MRCGP Clinical Skills Assessment
Information for Candidates

Directions to the Examination Centre:

The CSA will be held in the Examination Centre at the RCGP’s headquarters at 30 Euston Square, London NW1. For a map of the area click here.

By Train/Tube: Euston Mainline and Tube Station is less than 5 minutes on foot. This provides regular trains to and from Birmingham and the West Midlands, North Wales, Manchester, Liverpool and Glasgow.

Euston Square Tube is also 5 minutes on foot for Circle, Hammersmith & City and Metropolitan Lines.

By Bus: Numerous buses stop on Euston Road and at Euston Station. See the TFL website for full details.

By Car: Not advisable – there is no parking available at the College building. The nearest available parking is at George Mews Car Park.

N.B. Access to the Examination Centre must be through the specific examinations entrance on Euston Road not the main College entrance on Melton Street which is separate.

Arrival and departure times:

The CSA normally lasts approximately 3 hours. A morning exam is scheduled to start at 10am and an afternoon session at 2pm. The RCGP aims to follow these times as closely as possible, however delays, whilst regrettable, are sometimes unavoidable and you should take this into account, particularly when making travel arrangements for return journeys.

Travel to the venue may be slow especially in the morning rush hour and taxi or bus services can be very busy. It is your responsibility to ensure that you arrive in time for the candidate briefing.

Morning Session:- Entrance to the exam centre will not be permitted before 8.15am. You should not arrive later than 9.00am in order to allow time for checking in.

Afternoon Session:- Entrance to the exam centre will not be permitted before 11.45am. You should not arrive later than 12:30pm in order to allow time for checking in. For the security of the examinations, you will not be admitted to the session if you arrive later than 12:45pm, when the morning session ends.

Please refer to your confirmation letter or e-mail to be sure which of these sessions you have been allocated to attend.

N.B. Once you have checked in, you will not be permitted to leave the candidate reception and briefing area and mobile phone use is strictly no longer permitted.

Missing the briefing before your exam may leave you at a disadvantage, so we strongly recommend that you allow enough time to arrive by the times stated above. Candidates who arrive after the start of the briefing will only be admitted to the examination under exceptional circumstances.

The CSA will commence when everyone present has been shown to their consulting room and settled in, but not before the stated start times. In the event of an emergency on the day and if you think you may be late, please contact a member of the RCGP Examinations Department by phoning 0203 188 7660.

Identification documentation

You must bring with you an identification document containing your photograph – a valid passport or photo-card driving licence. No other documentation will be accepted.
Candidates with a disability or special requirements:

If you have a disability or medical condition which may affect your capacity to undertake the CSA, you need to notify the RCGP at the time you apply to take the CSA. The RCGP makes every effort to ensure that adjustments are appropriate, proportionate and consistent, and such that they do not result in unfair advantage. In order to determine what adjustment is reasonable we may seek information about special arrangements made previously 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 has not been previously notified. However, it may not always be possible to make appropriate arrangements without prior notice, and in such cases candidates would be advised to take the assessment at a future date. If you have a disability that could make it difficult for you to use the stairs in the event of an evacuation of the building, it is important that you make this known to RCGP staff as soon as possible.

Emergency evacuation of the Examination Centre:

In the event of an emergency evacuation of the building, the assessment session may be terminated at the discretion of the Senior Marshal present.

Subsequent assessment sessions may also be affected and in this event, RCGP staff will inform candidates as and when possible.

Confirming that you are fit to take the assessment:

In presenting for the CSA you will be deemed fit to take the assessment and required to sign a declaration to that effect as part of the registration process on the day.

Conduct during the assessment:

The College strives to conduct the assessment in an open and fair manner, and expects candidates to abide by its Guidance on the Conduct of Assessments for the MRCGP. You should follow all instructions and advice given by Marshals and administrative staff involved in the assessment.

Your mobile ‘phone and other electronic devices must be switched off at all times whilst you are in the Examination Centre. In order to ensure your compliance you will be required to hand in your ‘phone, wrist watch and other devices (e.g. iPad, iPod, Kindle etc.) to the reception staff on arrival at the centre.

