



UNION EUROPEENNE DES MEDECINS SPECIALISTES EUROPEAN  
UNION OF MEDICAL SPECIALISTS

SECTION & BOARD OF SURGERY - GENERAL SURGERY DIVISION

## **EBSQ GENERAL SURGERY**

### **EXAMINATION AND QUALIFICATION**

#### **Frequently Asked Questions**

### **Accommodation**

Q: Do you provide a list of suitable accommodation for the examination?

A: No, we do not provide a list of accommodations.

### **Appeal (eligibility decision)**

Q: I have been declared ineligible, can I appeal?

A: Yes, the eligibility decision is open to appeal within a week of the decision notification; appeals can be lodged with the Credentials Committee through the Office.

### **Appeal (examination result)**

Q: Can I appeal my exam result?

A: Yes, you have the right to appeal. The appeal should be lodged within a week of the examination results with the Chairperson of the Examination Committee who will notify the Credentials Committee. There is a fee attached to such appeals if not upheld.

### **Award (Gold certificate) Q:**

Is there an award?

A: Yes, a Gold Certificate amounting to 1,000 Euros will be awarded to the first placed candidate at each session of the ESBQ.



## **C**ancellation of participation Q: If I cancel participation at the UEMS EBSQ General Surgery

Examination, can I get a refund?

A: No fees will be refunded if a candidate cancels his/her participation or does not show up on the day of examination. It is however possible to postpone participation: see 'Postponement' below.

### **Certificate**

Q: When will I receive my certificate?

A: Certificates are issued to successful candidates shortly after results have been announced.

### **Certificate's authentication**

Q: How can I get my documents authenticated for the eligibility process?

A: In order for a UEMS diploma to be officially authenticated in countries requiring such procedure, it must be signed by the legal representative of a Belgian legal entity, whose signature can be authenticated by a Belgian Civil Officer. In this regard, we liaised with the notary of the UEMS, who has accepted to validate the signature of a legal representative of the UEMS.

If applicants are interested, **here is the procedure to follow**:

1. The applicant sends the following documents to the UEMS, Rue de l'Industrie 24, 1040 Brussels, BELGIUM:
  - The original UEMS certificate (please note that only certificates issued by UEMS can be authenticated)
  - A copy of the UEMS certificate
  - A copy of a valid ID or passport
2. The applicant sends a scanned copy of his certificate and ID by email to [coordination@uems.eu](mailto:coordination@uems.eu) with details of postal address to which we will return the signed document. Please put as subject of the email "Authentication of UEMS Diplomas – supporting documents". Provide details on the date you passed the exam and the medical specialty.
3. The UEMS Office will then contact the organizers of the examination to confirm that the applicant has indeed passed the exam.



4. The UEMS Office will organize a meeting with the Notary to have the confirmed Certificates signed.
5. The UEMS Office will then send back the original certificates to the applicants or to someone duly mandated.

Find all the information on: <https://www.uems.eu/european-examinations/authentication-ofdiplomas>

### **Certificate re-issue**

Q: May I ask for a re-issue of my certificate?

A: It is assumed that Fellows are responsible persons and are therefore trusted to take good care of their Certificates. New Certificates will not be re-issued in case of loss.

### **Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Q:**

How do you take CPD into account?

A: CPD, attendance to courses, congresses and publications are all taken into account towards the Credit points (See 'Eligibility Criteria and Guidance').

### **Courses (preparation)**

Q: Do you organize preparation courses for the exam?

A: No, not at the moment.

## **Deadline for applications**

Q: Am I guaranteed a place if I apply before the deadline?

A: Examination candidacy slots may be limited and it is much safer to apply early. If you apply late, or the limiting number of candidates is reached, or your application is incomplete, you may not get a place for the examination.

### **Documents submission/uploading**

Q: How will I submit my supporting evidence?

A: All the documents submitted as supporting evidence must be uploaded on the application web platform.



## **E**ligibility notification

Q: How will I know if I am Eligible?

A: If you have paid your eligibility process fee and the review of your application shows that you are eligible, you will be notified in due course.

### **Entrustable Professional Activities (EPAs)**

Q: I am not familiar with this concept, what are EPAs?

A: An EPA is a unit that can be entrusted to a trainee once sufficient competence has been reached. An EPA goes a level higher than the traditional 4<sup>th</sup> level of competence which is the 'independence competency'. The trainee is not only capable of tackling the particular procedures or units independently, but he can be trusted to do this by his tutors.

