

Therapeutics Common Final Assessment Regulations

1. These are the regulations that govern the Therapeutics Common Final Assessment. You should read them carefully, in conjunction with the other candidate information, so that you understand the procedures. You must abide by them.

Definitions

2. The following definitions will apply to these regulations:

“The College” means the College of Optometrists.

“Candidate” means someone who has entered for the Therapeutics Common Final Assessment.

“Examiner” means the Examiner appointed by the College to assess the portfolio and undertake the structured oral for the Additional Supply qualification.

“Chief Executive” means the Chief Executive of the College.

“Director of Education” means the Director of the Education Department of the College or his or her nominee.

“Therapeutics Common Final Assessment” means the assessment through which candidates demonstrate that they have the knowledge and skills necessary to be eligible for specialist registration with the GOC. This can be in relation to Additional Supply or Independent Prescribing.

Scope

3. These regulations apply from 1 June 2009.

Entry requirements for the Therapeutics Common Final Assessment

4. Before a Candidate enters the Therapeutics Common Final Assessment he or she must have:

For Additional Supply

- a. Successfully completed an appropriate specialist therapeutics programme recognised by the General Optical Council.
- b. Undertaken a clinical placement of a minimum of 10 sessions of not less than three hours (five days).

For Independent Prescribing

5. If you have already passed Additional Supply, before entering the examination you must have:
 - a. been practising in the UK and registered with the GOC for two full years before beginning the clinical placement
 - b. successfully completed an appropriate specialist therapeutics programme recognised by the General Optical Council
 - c. undertaken a clinical placement of a minimum of 14 sessions of not less than three hours (seven days) within two years of completing the specialist therapeutics programme. Note you must take the TCFA within two years of completing the clinical placement.

6. If you have no previous prescribing qualifications, before entering the examination you must have:
 - a. been practising in the UK and registered with the GOC for two full years before beginning the clinical placement
 - b. successfully completed an appropriate specialist therapeutics programme recognised by the General Optical Council
 - c. undertaken a clinical placement of a minimum of 24 sessions of not less than three hours (12 days) within two years of completing the specialist therapeutics programme. Note you must take the TCFA within two years of completing the clinical placement.

Registration with the GOC

7. The Candidate is eligible for specialist registration when the Candidate is deemed to have been successful in the appropriate Therapeutics Common Final Assessment.

Language of Assessment

8. All assessments will be carried out in English.

Reasonable Adjustments

9. Temporary personal circumstances which might affect a Candidate's performance other than those which relate to a disability within the meaning of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 will not be taken into account.
10. Any Candidate who is a disabled person and who feels that the arrangements for the Therapeutics Common Final Assessment will cause him or her a substantial disadvantage may apply to the Director of Education for reasonable adjustments to be made, setting out:
 - a. The reasons why the candidate requires reasonable adjustments to be made, with supporting evidence if necessary; and
 - b. The adjustments he or she wishes to be made.

This can be done either using the appropriate Reasonable Adjustments form or by writing a letter or email.

11. The Director of Education will reply as soon as practicably possible indicating what adjustments can reasonably be made.
12. Any Candidate who has made an application under Regulation 11 and who is dissatisfied with the Director of Education's response may ask for the Chairman of the Education & Standards Committee to review the application.
13. The Chairman of the Education & Standards Committee shall allow the Candidate to make further representations in person or by any other convenient means if requested.
14. Having heard or received any further representations from the Candidate the Chairman of the Education & Standards Committee shall either agree that the requested adjustments be made to the assessment arrangements or refuse the application.
15. The Chairman of the Education & Standards Committee shall notify the candidate of his or her decision and reasons in writing or by such other means as may be appropriate.
16. Nothing in Regulations 11-16 above shall be read as implying that the Education Committee will allow any adjustment to the competence requirements of the assessment on the grounds of disability.

Cheating and Misconduct

In the Portfolio or Logbook

17. For the purposes of these Regulations, 'cheating' includes:

- a. Falsifying evidence for the portfolio or logbook.
- b. Copying, stealing, appropriation or use of the work of another as evidence for the portfolio or logbook.
- c. Permitting or assisting another to copy or use one's own work as evidence for their portfolio or logbook.
- d. Using, attempting to use, assisting another to use or attempting to assist another to use any other unfair, improper or dishonest method to gain advantage in any part of the assessment process.

18. For the purposes of these Regulations, 'misconduct' includes writing in or attaching to any papers, or giving orally, any message or appeal to the assessor with the intention of influencing his or her decision.

19. Where an Examiner or other complainant suspects a candidate of cheating or misconduct he or she will report the matter promptly to the College.

20. Upon receipt of an allegation of cheating or misconduct, the Chief Executive, or his or her nominee, will decide upon examination of the initial evidence whether the allegation should be investigated and, if so, what form the investigation should take.

