



# ABPI Examination Regulations

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**The Exam Regulations are reviewed biennially.**

**Approved/reviewed by**

ABPI Director of Examinations December 2023	
Date of next review	December 2025

## Introduction:

The examination (the “ABPI Exam”) is administered by the ABPI Director of Examinations. Contact details are given at the end of this document.

The ABPI Exam is conducted in line with the requirements of the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ). The accredited examination is awarded by, and quality assured by, SFJ Awards.

ABPI runs all exam sittings to the SFJ standard Quality Management System. The ABPI Exam is governed by the **ABPI Exam Governance Committee** which is an independent committee.

## Exam Regulations

### General:

1. All Candidates, at all times, must comply with the examination regulations and guidelines below (and where referred to, specific separate policies). Any Candidate found to be in breach of any of these regulations or failing to adhere to the guidelines below, may become liable to disciplinary action.
2. All Candidates are required to comply in all respects with any instructions issued by the exam proctor before, during and at the conclusion of an exam. Failure to comply with these instructions may result in the termination of the examination and forfeit of examination fees.
3. After registering on the ABPI Examinations website ([mylearning.abpi.org.uk](http://mylearning.abpi.org.uk)) by completing the details requested in the secure online application form, examinations seats in multiples of 1 – 7 can be purchased in the online store, and used against any chosen unit.
4. The ABPI qualifications are appropriate qualifications for meeting the requirements set out in Clause of the ABPI Code of Practice. The ABPI Code of Practice requires representatives to take an appropriate examination within the first year of employment as a representative and to pass such a qualification within 2 years of starting such employment. Applications for extensions to these periods of time should be made to the **PMCPA** on the following webpage: <https://www.pmcpa.org.uk/training/application-for-an-extension-of-time-to-take-the-representative-examinations/>.

5. For those candidates for whom the qualification is not being undertaken as a mandatory requirement, passes in any given unit examination expire 3 years after the date of passing. The life span of a pass in *Unit 1 The Code of Practice and the NHS* is an exception, for which the expiry date of a pass is considered on a case by case basis, depending on the date and magnitude of the most recent update to the learning content.
6. Candidates **MUST** set the local time zone when scheduling an exam appointment. Candidates are responsible for checking that they have booked the correct examination units at the time of booking.
7. If a Candidate cannot make a scheduled exam sitting, it is the responsibility of the Candidate to cancel and reschedule the exam appointment – this can be done by clicking ‘Manage booking’ and cancelling the appointment. Following cancellation of the appointment, it is possible to reschedule. A cancelled exam appointment does not count as an attempt. There is no penalty for rescheduling, and a rescheduled appointment only counts as an attempt once the exam has been sat. The ABPI Examinations Team does not reschedule exams on behalf of Candidates. Examination fees could be forfeited if the Candidate fails to reschedule **more than 30 minutes** in advance of the exam sitting, irrespective of the reason for cancelling and rescheduling.
8. It is the responsibility of the Candidate to ensure in advance of the sitting that QuestionMark Secure has been installed on the computer intended for use in the exam, and that the

computer intended for use in the exam will run the QuestionMark secure software – this includes the Example Exam. Examinations can neither be scheduled nor taken on tablets, e.g., iPads and Google Chromebooks, and other operating systems, e.g., Linux.

9. Candidates can take an exam wherever it is convenient, however, the exam will be proctored and must be kept secure. It is the responsibility of the Candidate to ensure the testing environment is suitable and away from any distractions. Candidates should give careful consideration to choosing a suitable location to undertake examinations and **MUST** ensure the following:

- A well-lit, quiet, private room.
- All doors to the room in which the examination is being sat, **MUST** be closed prior to starting the exam, and must remain closed for the duration of the exam.
- No one else is in the room (including pets) unless this forms part of a specific Exam Access Arrangement agreed by the Director of the Examination on application, and in advance of the exam appointment – **see ABPI Exam Access Arrangements Policy**.
- No communication with any other persons during an examination, neither inside nor outside the room in which the examination is taking place, with the exception of the on-screen proctor.

