Membership of one of the surgical Royal Colleges of Great Britain and Ireland is open to surgeons who have passed all parts of the Intercollegiate Membership examination and meet the criteria set out below. The examination syllabus, format and content, are common to all four colleges. The examinations are held separately by each College at the same time of year in Great Britain and Ireland, but at different times overseas, with the exception of the Part 1 and Part 2, which are held at approximately the same time worldwide.

Candidates can enter any part of the examination through any College, but **may only enter with one College at each sitting**. Candidates will be eligible for election as Members of the College with which they successfully complete Part 3 of the examination.

1. **Eligibility for Diploma**

To be eligible to obtain the Diploma of Member, all candidates **must**:

1.1 hold a primary medical qualification that is acceptable to the United Kingdom General Medical Council for **Full or Limited Registration** or to the Medical Council in Ireland for **Full or Temporary Registration**; overseas candidates must hold a primary medical qualification acceptable to the Councils of the four Colleges; (prospective candidates who wish to check the acceptability of their medical degree should check the World Health Organisation’s list of medical schools on [www.who.int/hrh/documents/HRH_documents/en/index1.html](http://www.who.int/hrh/documents/HRH_documents/en/index1.html). If the medical school does not appear on this list, candidates should contact the examinations department/section at the College to which they wish to apply for the examination);

1.2 have passed Parts 1, 2 and 3 of the MRCS examination; and

1.3 have applied for Membership and been approved by the relevant College Council. Details of the procedure for election to Membership may be obtained from individual Colleges.

Candidates should note that eligibility for entry to Higher Surgical Training in United Kingdom and Ireland will be dependent upon possession of the Certificate of Completion of Basic Surgical Training (CCBST). To acquire the CCBST trainees will need to have passed the MRCS and to meet a number of other conditions, including successful completion of twenty four months’ training in recognised posts from defined specialties and completion of mandatory courses. Full details of the CCBST will be announced in early 2004.
2. Entry to Examination

2.1 In order to enter the examination, all candidates must possess a primary medical qualification that is acceptable to the United Kingdom General Medical Council for Full or Limited Registration or to the Medical Council in Ireland for Full or Temporary Registration; overseas candidates must hold a primary medical qualification acceptable to the Councils of the four Colleges. (See note under paragraph 1.1 above on checking eligibility of primary medical qualifications.)

2.2 Candidates may enter for Part 1 at any time after gaining their primary medical qualification, however they are strongly recommended to be in Basic Surgical Training (BST) before entering Part 1 of the examination. Candidates must have commenced BST before entering Parts 2 and 3 of the examination. [Note: BST is defined as surgical training undertaken after a primary medical degree.]

3. The Examination

The examination is in three parts:

Part 1 - Applied Basic Sciences MCQ paper

Part 2 - Clinical Problem-Solving MCQ paper

Part 3 - This part comprises two separate components, the Oral Component and the Clinical Component.

All parts of the examination will be conducted in English.

3.1 Parts 1 and 2 - MCQ papers

3.1.1 Parts 1 and 2 of the MRCS examination each consist of one MCQ paper:

Part 1 - Applied Basic Sciences (ABS): this consists of Multiple True False questions only.
Part 2 - Clinical Problem-Solving (CPS): this consists of Extended Matching questions only.

The paper sat at any of the Colleges at any particular sitting is identical between all four Colleges.

3.1.2 Part 1 is three hours in length and Part 2 is two and a half hours in length (N.B Part 2 will become a three hour examination commencing at the diet to be held in April 2005.)

3.1.3 Parts 1 and 2 are held up to three times a year in centres worldwide. The examinations are held almost simultaneously at all centres.
3.1.4 Each Part stands alone, candidates being awarded either a “pass” or a “fail”.

3.1.5 Candidates may enter Part 1 and Part 2 in any order. Part 1 may be entered at any time after gaining an acceptable primary medical qualification (see paragraph 1.1 above), However candidates are recommended to undergo one year’s training before entering and to sit Part 1 before Part 2. Part 2 can only be entered once the candidate has commenced BST.

3.1.6 Candidates may resit Parts 1 and 2 repeatedly. However, candidates should note that they will have 3½ years in which to complete all parts of the examination dating from their first attempt at Part 2. This regulation applies even if they choose to sit Part 2 before Part 1.

3.1.7 Candidates may sit Part 1 and Part 2 with different Colleges.

3.1.8 Candidates must pass both Part 1 and Part 2 before proceeding to Part 3 of the examination.

3.2 Part 3

Part 3 of the MRCS consists of two components: the oral and the clinical. Both components are held up to three times a year in centres worldwide. Candidates must take both components with the same College.

3.2.1 The Oral Component

The oral is the first component of Part 3 of the MRCS.

3.2.1.1 The oral component is a knowledge-based part comprising three individual question and answer sessions, each lasting 20 minutes, in:

- Applied surgical anatomy & operative surgery;
- Applied physiology & critical care;
- Applied surgical pathology & principles of surgery.

