

Technical issues facing examination candidates on 23-25 September 2025

FAQS

1. What caused the technical difficulties for candidates?

A coding issue led to candidates who were attempting to log on being unable to connect to a proctor. While the issue was identified and resolved, the delayed start to the examinations had a knock-on effect for the rest of the day causing further issues.

2. What technical problems did candidates face?

- The first group of candidates were due to begin onboarding at 7.45 am. They were unable to connect to the proctoring service when they logged in.
- Due to logging on delays, some onboarding sessions timed out, leaving candidates unable to connect.
- A number of candidates experienced a frozen screen and an inability to reconnect to the exam. Once identified, additional time was added to the end of the exam.
- The online proctor provider was unable to extend the duration of the proctoring sessions. This led to some candidates being removed early from their exam. Internet issues also continued to be a cause for concern throughout the afternoon and through both sessions on Wednesday; and at a higher level than we normally experience.

3. How many candidates were affected?

- On Tuesday 23 September, 44 of 171 candidates were unable to connect to one or both papers on the day. This number reduced to 6 of 169 on Wednesday 24 September and 7 of 289 on Thursday 25 September.

4. Which specialities were affected?

FRCPATH Part 1 exams for the following specialties took place on Tuesday 23 September: haematology, reproductive science, genetics, oral and maxillofacial pathology, allergy & immunology.

On Wednesday 24 September, the specialties were: clinical biochemistry, infection and medical microbiology and virology, reproductive science,

genetics, histocompatibility and immunogenetics, transfusion science, haematology clinical science, molecular pathology and veterinary pathology.

On Thursday 25 September, the specialty was histopathology.

5. What steps did the College take to resolve the situation?

- Candidates who were unable to connect to their morning or afternoon exam or who were only able connect briefly at the start of their exam were rescheduled for the following day. Any candidates choosing to withdraw from the exam as a result of the issues they experienced can transfer to the Spring exam session and will not need to reapply.
- We are reviewing the options to make the next steps clear for all candidates. There were a range of candidate experiences, and we are keen to ensure that our next steps reflect this. We will need a little time to make some considered decisions rather than take a one-size-fits-all approach.
- Candidates who were able to sit the rescheduled examination will have their paper marked as normal.

6. Did the College set up a helpline for affected candidates?

The College's Examinations team handled an extremely high number of calls from affected candidates on Tuesday.

Unfortunately, due to the large volume of calls coming into the College on Tuesday, some candidates were unable to get through and speak to a member of the team. Call volumes were not as high on Wednesday and Thursday.

We are keen to collect as much information as possible about the issues with the examinations and all emails will be reviewed as part of the process of deciding next steps. We are encouraging affected candidates to email their experiences and concerns to DirectorofLearning@rcpath.org. These will be collated along with the emails sent to the exams inbox.

7. What testing did the College undertake before using the new online provider?

Extensive and thorough testing was carried out by the College ahead of the launch. This included:

- Two pilot exams, without the use of the secure exam environment
- A demo examination for candidates
- A trial link of secure exam browser (tested by both the Examinations team and candidates)
- A trial link to proctoring onboarding process (tested by both the Examinations team and candidates)

- Significant testing had taken place between the exam system provider and the proctoring provider to ensure compatibility between their systems.

8. Will you be upholding candidate complaints?

We are upholding all complaints regarding the disruption to the exam.

9. Why weren't all affected candidates allowed to sit their exam the following day?

Candidates who were unable to log on at all to start their exam were offered the option of taking it the following day, as per our Online Examination FAQs circulated to all candidates before the exams.

10. Have the GMC been informed?

Yes, in line with the GMC ['Unexpected events affecting the delivery of postgraduate medical exams'](#) guidance, the GMC were contacted and the team met with them on Thursday.

The GMC has clarified that the College must uphold the standard of the examination and that no adjustments can be made to the passing standard. To ensure fairness, this guidance will be applied across all specialties regardless of regulator.

11. What other organisations has the College informed?

In addition to the GMC, the College has informed the following stakeholder:

- The General Dental Council
- The Federation of the Royal Colleges of Physicians UK
- The Royal College of Physicians of Ireland
- The National School of Healthcare Science
- The British Society of Haematology

12. Was the College President made aware of the issue?

The College's Clinical Director of Examinations, Vice President for Learning and the President were informed on Tuesday with Honorary Officers, the Chair and Vice Chair of the College's Trainee Advisory Committee and key stakeholders informed on Wednesday and Thursday.