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## MRCPsych examination – too expensive?

Few topics will engage senior house officers (SHOs) in such animated discussions as the MRCPsych exams. I read with interest the comments made by Dr Finlayson regarding the high pass mark for the MRCPsych part I exam (*Psychiatric Bulletin*, January 2006, **30**, 35). Although I found the exam stressful, the standard

was comparable to that of the last 10 years (part of the exam preparation involves working through past papers).

The 'horror' is the cost of the exams given that under the new European Working Time Directive most SHOs have seen their salaries shrink over the last 2 years. The added cost of exam-orientated courses run by private companies and books has made this truly expensive. Long gone are the days when Band 3 SHOs could afford all these.

I understand that to maintain high standards and quality the College needs to spend accordingly. The problem is that the MRCPsych courses run by universities

are not sufficiently focused. This inevitably means having to pay for a course that runs the total cost way beyond £1000 per exam. With this kind of pressure a lot of SHOs can't afford to fail.

I am already dreading my part II exam – not because of the standard of the exam but I don't know how I will be able to pay the £593 cost on a 1B salary. With the modernising process underway, is the MRCPsych going to be a 'luxury' that future SHOs will not be able to afford?

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# the college

## Revised College procedures for ACCEA nominations for England and Wales

The main change proposed is to bring the College procedures for the English and Welsh nominations forward so that the nomination process begins in June rather than in November/December as at present.

The Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Clinical Excellence Awards (ACCEA) has asked the President to ensure that in future the Divisions play a far greater central role in the nomination for awards. It is therefore suggested that the Faculties and Sections begin the College process by preparing their ranked lists in June. They will send these to the Divisions who will refer to them in their nomination process. This should greatly improve communication between Faculties, Sections and Divisions. The individual Faculty, Section and Division lists will be considered at the College meeting in November/December.

The London Division have devised a system which scores nominees against criteria which are largely based on the ACCEA domains. This seems to have been highly successful and it is recommended that the system be adopted by all the English Divisions. Training is available to facilitate this process.

At present only award holders may be representatives on the College's central committee. These representatives are identified by their respective Executive Committees. In future it is recommended that representation at the College Committee will not be limited to award holders, although representatives will continue to be selected by their Executive Committees. Guidance notes will be prepared for Committee members.

It will be made clear in the notice to the membership that members are encouraged to submit nominations to Faculties, Sections and Divisions. Nominations will only come via Officers if for some reason they cannot be submitted to a Faculty, Section or Division. Members will also be reminded that it is their responsibility, and not the College's, to submit their CV questionnaires (CVQs) to ACCEA. Members will also be reminded that trust support is not a prerequisite for College support.

Psychiatrists who are on the Regional Awards Committee should be identified so that they can work more closely with Divisions. The President should contact ACCEA if there are regions without psychiatric representation.

The revised timetable is given below.

## January

Prepare notice for *Psychiatric Bulletin* informing membership of College's system for nominating for awards. This will appear in the April edition. Reminder notices to appear on the College website throughout the year.

## February

Current College Committee members sent final list of College nominations and informed of date of next College meeting.

## April

Details of process appear in *Psychiatric Bulletin*/on the website. Members asked to submit CVQs to Faculties, Sections and Divisions (on the form used the previous year, assuming that the new form is not available at this stage).

## June/July

Faculties and Sections hold meeting of Executive Committee to consider and rank nominations. If CVQs are weak, members are contacted and advised to amend them.

As results for awards for the current year will not be known at this stage, Faculty and Section members who have been included on the final College list submitted earlier in January will be included on the new list. Faculties and Sections send ranked list to Divisions.

## August to October

Divisions hold meetings of Executive Committee to consider their nominations. The ranked lists from the Faculties and Sections are taken into account. As for Faculties and Sections, members who have been included on the College list submitted to ACCEA the previous January are also included on this list. Lists are forwarded to the College Secretariat.

The Honorary Officers convene a similar meeting but only discuss those nominations which have not been submitted to the Faculties, Sections or Divisions.

## November

Divisions, Faculties, Sections and Honorary Officers update their list of nominations and circulate them to each other. After results of previous round are announced by ACCEA, the successful nominees are removed and other nominees move up the list.

Divisions, Faculties and Sections contact individual nominees asking them to complete their CVQ on the new form (assuming that it continues to change each year) and to submit this to ACCEA. The ranked lists of the Divisions, Faculty