21. The Chief Executive, or his or her nominee, will write to the Candidate, and the Examiner informing them that the allegation has been received and what will happen next, including (but not necessarily limited to):

- a. Whether:
 - i. the allegation will be investigated to obtain more details before it is referred to the Education & Standards Committee; or
 - ii. the allegation will be referred straight to the Education & Standards Committee with such details as are available; or
 - iii. no action will be taken by the College in relation to the allegation; and
- b. Requesting a written statement from the Candidate of his or her observations on the allegation.

22. If the Chief Executive, or his or her nominee, decides that it is appropriate to investigate the allegation before it is referred to the Education & Standards Committee, an investigation will be carried out.

23. The College investigation will depend on the nature of the concerns raised.

- a. The investigation will include consideration of the Candidate's written observations and may include obtaining written and/or oral evidence from the complainant, the Candidate, the Mentor or the Examiner and/or other persons and examine other evidence such as patient records and other written materials.
- b. If the Candidate is interviewed by the investigators, the Candidate may be accompanied.
- c. The length of the investigation will usually depend on the complexity and seriousness of the concerns. The investigation will be completed as efficiently as reasonably practicable. It is expected that it will normally be completed within 28 days of the letter being sent informing the Candidate that an allegation has been made; however, it is recognised that this may not be possible in all cases.
- d. The Candidate will be kept informed of progress. The complainant may also be kept informed, depending upon his or her interest in the matter.

24. At the end of the investigation the details of the case, including the Candidate's written observations on the findings and any recommendations of the investigators, will be referred to a meeting of three representatives of the Education & Standards Committee (including one lay representative), appointed by the College. For the avoidance of doubt, the Education & Standards Committee representatives are not bound to follow the investigators' recommendations.
25. Upon receipt of details of a case, three representatives of the Education & Standards Committee, appointed by the College, will meet to decide whether there is a case to answer.
 - a. If they decide there is no case to answer, no further action will be taken by the College.
 - b. If they decide there is a case to answer, either:
 - i. The result of the Therapeutics Common Final Assessment will be annulled, or
 - ii. The candidate will be referred to the General Optical Council (GOC) for consideration under its Fitness to practise procedures and the College will require the candidate to be reassessed as it thinks fit, pending the outcome of the GOC's procedures.
26. The candidate will be informed in writing of the decision of the representatives of the Education & Standards Committee. The complainant may also be informed, depending upon his or her interest in the matter.

In the Assessment

27. For the purposes of these Regulations, 'cheating' includes:
 - a. Copying, stealing, appropriation or use of the work of another during or outside the Assessment.
 - b. Permitting or assisting another to copy or use one's own work during or outside the Assessment.
 - c. Taking into the Assessment any unauthorised material or aids.
 - d. Using, attempting to use, assisting another to use or attempting to assist another to use any other unfair, improper or dishonest method to gain advantage in any part of the Assessment process. For the avoidance of doubt, the use or possession by any candidate of any papers, answer sheets or other examination material from a previous Assessment, will be considered cheating.
28. For the purposes of these Regulations, 'misconduct' includes:
 - a. Conduct in an Assessment Centre which an Examiner, invigilator or other member of staff appointed by or on behalf of the College to control the conduct of candidates thinks is causing disturbance to other candidates or affecting the proper running of the Assessment.
 - b. Communicating or attempting to communicate with any other candidate during the course of an Assessment.
 - c. Removing from the Assessment Centre any papers, answer sheets or other Assessment materials or making or removing copies of any part of such papers, answer sheets or Assessment materials.
 - d. Writing in or attaching to any papers, or giving orally, any message or appeal to the invigilator or Examiner with the intention of influencing his or her decision.
 - e. The theft or concealment of any material which is the property of the College or the Assessment Centre.

- f. Providing and/or disseminating information about the Assessment content with a view to assisting current or prospective candidates whether before or after the Assessment.
29. Where an Examiner, Invigilator or other member of staff suspects a candidate of cheating or misconduct, he or she shall report the matter promptly to the Chief Executive. Upon receipt of an allegation of cheating or misconduct, the Chief Executive, or his or her nominee, will write to the candidate informing them that the allegation has been received and what will happen next, including (but not necessarily limited to):
 - a. Whether:
 - i. the allegation will be investigated to obtain more details before it is referred to the Education & Standards Committee; or
 - ii. the allegation will be referred straight to the Education Committee with such details as are available; or
 - iii. no action will be taken by the College in relation to the allegation; and
 - b. Requesting a written statement from the candidate of his or her observations on the allegation.
30. If the Chief Executive, or his or her nominee, decides that it is appropriate to investigate the allegation before it is referred to the Education & Standards Committee, the investigation will be carried out by the Director of Education at the College, or his or her nominee, who will obtain written evidence from the complainant, the candidate, the Examiner and/or other persons and examine other evidence such as written materials.
31. The length of the investigation will usually depend on the complexity and seriousness of the concerns. The investigation will be completed as efficiently as reasonably practicable. It is expected that it will normally be completed within 28 days of the letter being sent informing the candidate that an allegation has been made; however, it is recognised that this may not be possible in all cases.
32. The candidate will be kept informed of progress. The complainant may also be kept informed, depending upon his or her interest in the matter.
33. At the end of the investigation the details of the case, including the Candidate's written observations on the findings and any recommendations of the investigators, will be referred to a meeting of three representatives of the Education & Standards Committee (including one lay representative), appointed by the College. For the avoidance of doubt, the Education & Standards Committee representatives are not bound to follow the investigators' recommendations.
34. Upon receipt of details of a case, three representatives of the Education & Standards Committee, appointed by the College, will meet to decide whether there is a case to answer.
 - a. If they decide there is no case to answer, no further action will be taken by the College.
 - b. If they decide there is a case to answer, either:
 - i. The result of the Therapeutics Common Final Assessment will be annulled, or
 - ii. The candidate will be referred to the General Optical Council (GOC) for consideration under its Fitness to practise procedures and the College will require the candidate to be reassessed as it thinks fit, pending the outcome of the GOC's procedures.

