

Regulations for the conduct of the European Society of Surgical Oncology examination for surgical oncologists in Europe

Preamble

Increasingly governments and the public are demanding evidence that an individual registered doctor's qualifications and knowledge have been gained through continuing professional development (CPD).

Much of the work in establishing such evidence has been undertaken by nongovernmental agencies that not only develop the methods by which doctors are examined but also validate the results. In this way the public is reassured a doctor has completed all eligibility criteria to earn a specific credential. A further purpose of this process is to promote the development of speciality areas of surgery by establishing minimal competency standards and recognising those individuals who have met the standards.

Accreditation

ESSO shall seek accreditation for its examination for relevant organisations such as the Accreditation Council for Oncology in Europe – under the umbrella of the Federation of European Cancer Societies -, and the European Union of Medical Specialities.

Application procedure

(see also **Eligibility criteria**)

All published deadline dates must be adhered to.

Applications must be received before or on the published deadline dates regardless of postmarks.

Those applications received after the first deadline date, but before the final deadline date, shall not receive any application fee deduction. Applicants who do not include the correct fee will be invoiced for the difference and shall not be permitted to take the examination unless the invoice is paid in full.

Payment will not be accepted at the test site.

Applications received after the final deadline date, regardless of postmark or any other circumstances, shall be returned.

Approximately four calendar months before the examination date, candidates shall receive a letter indicating the examination date, examination centre address, the time to report to the centre and other information about the test. Candidates must read the letter thoroughly when received. This letter shall also serve as the candidate's admission ticket to the examination. If this letter has not been received 7 days before the examination is due to take place, candidates should contact ESSO's main office at Avenue Mounier 83, B-1200 Brussels tel +32 2 537 3106, fax +32 2 539 0374 email eursso@skynet.be website <http://www.esso-surgeonline.be>

Day of the examination

Admission to the examination centre

Candidates must arrive at the centre promptly at the time indicated in the admission letter. Candidates must bring the letter mentioned under **Application procedure** (see *supra*) with them to the examination.

Candidates shall also bring an official identification document (for example passport, driver's licence) bearing his/her signature and a recent photograph

Schedule for the examination

TIME: report to the examination centre
TIME examination directions/preliminaries begin
TIME examination begins
TIME examination ends

Examination regulations

The following regulations shall be observed:

- candidates shall enter the examination centre after having their identification checked and shall not leave the room until after the examination begins
- candidates shall not be permitted to leave the examination centre without the supervisor's permission
- candidates shall not be permitted to make up time lost in this way
- candidates shall not enter the examination centre once the supervisor has begun to give instructions
- calculators, books, reference materials and other aids are not permitted in the examination room. Candidates who attempt to use them shall be dismissed from the examination
- visitors are not permitted in the examination centre
- candidates shall not take food or drink into the examination centre
- a supervisor may dismiss a candidate from the examination for any of these reasons – creating a disturbance, giving or receiving help in the examination, attempting to remove examination materials or notes from the examination center, impersonating another candidate, and failing to follow the regulations and instructions.

Discrimination

ESSO does not discriminate against candidates based on age, sex, ethnic origin, religion, race, disability, marital status or sexual orientation.

Candidates who have a disability that prohibits them from taking the examination under standard conditions shall request special arrangements. Candidates must submit a letter that indicates the nature of the disability and the special accommodations needed, as well as a letter from an appropriate and qualified healthcare professional that attests to both the disability and the need for special accommodations. Both the request and documentation must accompany the application form. Specific details about the type of assistance needed (eg wheelchair access) must be provided.

Eligibility criteria

Candidates must meet one of the following criteria:

- each candidate must hold a current licence to practise as a general surgeon at the time of the examination
- each candidate must be able to demonstrate that he/she had worked for a minimum of two years in a designated oncology centre specialising in surgical oncology*
- each candidate must be able to demonstrate evidence of recent CPD activity

(*or a minimum of three years if this experience was not in a designated oncology centre
or had followed a surgical oncology clinical fellowship of one year's duration plus a further one year working as a surgical oncologist

or a specialist training of one year working as a surgeon in a recognised oncology related field

or a surgical oncology research fellowship plus two years in a clinical surgical oncology setting.)

In addition to a completed application form and a *curriculum vitae* candidates would be required to submit a letter from their Head of Department supporting the application (with particular reference to their surgical/oncology experience), a history of their operating schedules over the past year and any evidence of having participated in multidisciplinary oncology care. National societies and other appropriate bodies shall be consulted to verify the candidate's claims as deemed necessary.

ESSO certificate

Candidates who meet the eligibility criteria and are successful in the examination shall receive an official ESSO certificate. Names of doctors holding ESSO certification shall be available to the public.

