



Principles for nullifying exam attempts and the provision of additional exam attempts to a candidate

These principles should underpin college decision making when candidates receive a new diagnosis of a condition which requires a reasonable adjustment to sit a high-stakes exam. The four principles cover the candidate's journey through the process, nullifying exam attempts, the number of attempts a candidate is permitted to sit, and reasons why they may be allowed additional attempts.

It is important that all candidates should be treated in a fair, equitable way and supported through their assessment journey. This should include clear and transparent communication from colleges at every stage — from application, to sitting an exam, through to any subsequent fail — ensuring that candidates are aware of the support available to them.

Principle 1. The candidate journey

At the point of application to sit an exam, candidates should receive clear communications from colleges regarding the number of exam attempts permitted, how to apply for any reasonable adjustment (if eligible), and details of additional support available to them.

Colleges, candidates and those responsible for their training should be encouraged to discuss a failed attempt, decide whether any additional support may be required and discuss diagnoses or other issues which may have affected their performance in an exam. Colleges should communicate with candidates and highlight that there may be situations or circumstances affecting a candidate's ability to pass the exam for which reasonable adjustments may be available.

- The Academy Assessment Committee have produced [Principles for exam preparation, feedback and support for candidates to address the awarding gap](#) which supports the approach outlined above.

Principle 2. Nullification

The term nullification, or its derivatives, is used here to describe the concept that previous attempts at an exam are not counted towards the candidates attempts but remain on their record. The term annulled is also used by some colleges.

Previous failed attempts of an exam should not be expunged from the candidate record. The record should state that new information has led to additional attempt(s) being granted to the candidate and record the date this decision is made.

- The 2010 Equality Act does not require exam attempts to be nullified if a disability was unknown at the time of sitting the exam
- Accurate record keeping throughout a candidate journey provides valuable information on when an intervention was applied and whether it has been of benefit to the candidate.

Principle 3. Number of attempts

College policy should reflect how many attempts a candidate is permitted to sit, and explain the rationale for that number. The number is limited in order to support maintaining the standard, acknowledge the length of training programmes and recognise the financial and emotional cost to trainees of failing multiple attempts.

- Most colleges allow an additional attempt beyond the maximum number with support of the educational supervisor and evidence of additional educational activity
- Best practice is for candidates to consider early any disability, or other circumstance, which might affect their performance in an exam. They should not reach a stage of failing multiple attempts before receiving a diagnosis which might have affected their performance
- The [statement](#) agreed between the Academy and GMC on the maximum limit of attempts in 2014 has been reviewed and noted.

Principle 4. Granting of additional attempts

When new information is received by a college, for example a new diagnosis or a change in the recommendation for reasonable adjustment, which might lead to the granting of additional attempts, it should be considered whether this information will have affected all previous attempts, or only some, and the number of remaining attempts calculated accordingly. For example, new information on a diagnosis of a disability which is likely to have affected all previous attempts, could lead to the full number of attempts being granted.