- The Candidate **MUST** be sat at a table or desk which is clear of any material, with the exception of one piece of plain A4 paper (blank on both sides) and a pencil.
- Exceptions to sitting at a table or desk (such as standing) can only be accepted where such an approach forms part of a specific Exam Access Arrangement agreed by the Director of the Examination on application, and in advance of the exam appointment – **see ABPI Exam Access Arrangements Policy**.
- Mobile phones are turned off and stored away out of sight and out of arms' reach. Possession of any other electronic device that allows information to be stored or internet access at an examination desk is also strictly prohibited – this includes Smart watches and any other technical devices or applications.
- Additional monitors are turned off and turned away from sight of the Candidate.
- Any desk phone is disconnected or blocked from incoming calls.
- There is no access to any unauthorised materials such as books.
- No posters, or information leaflets on the walls of the exam room, nor within reach or sight, particularly, but not limited to, where a Candidate chooses to sit the exam in their place of employment.

10. Examination fees could be forfeited if the Candidate does not choose a suitable location to undertake examinations, adhering to all of the above requirements.
11. To ensure all requirements listed in regulation 9 above are met, proctors will take the following actions before unlocking the exam:
  - Conduct a 360-degree room scan using the Candidate's webcam, including viewing under the desk at which the examination is being conducted
  - Remind Candidates permitted resources and behaviours and prohibited behaviours.  
Proctors may also request to see inside cupboards and/or drawers that are within arms' reach, as well as the surrounding floor space.

The proctor will also require the Candidate to hold up a reflective surface such as a mirror, to show the edges of the monitor, so Candidates must have one available before the exam.

Having entered the QuestionMark exam portal, it is possible to use text chat to communicate with the proctor before the exam is 'opened' by the proctor. Once the exam begins and Questionmark Secure is running, text chat is unavailable, but the Candidate may speak with the proctor. Exam proctors only speak English.

12. Once a Candidate has logged into their account on the ABPI Exam's website, it is possible to open up the exam sitting up to 15 minutes prior to the scheduled start time. Opening an exam sitting up to 15 minutes prior to the

scheduled exam time does not alter the recorded scheduled time for starting an exam. Punctuality is the responsibility of the Candidate as lateness cannot guarantee admittance to the exam sitting, and time will not be added to the exam sitting window.

13. Punctuality is also what the Candidate should expect of the proctors however, in exceptional circumstances, there may be an instance where a proctor is unable to open the exam session immediately. In such situations, the Candidate should continue to wait. ABPI request metrics on 'Candidate Wait Time for Proctor' to ensure ABPI and Candidate expectations are met as fully as possible.
14. All Candidates must have the required photo identification ready when logging onto the exam session to go through the authentication process with the one-to-one online proctor. The name on the exam appointment **MUST** match the name on the photo identification. Acceptable photo ID for authentication is: a valid Government-issued Passport, Driver's Licence or National ID card. Any examination Candidate found to have either provided false ID or arranged for someone else to sit the exam on their behalf will be subject to disciplinary procedures in line with the **ABPI Malpractice Policy**. Any person who attempts to sit an exam on behalf of another person will be subject to disciplinary procedures. Such behaviour constitutes the crime of attempting to obtain a pecuniary advantage by deception and may be reported to an employer or to appropriate national authorities.
15. Any Candidate who is unable to meet the requirements of the photo ID authentication will **NOT** be permitted to take



the examination. ABPI will **NOT** refund the examination fees for Candidates who do not meet the ABPI Exam identity authentication requirement.

