

# MFDS Exam Syllabus

Published on 16 March 2026

The MFDS examination is developed and delivered on a tri-collegiate basis by the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh, the Royal College of Surgeons of England and the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow. On successfully completing the examination, trainees will be eligible for Membership of the College with which they choose to affiliate.

The MFDS has been designed to form an important part of the postgraduate assessment pathway for those undertaking special training. It will therefore serve as a criterion for entry into the Dental Specialty Fellowship Examination in the relevant specialty.

The examination will include elements in this syllabus.

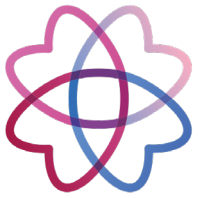
## The standard of the MFDS

The MFDS is designed to assess the all-round competence of a GDC registered dentist prior to exit from Dental Core Training (DCT) [Dental Core Training curriculum](#) and prior to entry into specialty training. This represents four years of postgraduate training following attainment of a primary dental degree.

## References

The exam assessment strategy and regulations, eligibility criteria and curriculum are additional resources relevant to candidates' preparation for the examination and this document should be reviewed in conjunction with these resources.

Domain A General Professional Outcomes			
A1. Professional Knowledge & Behaviour			
ES code	Trainees should be able to:	SBA	OSCE
A1.1	Demonstrate and apply ethical principles, including patient autonomy and confidentiality, to clinical practice.	X	X
A1.2	Apply knowledge and understanding of the regulatory issues relating to clinical practice including record keeping and information governance.	X	X
A1.3	Apply principles underpinning equality and diversity legislation in all interactions with patients and colleagues.		X
A1.4	Apply an understanding of the legalities and concept of capacity and valid, informed consent, the potential difficulties in obtaining this, and how these difficulties may be overcome.		X
A1.5	Apply knowledge of formal standards, guidelines and procedures, e.g. GDC requirements.	X	X



A1.6	Demonstrate confidence in own abilities, working independently within these boundaries of competence		X
A1.7	Act professionally with maturity, courtesy, empathy, honesty, integrity and sensitivity and in a non-confrontational, non-judgemental manner.		X
A1.8	Demonstrate respect and support for the privacy and dignity of patients.		X
A1.9	Demonstrate an understanding of appropriate professional and personal boundaries.		X
A1.10	Address common reactions of patients, family and clinical staff when a treatment has been unsuccessful or when there has been a clinical error.		X
A1.11	Resist pressure from patient or carer to provide inappropriate treatment e.g. extraction of tooth that does not warrant such.		X

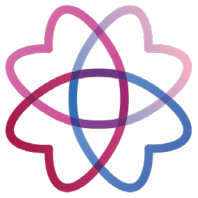
<b>A2. Patient-Centred Care</b>			
<i>ES code</i>	<i>Trainees should be able to:</i>	<b>SBA</b>	<b>OSCE</b>
A2.1	Demonstrate and apply an understanding of the principles of safeguarding and child protection.	X	X
A2.2	Discuss management and treatment options with patients and / or appropriate others.		X
A2.3	Demonstrate understanding of care pathways and the process of care from the patients' perspective.		X
A2.4	Consider the patient holistically, respecting their individual needs, dignity and right to privacy, autonomy and confidentiality.		X
A2.5	Demonstrate respect for patients' right to refuse treatment.		X
A2.6	Recognise the potentially vulnerable patient and those in need of extra support.		X
<b>A3. Communication and Interpersonal Skills (Patient/Carer/Peer)</b>			
<i>ES code</i>	<i>Trainees should be able to:</i>	<b>SBA</b>	<b>OSCE</b>
A3.1	Respond appropriately to individuals' queries or concerns.		X
A3.2	Recognise when individuals may have unspoken concerns and communicate in an empathic manner to elicit and address these.		X
A3.3	Adapt communication as appropriate to the individual and situation.		X
A3.4	Deal appropriately with angry or dissatisfied individuals.		X
A3.5	Consider personal factors in their communication approach.		X
A3.6	Deal appropriately with distressed individuals.		X
A3.7	Demonstrate understanding of different communication modes and styles.		X
A3.8	Listen actively, seeking clarification to ensure understanding and responding to cues.		X
A3.9	Summarise accurately the main points of patients' diagnoses, active and potential problems, and management plans.		X





