

Collection of Medical Royal College and Faculty exam outcomes in 2023/24 – Briefing note 1

Introduction

The GMC undertakes an annual project to report on the exam outcomes which could contribute to the award of a CCT or CESR to doctors at the end of their training or allows progression to the next stage of training. This also includes exams that are required to progress through foundation training. This data is used for both the Progression reports and the UK Medical Education Database which you can read more about [here](#).

- The reporting period that this briefing note covers includes the outcomes from exams taken between **1st August 2023** and **31st July 2024**.
- Royal colleges, faculties and any other organisation administering an exam that is required for a CCT will be referred to as 'colleges' throughout this note.
- Please ensure you complete the list of returned exams to inform us of any changes as there is continued interest around the effect of historical cancellations, postponements and derogations made to exams due to COVID-19.

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Exam data collection 2023/24 project timelines

Deadline date	Who	Action
15th August 2024	Colleges	<p>Confirm names and contact details of individuals who will be sharing data with the GMC, as well as those who will be reviewing the data in the stakeholder review.</p> <p>Our Information Governance policies require access to GMC Connect, our secure file-sharing system, to be withdrawn for those who do not confirm they require access in 2024.</p> <p>Nominated contacts will receive all the relevant communications.</p>
2nd September 2024	Colleges	<p>Colleges to submit the list of returned exams file sent with this note.</p> <p>Confirm if there are any derogations made to exams in the reporting period.</p> <p>If your college has an entirely new exam format in response to COVID-19, please see here for how to record these.</p>

Deadline date	Who	Action
9th September 2024	Colleges	Deadline for submitting candidate demographic data via GMC Connect.
7th October 2024	GMC	Return candidate demographic data to colleges identifying which candidates are or have been on the UK medical register, and for whom colleges should provide exam results.
4th November 2024	Colleges	Deadline for submission of exam outcomes for all candidates who are or have been registered with the GMC.
November 2024	GMC	<p>Conduct initial checks of exam data which include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A check against the list of returned exams file to ensure that each exam listed has results returned ▪ Number of exam results expected based on previous year's returns and candidate demographic data submission ▪ Missing data from the data sharing agreement or gaps in the data <p>Feedback will be given to colleges if any issues are identified.</p>
Early December 2024	Colleges	Colleges to respond to any queries from the initial checks within two weeks of GMC feedback.
Q1 2025	GMC	Stakeholder review of data and opportunity to view reports built from the data. Further detail on this will be available in the next briefing note.
Q1 2025 (2 weeks after receiving data)	Colleges	Stakeholder return of reviewed data and any comments on the reports. Further detail on this will be available in the next briefing note.
2025	GMC	2023/24 data included in UKMED database. Access for research projects is via an application to UKMED.

Exam data collection: what data should be returned?

Colleges provide the GMC with exam outcomes for all doctors who are currently or ever on the UK medical register and who sat an exam which could contribute towards their CCT or CESR within the reporting period **1st August 2023 to 31st July 2024**.

Data sharing agreements

Data sharing agreements (DSAs) were produced and signed by colleges and the GMC to agree and list the data fields shared by the two parties for the candidate demographic data and outcomes for each exam. You should have a copy of the DSA; if you do not, please email educationdata@gmc-uk.org and we will share the most up to date version. Below is an example of the data fields listed for each exam in the DSAs:

Fields Shared with the GMC for exam name
Candidate ID
GMC reference no
Candidate first name
Candidate surname
Date of birth
Exam date
Attempt
Score
Pass mark
Pass/fail

Please check the DSA to make sure it reflects the exams and data fields you can share with us. Please let us know if the DSA needs to be amended.

We will be in contact with colleges that are able to return data on reasonable adjustments to ensure the additional fields are included - please see the [reasonable adjustment data](#) section below.

If your systems have been updated and it is now possible for you to provide total scores or sections scores, we would be very interested in amending your DSA.

Candidate demographic data return

To check whether the candidates who sat the exams are or were ever on the UK medical register, colleges are first asked to share demographic data about the candidates with the GMC. You can submit files in Excel or csv format. All files should be submitted using the secure portal in GMC Connect. Unfortunately, we cannot accept Word or PDF files.

