

Policy

Subject: **Allocation of Grades Procedure**
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1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of this document is to outline a consistent and transparent approach to the use of grades specific to summative assessment tasks at the conclusion of a defined instructional period, for judgements about progression in College examinations. It recognises that each specialty discipline program of study has its own inherent requirements. These requirements represent the highly specialised abilities, knowledge and skills needed to complete the particular specialty discipline that must be met by all its candidates.
- 1.2 Grades are used to record formal marks awarded for a candidate's academic achievement in a program.

2 SCOPE

- 2.1 This procedure applies to candidate assessment in the following RCPA programs: Anatomical Pathology, Chemical Pathology, Forensic Pathology, General and Clinical Pathology, Genetic Pathology, Haematology, Immunopathology, and Microbiology.

3 GRADES AND PROGRESSION PROCEDURE

- 3.1 Grades are criterion-referenced and are decided by the extent to which the assessment criteria have been met.
- 3.2 Moderation is undertaken to ensure marks and grades are as valid, reliable, and fair as possible for candidates.
- 3.3 Grades that RCPA examiners award for assessment, the rules for their use and the range of marks applicable to specific grades (4-point scale: excellent, pass, borderline, fail) – refer to Definitions.
- 3.4 Establishing a cut-score or pass mark which allows competent and poor performances to be distinguished is based on standard setting methods for assessments. It is acknowledged that each discipline uses valid methods of standard setting for determining passing scores and these are equitable and defensible. The most common divisions of scores include pass or fail. In this situation, the cut score separates those who know (or can show or do) enough to pass from those who do not know (or show or do) enough to pass.
- 3.5 Assigning a candidate to a category of borderline grade in assessment implies that the examiners are unsure if the candidate's performance is neither a clear pass nor a clear fail. Use of the borderline grade does not create a new performance standard, but rather permits examiners to

award an undetermined pass/fail assessment where appropriate, and when insufficient evidence regarding the candidate's performance was available to make a clear decision.

- 3.6 Based on the former advice, use of borderline grade should only relate to a small number of candidates at any one time.
- 3.7 Borderline grade decisions in written and slide examinations will result in a separate blind marking by another pair of examiners to assist with determining the final grade.
- 3.8 Borderline grades may require review on a case-by-case basis by the Chief Examiner; and may be resolved into a pass or fail grade at the discretion of the Chief Examiner prior to results being released by the College.
- 3.9 Award of borderline grade may allow candidate progression to the next stage of summative assessment, including for final year candidates who may be granted a repeat assessment in the same year (typically at the discretion of the Chief Examiner). Such candidates then awarded a borderline or fail in this second attempt will need to repeat the following year.
- 3.10 Fail grades will result in an examination repeat the following year.
- 3.11 Combination of borderline and/or fail grades in a defined number of assessments (including incremental/ grouped together) per discipline will result in repeats in the following year.

4 PROGRESSION PER DISCIPLINE

- 4.1 Progression requirements specific to each discipline refer to **Appendix**.

5 FEEDBACK TO CANDIDATES

- 5.1 Candidates who have been awarded a fail or borderline grade must be provided written feedback to indicate how the candidate performed against the assessment criteria. Wherever possible, comments should further indicate how a candidate can improve their performance.
- 5.2 Chief examiners are responsible for the timely provision of feedback. Candidates will receive written feedback as soon as practicable following the release of grades (and in line with Examination Results Policy).
- 5.3 Feedback that is used to directly support a scaffolded future assessment task will be provided in sufficient time (and in line with Examination Results Policy) for it to be effective.
- 5.4 Feedback letters will provide clear advice about the candidate's progression.

Examiners when marking

- 5.5 For borderline and fail results, your comments are very important. The Chief Examiner relies on them when preparing feedback for less than satisfactory candidate performance. For this to be effective, record the following: significant errors; essential items that were omitted and/or required significant prompting (e.g., in oral format); poor structure; any other aspects that you feel need to be drawn to the candidate's attention.
- 5.6 When preparing written feedback consideration should also be given to spelling, punctuation, grammar, consistent use of terms, minimal use of abbreviations, awareness of tone, and consistency in layout.

- 5.7 Written feedback will require editing and proofreading by the Curriculum and Assessment Development Officer (allocated to the discipline) as a quality-assurance process, to help ensure consistency so that content meets candidate needs and expectations and College requirements.

