

**TCFA Feedback November 2023**

Candidate comments in blue.

**Logbook**

Candidates appreciated being able to track their logbook digitally without fear of losing pages of information; the logbook was easy to manoeuvre through; structurally easy to use for candidate and mentor.

Whilst the logbook was straightforward to access some mentors found access challenging as it required more work than a signature on a piece of paper.

Non-College members have to hand write their logbooks which was not as advantageous.

**College response:** The College are pleased that most trainees found the system easy to access and navigate. We have improved our response times to candidate queries and hope candidates are gaining a better experience from the College.

**Clinical Management Guidelines (CMGs)**

Some candidates struggled with the changes that were published to the CMGs in the run up to the exam.

**College response:** The CMGs are regularly updated to ensure that patients are given the best possible care. It is not possible to pause the publication of the CMGs for TCFA exam candidates and once the exam is passed candidates are expected to keep abreast of updates as part of their ongoing professional development. A copy of the CMGs used at the time of the examination is shared with candidates to ensure that all parties are looking at the same version.

Candidates also struggled where local protocols are in conflict with the CMGs.

**College response:** The CMGs are reflective of evidence-based best practice and the TCFA IP exam is based on them. The College of Optometrists acknowledges that local protocols will sometimes differ, but is not able to create a resource that accounts for every local protocol. The College uses the CMGs as they are created for use across the UK.

Observation/symptom based, not condition based.

**College response:** This suggestion has been fed back to the CMG writing team.

Easy and helpful to use.

A resource which I have been aware of for a long time, but until I actually started preparing for the exam, I didn't really realise how good they are.

College CMGs were a great way to prepare for starting out as an IP optometrist. They provide an evidence-based approach that I can use to direct my practice whilst I build my own clinical experience.

**College response:** The College sends a PDF of the CMGs to exam candidates once the exam registration date has passed. These are the same as those online and will be the ones referred to by the IP Assessment Panel in setting the standard. Candidates are advised to revise from the website as it will contain the most up-to-date versions of the CMGs. Candidates are not expected to wait for the PDF.

**TestReach system feedback:**

Most (50 of the 62 responses) candidates preferred the option of completing the exam from a place of their choice without the expense and stress of travel to a central venue.

Additional benefits included having a reminder of the time left.

Software was easy to download and use.

Some issues were:

Not knowing when the invigilator was going to answer questions; not having the time frozen; confusion over whether or not a hard copy BNF is allowed (it is).

Did not like the set-up of the page with questions on the right and answers on the left. Felt like it was counter intuitive.

**College response:** All of the questions regarding the TestReach software and invigilation process are outlined in the Remote Invigilation Protocol document, shared with the cohort once the application deadline has passed. This document includes details on the time frozen if an issue occurs, and what the invigilators are there for. An online copy of the BNF is currently not possible. The College is aware that the paper copy will become obsolete towards the end of the year and will look to integrate this into the TestReach software.

**Questions:**

There were a number of comments that some questions were ambiguous. Please see the page on how we create each TCFA IP exam paper and the checks that are in place to ensure that there is clarity.

Clarity about qualification level of the person providing care in the question.

Access to past exams/previous questions.

**College response:** The College is aware of the desire of TCFA IP candidates to have a set of previous questions. Each TCFA IP question takes a considerable amount of time and effort to write and refine so that it is useable in the exam. Once it becomes a sample question, it can no longer be used in the exam. Therefore, continually depleting our question bank to make sample questions would increase the cost of the exam for candidates.

How are the questions marked?

**College response:** If there is a question asking for three answers and a candidate only gets two right, they are still awarded marks for the correct answer.

A number of candidates have requested more feedback on performance.

**College response:** The College is exploring possibilities of more feedback for candidates who have failed the exam. Currently the feedback lists the conditions that were the focus of the scenarios with the marks achieved and the maximum marks available.

Candidates note that, in most cases, an IP optometrist will examine the eye and yet the exam contains no pictures.

**College response:** The College used to include pictures in the exam, but there were often concerns about the quality of the pictures included, so it was decided to remove them.