A4. Teamworking			
ES code	Trainees should be able to:	SBA	OSCE
A4.1	Demonstrate understanding of each member's role and responsibilities within the team.	X	X
A4.2	Demonstrate understanding of human factors.	X	X
A4.3	Apply an understanding of organisational structures and lines of responsibility.	X	X
A4.4	Suggest appropriate utilisation of other members of the dental team.		X
A4.5	Manage conflict effectively within a team.		X
A5. Clinical and Patient Safety			
ES code	Trainees should be able to:	SBA	OSCE
A5.1	Keep emotions under control in difficult or challenging situations.		X
A5.2	Demonstrate an understanding of the need to raise concerns where patient safety is potentially compromised.		X
A5.3	Recognise the benefits and limitations of guidelines and care pathways.		X
A5.4	Demonstrate and apply knowledge of the adverse effects and contraindications of therapeutic interventions.	X	X
A5.5	Demonstrate knowledge of national microbial prescribing policies and antimicrobial stewardship principles.	X	
A5.6	Take a holistic view to patient care, considering each patient's personal circumstances and tailoring the treatment plan accordingly.	X	X
A5.7	Demonstrate understanding of the risk of radiation exposure including in pregnancy.	X	X

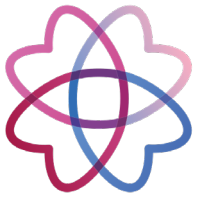
Domain B General Clinical Care			
B1. Underpinning Clinical Knowledge			
ES code	Trainees should be able to:	SBA	OSCE
B1.1	Demonstrate and apply knowledge of basic science relevant to dentistry – anatomy, biology, physiology, pathology and microbiology.	X	X
B1.2	Apply an understanding of the evidence base and clinical guidance in relevant clinical areas.	X	X
B1.3	Take into account the limitations of clinical guidance in certain individual patient circumstances.	X	X
B1.4	Recognise and suggest appropriate management for common medical emergencies.	X	X
B1.5	Demonstrate and apply knowledge of common drugs, including prescribing as appropriate.	X	X



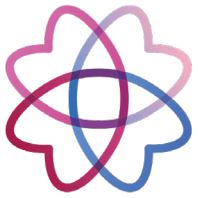
B1.6	Demonstrate and apply knowledge of common oral conditions, oral pathologies and their pathogenesis.	X	X
B1.7	Demonstrate and apply knowledge of common medical problems, including mental health issues.	X	X
B1.8	Demonstrate and apply an understanding of the causative factors of dental diseases, including caries.	X	X
B1.9	Demonstrate and apply knowledge of the classification, aetiology, epidemiology and management of dental anomalies.	X	X
B1.10	Demonstrate and apply knowledge of the commonly used materials and techniques.	X	X
B1.11	Demonstrate an understanding of the basis of pain and anxiety management.	X	X
B1.12	Demonstrate and apply knowledge of the pharmacology and therapeutics of analgesia.	X	X
<b>B2. Clinical Examination and Assessment</b>			
<i>ES code</i>	<i>Trainees should be able to:</i>	<b>SBA</b>	<b>OSCE</b>
B2.1	Demonstrate understanding of the principles underpinning an appropriate assessment and examination of the patient in relation to the presenting complaints.		X
B2.2	Demonstrate understanding of the principles that underpin a thorough patient history.		X
B2.3	Demonstrate an understanding of the dental, medical, psychiatric and social history factors likely to be relevant to the presenting condition and its management.	X	X
B2.4	Demonstrate understanding of the sensitivity and specificity of diagnostic tests.	X	X
B2.5	Suggest appropriate investigations (e.g. radiographic, sensitivity and vitality tests) and interpret these to diagnose oral conditions.	X	X
B2.6	Take into account any systemic factors likely to have a bearing on diagnosis.	X	X
B2.7	Differentiate patients requiring immediate assessment and treatment from those who are non-urgent.	X	X
B2.8	Construct an appropriate differential diagnosis from the information provided, examination and investigations.	X	X
B2.9	Assess the dentition.	X	X
B2.10	Demonstrate knowledge of when to submit tissue for pathological examination.	X	X
<b>B3. Diagnosis, Patient Management and Treatment Planning</b>			
<i>ES code</i>	<i>Trainees should be able to:</i>	<b>SBA</b>	<b>OSCE</b>
B3.1	Diagnose, assess and formulate appropriate management plans, in line with current clinical guidelines and within scope of practice, for a range of common oral conditions. (this may include, but is not limited to, dental caries, pulp and	X	X



