Online Examinations Frequently Asked Questions

Please read these through carefully as you may find your question answered here. If you have a specific question that is not covered in this information, please e-mail exams@rcpath.org.

General Questions

How do I register with Testreach?

Testreach will send a registration email to all candidates around a week prior to the exam. You will register with Testreach and schedule the start time for your exam. It is important that candidates complete this registration **at least 72 hours ahead** of the exam date to guarantee they are able to sit the exam.

Does the College offer exam centres to sit the exam?

The College does not host exam centres for the Part 1 exams presently. Candidates should sit the exam at home, or if they are not able to sit the exam at home they should sit in another suitable quiet environment such as asking a friend or family member if you can sit at their house, your workplace or booking a study room in a local library etc**.**

What are the minimum system requirements I need for online exams?
You will need a working webcam (preferably external) and microphone, and a stable internet connection. You should take your written examination on either a desktop computer or laptop – the TestReach system is compatible with both Apple and Windows operating systems and a variety of browsers will allow you to download the TestReach application. The system requirements are as follows:

- Laptop / computer with 4GB of ram (no chrome books, tablets or surface pro)
- A Windows v7.0+ or MacOS 10.10+ operating system (MacOS BigSur users need to upgrade to 11.3+)
- Intel Core i3 (or equivalent) and 4GB RAM
- A working webcam that can be used to scan the room (external is best for this), microphone and speakers
- Internet connectivity with continuous internet speed of a minimum of 516kb
- A screen size of at least 13" and a resolution of 1024 x 768

We also recommend the use of an external mouse for TestReach examinations, to make navigation/scrolling easier.

For oral examinations you can use either a computer or tablet so long as it can support Zoom videoconferencing (either in a browser or the app).

My internet connection at home is really poor. What other options do I have?
If your internet connection is not reliable enough to take an examination, you can see if your workplace has the facilities to take the examination there. If this is not possible, then we suggest contacting a friend or family member who has a stable internet connection to allow you to take the exam at their house. You will also need to ensure that they are able to provide a quiet environment where you will not be disturbed for the duration of your examination.

We have found that some NHS firewalls can block the TestReach live proctoring software and cause issues that don't show up during the system check, so we would recommend that candidates working within the NHS make arrangements to sit the exam from home (or similar).

I'm an overseas candidate. Will I have to take my examination at an unusual time?
Examinations will be held at the same time across the world in line with the UK so if you are based overseas then your examination will take place at the equivalent time. Examinations will generally be held between 8:30am and 6pm UK time.

I require a reasonable adjustment to my examination. Will I be granted additional time/colour overlays/frequent restroom breaks/larger font sizes?
Reasonable adjustments will be granted in line with the recommendations made in your supporting evidence. If you have been given additional time, then this will be included. Font sizes and colour backgrounds will be able to be changed within the TestReach system.

Will I be able to go to the toilet, eat or drink during the examination?
You will be able to bring a drink with you for all examinations; for written examinations you may also bring a non-disruptive snack. In written examinations you may take a toilet break but must notify the proctor and you will not be given additional time to make up for this. Any suspicious behaviour will be noted by the proctor and reviewed by the College Examinations team.

How will you stop candidates from cheating?
The TestReach system will lock down the device that you are using so that the only thing you can access is your examination. The examinations are fully live-proctored via webcam and microphone, so the proctors will be able to pick up on anything they think is suspicious and directly communicate this to the candidate.

For both written and oral examinations, you will be required to carry out an environment check before you start the examination in which you will show the proctor around the room you are using so they can see that you are in suitable conditions. You will not be allowed to have books, papers, or your mobile phone near you, or any other people in the room. Your examination will also be recorded so that the College Examinations team are able to review any video footage that has been raised as suspicious by the proctors/examiners.

Candidates are reminded that the Candidate Misconduct Policy forms part of the Regulations and Guidelines they have agreed to abide by.

What is happening to any video footage of me? Is it being stored and if so, when will it be deleted?
Video footage will be temporarily stored in line with GDPR. This is strictly for the purposes of reviewing candidate data to investigate any possible incidents that may take place during an examination. For oral examinations, video footage may also be used for moderation purposes.

What happens if I am late for the examination?
For written examinations, if you are more than 30 minutes late you will not be able to sit. For oral examinations, you may be allowed in after the start of your exam, but extra time will not be added to compensate. In the case of technical difficulties, extra time will be added.

You will be sent an e-mail with all the details for your examination timings and you must keep this e-mail safe. If you are late for your examination and miss it without good cause, it will count as a Did Not Attend and you will forfeit your exam fee.

Why do the exams still cost as much to do online now that there isn't venue hire to cover?
There is still a high cost associated with delivering examinations online, including development of software, licencing and invigilation fees.

Will there be an opportunity to provide feedback about the exam after I have taken it?
In line with our normal practice, a survey will be sent to all candidates once all the examinations have taken place, for completion before results are issued, which will give you an opportunity to feedback on your examination experience.

Specific Questions for Written Examinations ([TestReach](#))

What are the minimum system requirements for TestReach?
- Laptop / desktop computer with 4GB of ram (no chrome books, tablets or surface pro)
- A Windows v7.0+ or MacOS 10.10+ operating system (MacOS BigSur users need to upgrade to 11.3+)
- Intel Core i3 (or equivalent) and 4GB RAM
- A working webcam that can be used to scan the room (external is best for this), microphone and speakers
- Good continuous internet speed of at least 516kbps
- A screen size of at least 13" and a resolution of 1024 x 768

We also recommend the use of an external mouse to make navigation/scrolling easier, but this is not required.

We have found that some NHS firewalls can block the TestReach live proctoring software and cause issues that don't show up during the system check, so we would recommend that candidates working within the NHS make arrangements to sit the exam from home (or similar).