Candidate demographic data files can be submitted to the GMC as soon as exam diets are finished, and you have a complete data set available.

To ensure we can accurately match the candidate data with the UK medical register, you must include *at least*:

- Candidate first name
- Candidate last name
- Candidate date of birth
- GMC reference number (if available)
- College ID (a unique ID provided by the college to each candidate if available)

If you hold it, 'Medical School attended' is an additional field helpful for matching purposes.

The most accurate way to submit the candidate demographic data is to extract the exam data then remove the exam results from the file. These data can then be sent to us to match against the UK medical register (<https://www.gmc-uk.org/registration-and-licensing/the-medical-register>).

We encourage colleges to submit unique IDs used for candidates as this allows us to do an additional data validation check to ensure that each unique college reference number only matches to one GMC number. Please refer to the DSA for a list of demographic data fields your college has agreed to provide.

Within four weeks of submitting the candidate demographic data, the GMC will return an output file to you which will identify candidates who are or were on the UK medical register and for whom their exam results should be shared with the GMC. You will find more information about the data which is returned in the output file in [Appendix B](#). There is also a brief explanation of the matching process that the GMC uses to identify those on the UK medical register in [Appendix C](#).

Please note: It is important to complete the candidate data check before you submit your exam data so that the GMC does not hold exam results for people who are not or have never been on the UK medical register. To ensure that the demographic data for people who are not and have never been on the UK medical register are not held by the GMC, candidate data are removed from GMC Connect and deleted from local folders. The unmatched cases are deleted from the tables in the Oracle database.

Exam outcomes data return

The final return of data to the GMC includes the exam outcomes for all candidates who are or were ever on the UK medical register, i.e. the matched cases as indicated in the output file, for any exams sat during the reporting period which could contribute towards the CCT or CESR. This may include exams which do not directly contribute towards the CCT, but if passed, exempt the doctor from passing an exam which is required for their CCT.

If you are unsure whether an exam contributes towards the CCT or CESR you will find assessment information in the curricula documents on the [GMC website](#).

A list of all exams that are currently shared with the GMC as part of the exam data collection can be found in the list of returned exams file which is attached to the email along with this briefing note. You will find more information about what is included in the list of returned exams file in [Appendix D](#).

For each exam, the DSA lists all the data fields that your college agreed to return to the GMC. The DSA was tailored for some colleges that were unable to provide the level of detail originally requested, such as examination scores. The GMC is keen to collect the following data fields for each exam in order to increase the utility of the data for UKMED research projects:

- Scores (section and/or total scores)
- Pass mark/score
- Attempts

If you don't currently return these data fields, please [email us](#) and we can discuss adding these data to the return and updating the DSA.

Once the exam outcomes are returned the GMC will use the information that you have provided in the DSA, the list of returned exams file and any information you have returned from the exam data checklist, to check the data and ensure data quality. You can find out more about what those checks include in [Appendix E](#).

Exam data collection: changes to exams and additional data returned

Changes to exam format

We are aware that, due to COVID-19, some exams changed in format and method of delivery. Further revisions may have since occurred to revert these exams back to their pre-COVID format, or indeed to a mixture of the two. In some instances, these methods will have changed significantly enough for an exam to be considered a new entity in terms of reporting - when compared with the previous version of the exam. Where this is the case, we would ask that you create a new line in the *list of returned exams* document for this exam and give it a new, identifiable name.

Example: The Royal College of General Practitioners have replaced their Clinical Skills Assessment with a Recorded Consultation Assessment as a result of the disruption caused by Covid-19 so this would be considered a new entity for reporting purposes.

If your college has published information about the new format of exam please include these links in your *list of returned exams* (see, for example: <https://www.rcgp.org.uk/gp-training-and-exams/mrcgp-exam/mrcgp-clinical-skills-assessment-csa.aspx>)

We are happy to discuss with you any queries you have on this matter, for instance if you would like to discuss the changes made and if they are to be considered different enough to warrant a new entry. We would also ask you to consider from a reporting side, how you want these exams to show in the reports as you may want to be able to compare exam results across years based on when changes were made.

Reasonable adjustment data

We are encouraging those that have not yet agreed to return this data to see if it is in their capacity to do so as it is an area that is gaining increasing attention but is currently underreported to us.

