RCGP frequently asked questions on the Applied Knowledge Test

Last updated: 1 June 2020

MRCGP

I cannot find an answer on the RCGP website to my specific questions about the AKT, CSA or WPBA

You can find the latest information on the AKT below; the temporary replacement to the CSA – the Recorded Consultation Assessment – here; and WPBA here.

If you are not able to find the answer to your query within any of the above, you can email the exams team at exams@rcgp.org.uk and we will endeavour to reply as soon as we can. Please bear in mind that although we would usually try to get back to you within five working days, the unprecedented number of queries coming through may mean some delays. We will continue to update the MRCGP website as the situation changes.

My GP specialty training ends this summer. How will I be able to obtain a CCT if I haven’t been able to take the AKT and/or CSA/RCA?

This continues to be a challenging situation which involves AiT Representatives, the RCGP, COGPED, GMC and government as well as many other relevant stakeholders. We would like to reassure you that important cross-party discussions are continuing to take place and we will continue to update this document.

Please read our CSA, RCA and AKT FAQs as we trust that these will answer some of your questions.

There is clear agreement that trainees who would have expected to gain a CCT in normal circumstances during August 2020 are a cohort that require special arrangements in order to transition into post-CCT working.

We are conscious that there are many difficulties around travel to take an assessment, that trainees would like flexible option choice and that the GMC, as the regulatory body, has confirmed that a statutory assessment is still required in order to maintain the appropriate standards of safe patient care.
Applied Knowledge Test (AKT)

I was due to sit the AKT in April 2020, when will it be rescheduled?

There will be a reduced capacity AKT on **Wednesday 15 July** subject to there being no changes to government advice in response to COVID-19 related issues.

We can also confirm that there will be an additional, near-normal capacity AKT on **Wednesday 19 August**.

Who will be eligible to sit the reduced capacity July AKT?

The test centres will not be permitted to run at maximum capacity for your safety and the safety of their staff. For this reason, there will be capacity for 450 candidates at approximately 50 Pearson VUE testing centres across the UK.

Due to this reduced capacity, there will be a priority booking system which will be coordinated by local Deanery and LETB GP Education teams as follows:

1. ST3s due to CCT by 04 August 2020
2. ST3s due to CCT by December 2020 and who only need the AKT component
3. Other ST3s
4. ST2s

Prioritised candidates who wish to defer their AKT from July to August need to discuss this with their Lead Educator within their local Deanery and LETB GP Education team. It should be noted that the RCGP cannot guarantee the actual capacity of the August AKT but have secured emergency agreement for the reduced capacity July AKT.

If ST3s do not wish to sit the AKT in July, then these spaces will be automatically made available to eligible ST2s. It is recommended that anyone thinking of applying should discuss their ‘readiness to sit’ with their Educational Supervisor.

Who will be eligible to sit the August AKT?

The test centres will still not be permitted to run at maximum capacity for your safety and the safety of their staff. However, we anticipate that the majority of test centres will be re-opened and that at least 1500 candidates can be accommodated.

There may still need to be a priority booking system which will be coordinated by local Deanery and LETB GP Education teams as follows:

1. ST3s due to CCT by 04 August 2020
2. ST3s due to CCT by December 2020 and who only need the AKT component
3. Other ST3s
4. ST2s
I have received official notification that I am eligible to sit the July AKT
How do I apply?

The application process will run as normal and all information can be found on the AKT section of our MRCGP webpage.

I have received official notification that I am eligible to sit the July AKT
Where will I be able to sit the July AKT?

Pearson VUE have worked with the RCGP and have been granted special permission to open test centres across the four home nations for medical keyworkers such as qualifying GP trainees.

In the current guidelines in place for the COVID-19 pandemic this will mean fewer test centres will be able to run the exam and may mean some additional travel for some candidates. This will be confirmed as soon as possible.

Do the current government guidelines permit travel to a test centre to sit the AKT?

Keyworkers are permitted to travel to their place of work and for essential travel such as sitting a national postgraduate medical exit exam.

Please print off the letter that accompanies your booking confirmation that will act as evidence for your essential travel.

I am due to CCT on 5 August 2020 but still need to pass the AKT.
How long will it take after the 15 July AKT to get my results and start post-CCT work?

We are working with all relevant regulatory stakeholders on this. We are aiming to be able to make recommendations to the GMC in time for the GMC to still grant CCTs for 5 August 2020 to all successful AKT candidates who have already passed CSA with completion of satisfactory WPBA. Delivery of this timeline cannot be guaranteed.

I have received official notification that I am not eligible to sit the July AKT. When can I sit an AKT?

There will be a near-normal capacity AKT on **Wednesday 19 August**.

The test centres will still not be permitted to run at maximum capacity for your safety and the safety of their staff. However, we anticipate that the majority of test centres will be re-opened and that at least 1500 candidates can be accommodated.