3.2.1.2 Candidates will be awarded a mark in each part of the oral and a pass or fail overall in the oral component.

3.2.1.3 Candidates must pass the oral component in order to proceed to the clinical component.

3.2.1.4 Candidates who fail the oral component are not required to resit Part 1 and Part 2; they are only required to resit the oral component of Part 3 before attempting the clinical component of Part 3.
3.2.2 The Clinical Component

The clinical is the second component of Part 3 of the MRCS.

3.2.2.1 Candidates must have passed Parts 1 and 2 and the oral component before sitting the clinical component.

3.2.2.2 The clinical component is in two parts: a mixture of ‘short cases’ and a test of communication skills. There will be a separate pass mark for the clinical bays and the communication skills bays. Candidates will be required to pass both parts and good marks in one part will not be allowed to compensate for poor marks in the other.

3.2.2.3 Candidates who pass the clinical bays but not the communication skills bays may retain their pass in the clinical bays and retake the communications skills bays only. Similarly, candidates who are successful in the communication skills bays but not the clinical bays may retake the clinical bays only.

3.2.2.4 The clinical short cases will be organised into four 15-minute bays. The bays will require candidates to be able to diagnose, elicit physical signs from and be familiar with the treatment of patients with conditions in the following areas: trauma and orthopaedics; vascular; endocrine, breast, skin, head and neck; and trunk, groin and scrotum. Candidates will be awarded a mark in each bay; all bays are equally weighted.

3.2.2.5 Communication skills will be separately assessed in two bays within this component. One bay will assess the giving of information and one will assess taking a history to reach a diagnosis. The total assessment time will be 30 minutes. Candidates will be required to demonstrate the ability to provide information to, and receive information from, patients, their relatives and other healthcare professionals.

3.2.2.6 Candidates who fail the clinical component will not be required to resit the oral component; they will only be required to resit the clinical component.

4. Timing

4.1 Candidates must pass Parts 1 and 2 before proceeding to Part 3, and must pass the oral component of Part 3 before proceeding to the clinical component of Part 3.

4.2 After the first attempt at Part 2 (even if they take Part 2 before Part 1), candidates will have 3 ½ years to complete the examination. This timescale cannot be extended unless there are extenuating circumstances acceptable to the Colleges, such as prolonged illness, maternity leave or armed forces
service. Candidates who believe that they have extenuating circumstances should apply for an extension as follows:

4.2.1 If the candidate has not attempted any component of Part 3, the candidate should seek the approval of the College examinations department/section at which the first attempt at Part 2 was made. This should be done as soon as possible, with a letter of support from the College Tutor or the candidate’s consultant.

4.2.2 If the candidate has attempted the oral component of Part 3, the candidate should seek the approval of the College examinations department/section at which the first attempt at the oral component was made. This should be done as soon as possible, with a letter of support from the College Tutor or the candidate’s consultant.

Candidates who have not completed all parts of the MRCS within the 3½ year time limit may not retake any part of the examination.

5. Recommendations and Advice

5.1 It is recommended that candidates do not enter Part 1 until they have commenced their Basic Surgical Training and completed their first year’s training. They are also strongly recommended to attempt Part 1 before Part 2. (However, candidates should note that they will have 3½ years in which to complete all parts of the examination dating from their first attempt at Part 2. This regulation applies even if they choose to sit Part 2 before Part 1.)

5.2 It is strongly recommended that candidates seek the advice of their trainer or programme director, or equivalent, before deciding when to take any part of the examination, particularly before taking Part 2, as they will then only have 3½ years remaining in which to complete all Parts of the examination.

5.3 It is also strongly recommended that candidates do not enter the clinical component before completing a Basic Surgical Skills course and, preferably, an Advanced Trauma Life Support©/Care of the Critically Ill Surgical Patient/Early Trauma and Critical Care course.

6. Admission to the Examination

Candidates should consult individual College websites or contact the examinations department/section of the relevant College for details of dates and venues for examinations. Details of the examinations department/section of each of the four Colleges are to be found on page 10.

6.1 Application for entry to any part of the examination must reach the examinations department/section of the appropriate College by the date specified in the examinations calendar enclosing the specified fee. Applications received after the closing date will be returned.
6.2 Proof of Eligibility

6.2.1 All first-time applications for Parts 1 and/or 2 must be accompanied by a certificate confirming the holding of, or eligibility for, Full or Limited registration with the UK General Medical Council or Full or Temporary registration with the Medical Council in Ireland; candidates who do not hold such registration must submit their original certificate (or an authenticated copy) of a primary medical qualification acceptable to the Councils of the four Colleges (see note under paragraph 1.1 above on checking eligibility of primary medical qualifications). Candidates who have previously entered Parts 1 and/or 2 with one College and then apply to a different College will also have to supply full details as set out here to the new College.

6.2.2 All first-time applications for Parts 2 and 3 must be accompanied by evidence of having entered basic surgical training (the trainee’s consultant’s signature, accompanied by the relevant hospital’s stamp, on the relevant section of the application form for Parts 2 is sufficient evidence of this).

6.3 Candidates must bring proof of identity to each examination. Proof of identity must be an official document, such as a current passport or driving licence, that includes their name, signature and a photograph.

