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The Applied Knowledge Test

FAQs for UK medical students

Updated January 2023

The Medical Licensing Assessment

- The Medical Licensing Assessment (MLA) will test the core knowledge, skills and behaviours of doctors new to medical practice in the UK. It will have two components:
 1. Applied Knowledge Test (AKT) – an online exam, with multiple choice questions. It will test your ability to apply medical knowledge to different scenarios.
 2. Clinical and Professional Skills Assessment (CPSA) – a structured clinical exam that reflects real-life clinical settings
- All medical students graduating from UK universities from the academic year 2024–25 onwards will be required to pass the MLA as part of their degree before they can join the medical register. International doctors who want to practise in the UK and who currently take PLAB will need to take the MLA from 2024.
- UK medical schools, through the Medical Schools Council (MSC), are developing an AKT that is constructed centrally, delivered locally and approved and quality assured by the General Medical Council (GMC).
- This FAQ relates to the AKT that will be taken by students at UK medical schools only. The questions below were recorded from two student webinars on the AKT held in [July](#) and [November](#) 2022. As processes are finalised, this information will be updated. Information about the CPSA will be available from each individual medical school.
- Information about both components of the MLA to be taken by [international doctors will be available from the GMC](#).

About the MLA

1. In which year will medical students take the MLA?

Medical students who plan to graduate in the academic year 2024/25 and onwards will need to have passed both components of the MLA, plus any other medical school specific assessments in order to graduate. Students attending medical schools that have penultimate year MLA assessments may therefore sit one of both parts of the MLA before the academic year 2024/25. Your medical school will advise you on this. Piloting of the AKT is currently underway.

2. Will the MLA be a pass/fail assessment or will scores be given? Will the AKT pass mark be determined at a national level or at a university level?

The MLA is a pass/fail assessment but scores will be provided. The standard of the AKT will be set nationally by panels of experts from medical schools across the UK but schools will deliver and assess the CPSA individually. Both the AKT and CPSA will need to meet GMC requirements.

3. Is the MLA a replacement for penultimate or final year exams?

The MLA will become a requirement of completing a UK medical degree. It will be set at the level of the first day of Foundation Year 1 in the UK Foundation Programme and will be taken with, or as part of finals assessments. Each medical school will decide whether their course structure requires them to add in additional assessments to finals assessments. Medical schools can also decide to deliver the AKT in the penultimate year of study.

4. Will the MLA provide full registration with the GMC?

At present, there are no plans to change the point of full registration: completion of a UK medical degree, including a pass in the MLA, would allow application for provisional registration with the GMC.

5. Will international students that want to be registered with the GMC need to take this exam? What about international doctors?

The AKT that will be taken by students at UK medical schools will be designed specifically for that group. This may include students who are based in the international branch campuses of UK medical schools. All UK medical students, regardless of fee status, will sit the MLA.

International medical graduates who want to practice in the UK – and who must currently take the [GMC's PLAB tests](#) – will need to take an MLA that includes an AKT, but this will be a separate assessment designed and delivered by the GMC rather than medical schools.

6. How does the assessment work for settled EU students? Are they considered international?

The determining factor is the country of undergraduate medical education rather than nationality. If an EU national studies at a UK medical school, then from 2024/25, they will sit the AKT at their school.

7. How long will your MLA result be valid for? What happens if you want to take a break after medical school?

An AKT pass is normally valid for two years. This applies to breaks in-programme, for example if you need to take time off during your degree. As the MLA forms part of the degree, taking a break after your studies has

no impact on the validity of your AKT in relation to starting the Foundation Programme.

8. How will the MLA contribute to the educational performance measure (EPM) score? Which components form the EPM score?

The calculation of the EPM is determined locally by each medical school. The AKT will be a pass/fail assessment. The MLA is unlikely to contribute to the EPM score for schools using the AKT as part of their final year assessment because the EPM score is calculated at the end of the penultimate year ahead of application to the foundation programme.

Medical schools that deliver finals, including the MLA, in the penultimate year will make their own decision as to how the components of MLA contribute to their EPM score. Please contact your medical school to learn more.

9. Will students be put into national deciles for application into the Foundation Programme (FP) or deciles within individual schools as current finals are? Will the MLA contribute towards points for FP application?

The MLA is not designed to be used for application to the UK Foundation Programme.

10. Will students on the medical apprenticeship programme be taking the MLA from 2024?

Yes, medical apprentices will need to pass both the AKT and their medical school's CPSA in order to graduate.

The content of the AKT

11. What is the knowledge focus of the AKT?

The AKT is a test of applied knowledge rather than factual recall, so where relevant this will include basic science, for example, the pathophysiology behind a symptom.

All content in the MLA's two components will be drawn from the [MLA content map](#), which sets out the core knowledge, skills and behaviours needed for safe medical practice. The AKT will include two 100-item papers.

The AKT papers will test the following Areas of Clinical Practice from the content map:

Areas of Clinical Practice	
Paper 1: 100 items over 2 hours	Paper 2: 100 items over 2 hours
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cardiovascular • Respiratory • Gastrointestinal • Medicine of older adult • Neurosciences • Ophthalmology • Endocrine & metabolic • Renal & urology • Infection • Dermatology 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cancer • Breast • Haematology • Palliative & End of Life care • Peri-op medicine and anaesthesia • Musculoskeletal • Emergency medicine & intensive care • Ear, nose & throat • Child health • Mental health • Obstetrics & gynaecology • Sexual health • Social/population health & research methods • Medical ethics & law
<p>Acute Medicine, Primary Care, Surgery & Clinical Imaging will be covered across both papers</p>	

12. How far apart are the two papers for the AKT?

Each medical school will be able to determine the timing of the sittings of the two AKT papers within specified delivery windows. National guidance will encourage schools to set the sittings within the same week, ideally on consecutive days.

