

Changes to the Regulations for Membership of the Faculty of Occupational Medicine

In April 2008, a new set of Membership Regulations was approved by the Faculty Board. This briefing sheet explains the main alterations.

Background and general framework

Arrangements for higher specialist training in occupational medicine changed on 1 August 2007, with the introduction of a new PMETB-approved curriculum and assessment framework.

Trainees in approved training at the watershed date (enrolled on or before 31 July 2007 – “old curriculum” trainees) enjoy the right to complete the training they have embarked upon under pre-existing rules, *or* if they choose, to transfer to the new curriculum provided they do so before 1 January 2009. “New curriculum” trainees – those enrolled in a UK specialty training post or programme **after** 31 July 2007 – will need to follow the new Regulations.

Historically, a second route to Membership has existed outwith UK specialist training for overseas posts approved on an *ad personam* basis. The new rules replace this arrangement with an option for doctors outwith specialty training to qualify as Members, provided that they match the experience and qualifications of UK specialty trainees – by passing all of the Membership-related examinations and demonstrating the competencies of a UK specialist.

The new MFOM regulations are therefore arranged in 3 sections:

- **Section A** relates to new curriculum trainees, transitional provision for old curriculum trainees electing to switch to the new curriculum, and other doctors outwith specialist training who aspire to Membership;
- **Section B** preserves the right of old curriculum trainees to complete their original training programme;
- **Section C** preserves the rights of overseas trainees in *ad personam* posts to complete their training programme.

(In due course the need for sections B and C will disappear, as existing candidates in these categories exit their training posts).

Membership for new curriculum trainees

For new curriculum trainees, Membership will require passes in 3 centrally administered examination components:

1. Part 1 MFOM – an MCQ based on the Diploma in Occupational Medicine (DOccMed) MCQ for generalists;
2. A research dissertation or equivalent evidence.
3. Part 2 MFOM – an MCQ, Structured Short Answer Paper, and Observed Structured Practical Examination (OSPE),

Certain rules will dictate the order of events and eligibility to enter these exams – in particular, Part 1 MFOM will be an initial exam, taken in the first year of training (usually ST3); Part 2 will be an exit exam, taken in the final year of training (usually ST6); and the research component will need to have been submitted before the end of ST5 and before the Part 2 exam can be attempted. Membership will follow a pass in all 3 elements, and may therefore precede by a few months the sign-up to CCT at the end of ST6.

Membership for old curriculum trainees

For old curriculum trainees who do **not** transfer to the new system, things will change very little, if at all. As before, Membership will comprise 4 years of approved training, endorsed by a RITA panel, plus the successful completion of a research dissertation and a pass in the AFOM examination.

However, from June 2010 the old style AFOM exam will be replaced by the new style Part 2 MFOM examination. Old curriculum trainees who have not passed the AFOM by then will need to take the Part 2 examination instead. In practice, the syllabus and the competencies assessed will be very similar to those in the old style examination, so the difference will be only in *assessment methods*. Old curriculum trainees passing the Part 2 examination will still receive the post-nominal qualification of AFOM. Prior to June 2010, they will be eligible (as now) to take the old style exam and/or re-sit it at any of the available sittings.

In addition, from April 2008, the process by which research dissertations are assessed will be simplified. The changes (which are explained in a separate Question & Answer Sheet) are mainly administrative, and are aimed at cutting out delays, clarifying certain ambiguous rules and adding flexibility in the range of eligible material. Care has been taken to ensure that no additional requirements arise for old curriculum trainees; the Faculty expects that they will benefit, however, in terms of smoother administration.

Old curriculum trainees will not notice any difference to their training or the conduct of their RITA assessments.

Membership for old curriculum trainees switching to the new curriculum

For old curriculum trainees, certain transitional provisions support the option to transfer to the new curriculum.

Requests to transfer have to be in writing and to reach the Faculty offices before 1 January 2009.

The arrangements for formal assessment thereafter will depend on prior experience and qualifications. A pass in the DOccMed may exempt a trainee the requirement to take the Part 1 examination, while a pass in the AFOM may exempt them both the Part 1 and Part 2 examinations. However, time limits will apply to these exemptions. To count, any pass in the DOccMed MCQ must have been achieved within the 5 years prior to the date on which the transfer application reaches the Faculty offices, and any pass in the AFOM must be before 1 January 2009. The rules of specialist training (as opposed to the Regulations of Membership) will require transferring trainees to participate fully in all of the assessment methods of specialist training, including workplace-based assessments.

Trainees considering a switch are advised to read the new Regulations and linked guidelines very carefully. If they do switch and have not passed the AFOM examination, they will need at least to take the Part 2 examination. This will not be available until

*June 2010, and it will not be possible to count the AFOM in lieu of it **after 31st December 2008**. (In general, trainees transferring to the new curriculum are expected to follow the new assessment methods. They should not assume they can transfer and rely on the old AFOM as a route to qualification.)*

Membership for doctors outwith UK specialist training

Doctors outwith UK specialist training may qualify as members provided that they pass the Part 1 and Part 2 MFOM examinations and submit an acceptable research dissertation or equivalent evidence.

Details of this alternative route to Membership can be found in the MFOM Regulations and associated guidance. Certain conditions of eligibility and experience will apply. In particular, applicants must (1) hold a medical qualification acceptable to the Faculty; (2) have 3 years of general professional training and 1 year of occupational medical experience or training acceptable to the Faculty at the time they apply to sit the Part 1 examination; and (3) have passed the Part 2 examination, submitted a research dissertation, and had 4 years of experience or training in occupational medicine acceptable to the Faculty at the time they apply to sit the Part 2 examination. (In general, at the Part 2 stage, they will need to offer evidence of competencies at the level of an independent UK specialist.)

Related documents and guidance

Regulations for Membership (MFOM) April 2008

http://www.facocmed.ac.uk/library/docs/mfom_r08.pdf

Question and Answer Sheet on Changes to the Faculty Examinations

http://www.facocmed.ac.uk/library/docs/t_qa3_exams.pdf

Question and Answer Sheet on Changes to the MFOM Dissertation

http://www.facocmed.ac.uk/library/docs/t_qa4_mfomdiss08.pdf

Guidance on Research Dissertations Written for Purpose

http://www.facocmed.ac.uk/library/docs/t_rdissguid.pdf

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