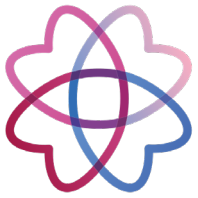
	periodontal disease, non-carious tooth surface loss, dento-alveolar trauma and dental anomalies).		
B3.2	Diagnose and suggest appropriate management for a localised dental abscess/infection.	X	X
B3.3	Recognise when important information is missing and take appropriate action.	X	X
B3.4	Recognise a potentially malignant lesion.	X	X
B3.5	Identify the dental cause of infection and suggest appropriate management.	X	X
B3.6	Recognise and suggest appropriate management for complications that may arise.	X	X
B3.7	Assess soft tissue swelling and identify the possible causes.	X	X
<b>B4. Emergency Care (Management of Dental and Facial Injuries)</b>			
<i>ES code</i>	<i>Trainees should be able to:</i>	<b>SBA</b>	<b>OSCE</b>
B4.1	Demonstrate understanding of the aetiology, presentation, investigation, classification and immediate management of traumatic facial and dental injuries in both the primary and permanent dentition.	X	X
B4.2	Prioritise acute clinical needs following traumatic facial and dental injuries, including life-threatening conditions and time-sensitive injuries.	X	X
B4.3	Assess airway, level of consciousness, head injury and cranial nerve function.		X
B4.4	Demonstrate understanding of follow up and longer- term management of traumatic facial and dental injuries with an awareness of when referral to specialist teams is indicated.	X	X
B4.5	Demonstrate understanding of possible sequelae following traumatic dental injures and identify teeth of poor prognosis in the intermediate and long term.	X	X
B4.6	Demonstrate an understanding of provision of aesthetic restoration of fractured permanent anterior teeth with appropriate materials.	X	X
B4.7	Demonstrate understanding of how the stage of dental development impacts management and expected outcomes of traumatic dental injury.	X	X
<b>B5. Preventative Care and Maintenance of Oral Health</b>			
<i>ES code</i>	<i>Trainees should be able to:</i>	<b>SBA</b>	<b>OSCE</b>
B5.1	Demonstrate and apply knowledge of guidance, programmes and evidence base underpinning oral health improvement initiatives.	X	X
B5.2	Demonstrate and apply knowledge of caries disease progression.	X	X
B5.3	Demonstrate and apply knowledge of interval for recall/radiographs.	X	X
B5.4	Motivate patients to understand the importance of prevention.		X
B5.5	Conduct an oral health risk assessment.		X
B5.6	Convey health and preventative information effectively.		X
B5.7	Demonstrate oral health techniques in a simple manner.		X