13. If the AKT will be embedded in medical schools' internal exams, does this mean other medical school exam questions will be selected from this question bank?

Questions used in the AKT will not appear in other medical school exams – they will be kept separate. Medical schools will be able to use other questions written in the same format for their own exams. Students will also have an opportunity to become familiar with this format through the official practice papers.

14. Are the individual questions in a paper separate from each other or will any questions be related in the exam?

The AKT questions are standalone rather than linked.

15. How many options will be present in the SBA questions?

The AKT uses Single Best Answer questions with five options.

16. Does every medical student in the country get the same paper?

No. There will be a number of AKT papers in use for each academic year. These will be assigned across medical schools, but will all conform to the content map and areas of clinical practice described above, and will be constructed so that they are balanced across the content map. Each question within a paper will have a standard set according to best assessment practice.

Balancing the content and setting individual standards for exam papers should help ensure that regardless of the paper you sit, you should have the same likelihood of passing the assessment.

The delivery of the AKT

17. How will the AKT be delivered?

The AKT will be an on-screen exam, delivered via the MSC Assessment Alliance's exam platform, Exam-Write®. Many medical schools already use this platform to deliver assessments.

Each medical school will be making its own arrangements for a suitable examination venue, depending on local circumstances. The majority of those will be familiar to students from exams taken earlier in their degree. We encourage students that may have reasonable adjustments related to venue accessibility to contact their medical school assessment office early to discuss how their needs may best be met.

18. Will the Exam-Write® platform be accessed via our universities or will it be possible to take the exam remotely?

The AKT will need to be sat with in-person invigilation that will be organised by your university.

19. Will there be an opportunity for medical students to provide suggestions on how the platform might be improved or local arrangements for the delivery of the AKT in their medical school?

The British Medical Association Medical Student Committee has been involved in the development of the AKT as a stakeholder and provided a

student focus group to advise on accessibility of the Exam-Write® platform. Regarding technical aspects of the exam, all students who take the AKT are encouraged to complete a short questionnaire related to the performance of the Exam-Write® platform. The platform is also widely used for medical schools' own exams – we would encourage students to feed back on their experience to their assessment leads.

Results

20. How long will it take before we receive our results?

The maximum time of waiting will be around four weeks, depending on when in the delivery window the medical school chose to organise the sittings. For sittings closer to the end of the delivery window, this time will be reduced to closer to two weeks.

21. Will we be given detailed feedback with our results?

You will not be given detailed feedback on your performance in the AKT assessment. The AKT is designed for registration with the GMC, and may therefore differ from some of the other medical schools' exams you have sat where detailed feedback is provided to support students' learning.

Reasonable adjustments and intercalation

22. How do you apply for reasonable adjustments?

Reasonable adjustments are available for the AKT and the process for applying is managed by individual medical schools. Please contact your medical school to enquire about arrangements for reasonable adjustments.

23. If you intercalate between the penultimate and final year of the course, will we still do OSCEs in our final year when we come back or will we have to do the CPSA?

The timing of the CPSA component of the MLA will be determined by the individual medical schools. Please contact your medical school to enquire about arrangements for intercalating students.

24. If the MLA happens in the penultimate year, and you intercalate after this year, will you be ranked with your new cohort or the cohort that you sat the MLA with?

The MLA has not been designed as a ranking assessment. The calculation of the EPM is determined locally by each medical school. Please contact your medical school to learn more.

Practice materials

25. Will MLA practice papers become available?

There are four practice papers for medical schools to make available to their students through Exam-Write®. More practice papers are in preparation.

We are aiming to provide practice both in terms of using the Exam-Write® platform as well as providing a good number of questions for you to familiarise yourself with the style and content of questions used in the exam.

26. Would you advise moving away from using existing online practice question banks or are the questions similar enough that these are still applicable?

Your degree course is the best preparation for the MLA - you won't need to learn anything beyond what's already covered in your medical school's curriculum.

There are free official practice papers students can access through their medical schools, and the schools' own revision materials. We do not recommend and cannot verify the content of external practice question banks.

Ranking and piloting

27. Can the AKT be used to rank students?

The AKT is not designed to be a ranking assessment. The questions test whether students have achieved a level of knowledge required for safe practice; they are not designed to test who has the most knowledge.

28. Will medical schools be ranked on the scores of their students?

The purpose of the MLA is to provide a common threshold for safe practice of individual graduating students. It has not been designed to rank medical students or medical schools. As with other assessments of this type it is expected that the scores in the assessment will vary slightly across medical schools; this information will ultimately be publicly available via the [UK Medical Education Database \(UKMED\)](#) (using anonymised data) after analysis and evaluation has taken place.

29. Will the data from the AKT pilot programme be published? (eg pass mark, particular questions that students find difficult)

Research into the AKT pilot is planned, in addition to internal quality assurance of the piloting process. This will not be done at an individual student level.

30. Do we get evidence of high performance in the MLA to add to our portfolio? Will the MLA help in CST/CMT applications?

The MLA will test the core knowledge, skills and behaviours for safe practice of medicine in the UK. It is not designed to rank students. Students will continue to have other opportunities to develop and document excellence. The MLA is not linked to postgraduate applications.