You must not:

• Attempt to solicit information about the content of the CSA from candidates attending earlier sessions or discuss/pass on any of the cases to other people - either of these actions could result in disqualification from the exam
• Bring any unauthorised material or electronic devices onto the test circuit, or otherwise arrange access during the course of an assessment. These might include manuscripts, notes, textbooks or study guides, dictionaries, recording equipment, personal organisers, computing equipment, calculators, personal stereos, mobile ‘phones, cameras or other similar electronic devices including timers. All ‘phones, wrist watches and other electronic devices must be left at reception. Bags, coats, food & drink and any non-essential medicines must be left in the locker provided for you at the Examination Centre. The only personal items permitted on the test circuit are your doctor’s bag - see section headed Equipment below
• Communicate with anyone, except role players, Marshals and administrative staff, by any means, during the CSA. This will include the periods during which the assessment is conducted and when you are leaving the Examination Centre. In the event of a temporary evacuation, (e.g. due to a fire alarm), candidates should not communicate with anyone other than Marshals or administrative staff.
• Remove any material whatsoever by any means from the Examination Centre. This includes notes or copies made of any material during the course of the test - these actions could also result in disqualification from the exam.

If you have a genuine need to be contacted in an emergency (e.g. because you have a sick relative), your phone may be left with the Marshal on your floor who will answer it for you and contact you if necessary.

N.B. All cases of irregular conduct will be reported, and may lead to disqualification from the assessment and possibly referral to the General Medical Council.

Please note that no one except candidates and RCGP staff will be permitted to enter the Examination Centre while the CSA is running; no other visitors (including spouses, partners and relatives) will be admitted under any circumstances.

The format of the assessment:

The Clinical Skills Assessment (CSA) is intended to be as much like real general practice as possible. The background to the assessment, its blueprint and the Curriculum Statements are available on the RCGP website [www.rcgp.org.uk](http://www.rcgp.org.uk).

The assessment itself will last for approximately three hours starting at either 10.00am or 2.00pm. In the normal run of events candidates will be free to leave the Examination Centre at 1.00pm or 5.00pm respectively, but from time to time some circuits do overrun by a few minutes. You should therefore bear this in mind when making your travel arrangements.

Three identical circuits of consultations will run simultaneously. You will be allocated to a particular floor, and given a consulting room, where you should remain throughout the assessment unless asked to leave by a Marshal. Refreshments will be provided halfway through the circuit.

Please note that lunch is not provided, and there are no catering facilities in the Examination Centre.

On your desk you will find:

• An iPad with an RCGP app containing a list of the patients you will see during your assessment. You will be given notes and records for each case, which will provide some background information. Please read the notes for each patient carefully before they enter the room – N.B. you may have to scroll down the documents as they may be longer than fits on the screen. Please leave the iPad in the desk-holder provided at all times. You may look forward to notes for later cases at any time, (but remember to navigate back to your current case.

***For full information and instructions on the use of iPads at the CSA, please be sure to read the following document before attending your exam: CSA Candidate iPad notes***

• A wipe-clean A4 whiteboard on which you can make notes; these won’t be marked.
• Some mock FP10 prescriptions (which may be marked if relevant to case), blood test request and Med3 forms.
• Any other information that might be relevant to a case you are seeing e.g. Peak Flow charts.
• Any additional equipment relevant to the days cases not normally in the standard doctors bag (please see below).

The patients:

You will see thirteen patients, each of whom is a role player trained to present a standard case. The cases are typical presentations that may be encountered in UK general practice. The role player will respond to your normal consultation style, but will not just tell you their whole script unless you ask relevant questions in an appropriate manner. They will not deliberately conceal vital information.
You may examine a patient if you feel it is appropriate to the consultation, but intimate examinations should not be carried out. If the role player feels that a proposed examination would be personally intrusive they will decline the examination. If you decide that a physical examination forms an important part of your assessment of the case, you should examine the patient and your technique may be marked. You will not normally find abnormal physical signs, but you should examine the patient in such a way that you would find them if they were present. Occasionally the Examiner or the role player will give you the results of an examination after you have sought permission to perform it instead of agreeing to the examination.

**Timing:**

Consultations are limited to ten minutes. The start and end of the consultation will be signalled by a buzzer. If you have not completed the consultation after ten minutes are up, you should allow the patient to leave. No marks will be given for anything that happens after the second buzzer. There will then be a 2 minute gap and the buzzer will sound again, signalling the start of the next case.

**Equipment:**

You should bring your doctor’s bag containing the usual diagnostic equipment with you, including:

- BNF
- BNF for children (**N.B. Added November 2013 – see below for more details**)
- Stethoscope
- Ophthalmoscope
- Auroscope
- Thermometer
- Patella hammer
- Tape measure
- Peak flow meter and disposable mouthpieces (N.B. These must be EU standard)

Please note that there is no need to bring a sphygmomanometer

It is your responsibility to ensure you have these items available by the time you sit the CSA. There will be no spare sets of equipment if you fail to bring anything, and in that event you will have to role play the assessment.

N.B. Your BNF must be free of additional/hand-written notes: all BNF’s will be checked before the start of the assessment and removed if they contain notes.