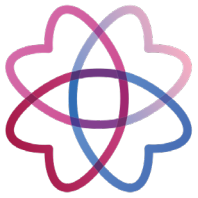
Domain C Specialist Outcomes for all Core Trainees			
C1. Restorative Dentistry			
ES code	Trainees should be able to:	SBA	OSCE
C1.1	Demonstrate and apply knowledge of endodontics, periodontics and fixed and removable prosthodontics.	X	X
C1.2	Demonstrate an understanding of prevention, diagnosis and management of periodontal disease.	X	X
C1.3	Recognise when periodontal disease may be related to systemic disease.	X	X
C1.4	Recognise patients for whom specialist periodontal opinion/ management may be indicated.	X	X
C1.5	Demonstrate an understanding of factors affecting success of endodontic, prosthodontic, periodontal outcome.	X	X
C1.6	Demonstrate knowledge of the principles of fixed and removable prosthodontics.	X	X
C1.7	Demonstrate understanding of the principles of occlusion.	X	X
C1.8	Demonstrate and apply knowledge of causative factors, risk factors, prevention and management of dental caries, tooth surface loss, discoloured teeth, tooth loss and periodontal diseases.	X	X
C1.9	Demonstrate and apply knowledge of restorative dental materials, equipment and techniques.	X	X
C1.10	Demonstrate and apply knowledge of responses of dental tissues to restorative treatment.	X	X
C1.11	Diagnose basic pathology / pain.	X	X
C1.12	Undertake structured treatment planning for a patient's restorative treatment needs.	X	X
C1.13	Formulate appropriate and effective preventive and interceptive periodontal treatment programmes.	X	X
C1.14	Diagnose dental caries, tooth surface loss, discoloured teeth, tooth loss and periodontal diseases.	X	X
C2. Orthodontics			
ES code	Trainees should be able to:	SBA	OSCE
C2.1	Demonstrate and apply knowledge of normal embryonic development.	X	X
C2.2	Demonstrate understanding of oral health in relation to orthodontic therapy.	X	X
C2.3	Demonstrate and apply knowledge of referral processes and orthodontic commissioning guidelines.	X	X
C2.4	Demonstrate and apply knowledge of treatment principles for types of malocclusion.	X	X



C2.5	Demonstrate an understanding of ideal occlusal goals – static and dynamic.	X	X
C2.6	Demonstrate and apply knowledge of orthodontic complications in adults.	X	X
C2.7	Demonstrate and apply knowledge of common complications of orthodontics and iatrogenic damage.	X	X
C2.8	Demonstrate and apply knowledge of retention protocols.	X	X
C2.9	Demonstrate knowledge of the Peer Assessment Rating (PAR) and Index of Orthodontic Treatment Need (IOTN).	X	X
C2.10	Demonstrate understanding of orthodontic diagnosis including the assessment of skeletal, dento-alveolar and soft tissues.	X	X
C2.11	Assess the development of the normal occlusion and deviations that represents abnormal development.	X	X
C2.12	Assess the risk/benefit of orthodontics.	X	X
C2.13	Suggest appropriate adjustments to an orthodontic appliance to render it comfortable and safe without compromising its effectiveness.	X	X
C2.14	Discuss bonding/rebonding of a fixed retainer in order to repair it.		X
C2.15	Suggest appropriate adjustments to a removable retainer appliance.		X
C2.16	Suggest appropriate orthodontic referrals at the appropriate time.		X
C2.17	Interpret radiographs to accurately locate impacted teeth, using parallax techniques.	X	X
C2.18	Assess an impacted tooth and provide treatment options.	X	X
<b>C3. Oral Surgery</b>			
<i>ES code</i>	<i>Trainees should be able to:</i>	<b>SBA</b>	<b>OSCE</b>
C3.1	Diagnose common mucosal diseases.	X	X
C3.2	Demonstrate knowledge of a variety of incisional/excisional biopsy techniques and when to use them.	X	X
C3.3	Demonstrate a working knowledge of clinical medicine and relevance to surgery.	X	X
C3.4	Demonstrate and apply knowledge of surgical procedures and techniques.	X	X
C3.5	Demonstrate and apply an understanding of the complications associated with removal (and retention) of impacted teeth.	X	X
C3.6	Demonstrate understanding of the indications for removal of impacted wisdom teeth including National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE)/ Scottish Intercollegiate Guidelines Network (SIGN) guidelines.	X	X
C3.7	Demonstrate an understanding of the relevant pharmacology and therapeutics of postoperative analgesia prescribed.	X	X
C3.8	Explain why and when to leave a retained root.		X
C3.9	Demonstrate an understanding of immunocompromised states and their relevance to treatment.	X	X