16. The webcam and screen of the Candidate's computer for all proctored exams are recorded, with the recording kept for 60 days. The authentication process including the ID checks are stored as part of the proctoring videos. Only a limited number of ABPI Examinations Team staff will have access to recorded exams, unless there are suspicions of malpractice in which case, additional personnel could be asked to review the recording in line with the **ABPI Malpractice Policy**, or in the case of a Candidate appeal.
17. All Candidates are presented with Candidate agreements by the live online proctor which must be accepted, prior to the proctor releasing the exam.
18. Failure to comply with Exam Regulations or guidance may be considered malpractice. Incidents of suspected malpractice will be investigated in line with the **ABPI Malpractice Policy**.
19. No materials are required to complete the exam as an on-screen calculator is provided - **no other calculator is allowed for use**. One sheet of A4 plain paper (blank on both sides) and a pencil only is permissible on the examination desk.
20. At the end of the assessment, the Candidate **MUST** wait for the proctor to communicate with post examination instructions. Candidates must remain patient for this to take

place and, when instructed to do so by the proctor, Candidates must destroy any working paper used during the remote-proctored exam, by tearing the paper into several pieces, all of which should be binned immediately following the exam session.

21. Candidates must not copy, photograph or reproduce in any manner, exam questions. Candidates are also strictly prohibited from distributing or seeking to exploit for any reason, unauthorised copies of exam questions.
  
22. The online proctor is responsible for starting the online exam once authentication has been completed. The ABPI cannot take responsibility for technical issues which originate with the candidate. Technical issues could occur at any time during the examination session (both during the verification process, or once the actual exam has been started by the proctor) – such technical issues could result in loss of connection, or a failure to save answers submitted to exam questions. In the unlikely event a disconnection occurs at some point during an examination session, it is possible the proctor may not be able to pause the examination whilst the candidate attempts to reconnect to their examination session. If your exam is paused by the proctor, it is still a live exam and all actions must comply in full with the ABPI Exam Regulations at all times. If, on investigation, such technical issues are found to be the result of the Candidate's equipment, connection or for some other reason that is local to the Candidate, the ABPI will neither refund the exam fees, nor provide a further exam attempt without incurring exam fees.

23. The Rules of Conduct during the online proctored Examination are as follows:

- The Candidate **MUST** be alone in the room (unless an additional person forms part of a specific Exam Access Arrangement agreed by the Director of the Examination on application in advance of the exam appointment – **see ABPI Exam Access Arrangements Policy**). Being alone in the room, includes there being no pets in the room.
- The Candidate **MUST NOT** leave their seat.
- The Candidate **MUST NOT** repeatedly look off screen.
- No talking is permitted, except to communicate with the proctor if necessary.
- Webcam, speakers, and microphone must remain on throughout the examination.
- The proctor must be able to see the Candidate for the duration of the examination – this means the whole head and shoulders at least should be in view of the camera for the entirety of the examination.

Proctors will immediately react to unacceptable exam behaviours which could lead to termination of the exam, loss of exam fees and the terminated session being counted as an exam attempt.

24. Any Candidate who has need to defer the taking of the exam for medical reasons or other extenuating circumstances should reschedule the exam appointment as

outlined above. Failure to reschedule an exam more than 30 minutes before the start time, **for any reason** could result in loss of exam fees.

25. It is forbidden to make any attempt to capture examination questions and answers to share with others directly or by posting online following the exam.
26. Unless by prior arrangement with the Director of Examinations as per the **Exam Access Arrangements Policy**, Candidates are not allowed to leave the examination room or go 'off screen' during the examination as per the Rules of Conduct outlined above.
27. In the event of a Candidate needing to leave the online exam due to a genuine emergency evacuation, the Candidate **MUST** take all necessary measures to protect personal safety and the safety of others. Once safe to do so, the Candidate should use email or telephone to get advice on possible next steps from the ABPI Examinations Team during office hours.
28. A Candidate may find it unnecessary to use the full allotted time for an exam – whilst this is perfectly acceptable, Candidates must be aware that once the Candidate has clicked on screen to confirm they wish to submit their final exam answers, there is no opportunity to revisit flagged or unanswered questions.

