

Final exams for medical students graduating in 2021

The Medical Schools Council (MSC) understands that students will be anxious about the processes leading to graduation this year. Students have experienced unprecedented disruption to their education and MSC and medical schools are proud of the levels of commitment and professionalism students exhibited over this difficult period. Because of this and the contingency plans medical schools have worked hard to put in place, schools report that they are confident they will be able to ensure students are well prepared and can graduate on time.

Where there might be minor delays to graduation through no fault of the student, for example where a student must self-isolate during the period when final exams are being held, MSC has agreed with UKFPO that students will, if necessary, be able to start F1 a little later than the national start date. This will be dependent on the rules in place at individual medical schools regarding extenuating circumstances and opportunities to resit.

Some students have been asking whether finals should or will take place. The answer is that all medical schools across the UK have informed MSC that they will be running finals for all their students. These finals may look different to previous years and schools may put a variety of contingency plans in place to ensure they go ahead. For example, some medical schools may use open book exams and others are considering remote invigilation. Other schools will be putting in place social distancing measures to ensure exams can take place in person.

Because curricula differ across all UK medical schools and the impact of the pandemic has been variable across different parts of the UK it is natural that individual medical schools will take differing approaches to delivering finals. The process relies on universities confirming to the General Medical Council (GMC) that the students who have graduated have met GMC standards and outcomes, completed their curricula and passed the relevant assessments on their course. As a result of this, it is appropriate that different approaches may be taken.