There may still need to be a priority booking system which will be coordinated by
local Deanery and LETB GP Education teams as follows:

1. ST3s due to CCT by 04 August 2020
2. ST3s due to CCT by December 2020 and who only need the AKT component
3. Other ST3s
4. ST2s

I have received official notification that I am not eligible to sit the July or August AKT, but feel I have exceptional circumstances for taking it then. What should I do?

You should approach your Deanery or LETB GP Education team to discuss your circumstances.

I am regarded as being at high risk (clinically extremely vulnerable) from coronavirus (‘shielded status’). I am therefore not able to leave my own home. How can I sit the July or August AKT?

We hope you are keeping safe during the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic and we fully recognise that the ongoing uncertainty about a date for your MRCGP AKT exam is also difficult for you.

As you are regarded as a person who needs shielding for medical reasons it is clearly unsafe for you to leave home and travel to a test centre.

We are looking closely at the practicalities of delivering a secure AKT as a remote assessment for those candidates providing evidence of their ‘shielded status’. At the moment, we have no alternative assessment and appreciate that sadly this may mean that your CCT date is being deferred.

If we are in a position to offer you an alternative option, we will let your Deanery know.

I am regarded as being at moderate risk (clinically vulnerable) from coronavirus (i.e. warranting an annual influenza vaccination such as for pregnant women, people with asthma or other long term medical condition). I am therefore not able to leave my own home other than for essential food or medical appointments. How can I sit the July or August AKT?

We hope you are keeping safe during the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic and we fully recognise that the ongoing uncertainty about a date for your MRCGP AKT exam is also difficult for you.

As you are regarded as a person who due to medical reasons needs to stay at home other than for essential reasons, it is clearly important that you make a careful decision about what you should do. Please speak with your Lead Deanery and LETB GP Educator to discuss your options. At the moment, we have no alternative
assessment and appreciate that sadly this may mean that your CCT date is being deferred.

If we are in a position to offer you an alternative option, we will let your Deanery know.

**I am not in a risk group but am anxious about travelling to a test centre during the COVID-19 pandemic. How can I sit the July or August AKT safely?**

Provided you are not a person who is medically regarded as being at increased risk from coronavirus (see previous FAQs) then please consider how you can get to a local test centre safely.

We know that keyworkers are being asked to work and we trust that a socially distanced AKT at a carefully run Pearson VUE test centre is acceptable to you.

You can drive or be driven and then wait nearby in your car until check-in time. You can bring your own gloves and face mask if you wish (sanitiser is provided), but please note that that you will still need to briefly show your face at ID checking.

Please do allow adequate time for the check-in process which will be carried out in accordance with strict social distancing requirements.

**I am concerned about the risk of contamination at a test centre. What measures are in place to ensure the safety of candidates while sitting the AKT?**

Pearson VUE have worked with the RCGP and have been granted permission to open test centres for medical keyworkers such as qualifying GP trainees. In the extraordinary circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic this will mean reduced test centre occupancy to 50% or less, adherence to strict social distancing rules and more time will be needed to check candidates in.

Pearson VUE have already gained experience of this with some very limited test centre availability to paramedics taking their qualifying exam. Enhanced cleaning of workstations and keyboards is in place and hand sanitiser is available, but you will need to bring your own gloves and mask if you wish to wear them but please note that that you will still need to briefly show your face at ID checking.

For further information, please also refer to [Pearson VUE’s Coronavirus update page](https://www.pearsonvue.com/gb).  

**Pearson VUE advertise remote testing. Why can’t I take a remote AKT from my own home during this time of a national pandemic?**

The RCGP have explored this option in detail but it is currently not fit for purpose in a high stakes national postgraduate medical exit exam. Ongoing work is being
undertaken with Pearson VUE.

As soon as we are in a position to provide more details we will update our website.

**I was due to sit the AKT in April 2020. What will happen to the fee I paid?**

As per our usual policy, payment for an exam that has been postponed, or where the candidate can demonstrate the reason for their inability to attend, will be automatically carried over until the next booked AKT sitting. We will refund any fees on request.

It is important to note that there will likely be an extremely high demand for examination sittings when the AKT resumes, and so where we can (subject to capacity), priority for re-booking will be given to those already booked and carrying forward their fee.

For refunds, please email the exams team at exams@rcgp.org.uk.

**If I sit the AKT on 15 July or 19 August and am unsuccessful does this attempt count towards the total number of permitted attempts at the AKT exam?**

Due to the exceptional circumstances and stresses of sitting your assessment during the early months of the COVID-19 pandemic, then a single unsuccessful attempt at either the July or August AKT will **not** count towards the total number of permitted attempts at the AKT exam.

**If I sit the AKT on 15 July or 19 August and am unsuccessful, does that equate to an automatic extension of my training?**

The decision to award additional training time due to exam failure will be made by your ARCP Panel and will be based on your overall progress in the training programme.