

## MS AKT paper copies policy

Paper copies will not normally be provided for the Medical School Applied Knowledge Test (MS AKT) for a variety of reasons outlined below.

### Why is the provision of paper copies not reasonable in the context of AKT?

The Equality and Human Rights Commission states the following about deciding whether an adjustment is reasonable.

*Various factors influence whether a particular adjustment is considered reasonable. The test of what is reasonable is ultimately an objective test and not simply a matter of what you may personally think is reasonable.*

*When deciding whether an adjustment is reasonable you can consider:*

- *how effective the change will be in avoiding the disadvantage the disabled worker would otherwise experience*
- *its practicality*
- *the cost*
- *your organisation's resources and size*
- *the availability of financial support*

The Medical Schools Council (MSC) has considered each of these factors in deciding to not provide paper copies as a reasonable adjustment for the AKT and this section will go through the thinking behind this decision.

In terms of whether the provision of paper copies of the assessment would remove the disadvantage for the student, MSC accepts that this will be the case when the student has been granted this adjustment by their medical school. However, it is also likely that other adjustments will also avoid the disadvantage to individual students and therefore MSC will work with medical schools to identify what else can be put in place that is fair for the individual student. The MSC delivery platform may also be able to accommodate more adjustments than those available in HEIs.

MSC's key reason for deciding the provision of paper copies is not reasonable in the context of the AKT is related to issues around security of the assessment. This is a high stakes national exam and therefore the security of papers is paramount to avoid any risk that the questions will leak. The AKT process is designed so that the papers stay on the secure platform at all times, printing papers would present an unacceptable risk to the security of the exam.

The second consideration MSC has taken into account relates to practicality. Online delivery of the AKT was chosen as the method of delivery because it enables the instantaneous provision of results to the teams overseeing the assessment. This means that the AKT psychometricians can immediately start to analyse data from

sittings of the assessment and standard setting panels can assess whether the assessment has performed as expected in a timely manner. This is important as it will allow MSC to provide results to schools within two weeks of the end of an assessment window.

The AKT is a high stakes exam and students sitting the AKT will expect to receive results in a timely manner. Medical schools will also need the results promptly to make decisions about progression and provide timely feedback to their students. It is not possible to stretch these agreed deadlines and the provision of paper copies would slow down the provision of results as individual responses would have to be added to the system before any analysis could take place.

Additionally, it should be noted that each time a paper is delivered by the online system the question order is randomised for security reasons. Therefore, transcribing answers from a paper copy to the online system is particularly difficult and requires multiple people to transcribe and validate that transcription. In MSC's view even with these steps being taken there is an unacceptable risk that answers may be transcribed in error. This would be compounded by the fact that for security reasons paper copies would need to be shredded as soon as transcription takes place and so a student considering an appeal will no longer have access to this information.

The issue of the cost in terms of developing items for the AKT has also been considered. It has been estimated that it costs approximately £2,000 to develop a single item once medical school staff time and the practicalities of running item writing events are taken into account. This means that the security implications of questions leaking also has very significant financial consequences for MSC.

### **What steps can be taken for students who have previously had RA's including paper copies?**

Medical schools are asked to contact MSC ideally no later than six months before they plan to deliver the AKT to their students if they have a student that has previously been judged to require paper copies of online assessments as a reasonable adjustment. The reason for this advance notice is to allow MSC to work with the medical school, the student and the disability service within the medical school or university to determine what alternative adjustments could be put in place to mitigate the disadvantage the student has because of the impact of their disability. For example, instead of using a paper copy of the test the student may find working with a reader and/or a scribe mitigates the issues the student has with online assessment. Similarly extra time and/or rest breaks might also remove the disadvantage a student faces.

This approach is in line with best practice in making reasonable adjustments and the GMC's guidance in Welcomed and Valued. Organisations only have a duty to make adjustments that are judged to be reasonable and in the case of paper copies it is not reasonable for MSC to provide these. The reasons for this decision are set out

above. However, when an organisation is not able to make a specific adjustment it does still have a duty to put in place alternative adjustments that will mitigate the disadvantage an individual faces. This is why MSC wishes to work with medical schools to ensure that alternative provisions can be put in place that are fair for individual students.