In particular UKMED has published in this area please see:

Murphy MJ, Dowell JS, Smith DT

Factors associated with declaration of disability in medical students and junior doctors, and the association of declared disability with academic performance: observational study using data from the UK Medical Education Database, 2002–2018 (UKMED54)

BMJ Open 2022;**12**:e059179. doi: 10.1136/bmjopen-2021-059179 <https://bmjopen.bmj.com/content/12/4/e059179.full>

The reasonable adjustment data has the potential to be a key part of the GMC's EDI Action Plan as it may pinpoint underlying inequalities which lead to the attainment gap in exams. By sharing these data colleges would be supporting PG Deans to better support trainees to access support they need.

Please see below a percentage break down of doctors for whom we have a record of whether they had an adjustment or not in the most recent reporting year, which shows the need for us to get more colleges on board with sending us this information as part of the Data Collection:

2023 Reasonable Adjustment status

Reported Status	%	n
Not reported	68%	41,914
Reported	32%	19,523
Grand Total	100%	61437

Duplicate pass results

During recent analysis using historic exam data collected from colleges, it was noted that there are instances where colleges have provided us with data where a candidate has passed the same exam more than once. In many instances this was across years - for example, a pass in 2018 and another in 2019 for the same exam.

Please ensure when submitting your exam results that the overall pass/fail for the exam is provided and is correct. A new check has been included internally to look for duplicate results across years. We will aim to raise any duplicates with colleges and resolve them before the data is finalised for reporting.

Nullified results

In previous year's returns some exam attempts were voided, due to the impact of COVID-19. In those instances, we asked the colleges to still return the record containing their scores and pass marks; however, their attempt number and their Pass/Fail Result were marked as result voided. For 2024, where this is still the case, we need these results to be returned in this manner. This enables us to maintain data consistency without it affecting the end reports.

Exam data collection: step by step guide to returning the data

Below are the guidelines for returning the candidate demographic data and the exam outcomes data. Please [email us](#) if you have any queries about the process.

- 1** Email the GMC confirming the college contacts who will be returning the candidate demographic data and the exam outcomes data by the **15th August 2024**. The GMC will check that these contacts have access to GMC Connect – the secure portal through which all data are to be returned.
- 2** If you need a copy of the DSA or you have not received the list of returned exams file, please [email the GMC](#).
- 3** Return the list of returned exams file and [email the GMC](#) by **2nd September 2024**.
- 4** Log in to [GMC Connect](#). In the Royal college/faculty – education stakeholder group you will have access to a document folder for your college called, 'Exam data collection 2024 – College name' where you will be able to upload the candidate demographic data. Please return the candidate demographic data by **9th September 2024**.
- 5** You will receive an email from the GMC when an output file is ready for you to download from your college document folder in GMC Connect.

- 6 Use the output file to prepare the exam outcomes data return with reasonable adjustment data included where agreed for the candidates who are/were on the UK medical register.
- 7 Upload the exam outcomes data return to your college document folder in GMC Connect by **4th November 2024**.
- 8 Should the GMC raise any issues with you following the initial checks of the exam outcomes data, please feedback to the GMC within two weeks of the query being raised.

Exam data: what are the data used for?

Progression reports: Specialty Exam

The data provided are used to produce the specialty exam report, which forms part of the [progression reports](#). The purpose of these reports is to help medical schools and postgraduate training bodies to better understand the journey of doctors through training. The specialty exam report highlights the variation in pass rates for different cohorts of doctors through various visuals developed in Tableau. The report is split into postgraduate and undergraduate visuals, the latest of which can be viewed by visiting these areas within the progression reports via the link above.

Following completion of the data collection, this report is refreshed for publication. Each year we aim to improve the report through developments to the data and visuals. If you have any suggestions on improvements or different visualisations you would like to see, please get in touch using the contact details below.

UK Medical Education Database

The UK Medical Education Database (UKMED) brings together different undergraduate and postgraduate data relating to UK medical education. It provides a platform for collating data on the performance of UK medical students and trainee doctors across their education and future career. UKMED aims to highlight the paths of doctors through school, university and their career and create a unique environment in which new research can be undertaken. Data extracts are made available to researchers via a formal application process which is described on the [UKMED website](#).