Evaluation

ESSO shall evaluate its examination appropriately. Any evaluation shall ensure that the candidates themselves had had an opportunity to evaluate the examination.

Examination Board

To ensure the proper conduct of the examination, an Examination Board shall be established consisting of four members, two of whom must be members of ESSO. Potential members of this Examination Board shall demonstrate they:

- hold a senior position within an academic institution or recognised oncology centre
- are perceived by their peers as a specialist in surgical oncology
- are experienced educators.

The term of office of each Board member shall, in the normal course of events, be six years. (In the first term, however, 50% of the members shall serve for the full six years but the remaining 50% shall serve for four years. This to ensure continuity.)

Examiners

The Board of ESSO shall identify and invite individuals to serve as examiners. The criteria for eligibility to serve as an examiner shall be as for members of the Examination Board (see *supra*). Additional specialists might be required should the expertise required for specialist areas requested by Part 2 of the examination be found to be wanting in the existing examiners. Terms of office for examiners would be as for members of the Examination Board.

Examination centres

ESSO shall be responsible for advertising the examination centre.

Frequency of the examination

The examination shall be held annually – during ESSO's annual conference in the even years and during ECCO in the odd years.

Language

Initially the examination shall be conducted in English. In the event where there is a sufficient number of candidates from one language group, consideration may be given to holding the examination in that language given that the logistics and financial considerations can be accommodated.

Refund of examination fees

Candidates who are unable to take the examination may request a refund of 25% of the examination fee by writing to ESSO. The written request must be postmarked no later than 15 days before the test date and include the candidate's contact details.

Registration fee

The registration fee shall not seek to make a profit but shall cover administrative costs. A fee of Euros 350 will be paid to UEMS to cover the costs involved in establishing that the information supplied by the candidate at the application stage is correct. A further 350 euros fee will be levied before a candidate is allowed to sit the examination.

Results

Individual examination results shall be sent only to the candidates at the address indicated by the candidate on his/her examination registration details.

Review and appeals process

A review and appeals process shall be available to individuals seeking an amendment of a decision about eligibility, results or any other matter relating to the examination.

Failure of the examination is not necessarily a circumstance for review or appeal.

Requests to activate the review process shall be forwarded in writing to the Chairperson of the Examination Board.

Sanctions

ESSO shall withhold its certification for the following reasons:

- falsification of the application
- falsification of any information requested by ESSO
- misrepresentation of credentials awarded by ESSO
- misuse of ESSO credentials
- lack of evidence of current license to practice
- cheating during the examination
- assisting others to cheat during the examination
- unauthorised possession of the examination papers or other confidential materials
- criminal convictions or limitation, sanction, revocation or suspension by a healthcare organisation, professional organisation or other private or governmental bodies relating to medicine or public health safety
- gross repeated negligence or malpractice in professional practice

ESSO may issue sanctions that include, but are not limited to, denials of initial certification, renewal or recertification, revocation, suspension or any other limitation of certification or combination of sanctions. On being notified of a possible violation, ESSO shall, in its sole discretion, investigate the allegation or decline to act on the matter. If ESSO believes there has been a possible violation of the conditions identified above, ESSO shall provide the applicant with a written notice of the allegations.

The review and appeals process may be instituted (see *supra*).

The official sanction shall state whether official notice of the sanction shall be provided to the doctor's licensing board. Such notice, if authorised by the sanction, shall not be given until the expiration and/or resolution of any appeal.

Structure and content of the examination

The examination shall be in three parts and shall seek to establish the candidate's knowledge, skills and experience at an advanced level:

- Part A – the written part - shall consist of 50 multiple choice questions (MCQs) that will elicit the candidate's knowledge of the general principles of oncology as applied to surgical oncology;
- Part B shall take the form of a discussion between the examiner and the candidate during which the candidate shall be required to critique a paper
- Part C – an oral examination – shall be based on a specialist area (eg gastrointestinal, breast, sarcoma, head and neck) previously identified by the candidate when applying for the examination. (Appropriate examiners will be contacted to conduct this part of the examination when the range of speciality areas were identified following the applications received.)

The examination shall be held over a period of one day within the following time scale:

09.00 – 12.00: Part A

12.30 – 13.30: opportunity for the candidate to read the
paper to be critiqued during lunch

13.30 – 15.30: Parts B and C.

With reference to the multiple choice questions (MCQs), Board members shall be invited to submit 5 questions relating to the application of the principles of oncology to surgical oncology in order to provide content for Part A of the examination. A percentage (not defined at the meeting) of these initial questions shall be replaced by new questions solicited in the same way on an annual basis in order to ensure questions remained current. The Examination Board shall be responsible for the final version of the MCQs. As mentioned *supra*, the content of Part B shall be determined by the speciality interest identified by the individual candidates.

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