### **Examination (format and schedule)** Q:

What is the format of the examination?

A: After the Eligibility process, which is the first stage of the examination, candidates will be assessed over two days. There are two components:

- Part 1 is a written component consisting of 150 Best answer-out-of-five (Type A) MCQs, lasting 3 hours.
- Part 2 is an oral component consisting of a clinical exam with nine stations, each lasting 9 minutes (including change over time).

### **Examination (frequency)**

Q: How often are the exams offered?

A: At present, the exam is offered once a year, but this is subject to adjustment.

### **Examination (clinical exam)**

Q: How is the Clinical Exam organized?



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A: In the Clinical exam you will be faced with cases and/or clinical pathways representing the breadth of general surgery. You will visit each of the nine stations where you will be assessed by (a pair of) examiners from an international panel and will be asked to give an oral answer. The circuit may include a clinical case, laboratory investigations, X-rays, CT, MRI and ultrasonography scans and pictures from typical clinical situations to interpret. One station will assess your ability to critically appraise (Evidence Based Medicine appraisal) a journal paper. A selected journal paper will be given to you 45 minutes before Part 2 (Clinical exam) circuit. Non-technical skills such as obtaining consent and communication will also be assessed in stations. You should be able to answer not only what you would do and how, but why.

The individual time schedule for the OSCE circuit is established after the MCQ-test.

### **Examination (notification)**

Q: When and how will I be notified about taking the exam?

A: All eligible candidates will be notified in due time soon after the closing date.

### **Examination (scoring)**

Q: How is the exam scored and what comprises a "passing" score?

A: Candidates will be required to complete both Part 1 and Part 2 of the examination in its entirety. To attain the FEBS, the candidate must achieve a passing grade in both Part 1 and Part 2 of the examination.

The Standard Setting for Part 1 is 75% of the 95th percentile. It represents 40% of an overall mark for purposes of ranking.

The Clinical exam (Part 2) is examined against the candidate demonstrating competencies on a par, (or exceeding) reasonable clinical behaviours/competencies of a Surgeon ready for a Consultancy/ Attending Surgeon autonomous role. This standard is reaffirmed in an exercise before each exam by our experienced examiners. It reflects a broad appreciation of a commensurate standard across Europe. Part 2 examination, as any high stakes Clinical examination requires to be passed in its own right.

There will be no compensation of marks from either Parts of the examination. In addition, qualitative feedback on professionalism is undertaken by the examiners in each station. These are reported using a colour card system. Two yellow boxes or 1 red box render mandatory discussion and individual evaluation of the candidate by the examination committee at the examiners meeting, prior to issuing final marks. In exceptional circumstances, upholding 2 yellow box or 1 red box concerns may be grounds for withholding awarding FEBS as the clinical standard would be considered not been met.

### **Examination (upcoming)**

Q: How can I find out about upcoming examinations?



A: Information about upcoming exams is posted on the UEMS General Surgery Website.

### **Examination (what to bring/what not to bring)**

Q: What do I need to bring with me to the Exam? What can I not bring?

A: You will be required to present your identification document and your own laptop even if the Part 1 is held in an IT laboratory. You may not bring any study aids, mobile phone or similar items into the examination room.

### **Examiners (who are they)**

Q: Who are your examiners?

A: The examiners are an international panel of senior surgeons.

### **Examiners (becoming one)**

Q: I am a senior surgeon, I would like to become an examiner, how can I apply?

A: Senior surgeons who wish to be considered as examiners for the General Surgery Division (UEMS) should first contact the UEMS Office. The subsequent preliminary step in the process for being entered in the waiting list for Examiners, is to be requested to serve as an Observer, in at least one Session of the UEMS EBSQ General Surgery Examination.

### **Exemption**

Q: I am a Fellow or a Member of a College of Surgeons or a Professional Surgical Society, can I be exempted from part of the exam?

A: No qualification in itself leads to an exemption to any part of the exam. Surgical qualifications are taken into account in the review of your application for eligibility.

## **F**ees

Q: Why do I need to pay two separate fees?



A: The first fee is for the Eligibility process, the second one is for the Examination itself for candidates declared eligible.

### **Flight**

Q: What is the earliest time that I can book my return flight?

A: Do not make any travel arrangements until you have received confirmation from the UEMS Office. You are advised to arrive the day before Part 1 and to plan your return flight not before the morning after Part 2.