C3.10	Demonstrate an understanding of the indications and process for surgical endodontics.		X
C3.11	Assess impacted third molars.	X	X
C3.12	Recognise when to undertake surgical extractions as a starting point.	X	X
C3.13	Demonstrate an understanding of how to treat/drain infection intraoral and/or remove tooth.	X	X
C3.14	Identify appropriate techniques for tooth splintage.		X
C3.15	Select an appropriate intra-oral suturing technique.		X
C3.16	Demonstrate knowledge of appropriate aftercare and review.	x	X
C3.17	Suggest appropriate management for infection.	X	X
C3.18	Take into account any systemic factors likely to have a bearing on treatment.	X	X
<b>C4. Paediatric Dentistry</b>			
<i>ES code</i>	<i>Trainees should be able to:</i>	<b>SBA</b>	<b>OSCE</b>
C4.1	Demonstrate understanding and recognise deviations to the normal dental and behavioural development in children.	X	X
C4.2	Demonstrate understanding of how the developing dentition influences treatment planning decisions, including timing of interventions in children/adolescents.	X	X
C4.3	Demonstrate knowledge of restorative and endodontic techniques used in children including minimally invasive techniques.	X	X
C4.4	Demonstrate and apply knowledge of non-pharmacological behaviour management techniques in the dental care of children and young people.	X	X
C4.5	Demonstrate and apply knowledge of pharmacological techniques in the dental care of children and young people.	X	X
C4.6	Demonstrate and apply knowledge of knowledge of children's rights to the clinical situation.	X	X
C4.7	Provide appropriate treatment planning for children, taking into account stage of development, level of co-operation, medical history and social circumstances.	X	X
<b>C5. Special Care Dentistry</b>			
<i>ES code</i>	<i>Trainees should be able to:</i>	<b>SBA</b>	<b>OSCE</b>
C5.1	Demonstrate and apply knowledge of common mental health problems.	X	X
C5.2	Demonstrate awareness of anxiety management and behaviour management techniques.	X	X
C5.3	Demonstrate an understanding of behavioural sciences.	X	X
C5.4	Demonstrate awareness of sedation guidelines and protocols.	X	X
C5.5	Select appropriate treatment techniques.	X	X



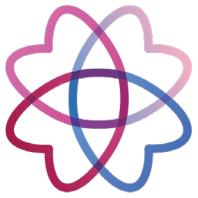
C5.6	Use/suggest behaviour management techniques required to provide oral care for people who have a physical, sensory, intellectual, mental, medical, emotional or social impairment or disability.		X
C5.7	Treatment plan for special care patients recognising appropriate compromise.	X	X

### C6. Oral Medicine

ES code	Trainees should be able to:	SBA	OSCE
C6.1	Demonstrate and apply knowledge of the underlying pathology, aetiologies and natural histories of conditions that fall within the scope of oral medicine practice.	X	
C6.2	Demonstrate knowledge of the differential diagnoses for clinical presentations involving the scope of oral medicine practice.	X	X
C6.3	Demonstrates understanding that oral presentations can prompt consideration of involvement beyond the orofacial tissues including iatrogenic factors.	X	X
C6.4	Demonstrate understanding of the day-to-day impact of conditions on a patient with consideration of symptoms and the psychology of illness.	X	X
C6.5	Demonstrate understanding of the role and limitations of clinical photography in patient care (including for diagnosis, longitudinal care and referral).	X	X
C6.6	Demonstrate awareness of the role of focused investigations/tests in diagnosis and monitoring, including blood tests, microbiological testing, biopsy and imaging, and recognise when to seek advice and how to refer appropriately.	X	X
C6.7	Takes into account the effect of patient lifestyle choices on oral health outcomes.	X	X
C6.8	Demonstrate awareness of appropriate management options for common oral medicine conditions and understanding that patient-specific factors may influence treatment planning and outcomes.	X	X
C6.9	Recognise the outcomes of management.	X	X
C6.10	Diagnose and suggest appropriate management for patients with simple conditions involving the orofacial tissues.	X	X
C6.11	Recognise situations where delay in care has the potential to lead to adverse outcomes.	X	X
C6.12	Demonstrate awareness of when ongoing review, shared care, referral to other specialties, or discharge to primary care may be appropriate in the management of oral medicine conditions and understand how these decisions support continuity of care across primary and secondary services.	X	X