## **Exam results:**

29. Candidates receive an indicative result on screen immediately following the exam. The result which appears on the secure QuestionMark browser, immediately following the exam, will be transferred over to the Candidate's ABPI exam profile. This result will then go through a quality assurance (QA) check by the ABPI Examinations Team. The QA check could include viewing of the exam recording should it be considered necessary. The Examinations Team will contact any Candidate for whom there is a justifiable need to change a Candidate's result. No communication of results will be made directly to the Candidate's listed employer.

Candidates who do not attain the set pass mark for any unit being attempted will be deemed to have failed that unit component of the overall qualification and will need to book a resit exam. The pass mark for all units is 60%. For Unit 1, Candidates must obtain 60% on the NHS content and 60% on the ABPI Code of Practice content within the same examination in order to achieve an overall pass for that unit.

All successful Candidates who have passed the required units will receive a certificate indicating the qualification awarded.

30. Candidates registered on the Advanced Programme who have met the distinction criteria will be awarded a certificate of distinction from the ABPI. To achieve distinction a Candidate must meet studying for the Advanced Programme and must meet all the following criteria:

- An average of 80% or more for Units 1 – 4 inclusive, and an average of 80% or more for those units from

Units 5 – 16 which are taken. Unit 6 is split between 6a and 6b and as such, a & b count as 2 units.

- The minimum mark for each individual unit must be at least 70%, apart from Unit 1: The ABPI Code of Practice and the NHS, for which the minimum mark must be at least 80%
- These marks must be achieved on the first attempt.

31. Where a Candidate feels there are grounds for applying for Special Consideration in relation to a specific exam sitting, the Candidate should, in the first instance, consult the **Special Consideration Policy**. Any application for Special Consideration should be made as soon as possible following the exam sitting. The independent **Chair of the ABPI Exam Governance Committee** rules on appeals for post exam adjustments in line with the **Special Consideration Policy**.

### **Appeal regarding clarity or correctness of questions in the exam:**

32. The ABPI will not normally enter into communication regarding individual Candidate performance other than by the methods set out in these regulations.

33. A Candidate who suspects there is an error in an examination question should report this post exam as soon as possible to the ABPI Director of Examinations for consideration (see Exam Regulations 34-40). Even if a

Candidate thinks there is an error in a question, the answer should not be left blank, but instead the Candidate should still make the best attempt to select the single best answer in case the Candidate is mistaken about there being an error.

34. The ABPI Director of Examinations will carry out an initial assessment of the reported alleged error and will communicate with the Candidate as to how ABPI proposes to deal with the matter. The Candidate making the enquiry may be required to provide additional information.
35. Following the initial assessment of the error by the ABPI Director of Examinations, if the error is not straightforward or blatant, the ABPI Director of Examinations may put the matter before the ABPI Chief Examiner to assess, who as a result might decide to undertake:
  - No further action
  - Exclusion of the question
36. In the rare case of an error being accepted as appearing in an exam question, and therefore, exclusion of the question being deemed necessary, the question would be removed from the examination and not considered for inclusion in the Candidate's final unit result. The same amendment to an examination score would be applied to any other Candidate in the same cohort that had been affected by the same error. Removal of a question could affect a result which is close to the pass mark boundary

however, even if a question is removed, the need to obtain 60% in a unit examination remains for ALL units.

37. The ABPI Chief Examiner is an independent appointment and will consider appeals in relation to questions on which the answer is not correct or clear, or there is something wrong with a live exam question, or facts recorded in the learning manuals.
  
38. It is important that Candidates contact the ABPI Director of Examinations as soon as possible after the exam sitting to raise concerns about exam questions. ABPI encourages openness and will support anyone who raises genuine concerns in good faith under this policy, even if they turn out to be mistaken. The ABPI will treat all disclosures seriously and will investigate as appropriate, where possible with confidentiality respected. Even if a Candidate suspects there is an error with a question, the Candidate should still answer the question at the time of the live online exam in case it is proven the Candidate is mistaken.
  