All colleges have a signed Data Sharing Agreement with the GMC that permit the inclusion of their exam data in UKMED. At the Academy Assessment Committee in June 2017 each college was asked to nominate a contact to consider UKMED research projects using their data and indicate their preferred level of involvement in such projects. Colleges interested in applying for a UKMED Research extract should note that the next application window is September 23 2024 - October 14 2024.

Contact the GMC

If you have any queries in relation to the data collection process of the exam outcomes please contact the GMC by email at educationdata@gmc-uk.org.

Your contacts at the GMC regarding the exam data collection are:

Haydn Dalton
Education Data Officer
(Leading on Exam data collection)

Jennifer Redman-Tootell
Education Data Officer

Kimberley Ashworth
Survey Analyst

All briefing notes from previous collections and this briefing note will be published on the [GMC website](#).

Appendix A – Table of fields included in the output file

Excel column	Column name	Description of data included
A	EXAM_MATCH_ID	Added by the GMC this number is unique to each record
B	COLLEGE ID	<p>This will be the ID you use against the record; in some cases it is a person ID in other cases it is an attempt ID.</p> <p>If you supply us with a college ID which is unique to a candidate in the demographic data, this will be in this column. We will use this to ensure that only one GMC reference number is provided against each unique college ID</p>
C	EXAM_NAME	If provided in the candidate demographic data the exam name will be included in this column
D	COLLEGE	Abbreviation of the college name
E	GMC_PROVIDED	GMC reference number as provided in the candidate demographic data by the college
F	GMC_ASSIGNED	The GMC reference number which is assigned to the candidate from the match test
G	COLLEGE_FIRST_NAME	First name of the candidate as provided in the candidate demographic data by the college

H	COLLEGE_LAST_NAME	Last name of the candidate as provided in the candidate demographic data by the college
I	COLLEGE_DOB	Date of birth of the candidate as provided in the candidate demographic data by the college
J	LRMP_FIRST_NAME	First name of the candidate as it appears on the List of Recognised Medical Practitioners (LRMP)
K	LRMP_LAST_NAME	Last name of the candidate as it appears on the LRMP
L	LRMP_DOB	Date of birth of the candidate as it appears on the LRMP
M	PRIMARY_PMQ_WORLD_REGION	The region in which the candidate took their primary medical qualification (PMQ) Possible values include EEA, IMG, UK
N	LRMP_MEDSCHOOL	The medical school from which the candidate was awarded their (PMQ) as it appears on the LRMP
O	LRMP_DATEOFPMQ	Date that the candidate was awarded their PMQ
P	GMC_VALID	Identifies whether a candidate is/was on the UK medical register. Possible values include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 1 = on or have been on the register ▪ 0 = not on the register
Q	MATCH_TEST	There are several match tests applied to the data to check against the UK medical register. This column will tell you which match test resulted in a

		<p>valid GMC reference number for this record. Possible values currently include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 - GMC_Validation - matching both names and DOB 2 - GMC_Validation - matching last name and DOB 3 - GMC_Validation - matching previous last name and DOB 4 - GMC_Validation - matching lastname OR DOB 7 - Reverse find on both names and DOB (hard matched) 8 - Reverse find on last name and DOB (hard matched) 9 - Reverse find on both names switched and DOB (hard matched) 12 - Reverse find on both names transposed DOB DAY AND MONTH 13 - Reverse find on lastname and transposed DOB DAY AND MONTH 14 - Reverse find on previous last name and DOB (hard matched) 15 - Reverse find on both names distance >70 * and DOB (hard matched)
R	GMC_NUMBER_NOT_MATCH	<p>Flag to indicate whether the GMC_PROVIDED = GMC_ASSIGNED.</p> <p>1 = GMC number provided does not match number obtained via matching process</p> <p>Blanks = GMC numbers match</p>
S	SURVEY_YEAR	Year that the candidate completed the national training survey (NTS).
T	ORG_NAME	Deanery/LETB/Local office the candidate was training under in the March 2024 census