**Dress Code:**

A Dress Code is available as guidance to postgraduate doctors undertaking licensing assessments as part of the MRCGP examination. It has been written in conjunction with Deanery guidance, and applies also to situations of recruitment to GP training, work based training itself and assessment. Please ensure you are familiar with this before sitting the exam. A copy is available on the website under the ‘Regulations and documents’ tab.

**Video recording of consultations:**

For quality control purposes we video-record a random sample of CSA consultations. These videos are not be used as part of routine assessment processes and not, save in exceptional cases, used as evidence when considering complaints, appeals or cases of alleged misconduct. However, if an examination offence or other serious departure from examination conduct is recorded then that recording may be kept as evidence for use in any subsequent action. Candidates will not be permitted to choose not to be video recorded. You will be asked to confirm you acceptance of these conditions as part of the registration process on the day.
Marking:
An Examiner will accompany each role player and will play no part in the consultation, except possibly to hand you information at appropriate points. They will sit outside your line of vision, and you should ignore them. The Examiner will be looking at specific aspects of your clinical skills, marking them on a pre-defined marking schedule. It is possible that an additional observer may be present. These may be performing a Quality Assurance exercise or merely observing the process. They will take no part in your assessment.

The approach to assessment:
Each candidate is allocated a consulting room and has 13 consultations, each of 10 minutes, all of which are assessed. Patients are played by role players who have been trained and calibrated to perform their role in a consistent manner. A description of the type of cases used in the CSA can be seen here.

Each of the thirteen cases is marked by a trained Examiner using a pre-set marking schedule which is specific to the case. The Examiner marks each case on three domains or areas - Data Gathering, Clinical Management and Interpersonal Skills. This creates an overall numerical mark for the case. Each domain carries the same number of marks. The marks for each case are added to create a final mark.

The three domains on which you will be marked are:

- **DATA-GATHERING, TECHNICAL & ASSESSMENT SKILLS**: Gathering & using data for clinical judgement, choice of examination, investigations & their interpretation. Demonstrating proficiency in performing physical examinations & using diagnostic and therapeutic instruments
- **CLINICAL MANAGEMENT SKILLS**: Recognition & management of common medical conditions in primary care. Demonstrating a structured & flexible approach to decision-making. Demonstrating the ability to deal with multiple complaints and co-morbidity. Demonstrating the ability to promote a positive approach to health
- **INTERPERSONAL SKILLS**: Demonstrating the use of recognised communication techniques to gain understanding of the patient’s illness experience and develop a shared approach to managing problems. Practising ethically with respect for equality & diversity issues, in line with the accepted codes of professional conduct.

The grades will be on a four point scale: Clear Pass Pass Fail Clear Fail

The Cases:
Below is a sample case to illustrate the type of consultation you might expect to have.

Diabetes and depression

Summary of the case presentation:
The patient is a lady with well controlled Type 2 diabetes mellitus. She is presenting with the symptoms of depression. The candidate’s task is to find out why she has presented and obtain the relevant details that enable the following decisions to be made:

- What is the main problem here? Is it the diabetes or something else?
- If it is something else, could it be low mood in which case is the patient clinically depressed or just fed up?

Having made these decisions, the candidate has to formulate a diagnosis and consider the clinical priorities, involving the patient in developing a shared management plan. All of this has to be done in a patient centred way, obtaining her ideas, concerns and expectations and incorporating these into the explanation given to her.
Why is this type of case being chosen?

This case illustrates the co-morbidity often seen in general practice presentations. The candidate is given the opportunity to demonstrate his/her skill in identifying the constituents at play, prioritising them and dealing with the problem presented in the consultation. In this case, the lady’s diabetes is well controlled and she has no diabetic complications. The candidate simply has to establish this and then move on to diagnosing her presenting ‘problem’. On the face of it, having two conditions in a consultation may seem complicated and challenging, but the task required is much more focused and should be manageable in the 10 minutes allowed for the case.

Use of children in the CSA:

A paediatric case is routinely included in the daily case mix (palette) of the CSA. This is usually achieved through a third party, usually a parent presenting with concerns about their child.

However, cases involving child role players, accompanied by their parents, can also be included in the palettes. Although there will be a paediatric case each day, this will not necessarily involve the use of a child role player on every occasion.

Some new cases will test paediatric examination. There will be no need for candidates to prepare in a different way as the learning outcomes are unchanged.

Additionally, please note that the British National Formulary (BNF) for Children has now been added to the list of equipment that candidates are required to bring into the CSA examination.

Further information:

If you need any further information please contact the RCGP Examination team by telephone on 0203 188 7660 or by e-mail to exams@rcgp.org.uk.