7. Withdrawal from the Examination

7.1 A candidate who withdraws, in writing, an application for admission to any part of the examination may be refunded the fee paid (less an administrative fee of 20%) provided that notice of an intention to withdraw is received by the examinations department/section before the closing date by which applications are due, as shown in the examinations calendar. No refunds are normally made to candidates who withdraw after the closing date.

7.2 Applications for consideration or a refund on medical grounds must be accompanied by a medical certificate. Applications for consideration of a refund on compassionate grounds should be supported by the consultant or surgical tutor responsible for training. All such applications must be submitted to the examinations department/section of the appropriate College within 14 days of the commencement of the examination.

7.3 The Colleges reserve the right, regardless of eligibility to take the examination, to review applications on an individual basis in exceptional circumstances. For information on pregnancy and deferral see page 7.

7.4 Candidates with special needs should advise the appropriate College at the time of application of the nature of their needs and any assistance that they require. Requests should be supported by medical evidence (an educational psychologist’s report is required for requests for extra time because of dyslexia).
If appropriate, details of extra time or other allowances made by other examining bodies should be given, although the Colleges are not bound to follow these.

8. Results

Results will be posted on the website and sent out in the post by the examinations department/section of the College through which the candidate entered.

9. Feedback

Candidates will receive a breakdown of their marks for all Parts of the examination. Further feedback on performance in Part 3 of the examination only can be obtained by application to the examinations department/section of the appropriate College. Requests must be made within four weeks of the publication of results.

10. Appeals Mechanism

Candidates who wish to make an appeal about the conduct of their examination must address it to the examinations department/section of the appropriate College within 30 days of the publication of results. Appeals will be considered which allege maladministration or bias or impropriety of some kind, whether in the conduct or in the determination of the result of the examination. Appeals disputing the academic judgement of the examiners will not be allowed. Details of the appeals process and fees charged may be obtained from the appropriate College.

11. Improper Conduct by Examination Candidates

In the case of improper conduct of an examination candidate as defined below, the four Colleges acting jointly may impose a penalty relating to the candidate’s eligibility for the relevant or future examinations. Improper conduct is defined as:

11.1 Dishonestly obtaining or attempting to obtain entry to the examination by making false claims about eligibility for the examination or falsifying any aspects of the entry documentation.

11.2 Obtaining or seeking to obtain unfair advantage during an examination, or inciting other candidates to do the same. Examples of unfair advantage are: having on the person any material that would give advantage in an examination once the examination has commenced (this includes electronic communication devices), communicating or attempting to communicate with another candidate once the examination has commenced, refusing to follow the instructions given by examiners or examinations staff concerning the conduct of and procedure for the examination. This list is not exhaustive.
11.3 Removing or attempting to remove from the examination any confidential material relating to the conduct of the examination.

11.4 Obtaining or attempting to obtain confidential information concerning the examination from an examiner or examination official.

11.5 Passing confidential information on the content of the examination to a third party.

The list given above is not exhaustive.

The Colleges may also on an individual basis decide that a candidate should not be allowed to proceed further with the examination or, having passed the examination, may not be admitted to Membership, according to their own statutes and regulations, in cases where serious misconduct not related to the examination is judged to make the person unfit to become a Member of the College.

12. Notification of Pregnancy and Deferral

12.1 A deferral may be permitted to candidates supplying an appropriate medical report which satisfies the relevant College indicating that:

12.1.1 the candidate has any pregnancy related problems or illness; and/or

12.1.2 the candidate’s confinement is due shortly before or around the date of the examination; and/or

12.1.3 the candidate has sufficient discomfort for her to consider that it will have a detrimental affect on her performance.

12.2 In such circumstances, a deferral will be permitted and no further fee will be required.

12.3 Any candidate who does not inform the College of her pregnancy and is consequently unable to sit for that examination will not normally be allowed to defer this examination without submission of another fee.

NOTE: These Regulations are under continual review. It is recommended that candidates keep in regular contact with their College to ensure that they have the most up-to-date information. Any changes will be announced on the College websites.
College Details

The Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh
Information Section
Adamson Centre
3, Hill Place
Edinburgh
EH8 9DS
Ph: 0131 668 9222
Fax: 0131 668 9218
E-mail: information@rcsed.ac.uk
Web: www.rcsed.ac.uk

The Royal College of Surgeons of England
35-43 Lincoln’s Inn Fields
London
WC2A 3PE
Ph: 0207 869 6281
Fax: 0207 869 6290
E-mail: exams@rcseng.ac.uk
Web: www.rcseng.ac.uk

The Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow
232-242 Vincent Street
Glasgow
G2 5RJ
Ph: 0141 221 6072
Fax: 0141 248 3414
E-mail: exam.office@rcpsglasg.ac.uk
Web: www.rcpsglasg.ac.uk

The Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland
123 St Stephen’s Green
Dublin 2
Ireland
Ph: +353 1 402 2223
Fax: +353 1 402 2454
E-mail: examinations@rcsi.ie
Web: www.rcsi.ie