35. The candidate will be informed in writing of the decision of the representatives of the Education Committee. The complainant may also be informed, depending upon his or her interest in the matter.

Therapeutics Common Final Assessment

Structure of the Therapeutics Common Final Assessment

36. For Additional Supply, the Therapeutics Common Final Assessment consists of a structured oral. Candidates must pass all learning outcomes before being eligible for registration with the GOC.
37. For Independent Prescribing, the Therapeutics Common Final Assessment consists of a computer-based key features examination.

Cancellation

38. A Candidate who cancels his or her place before the Therapeutics Common Final Assessment in which he or she has a place may apply for a place in a subsequent Therapeutics Common Final Assessment.

Non Attendance

39. For candidates who do not attend the Therapeutics Common Final Assessment in which they have a place and who have not cancelled their place in advance, their non-attendance will be recorded as a failed attempt and they will have to pay resit fees when they apply for the Therapeutics Common Final Assessment again. These fees will be in the Schedule of Fees in force at the time.
40. For candidates who can provide a medical certificate stating that they were ill on the days of their assessment there will be no additional fee when they apply again.
41. Candidates who feel unwell during any section of the Therapeutics Common Final Assessment must inform the Senior College Representative present. Should the candidate choose to continue with the assessment he or she will be marked in the usual way. If the candidate does not attempt the assessment then regulations 39 and 40 above apply.
42. If candidates arrive late for the Therapeutics Common Final Assessment, it is at the discretion of the Senior College Representative whether to allow the candidate to sit the assessment on that day. Where the decision is taken to cancel that section candidates will be deemed to have been absent and regulations 39 and 40 above apply.

Adverse Circumstances which affect the Conduct of the Therapeutics Common Final Assessment

43. If any adverse circumstances affect the conduct of the Therapeutics Common Final Assessment for any candidates, the senior College representative at the Therapeutics Common Final Assessment will take such action as he or she thinks fit. After the Assessment the College will consider the effect of the circumstances and take any further action it thinks appropriate. The action taken will be reported to the Education & Standards Committee.

Complaints

44. Any candidate who wishes to complain about any aspect of the Therapeutics Common Final Assessment (other than applications made under Regulations 11 – reasonable adjustments) should submit a written report to the Head of Examinations or to education.help@college-optometrists.org within 28 days of the Final Assessment.

Appeals

45. Candidates who believe that a mistake may have occurred in the College's examining process may make an appeal.

46. A completed Appeal form or full written statement of the appeal setting out the grounds for the appeal must be submitted to the Director of Education within 28 days following the issue of your exam results.
47. The College will acknowledge receipt of the appeal in writing.
48. Appeals can only be made if the candidate believes that there were irregularities in the administrative procedures and conduct of the examination, which were of such a nature as to cause reasonable doubt about whether the Examiners would have reached the same conclusions had the irregularities not occurred.
49. The fee for each appeal is set out in the Schedule of Fees in force at the time. Payment must be made in sterling drawn on a UK bank. Cheques and drafts should be made out to 'The College of Optometrists'. Cash should not be sent through the post. Appeals will not be considered until payment has been cleared.
50. The appeal will be considered by an Appeal Panel comprised of members of the Education & Standards Committee and a lay member of the College's Lay Advisory Panel.
51. The appeal will be heard as quickly as possible and inform the appellant of the outcome. Should the appeal be upheld, the fee will be returned.
52. The Appeal Panel will ask all those involved in the case for their observations will refer the appeal for comment to those immediately concerned with the examination. The candidate will be informed of the relevant responses.
53. The Appeal Panel may dismiss the appeal, or, if it considers it justified, it may do one of the following:
 - a. Overturn the result of the examination.
 - b. Allow the candidate to resit the examination where resit attempts are exhausted.
 - c. Allow the candidate to resit the examination at no charge.
 - d. Uphold the Examiner's decision.