6 DEFINITIONS

- 6.1 Moderation refers to a holistic quality assurance process directed at ensuring that assessments are marked with accuracy, consistency, and fairness. The process chiefly focuses on the development of robust assessment criteria and consistent application between examiners.

- 6.2 RCPA assessment rubric:

Excellent	The essential facts for all sections of the question are present and correct; nothing essential is omitted or wrong. Additional correct details and explanations are provided. No irrelevant material. The answer is almost at consultant level. Very few candidates will merit this grade. Cannot score above 9 if poorly structured and/or hard to read.	9-10
Pass	Most of the essential facts for all sections of the question are present and correct, very few omitted or wrong. Very few irrelevancies. May be weakness in one minor section of the question. Cannot score above 6 if poorly structured and/or hard to read.	6-8
Borderline	Some essential facts omitted or wrong in most or all sections of the question. May be padded out with irrelevant information. Cannot score above 4 if poorly structured and/or hard to read.	4-5
Fail	Many essential facts missing and/or wrong. Some sections of the question ignored. May be padded out with irrelevant information. May be poorly structured and/or very hard to read.	0-3

7 RELATED POLICIES AND DOCUMENTS

- Examination Results Policy; Number 1/2002
- Limitation on the Number of Examination Attempts and Length of Time Examination Passes Remain Valid Policy; Number 2/1998

8 REFERENCES

Australian Medical Council Limited Specialist Education Accreditation Committee. Standards for assessment and accreditation of specialist medical programs and professional development programs by the Australian Medical Council 2015.

APPENDIX

Discipline	Stage of Summative Assessment and Progression						
Anatomical Pathology	Part 1	Progression	Part II	Progression	Part II	Progression	
	<i>Written + Slides</i>		<i>SBST & Cytology + Slides</i>		<i>Oral</i>		
	Pass + Pass	Proceed to Part II	Pass + Pass + Pass	Proceed to Part II oral	Pass	Progress to FRCPA	
	Pass + Fail	Do not progress. Repeat Fail the following year.	Any solitary Borderline	Final year candidates may repeat in same year (all other candidates repeat in the following year)	Fail	Repeat Oral in the following year	
		Any Fail or more than one Borderline	Repeat exam following year (except final year candidates may be offered repeat in the same year at CEX discretion)				
Chemical Pathology	Part I Phase I	Progression	Part I Phase II	Progression	Part II Phase I	Part II Phase II	Progression
	<i>Written (A & B)</i>		<i>Oral</i>		<i>Written</i>	<i>Oral</i>	
	Pass + Pass	Proceed to Phase II Oral	Pass in Oral examination	Proceed to Part II	Borderline or Pass proceed to Oral	Pass in Oral Exam	Progress to FRCPA
	Pass + Borderline	Proceed to Phase II Oral	Borderline or Fail in Oral exam + Borderline in Phase I written	Do not progress. Repeat Borderline in Phase I written the following year		Borderline in Oral Exam	Repeat Oral in same year
	Borderline + Borderline	Do not progress. Repeat both Borderline and/or Fail the following year	Borderline or Fail in Oral but Pass in both Phase I written	Do not progress. Repeat Oral in following year	-	Fail in Oral Exam, with pass in Phase I written	Repeat Oral in the following year
	Borderline + Fail					Fail in Oral Exam, with Borderline in Phase I Written	Repeat Phase I written the following year
	Borderline in Oral, with Borderline in Phase I Written	Repeat Phase I Written the following year					
Forensic Pathology	Part I	Progression	Part II	Progression			
	<i>Written + Slides + Practical + Oral</i>		<i>Written + Long Practical Exam + Short Practical + Histology Slide Exam + Oral</i>				
	All 4 passes	Proceed to Part II	All 5 passes	Progress to FRCPA			
	Any fail	Repeat following year	Any Borderline	Repeat exam in same year (at the discretion of CEX), otherwise repeat the following year	Pass, progress to fellowship. Any borderline or fail, repeat exam the following year		
		Any Fail	Repeat exam in same year (at the discretion of CEX), otherwise repeat the following year	Pass, progress to fellowship. Any borderline or fail, repeat exam the following year			