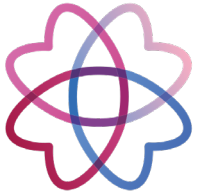
### C7. Oral and Maxillofacial Pathology

ES code	Trainees should be able to:	SBA	OSCE
C7.1	Demonstrate knowledge of normal head and neck, oral and dental anatomy, terminology for macroscopy and orientation of specimens.	X	X
C7.2	Demonstrate knowledge of how biopsy specimens are reported and reports issued.		X



C7.3	Diagnose, evaluate and suggest appropriate management for temporomandibular joint disorders.	X	X
<b>C8. Oral and Maxillofacial Radiology</b>			
<i>ES code</i>	<i>Trainees should be able to:</i>	<b>SBA</b>	<b>OSCE</b>
C8.1	Demonstrate an understanding of the legislation relating to the use of ionising radiation.	X	X
C8.2	Demonstrate understanding of different imaging modalities their limitations and when to request them.	X	X
C8.3	Identify when specialist radiology opinion is desirable.		X
C8.4	Provide clinical correlation of imaging findings.	X	X
C8.5	Interpret different investigations correctly.	X	X
C8.6	Critically analyse imaging results and draw conclusions.	X	X
C8.7	Interpret plain film radiographs.	X	X
C8.8	Grade diagnostic usefulness of images.	X	X

<b>C9. Oral Microbiology</b>			
<i>ES code</i>	<i>Trainees should be able to:</i>	<b>SBA</b>	<b>OSCE</b>
C9.1	Demonstrate knowledge of the aetiology and pathogenesis of orofacial infection including bacterial, fungal and viral disease.	X	X
C9.2	Demonstrate understanding of the role of diagnostic microbiology investigations in the diagnosis and management of orofacial infection.	X	X
C9.3	Demonstrate a basic understanding of the processing of specimens from infection.	X	X
C9.4	Demonstrate and apply knowledge of the antimicrobials used in the management of orofacial infection including antibacterial, antifungals and antivirals.	X	X
C9.5	Demonstrate and apply knowledge of potential infectious agents and routes of infection in the practice of dentistry.	X	X
C9.6	Prescribe appropriately based on nature of infection and patient factors.	X	X
C9.7	Suggest an appropriate response to accidental exposures to infectious agents including undertaking risk assessment.	X	X
<b>C10. Dental Public Health &amp; Epidemiology</b>			
<i>ES code</i>	<i>Trainees should be able to:</i>	<b>SBA</b>	<b>OSCE</b>
C10.1	Demonstrate understanding of community-based prevention.	X	X
C10.2	Demonstrate and apply understanding of legal principles relevant to dentistry and public health.	X	X



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C10.3	Demonstrate understanding of the relationship between life cycle and oral health.		X
C10.4	Demonstrate understanding of population wide and targeted approaches.	X	X
C10.5	Demonstrate ability to take a population approach.	X	X

Version control:

Publication date:	Change
10 October 2025	First release
7 November 2025	dOSCE and cOSCE distinction removed as elements can be examined in all OSCE's.
16 March 2026	Punctuation and formatting changes.



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