



The MFDS qualification is changing

Information for candidates

The MFDS (Membership of the Faculty of Dental Surgery) qualification will be changing over 2026 and 2027. This is an update on the changes and what they mean for you if you have already passed MFDS, are part-way through MFDS, or plan to sit MFDS in the future.

What is the MFDS?

The MFDS is a postgraduate examination offered by the UK surgical royal colleges. The current standard is equivalent to that of dental graduates who have completed a two-year foundation programme (VT plus one other year in General Dental Practice or Dental Core Training). At present, there are two versions of the MFDS available. Candidates may take the examination offered by the Royal College of Surgeons of England, or alternatively the bi-collegiate examination offered by the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh and the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow.

Completion of the examination allows the successful candidate to become a member of one or more of the UK surgical royal colleges.

What is changing?

The new MFDS examination will provide a single, gold standard assessment of a primary or secondary care dental professional's knowledge and skill, as well as serving as an entry point for specialty assessments. There are two key changes to the examination.

- 1. Single tri-collegiate examination:** The three UK Surgical Royal Colleges will now offer one unified MFDS, providing a clearer, more straightforward, postgraduate assessment pathway relevant to careers in both primary and secondary care. It will also serve as an entry requirement for the dental specialty fellowship exams.
- 2. Higher level of assessment:** The new MFDS will assess competence at the level of a General Dental Council (GDC) registered dentist completing the third year of Dental Core Training (DCT3), equivalent to four years of postgraduate experience. It is mapped to the relevant learning outcomes of the DCT programme syllabus years 2/3, representing a different standard to the current examination. This change allows candidates to demonstrate a higher level of competence at the point of progressing to specialty training.



The examination will still be available to both UK and internationally-trained dentists and successful candidates will remain eligible for membership of the college with which they choose to affiliate.

Why is it changing now?

The colleges have announced that they will work together to provide a cohesive postgraduate assessment pathway for dental graduates completing specialty training in the UK. The release of new General Dental Council (GDC) curricula for specialty trainees provided the impetus to review and improve dental assessments, giving clarity to trainees, trainers and patients, with a consistent standard across specialties.

As part of this work, the colleges worked together to review the MFDS examinations and identify opportunities to enhance them. The revised MFDS will better reflect the knowledge and competence expected of dentists entering specialty training and provide a clear consistent pathway through postgraduate dental assessment.

The new MFDS is mapped to the UK Dental Core Trainee (DCT) curriculum. It will strengthen recognition for candidates, both in the UK and internationally.

When is the change happening?

The first MFDS Part 1 examination in the new format will be held in Autumn 2026. We will release the date in the coming weeks. The first sitting of Part 2 will be in early 2027. Information and dates will be shared on the Dental Specialty Fellowship Examinations [website](#) and on each College website as they become available.

How will the changes affect me?

If you have already completed MFDS

Many congratulations on completing your MFDS! You will retain your existing postnominals of MFDS if you have joined a College. Your existing MFDS provides eligibility to enter the Dental Specialty Fellowship Examinations for any application to sit Part 1 made on or before 1 May 2031.

Please be aware that if you decide to take one of the specialty examinations after that period, you will be required to sit the new MFDS available from 2026.

If you are part-way through MFDS or currently studying for it

If you are already part-way through your study for MFDS, or already hold Part 1 of the existing MFDS, you should refer to the information from the college(s) offering your current examination to understand how many more sittings of the examination are available to you. Colleges will also be contacting candidates who have already enrolled



for or sat part of their MFDS to provide information that will help you decide about the timing of your examinations.

It is important to be aware that the new examination is set at a different level to the current one. This means that part-completion of the existing MFDS **will not offer exemption** from any part of the new MFDS. For example, if you only complete Part 1 of the current MFDS and do not pass Part 2 before the examination ceases, you will be required to sit Part 1 of the new MFDS examination in order to be eligible to sit the new MFDS Part 2.

For this reason, it is important that you refer to each college's information to find out more about the final dates of the current examinations. Your college can provide advice and support during the transition to help you to decide on your next steps.

If you have not yet started the existing MFDS

As the existing examinations will cease, you are advised to work towards the completion of the new MFDS examinations, starting in 2026. You may like to refer to the [assessment strategy](#) for the MFDS examination to consider the timing of your attempt at the exam, recognising that this will now be expected to be sat approximately four years following graduation.

Where can I find out more about the new examination?

We know you may have questions about the new exam. You can find the [assessment strategy](#) for the MFDS examination on the Dental Specialty Fellowship Examinations [website](#). This will also provide a link to the DCT curriculum.

You can also contact the new MFDS team by contacting info@dsfe.org.uk.

For more information on the Dental Specialty Fellowship Examinations, please visit the [website](#).

For advice and information on the current examinations:

- Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh [website](#), or email dental.exams@rcsed.ac.uk
- Royal College of Surgeons of England [website](#), or email mfdsexam@rcseng.ac.uk
- Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow [website](#), or email mfds@rcpsg.ac.uk