

General  
Medical  
Council

# Requirements for the MLA Applied Knowledge Test

Medical Licensing Assessment  
[gmc-uk.org/mla](http://gmc-uk.org/mla)



# Requirements for the Medical Licensing Assessment Applied Knowledge Test

*Requirements for the Medical Licensing Assessment Applied Knowledge Test are annexed to - and form part of – Assuring readiness for practice: a framework for the MLA*

## Background

### The Medical Licensing Assessment

The purpose of the [Medical Licensing Assessment](#) (MLA) is to ensure that doctors seeking registration with a licence to practise medicine in the UK have met a common threshold for safe practice that is appropriate to their point of entry to the medical register.

The MLA has two components: the applied knowledge test (AKT) and the clinical and professional skills assessment (CPSA), through which candidates can demonstrate they are ready for safe practice, able to manage uncertainty, and able to deliver person-centred care. These are the three themes underpinning the [MLA content map](#), which sets out the core knowledge, skills and behaviours needed for UK practice.

The AKT is a written assessment of applied clinical knowledge. It is set and delivered by:

- UK medical schools\* for medical students in their penultimate or final year of undergraduate education, and
- the GMC for those international medical graduates (IMGs) who wish to practise medicine in the UK and must demonstrate their knowledge and skills through taking the MLA.

### Joining the medical register

Before they can join the medical register with provisional registration with a licence to practise granted by the GMC, UK medical students graduating from the academic year 2024-25 will need to hold a medical degree awarded by a university included in the list maintained by the GMC of bodies [entitled to award a Primary Medical Qualification](#) that

\* Under section 4.4 of the Medical Act 1983 medical schools may, with GMC approval, unite or cooperate to design, construct, and deliver the AKT for UK medical students

includes a pass in both parts of the MLA and the other assessments specified by their medical school for graduation.

From 2024, before they can apply for registration with a licence to practise, IMGs who need to take the MLA will need to pass both parts of the MLA and meet our other conditions, including providing evidence demonstrating that they have an acceptable primary medical qualification, clinical experience and the necessary knowledge of English.

### **Purpose of this document**

This document specifies the requirements that each assessment provider's\* AKT must meet.

In identifying these requirements, we have ensured they are based on scholarship and effective practice. By meeting these requirements, an assessment provider is demonstrating the quality, consistency and fairness of their AKT to a standard that the GMC requires for the AKT to count towards a candidate's MLA.

The AKT is the pass/fail summative assessment of professional medical knowledge as applied to the care of patients, at the level expected of a doctor entering the UK Foundation Programme.

An assessment provider must submit a narrative and supporting evidence ("the submission") to us to show how their AKT meets these requirements. We will then review the submission, with the help of independent expert advice, to decide whether an AKT meets the requirements.

### **Piloting the AKT requirements**

These requirements, and the process of submitting evidence, will be piloted alongside development of assessment providers' AKTs prior to the implementation of the MLA in 2024. During our approval processes, assessment providers must describe and give evidence to show how our standards and requirements, as set out in this document, have been addressed in the design, development and delivery of their AKT.

### **Accompanying guidance**

Further information on how to complete the submission will be available in accompanying guidance (to follow).

\* This document refers to all medical schools and the GMC as 'assessment providers' and all test-takers as 'candidates'.

## Design

**Assessment strategy** *The AKT is one of the elements through which passing candidates demonstrate to the GMC their eligibility to join the medical register.*

- 1 Describe and demonstrate how the AKT sits within the overall assessment strategy.

**AKT design** *The design of the AKT must enable effective assessment of the learning outcomes required to demonstrate professional medical knowledge as applied to the care of patients, at the level expected of a doctor ready for safe practice at the relevant point of registration.*

- 2 Describe the rationale for the design of the AKT.

**Scoring** *The scoring approach must enable fair and consistent pass/fail decisions on candidate performance.*

- 3 Describe the approach to scoring candidate performance at item level and overall, including any score conversions and rounding protocols.

**Standard setting** *The AKT must be set at a standard that is appropriate to the point of registration for which it is designed (a national standard for provisional registration for all UK students, or a national standard for full registration for IMGs). The standard for the AKT must be created through the use of a recognised methodology and procedures. The standard setting processes must include a mechanism for maintaining a consistent level of challenge for each administration within a single year and over time.*

- 4 Describe and demonstrate how the national standard is determined, including input from stakeholders, piloting and review of outcomes.
- 5 Describe and demonstrate the underlying rationale for the chosen method and how the national standard is set and maintained, including any conjunctive standards.

