Membership of the Royal College of General Practitioners (MRCGP)

Equal Opportunities Policy

The Royal College of General Practitioners (RCGP) is committed to equality of opportunity and opposes all discriminatory practices and attitudes. MRCGP assessments comply with legislation on equal opportunities and fair management of diversity issues and specifically the Equality Act 2010.

The primary purpose of the Act is to consolidate the complicated and numerous array of Acts and Regulations, which formed the basis of anti-discrimination in Great Britain and requires equal treatment in access to employment as well as private and public services, regardless of the protected characteristics of age, disability (including mental and physical disability), race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, and pregnancy and maternity. In the case of disability, employers and service providers are under a duty to make reasonable adjustments to their workplaces to overcome barriers experienced by disabled people. The MRCGP seeks to comply with aspects of this legislation.

In addition to the above legislation, in Good Medical Practice, the General Medical Council (GMC) makes it clear that doctors are expected to keep up to date with, and adhere to, the laws and codes of practice which are relevant to their work. This includes the requirements of equality and human rights law. Good Medical Practice makes it clear that doctors must treat patients with respect whatever their life choices and beliefs and must not unfairly discriminate against patients by allowing their personal views to affect adversely their professional relationship with them or the treatment they provide or arrange. This includes views about a patient’s age, colour, culture, disability, ethnic or national origin, gender, lifestyle, marital or parental status, race, religion or beliefs, sex, sexual orientation, or social or economic status. The same principles apply to examiners when conducting the MRCGP.

Equality and diversity cuts across all areas of a doctor’s role, whatever the specialty or setting. Many doctors will also lead teams or be involved in the management, supervision or recruitment of diverse colleagues.

Training

The RCGP ensures that examiners, administrative staff and others involved in MRCGP assessments, including role-players for the CSA, receive appropriate training in equal opportunities and comply with this policy. Examiners receive
regular training in all aspects of equal opportunities, at the Examiners’ Annual Conference, and which includes all aspects of the protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010, both with regard to how to consider and mark cases that include aspects of diversity, as well as in their attitudes and professional marking duties towards candidates from diverse and varied backgrounds.

Monitoring

The RCGP’s quality assurance mechanisms include checks to make sure that no inadvertent discrimination takes place (either direct or indirect discrimination). The policy is monitored to ensure that it is up to date and compliant with current legislation.

Documentation and assessment material

The RCGP takes care to ensure that printed documents for the MRCGP assessments are prepared in clear unambiguous language. Documents are available in large print if needed. Assessment material is prepared in accordance with this equal opportunities policy, such that it discriminates between candidates only in terms of the abilities, knowledge and skills that are the subject of the assessment.

Candidate data

Data on candidates’ background is collected at registration with the RCGP, and by supplying this information candidates give their consent to its use for the following purposes:

- to allow RCGP to consider reasonable adjustments for declared disabilities that may affect candidates’ performance in an assessment
- to allow quality control of the assessment
- to monitor the operation of the RCGP’s equal opportunities policy.
- A summary of the data collected is used in conjunction with examination data in MRCGP Annual Reports

Data will not be used in ways that might discriminate against candidates, but will be used to analyse assessment results in terms of candidate diversity. Anonymous data may be used to publish information about the assessment process.

Disability information will be treated as confidential and used only in planning and implementing reasonable adjustments.
Access to assessment centres

The RCGP undertakes, where possible, to use assessment centres that can accommodate candidates with disabilities, though it is not possible in each instance to guarantee that this will be the nearest centre available.

Reasonable adjustments

Reasonable adjustments may be made for candidates who declare and provide evidence for disabilities in advance of taking an assessment. The RCGP makes every effort to ensure that adjustments are appropriate, proportionate and consistent, and such that they do not result in unfair advantage. The RCGP may seek information about special arrangements previously made for candidates in training or other assessments.

Reasonable adjustments will also be made as far as possible for candidates who attend for an assessment with a disability which was not known at the time of application for the assessment. However, it may not always be possible to make appropriate arrangements in such cases without prior notice.

Reasonable adjustments may include provision for extra time, a separate area or room, a reader or amanuensis. In deciding what adjustment is reasonable, the RCGP will take account of a candidate’s personal circumstances and any professional advice given in the corroborative evidence of the disability that has been supplied.