39. Appeals from this decision by the ABPI Chief Examiner to the ABPI Exam Appeal Board will only be considered on the basis set out below under the sub-heading “Second-line Appeal”.



## **Disciplinary action for poor conduct during exams:**

This section should be read in conjunction with the **ABPI Malpractice Policy**.

40. In line with the Rules of Conduct during online proctored Examinations noted above, any Candidate who does not heed a warning from the proctor, can expect the examination to be terminated by the proctor. The termination shall be reported to the ABPI Director of Examinations.
41. Candidates will be liable to investigation as laid down in these regulations for irregular conduct relating to an exam including but not limited to:
- attempts to cheat at the ABPI examination
  - cheating by reviewing an unauthorised copy of an exam or exam answers before taking the online exam
  - cheating by attempting to copy or otherwise view or steal someone else's exam responses
  - accepting a bribe related to taking the examination
  - attempting to give a bribe related to taking the examination
  - misrepresenting Candidate identity when taking ABPI examination(s)
  - taking the examination on behalf of another person
  - attempting to inappropriately use digital technology to gain advantage in the examination or to conceal unauthorised document(s) to look up answers during the examination

- criminal activity such as fraud, dishonesty or deception in relation to the ABPI Examination
- failure to follow the directions of the exam proctor
- behaviour which assists another Candidate in an unauthorised manner
- serious incapacity whilst taking exams caused by alcohol or illegal drugs
- use of words or behaviour which is threatening, abusive or insulting to the online proctor or any staff member of ABPI.

42. Anyone wishing to report a Candidate to the ABPI Director of Examinations for suspected irregular conduct, even if there is uncertainty whether a particular act constitutes something to be reported to the ABPI, should report as soon as possible. Candidates should also refer to the **Exam Whistleblowing policy** for guidance on making concerns known to the ABPI.

43. Once a concern has been raised, the ABPI Director of Examinations will carry out an initial assessment to determine the scope of any investigation, this stage may also require consultation with a relevant ABPI Leadership Team Director and will communicate with all affected parties to give an indication of next steps. The investigation will be instigated, drawing on a detailed review of evidence available. The person raising the concern may be required to attend additional meetings to provide further information about the complaint circumstances.

Investigations will attempt to reach an initial conclusion in as timely a way as possible. In line with JCQ

recommendations the candidate being investigated will, prior to the final decision being reached by the ABPI Director of Examinations:

- have the opportunity to consider their response to the allegations (if required);
- have an opportunity to submit a written statement;
- have an opportunity to seek advice (as necessary) and to provide a supplementary statement (if required).

The candidate being investigated is given 14 days in which to provide such a response for due consideration before a final decision on the investigation is reached.

44. Any ensuing investigation will be reported on by the ABPI Director of Examinations, who will also decide upon the outcome of the assessment. Prior to reaching a final decision, for cases in which the most severe sanctions are being considered, the ABPI Director of Examinations may wish to consult with the ABPI Legal Director and/or the independent Chair of the Exam Governance Committee.

The outcome, together with details of the Appeal process, will be sent where appropriate to: (a) the Candidate in question; and (b) all other affected individual(s).

45. Failure to comply with these regulations may lead to disqualification or other sanctions. Having investigated alleged malpractice, the ABPI Director of Examinations can decide to prescribe any or all the following sanctions:

- No further action

- No case to answer
- Award a mark of zero for the exam paper/unit concerned
- Ask a Candidate to retake or undertake further examination papers/units under conditions
- Refer the matter to the employer of the relevant person(s)
- Refer the matter to the appropriate national authorities.

Each case of suspected malpractice will be considered and judged on an individual basis in the light of all information available. Where there is an established, clearly evidenced, repeated pattern of malpractice, this may be taken into consideration when determining whether a more severe sanction should be applied.

The standard in operation for reaching investigation final conclusions in cases of alleged malpractice, is to use a 'balance of probabilities' threshold.

