

Assessment Strategy for MFDS

This document sets out the assessment strategy for the Membership of the Faculty of Dental Surgery (MFDS) examination.

The MFDS examination

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 also 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 Examinations.

The standard of the MFDS

The MFDS is designed to assess the competence of a GDC registered dentist at the level of a Dental Core Trainee (DCT) completing the third year of their training and provide a gateway for entry into specialty training. This would be equivalent to four years of postgraduate training following attainment of a primary dental degree. This applies to both UK and international applicants.

The coverage of the MFDS

The MFDS is mapped to relevant learning outcomes of the Dental Core Training (DCT) programme syllabus years 2/3 [Dental Core training curriculum](#). The examination covers selected general professional outcomes (Domain A), general clinical outcomes (Domain B) and specialty specific outcomes (Domain C). It focuses on assessing application of knowledge in the basic and clinical sciences, communication/interpersonal skills, clinical judgement and decision-making skills, clinical and general professional practice. It does not seek to assess in a standalone way any technical skills listed in the DCT curriculum.

An examination syllabus has been developed that illustrates how the two assessment tools used in the examination are mapped to the learning outcomes of the exam syllabus.

The structure and format of the MFDS

The MFDS has two parts (Part 1 and Part 2), which will each comprise a different examination format to assess the content of its syllabus: Part 1 is a written component that will use single best answer (SBA) questions. Candidates will be required to pass Part 1 before being eligible to sit Part 2.

Part 2 uses an Objective Structured Clinical Examination (OSCE) format to assess candidates in two broad content areas

- communication/history taking
- clinical judgement/professional practice

Candidates must achieve a pass in both broad content areas in order to be successful in Part 2.

Single Best Answer (SBA) Questions

A total of 180 Single Best Answer questions will be used to assess basic and clinical sciences pertinent to clinical decision making and professional practice. They may also assess application of peripheral knowledge, that whilst not strictly clinical, is relevant to clinical decision making and treatment planning.

SBAs are a selected response format with one single best answer and 4 plausible distractors. They are particularly well suited to assessing higher-order thinking and usually contain a clinical vignette requiring the application of knowledge.

Part 1 will be delivered as two discrete 2 hour papers each consisting of 90 SBA questions.

Examples of content covered: physiology, anatomy, pharmacology, application of guidance, diagnosis, treatment planning, interpretation of radiographic images.

Objective Structured Clinical Examination (OSCE)

Part 2 will consist of a 14 station OSCE, each station being approximately 10 minutes duration. Candidates will rotate around the circuit of stations each of which will be overseen by at least one examiner. Some stations may have actors playing the role of patients or members of the dental team. Each station may assess one or both broad content areas across a range of different skill areas

Examples of content covered: communication (peer and patient/career), history taking, diagnosis, treatment planning, clinical judgement, delivery of care and professional practice.

Please refer any questions to info@dsfe.org.uk

Version control

Version	Date	Changes made
1.0	10 October 2025	Document released.
1.1	8 April 2026	Branding update, no content change.