General Pathology	Assessment	Progression	Assessment	Progression	Assessment	Progression	Assessment	Progression	Clinical Pathology	Assessment	Progression	Assessment	Progression				
	Written + Slides (AP & Haematology components)		Written only (Chemical Pathology & Microbiology)		Oral (AP)		Oral Clinical Consolidation				Written (Chem Path, Haem, Micro) & Slides (Haem)		Integrated Cross Discipline Oral				
	For each specialty: Pass and/or Pass	Proceed to Part II after passing the examinations in all of the specialties	Pass	Proceed to Part II after passing the examinations in all of the specialties	Pass	Proceed to Part II after passing the examinations in all of the specialties	Pass	Progress to FRCPA		Pass	Pass and/or Pass	Proceed to Part II after passing the examinations in all of the specialties	Pass	Progress to FRCPA			
	Pass and/or Borderline		Borderline		Borderline		Fail			Repeat Oral in the following year			Fail		Repeat Oral in the following year		
	Pass and/or Fail		Fail		Fail		Repeat Fail following year			Repeat Fail following year			Repeat Fail following year		Repeat Fail following year		
	Borderline and/or Fail		Repeat both following year							Borderline and/or Fail			Repeat both following year		Fail	Repeat Oral in the following year	
Genetic Pathology (Medical Genomics and Biochemical Genetics)	Part I Phase I Written	Progression	Part I Phase II Dry Practical	Oral	Progression	Part II Oral	Progression										
Pass	Proceed to Phase II		Pass	Pass	Proceed to Part II	Pass	Progress to FRCPA										
			Borderline	Pass	Proceed to Part II	Borderline	Repeat Oral in the same year at the discretion of the CEX for final year candidate										
Fail	Do not progress. Repeat Fail following year		Borderline	Fail	Do not progress to Oral. Repeat following year	Fail	Repeat Oral following year										
			Fail	Do not progress to Oral. Repeat	Do not progress to Oral. Repeat following year												
Haematology	Part I Phase I Written + Slides	Progression	Part I Phase II Dry practical	Oral	Progression	Part II Oral	Progression										
Pass + Pass	Proceed to Phase II		Pass + Pass	Pass (Dry) + Borderline (Oral)	Proceed to Part II	Pass	Progress to FRCPA										
Pass + Borderline	Proceed to Phase II		Pass + Fail	Pass (Oral) + Borderline (Dry)	Do not progress. Repeat both Phase II exams following year	Borderline/ Fail	Repeat Oral following year. Repeat Oral may be available in same year, at CEX discretion.										
			Borderline/Fail + Borderline/Fail	Borderline/Fail													
			Pass + Pass		Proceed to Part II												
			Pass + Borderline	Pass + Fail	Repeat Borderline Phase I Exam next year. Passed Phase I exempt for one year only												
			Borderline/Fail + Borderline/Fail	Borderline/Fail + Borderline/Fail													
	Pass + Fail	Repeat Fail following year. Pass is exempt one year only.															
	Borderline + Borderline/Fail	Repeat both following year															
Immunopathology	Part I Phase I Written	Progression	Part I Phase II Practical	Test	Progression	Part II Oral	Progression										
Pass	Proceed to Phase II		Pass both		Proceed to Part II	Pass	Progress to FRCPA										
Borderline	Proceed to Phase II					Borderline	Repeat Oral exam in the same year										
Fail	Repeat Fail following year		Fail one or both		Do not progress. Repeat Fail following year	Fail	Repeat Oral exam in the following year										

Microbiology	Part I Phase I	Progression	Part I Phase II	Progression	Part II	Progression
	<i>Paper A, B & Wet-Practical</i>		<i>Oral</i>		<i>Oral</i>	
	Pass + Pass + Pass	Progress to Phase II	Pass in Oral	Proceed to Part II	Pass in Oral Exam	Progress to FRCPA
	Pass + Pass + Borderline (in any assessment)	Progress to Phase II	Fail in Oral Examination (after 1 or more borderline in Phase I)	Repeat Oral and any borderline Phase I following year	Fail in Oral Exam	Repeat Oral exam in the same year (for final year candidates)
	Pass + Borderline + Borderline (in any assessment)	Progress to Phase II				
	Borderline + Borderline + Borderline	Progress to Phase II				
	Pass + Pass + Fail (in any assessment)	Do not progress to Phase II Oral. Repeat the Fail the following year.				
	Pass + Fail + Borderline (in any assessment)	Do not progress to Phase II Oral. Repeat the Fail and Borderline the following year.				
	Borderline + Borderline + Fail (in any assessment)	Do not progress to Phase II Oral. Repeat Borderlines and Fails the following year.				