I am unsure about using an online system I haven't used before. Is there any way of previewing the software prior to launch day?
Yes. You will be sent a link approximately one to two weeks in advance of your exam date to take a tutorial exam so that you can familiarise yourself with the system. You will also be asked at this time to run a system check.

As part of this system check, you will download and install TestReach's desktop app. This app allows for internet fluctuations and prevents candidates from accidentally closing the examination.

How long will I get to familiarise myself with the system? Will it just be one session or will I be able to access it whenever I want to in the run-up to the exam?
You will be able to try out the tutorial as many times as you want to in the run up to the examination.

Will I need administrator permission to install the TestReach software?
The TestReach desktop app should not require administrator access to download or install, however, we recommend that if you are using a work laptop/computer you download the application in plenty of time, as you may need support from your IT department during the system check depending on the security constraints in place.

We have found that some NHS firewalls can block the TestReach live proctoring software and cause issues that don't show up during the system check, so we would recommend that candidates working within the NHS make arrangements to sit the exam from home (or similar).

What internet speed do I need?
A minimum of 516kbps connection speed is required, though higher is recommended. The software has also been designed to handle fluctuating connection speeds. Any issues with a

candidate's connection speed should be highlighted during the system check that candidates will take prior to the day of the examination.

What device should I use to do the system check?
Please use the one that you plan to use for your examination so that you know that it is compatible. It is also advisable to do the check in the area of your house/workplace that you plan to use for the exam, so the internet speed can be accurately tested.

We have found that some NHS firewalls can block the TestReach live proctoring software and cause issues that don't show up during the system check, so we would recommend that candidates working within the NHS make arrangements to sit the exam from home (or similar).

Can I use two screens during my exam?
Yes, but any second screen will need to be a mirror of the main screen, and the invigilator will need to be able to see both screens. Please be aware that candidates have had issues with using two screens in the past and found it slowed down the app.

What do I do if my internet cuts out during the examination? Will I be given extra time?
If your internet drops out, you will be guided by on-screen instructions to reconnect to the exam. Your exam and exam timer will be paused, so you won't lose any time.

Your answers will be safe if this happens, as all data is automatically saved by the system at regular intervals and any time you move to a new question.

The system will continually try to re-establish the connection for a period of up to 10 minutes, though usually connection issues are resolved quickly. As soon as a connection is detected, the exam will resume - you will be able to continue exactly where you left off.

If you are unable to reconnect within the 10 minutes, you will need to call the TestReach support team on +44 (0)20 34758685 or +353 (0)1 6991385. These numbers will also appear on the screen for you. **Please call TestReach rather than contacting the College.** You will not be penalised for leaving the room to use your mobile phone to make the call.

I type really slowly and can write much faster so I am worried that I will not be able to answer all the questions in the time allowed.
We would encourage you to practice typing if you are sitting an essay paper where longer answers are required. However, even with a very slow typing speed it is expected candidates will have enough time to complete the question/s. Remember, quality is far more important than quantity. For short answer questions, you will not be required to write more than a few sentences for your answers.

An additional five minutes per hour will be added to all written examinations (not including MCQs) to account for typing concerns.

How do I complete the MCQ/EMQ answers?
For each question, there will be an option list of potential answers and you will click on the one that you think is correct.

Can I include diagrams as part of my answers?
Unfortunately, this feature is not yet available in TestReach. All exam papers have been written with this in mind and diagrams will not be required for any questions.

Can I use a calculator during the exam?

Candidates are permitted to use their own non-programmable scientific calculator during the exam if this is required. The calculator will be checked by the invigilator/proctor prior to starting the exam.

How do I type equations in the TestReach software?
For those exams where candidates are required to make calculations and show their working, an equation editor will be available within TestReach.

Will I be able to go back and edit answers?
For the majority of examinations, yes, you will be free to navigate back and forth through the exam. You are also able to 'flag' any questions you wish to come back to later.

For examinations made up of 'stations', such as OSPEs and the Part 2 Virology, each station will be individually timed and you will not be able to go back once you submit an answer or a set of answers. This is in keeping with the way the examination is run offline.

Will images form part of the online exams e.g. histology images in the FRCPath Part 1? Will I be able to zoom in closer to look at them if needed?
Yes, there will be images in a number of papers and you will be able to zoom in on these if needed. If there is no zoom button showing within TestReach, please use Ctrl +- or Ctrl and the scroll wheel on your mouse to zoom in/out. On Mac, use Command +-.

How will I view supplementary exam material such as journal articles? Will I be able to make notes on these?
Journal articles, images, etc. will be viewed on one side of the screen, with the questions and answers section on the other. You will be able to resize/zoom in on any of these areas. You will also be able to annotate and highlight directly on the article, and copy and paste text from the article into your answers.

Will I be able to make notes during the examination?
You are allowed **one hand-held A4 size whiteboard** on which to make handwritten notes, which must be erased at the end of the exam. You are also able to make notes within the online platform. You will not be allowed to make any notes on paper, as this jeopardises the integrity of the examination questions. Taking notes on paper will be considered candidate misconduct.

How will I be able to contact someone if I don't understand a question or notice an error in the question paper?
You will be able to contact a proctor who will be able to address your queries or pass them on to the Examinations team if necessary.

What if I finish my examination early?
If you finish your examination early, you can submit your answers and leave as you would do when sitting in an examination hall. The system will ask if you are sure you wish to submit the exam early, and will bring to your attention any unanswered or flagged questions. Once you have submitted and logged out, you will not be able to log back in.

How will I know my examination paper has been submitted correctly and received? The proctor will not allow you to log off until your paper has been correctly submitted. You should also receive a confirmation email from TestReach after the exam to confirm that your paper was submitted. If you have any concerns, please email support@testreach.com.