

**Rt Hon Wes Streeting MP**  
Secretary of State for Health and Social Care

Sent via email

21 February 2025

Dear Secretary of State,

We were shocked to discover, and then subsequently see the official statement from the Federation of Royal College of Physicians in the UK (FRCP), that 283 doctors had been wrongfully informed of the result of their MRCP exam taken in September 2023. This news is devastating for these doctors, and urgent coordinated action must be taken to provide assurances, compensation and pastoral support to those affected.

The consequences of these errors are far-reaching, affecting the careers and mental well-being of these doctors. Some individuals who believed they had passed may have progressed in their careers, only to now face uncertainty and potential setbacks. Conversely, those who were incorrectly told they failed may have had to retake the exam at significant financial and emotional cost, delayed their training, or even left medicine entirely.

This situation has highlighted serious deficiencies in the governance and audit processes of the FRCP's examination system. It is unacceptable that such errors have taken so long to be identified, placing doctors' careers in jeopardy and affecting the future of patient care in the NHS. Rectifying this serious error will require a coordinated effort from different organisations.

We are asking for you to use your position as Secretary of State to demand immediate action from the FRCP, royal colleges and employers to address this issue by taking measures including but not limited to the below:

1. Confirming that those doctors who have since begun further training can continue in their job without their training or career progression being impacted, given that their appointments were in good faith. Any punitive actions or detriment would be deeply unfair on a doctor who, until this announcement, is likely to have been assessed as carrying out their clinical role safely and well.
2. Confirming that the Annual Review of Competence Progression (ARCPs) of those impacted will not be retrospectively altered.
3. Offering immediate support and mentorship to any doctor affected by this mistake to ensure that any training needs are addressed positively, with all costs met by the colleges, employer or NHS.

**Chief executive officers:** Neeta Major & Rachel Podolak

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4. Fully supporting and compensating all affected doctors, including financial reimbursement for exam costs, lost earnings, potential lost earnings, career disruptions, additional study budget for doctors in the event that they have to re-sit exams, and other unexpected costs such as childcare requirements.
5. In the event that re-sits are required, reconsidering the offered date in March and/or offering alternative dates to ensure enough time for these doctors to properly study and gain assurance that their study leave will be granted. We believe 10 days study leave to be a reasonable amount.
6. If sitting the exam in the next diet is not possible, allowing and funding any further attempts that need to be completed, and permitting this to be at any point prior to completion of training.
7. Making amended marks available immediately. We are aware of doctors having asked for their amended marks, only to be told that the amended marks cannot be accessed. This is inexplicable in the circumstances. We consider it imperative that these details are released to all affected individuals without delay.
8. Completing an automatic appeal process for re-marking for affected candidates.
9. Ensuring that an independent investigation into how this error occurred, why it remained undiscovered for so long and the decisions made following its identification is undertaken and is published in full to ensure transparency and accountability.
10. Reviewing examination processes across all royal colleges to ensure rapid, robust and transparent audit mechanisms are in place and implementing safeguards to prevent such errors in the future. This not the first time such an error has occurred at the RCP or other royal colleges.

We are aware that FRCP have emailed doctors to ask them if they wish to re-sit the examination on 26 March (through an online form with an option of “yes” or “no”). At present, no alternative dates have been offered, and no explanation has been provided in relation to the next steps or consequences if they answer “no”. This is completely unreasonable in the circumstances and needs to be addressed as a matter of urgency. At present, we have advised members not to complete the form until further information is provided.

The BMA has called for any doctors impacted to contact us so that we can provide whatever support we can and act on their behalf. Too often resident doctors are at the whims of organisations who do not speak to one another. The response to this unacceptable failure by FRCP cannot be more of the same. A proper plan of action demands urgent coordination between parties, and we ask that you make this a priority.

We are working alongside affected members to consider all legal options available to them.

We would be grateful if you would meet with the BMA as a matter of urgency and I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,



**Professor Phil Banfield**  
Chair, BMA UK Council



**Dr Emma Runswick**  
Deputy Chair, BMA UK Council



**Dr Iain Kennedy**  
Chair, BMA Scotland Council



**Dr Iona Collins**  
Chair, BMA Cymru Wales Council



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Cc. Amanda Pritchard, Chief Executive Officer, NHS England  
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Neil Gray MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care, Scotland  
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Caroline Lamb, Chief Executive, NHS Scotland  
Judith Padget, Chief Executive, NHS Wales  
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