U	PROGRAMME_SPECIALTY	The training programme specialty a candidate was returned under in the March 2024 census.
V	TRAINING_LEVEL	The level that the candidate was training at as per the March 2024 census.
W	MANUAL_REVIEW	Outcome of a review done by the GMC on candidates which have 1 in GMC_valid but were matched on a test which could result in a false match (tests 9 and above are manually reviewed)
X	COMMENT	Any comments made about the records during manual review
Y	FINAL_CORRECT_GMC_NUMBER	The GMC reference number which is correct and final
Z	Provide exam data?	Indicates if a candidate has a 1 in GMC_Valid, please provide the exam data. Possible values: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Yes (provide exam data) ▪ No (do not provide exam data)

Appendix B – Exam data collection: how are the candidate data matched to the medical register?

Using the demographic data that you provide we will match candidates to our list of registered medical practitioners, known as 'the medical register'.

Where it has been provided, we will check if the GMC reference number is valid by matching candidates to the medical register using the GMC reference number and date of birth and last name to confirm if it is the correct number for the candidate.

For candidates with no GMC reference number or one we cannot validate as above, we will attempt to match them to the medical register using a combination of date of birth, first name and last name.

If available we can use medical school as an additional check on matches, we use this for other datasets such as ORIEL recruitment data.

We will return the results of the matching exercise in an output file within four weeks of receiving your candidate demographic data. Please refer to Appendix A for a list and description of the data fields included in the output file.

Appendix C – Table of fields included in the list of returned exams

If these are all correct please confirm; if not please amend in the file as required. Please note this information is shared with UKMED researchers to aid their understanding of the data.

If the exam has changed substantially we recommend it is given a separate entry in this table with a new name, such as PACES – Hybrid

Excel column	Column name	Description of data included	What to check
A	CollegeName	Abbreviation of the college name	Please check this is correct for your college
B	CollegeNameLabel	Full college name	Please check this is correct for your college
C	AbbreviatedExamName	Abbreviation of the exam name	Are there any exams missing? Please add a new row for any exam missing
D	ExamName	Full exam name	Are there any exams missing? Please add a new row for any exam missing
E	DataYear	The first year that data from this exam was provided to the GMC	Please check the year is correct for this exam
F	ExamCloseDate	If an exam is no longer running at the college this will be the last year the data was returned to the GMC for this exam	Please fill this in if an exam will not be returned and is no longer running
G	ExamType	The format of the exam e.g. Multiple choice or Single Best Answer etc.	Please check this is correct and update if changed. If changed due to a derogation from the curricula please email us to let us

			know so we can discuss with you any potential impact on reporting the data
H	LevelTaken	The level of training that the exam is sat at	Please check this is correct and update if changed
I	Eligibility	Eligibility criteria for taking this exam	Please check this is correct and update if changed
J	RequiredForProgressionTo	The level of training that the exam provides progression to	Please check this is correct and update if changed
K	SourceURL	The web page which has the exam information on	Please check this is correct and update if changed
L	SectionScoreAvailable	If section scores are available please put a Y in this box or a N if there are no section scores for this exam	Please check this is correct and update if changed
M	TotalScoreAvailable	If a total score is available please put a Y in this box or a N if there are no section scores for this exam	Please check this is correct and update if changed
N	TypeOfTotalScore	Whether the total score is a percentage (Percent) or a raw score (Total score)	Please check this is correct and update if changed
O	PassMarkAvailable	If a pass mark is available please put a Y in this box or a N if this is not available	Please check this is correct and update if changed

P	Exam sat within reporting period (yes/no)	If exam was sat within the reporting period 1 August 2023 and 31 July 2024 please put Yes. If exam was not sat due to COVID cancellation put No	Please check this is correct and/or update
Q	COVID specific changes to exam	Information on whether exams were cancelled, delayed, or changed due to COVID	Please check this is correct and/or update
R	Impact on trainee progression	Information on whether the progression of the trainee has been impacted due to COVID specific changes to exam and/or requirements to pass exam to progress have changed	Please check this is correct and/or update
S	Contact	Where information is populated in columns P-R, this is the contact who provided the information	This column is for reference only
T	Notes	This is a section for you to add any notes about the exam or future of the exam	Please add a comment if required, this may include any additional information other than COVID specific change.
U	Method of delivery	If the method of delivery changed due to COVID, please record here whether this was done for all candidates in a given diet or whether it can only be reliably captured at the level of individual candidate. If it can only be captured at the level of individual candidate, it will need to be included in the exam outcomes data.	Please add any information around changes in method of delivery.