## Content

**Sampling** *The [MLA content map](#) is informed by Outcomes for graduates, the Foundation Programme training outcomes, the Generic professional capabilities framework and Good medical practice. All AKT content must be derived from the MLA content map, and the sampling criteria (the sampling grid and any further dimensions) must demonstrate how this is achieved and applied consistently in each test administration. The sampling criteria must be approved by the GMC.*

- 6 Describe and demonstrate how the sampling approach aligns with the [MLA content map](#), including the extent to which the sampling criteria reflect the three overarching themes and the individual domains of the content map.

- a Describe the rationale for the themes/categories of the sampling grid, including the weightings/proportions and any other factors that are applied to enable effective test construction and reporting.
- b Describe the sampling criteria and demonstrate how these are used to create a technical algorithm for item selection that produces consistent and comparable tests.
- c Describe how the sampling approach is reviewed and kept up to date to reflect updates to the MLA content map.

**Quality management** *The AKT question bank must be secure, current, of high quality and its content must be derived from the MLA content map. Test items must be developed, managed and reviewed through fair and effective processes.*

- 7 Describe and demonstrate how items are created, reviewed and quality assured in a consistent and timely manner.

**Quality management** *Each test must be created through operationally effective test construction methodology supported by expert review and quality checking processes to ensure consistent application of the sampling criteria.*

- 8 Describe and demonstrate how tests are created, reviewed and quality assured in a consistent and timely manner.

## Support for candidates

**Familiarisation** *Candidates must be given appropriate and timely information about the AKT, including: the test format, mode, testing time and sample content; arrangements for running the test on the day; and relevant local regulations.*

- 9 Describe and demonstrate how candidates have been familiarised with the AKT and how the AKT will be run on the day.

**Results and feedback** *Timely and appropriately detailed feedback must be provided to individuals with their AKT results to enable unsuccessful candidates to identify and target specific areas of development prior to their next attempt or to enable successful candidates to reflect on their performance.*

- 10 Demonstrate what results and feedback are given to candidates, as well as what support is available to unsuccessful candidates.

## Policies and resources

**Policies and procedures** *The AKT must be supported by policies and procedures for conduct and administration embedding fairness and ED&I principles for reasonable adjustments, mitigating circumstances, number of attempts or resits, exam misconduct, complaints and appeals. The policies and procedures must be approved by the GMC.*

- 11** Demonstrate and describe that there are policies and procedures in place to ensure a fair and comparable test experience for candidates.

**Resources and space** *The AKT must be delivered in a suitable environment for a high stakes assessment for all candidates.*

- 12** Demonstrate that the AKT takes place in a space appropriate for a high stakes assessment with suitable provision for the delivery method.

**Security** *The AKT must be developed and delivered within secure environments with appropriate measures in place across systems, venues and processes to prevent security breaches including leakage of test material and access to assessment content by unauthorised individuals.*

- 13** Describe and demonstrate how the security of the question bank and test papers is maintained.
- 14** Describe and demonstrate how exam materials (digital and/or paper) are prepared, stored and delivered.
- 15** Describe and demonstrate the arrangements for AKTs delivered in multiple venues or over multiple sittings.
- 16** Describe and demonstrate how invigilators are trained and briefed.

## Data management

**Data acquisition** *There must be secure and robust processes in place to capture and check assessment data.*

- 17** Describe and demonstrate the approach to collecting or uploading candidates' responses on the day and dealing with missing data identified at the end of the test.

**Production of results** *Performance metrics must be used to support decision-making and ensure the standard of proficiency is being met.*

- 18** Demonstrate how results data are processed, checked and analysed after the AKT, including criteria for making post-test adjustments, to produce test outcomes for ratification by the relevant exam board.

## Evaluation and quality assurance

**Psychometric analysis** *Assessment providers must demonstrate that the AKT is operating as intended. This includes evaluation of test performance and outcomes. Reports, data and information must be provided to the GMC for quality assurance purposes.*

**19** Describe and demonstrate how the post-test analyses feed into decision-making and quality improvement.

**Governance and fairness** *The AKT must be set and delivered through governance structures approved by the GMC. The AKT must embed legal requirements, principles and good practice of equality, diversity and inclusion in its development, delivery, monitoring and review, to ensure a fair and comparable test experience for all candidates.*

**20** Describe the boards and operational groups involved in the governance of the AKT.

**21** Describe and demonstrate how ED&I considerations are applied across processes and decision-making.

**22** Describe and demonstrate how stakeholders are involved across the AKT's governance.

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