

[Theory & Standards team](#)

The MRCPCH (membership) exam has three theory examinations, which are computer-based and can be taken in an exam centre or online. They are Foundation of Practice (FOP), Theory and Science (TAS) and Applied Knowledge in Practice (AKP); they can be taken in any order. The Diploma of Child Health includes FOP only. Find out about the question types in each exam, and download the full syllabi below.

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The three theory exams will feature some changes, with effect from the 2024.3 diet. We are making these changes in consultation with senior faculty and trainee representatives, and they are approved by the General Medical Council. We modelled the changes and found similar outcomes to the current exams.

[See our news page for more information](#)



Our syllabi for theory exams are for both candidates and their teachers. The document outlines the core knowledge requirements for each section of the exam:

- adolescent health/medicine
- behavioural medicine/psychiatry
- cardiology
- dermatology
- emergency medicine (including accidents and poisoning)
- endocrinology and growth
- ethics and law
- gastroenterology and hepatology
- genetics and dysmorphism
- haematology and oncology
- infection, immunology and allergy
- metabolism and metabolic medicine
- musculoskeletal
- neonatology
- nephro-urology
- neurodevelopment and neurodisability
- neurology
- nutrition
- ophthalmology
- palliative care and pain medicine
- patient safety and clinical governance
- pharmacology

- respiratory medicine with ear, nose and throat (ENT)
- safeguarding
- science of practice.

We strive to ensure that all our exams are valid and reliable, through consistency in the way that exams are created and with a detailed standard setting process once the exam has been sat. The blueprints in our syllabi allow specific mapping of questions to the syllabi, and ensuring adequate selection across the entire syllabi, with consistency of subject content, depth and difficulty over time.

You can download the syllabi document below. Please read it in combination with our [Progress+ curriculum for paediatrics](#).

[Download syllabi below](#)



In the MRCPCH theory exams we use Single Best Answer questions (SBAs).

For candidates who have recently graduated from UK medical schools, these questions will be familiar as they are now widely used in medical school examinations. However, they are somewhat different from historical exam questions, and the differences are important to understand when attempting to answer them. We have dispensed with multiple true/false questions as they have

but are left uncertain about which of the remainder is the best response. If this is happening frequently in the examination it suggests that you have gained some knowledge but need to add some more depth to your revision.

When writing questions, we require the question to be carefully referenced. The sources for these can include widely used textbooks (especially those published or recommended by the RCPCH), RCPCH endorsed guidelines and research published in peer reviewed journals. Candidates are strongly recommended to use all of these resources when revising for the theory exams.

much more detail or higher image quality than that which is provided, you are probably thinking along the wrong lines and go back to the question stem again and check it carefully.

If a question has inadvertently been placed in the exam which, for technical reasons fails on the day, we will identify this during the Angoff process (post-examination question review) and it will be excluded from the overall mark for all candidates.

Photographs used for the exams may be prepared from clinical and retinal photographs, radiographs, illustrations of investigation results and occasionally from pathological material. Candidates are asked to identify abnormalities, or provide a diagnosis, to recommend investigation or treatment or a combination of these.



B

Best of five questions are used to test judgment and experience. A simple statement or short clinical scenario leads into five options. All could be possible but only one is completely correct, or more correct than the others from a given list. Marks will only be awarded for choosing the correct answer.

They should only cover one aspect of the topic. So stems might be:

- what is the most likely diagnosis?
- which investigation is most likely to lead to a diagnosis?
- what is the best next step?
- what is the best advice to give to parents?
- what is the most likely pathogenesis of this condition?
- what is the most common cause of this?

C

Each question will be a case history with results of physical examination and investigations. They are designed to test ability in diagnosis and in the planning of investigations and management.

These questions also include photographic material.

D

These questions will consist of laboratory data or graphical data, for example electrocardiograms introduced by a short statement of the clinical setting. Candidates are asked for specific points of interpretation.

Please note that drugs will almost invariably be referred to by their UK-approved names rather than their trade names. Biochemical and other measurements will be expressed in SI units.

FOP assesses a candidate's knowledge, understanding and clinical decision making abilities. It aims to ensure you have reached the standard of someone entering core specialist training. It is part of both the MRCPCH and Diploma of Child Health (DCH) exams.

It lasts 2 hours.

It used to be called MRCPCH Part 1A.

There will be 100 SBA questions in the FOP examination.

Questions cover one aspect of the topic. For example:

- choose the most likely diagnosis from the following
- choose the best treatment for each of these children
- choose the organism which matches most closely each of the following case scenarios.

O

A

TAS tests basic scientific, physiological and pharmacological principles of clinical practice, and of evidence-based practice. It is part of the MRCPCH exams.

It lasts 2 hours.

It used to be called MRCPCH Part 1B.

There will be 100 SBA questions in the TAS examination.

Questions cover one aspect of the topic. For example:

- choose the most likely diagnosis from the following
- choose the best treatment for each of these children
- choose the organism which matches most closely each of the following case scenarios.

Candidates can apply to take FOP and TAS on the same day; FOP is always in the morning, and TAS in the afternoon.

A

A

AKP tests a candidate's knowledge, understanding and clinical decision making abilities based on a standard of someone entering their core specialist training and is part of the MRCPCH exam.

It comprises two exams, each of which is 2 hours 30 minutes and taken on the same day.

- British National Formulary for Children
 - Grays Anatomy
 - Ganong's Review of Medical Physiology
 - Forfar and Arneil's Textbook of Pediatrics
 - Up to date
 - Rennie and Robertson Textbook of Neonatology
 - Paediatrics and Child Health journal
 - Nelson Textbook of Pediatrics
 - e-medicine
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- [1](#)Tan, LT; McAleer, JJ (2008). "The introduction of single best answer questions as a test of knowledge in the final examination for the fellowship of the Royal College of Radiologists in Clinical Oncology". Clin Oncol (R Coll Radiol). 20: 571-6. doi:10.1016/j.clon.2008.05.010. PMID 18585017.

Downloads

[MRCPCH theory examination syllabi v2 \(published September 2023\)](#) 413.11 KB