46. The **Director of the Prescription Medicines Code of Practice Authority** is the only person who can consider appeals for a Candidate to be given extra calendar time beyond the one year allowed by the ABPI Code of Practice to take an appropriate examination and the two years given to Candidates to pass such an exam. The ABPI Director of Examinations, ABPI Chief Executive, the ABPI Chief Examiner and ABPI Exam Appeal Board have no role in this process.

## **Second-Line Appeal from decisions of the Chief Examiner or Chief Executive:**

47. Only the following grounds of appeal are applicable for the second line appeal process:
- New evidence which could not reasonably have been made available at the original hearing or
  - A procedural irregularity occurred which had a detrimental impact on the outcome of any hearing, or
  - The penalty imposed was disproportionate given the nature of the alleged offence.
48. A Candidate may appeal on these grounds against any decision made by the ABPI Director of Examinations in writing within 14 days of notification of the result to the ABPI Director of Examinations who will refer the matter to the independent ABPI Exam Appeal Board to make a final decision. The Appeal must set out the relevant grounds and further information on which the appeal is being made.
49. The appeal may uphold, remove or amend any terms of the investigated Candidate's outcome. The ABPI Exam Appeal Board's decision is final. Having received the investigating officer's report, and notice of the decision by the ABPI Director of Examinations the ABPI Exam Appeal Board might decide to uphold the decision reached by the ABPI Director of Examinations, or to amend the decision and prescribe any, or a combination of, the following sanctions:
- No further action

- No case to answer
- Award a mark of zero for the exam paper/unit concerned
- Ask a Candidate to retake or undertake further examination papers/units under conditions approved by the ABPI Director of Examinations
- Refer the matter to the employer of the relevant person(s) or to the appropriate national authorities

The ABPI Exam Appeal Board should comprise:

1. Chair – the independent Chair of ABPI Exam Governance Committee
2. Member of the Exam Governance Committee
3. Member of the ABPI Medical Strategy Board Sponsored Group
4. An ABPI Leadership Team Executive Director

## Summary of responsibilities:

- The **ABPI Director of Examinations** has investigatory powers under these regulations and will present a written report to relevant decision makers. The **ABPI Director of Examinations** also makes decisions as to the nature of reasonable adjustments for Candidates with special needs as per the Exam Access Arrangements Policy.
- The **ABPI Director of Examinations** will rule on investigations into alleged malpractice or misconduct by Candidates, as well as any whistleblowing complaints.
- The independent **ABPI Exam Appeal Board** shall undertake appeals against decisions in relation to the

outcome of investigations into alleged malpractice or misconduct by Candidates, whistleblowing.

- The independent **Chair of the ABPI Exam Governance Committee** shall rule on appeals for post exam adjustments in line with the **Special Consideration Policy**.

## Privacy of data:

50. In general, the ABPI will not pass on to any third party (including the Candidate's employer or a potential employer) details regarding a Candidates exam taking schedule or results without first obtaining the consent of the Candidate indicated during the online registration process or separately in writing. Only in cases of findings by the **ABPI Director of Examinations** or the **ABPI Exam Appeal Board** of malpractice or misconduct will the ABPI seek to contact a Candidate's employer or the police to pass on the details under investigation.

51. For more information about how the ABPI processes personal information, please see the Exams Privacy Notice.

## CONTACTS:

**ABPI Director of Examinations**

Andrew Croydon  
[exams@abpi.org.uk](mailto:exams@abpi.org.uk)

**ABPI Chief Executive**

## **ABPI Exam Appeal Board**

1. Chair – the independent Chair of ABPI Exam Governance Committee
2. Member of the Exam Governance Committee
3. Member of the ABPI Medical Strategy Board Sponsored Group
4. An ABPI Leadership Team Executive Director

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Independent Chair  
Contact in writing via [ABPI exams@abpi.org.uk](mailto:ABPIexams@abpi.org.uk)

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**Candidates with special needs** should read the **Exam Access Arrangements (including Special Educational Needs) Policy**.