V	Contains Nullified Data	If an Exam has had any of its attempts nullified due to COVID, put a X in this box so that we know to be aware of these when it comes to reports.	Please add if the exam return contains nullified data
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Appendix D – Table of fields included in the CR_Exam research file

Excel column	Column name	Description of data included
A	CollegeName	Abbreviation of college name e.g. RCOEM
B	CollegeNameLabel	Full college name e.g. Faculty of Public Health
C	AbbreviatedExamName	Abbreviation of the exam name
D	PreviousAbbreviatedExamName	Any previous abbreviations used and the year in which they changed
E	ExamName	Exam name in full as provided by the college
F	ExamPreviousNames	Any previous names by which the exam has been known where there aren't significant changes to consider them an entirely new exam.

G	DataYearIntroduced	The year we started receiving the data
H	ExamCloseDate	The year the exam ended or was renamed
I	ExamKnowledgeOrClinical	This is a note on whether the Exam is a knowledge based exam for instance written exam or multiple choice, or if it is clinical based for instance with patients or actors.
J	ExamType	What kind of exam it is e.g. Multiple Choice Questions
K	LevelTaken	The level of training that the exam is sat at
L	Eligibility	Eligibility criteria for taking this exam
M	RequiredForProgressionTo	The level of training that the exam provides progression to
N	SourceURL	The web page which has the exam information on
O	SectionScoreAvailable	If section scores are available
P	TotalScoreAvailable	If a total score is available
Q	TotalScoreAsPercent	Total Score is shown as a Percentage
R	TotalScoreAsNumber	Total Score is shown as a Number
S	PassMarkAvailable	If a pass mark is available

T	ExamTable	GMC database table name
U	CollegeIDprovided	College ID provided in data set
V	AttemptsProvided	How the candidates attempt information is provided to us
W	EligibilityToPass	If we have been advised there is an alternative way to receive a pass on the Exam
X	CandidateLevelOrAttemptLevelDataProvidedForMatching	Taken from AttemptsProvided? For matching purposes
Y	ReasonableAdjustmentData	If the Exam data also includes information on Reasonable Adjustments
Z	2019_2020Cancellations	If the Exam was cancelled during this collection window due to COVID
AA	ContainsCOVIDNullifiedRecords	If the Exam had some candidates with nullified attempts due to COVID

Appendix E – Exam data collection: what are the data quality checks?

To help improve the data quality we will complete some checks when you return your candidate demographic data and exam data to us. If we think there are any issues with the data you submit we will email you and ask you to check the data or provide clarification. Checks will include:

- Number of records returned - this will be compared to the number of candidates submitted in last year's data return for any large discrepancies
- Matched candidates have exam outcomes – we will check that all candidates submitted in the demographic data and matched to a GMC number (i.e. GMC_VALID =1) have one or more records in the exam data and if there are any candidates in the exam data not in the output file
- Exam marks – we will look at the data returned to confirm that the scores relate appropriately to their pass or fail
- Missing exams – unless you let us know that data will not be supplied for an exam, we will check that data are returned for every exam listed in the list of returned exams and the DSA
- Blanks within columns – we will check for any blank cells in columns where data are expected
- Data within columns – we will check that numbers match up where they should and that the correct data is in the correct columns
- Duplicate records – we will check for exact duplicate results for exams i.e. a record for the same candidate that has an identical exam date, exam name and result
- Missing data fields – we use the DSA to check if there are any data fields listed in the DSA which have not been returned
- Duplicate pass marks – we will check that there are no passes for candidates where we have previously recorded a pass for the same exam in another data collection year. This is an additional check introduced from the 2019/20 collection.

Please note: Some data fields are more important to the UKMED and progression reports projects and these will be the only fields chased up with colleges unless we are made aware that they are not available:

Candidate data
Candidate first name
Candidate last name
Candidate date of birth
GMC reference number

Exam data
Exam date
Attempts
Section/total scores
Pass marks
Pass/fail