**Fraud** Q: What is the penalty for fraud or misconduct?

A: When taking part in the UEMS/EBSQ examination, candidates agree to abide by its code of conduct. Candidates will be asked to sign a statement that will read:

"I agree to abide by the rules of the examinations; I am aware that any behaviour listed below will be interpreted as misconduct and will lead to penalties:

- Submitting forged documents in order to gain eligibility.
- Gaining information about the exam questions in advance of the exam date
- Bringing materials other than those specifically permitted into the exam
- Impersonating a candidate
- Behaviour disruptively during an exam
- Sharing exam content in any way, including on social media and other online forums
- Not complying with the reasonable instructions of an invigilator or other examination official
- Viewing the work of another candidate, or attempting to do so
- Accessing material, whatever the format, that may assist in answering questions during the examination
- Using bribery, or attempted bribery of another candidate, exam official, simulated patient or other relevant person
- Communicating with or attempting to communicate, through whatever means, with another individual who is not an invigilator or other examination official whilst under exam conditions
- Leaving the room without permission
- Writing after the end of the examination has been announced
- Removing materials or content (including copying exam questions and the use of recording devices) from an examination other than those specifically permitted • Releasing exam content to a third party/commercial organisation
- Aiding or abetting any of the above.
- In such circumstances, the incident will be formally documented and reported to the UEMS Executive."

Penalties for undoubted misconduct during the Exam include:

- Being stopped from completing the Exam and not being allowed to apply to sit the EBSQ/UEMS Exam again.
- The information may be passed on to the Regulatory Authority where the candidate is registered.



## **H**onorary Certificate

Q: I am a senior surgeon; can I apply for the Honorary Certificate?

A: No. Conferment of the Honorary FEBS General Surgery is now restricted to surgeons selected to be examiners if they do not already hold it. It is no longer be conferred in response to a proposal or an application.

## **I**dentification

Q: How can I prove my identity?

A: Both during the eligibility process and on the day of the examination, you will be asked to prove your identity with your passport or EU national identity card. The name as spelled on this identity document is the name that we will use for all matters pertaining to the examination.

## **L**anguage (examination)

Q: Do you organize examinations in languages other than English?

A: No, at the moment, examinations in General Surgery and only offered in English.

## **L**ogbook

Q: Do you provide a template for the logbook?

A: Yes, a template is provided for downloading on our UEMS/EBSQ General Surgery webpage.

## **M**MCQ sample questions

Q: Where could I find examples of the types of MCQ that will be used?





A: Sample MCQs are provided on the UEMS/EBSQ General Surgery webpage for downloading.

## **P**ostponement

Q: What if I want to postpone my participation at the UEMS EBSQ General Surgery Examination?

A: There are two possible situations:

- Cancellation/Postponement up to 30 days before the exam:  
Exam fees (if paid) postponed to next sitting + an admin charge of 90 euro will be charged when candidate re-apply for the exam.
- Cancellation/Postponement less than 30 days before the exam:  
Exam fees are not transferred to the next exam and not refundable. When re-applying for the exam, the candidate must pay the exam fee again + 90 euros administration fee.

Reasonable cancellations within 30 days of the exam will be considered on a case by case basis at the discretion of the Board of Examination. Supporting documentation is required.

For those who have been assessed eligible, you may postpone for up to 24 months without having to pass and pay the eligibility assessment again. After 24 months you must go through the eligibility assessment again and pay its fee.

All fees paid are non-refundable. The exam fee may be transferred to another exam sitting if more than 30 days' notice is given. See also above under 'Cancellation'.

## **Preparation for the examination**

Q: How can I prepare for the examination?

A: The best preparation is daily surgical practice, practice of MCQ tests of the type already indicated and all aspects of the oral examinations. You must be familiar with the Syllabus and the format of the exam. Not only should you practice the content of your answers, but also the presentation of your decision-making process and the demonstration of problem- solving ability.

## **Procedures (flexible endoscopy skills)**

Q: In the country where I trained, General Surgeons do not practice endoscopies. Will my application for eligibility be accepted?



A: The Board is aware that in some countries surgeons do not have the opportunity to practice endoscopy. The Eligibility Committee will apply the correct degree of **flexibility** in its assessment of applications, allowing for equivalence and compensation.

### Procedures (technical surgical skills)

Q: I do not have the required percentage of EPAs, will I be found ineligible?

A: Because the emphasis and attitudes regarding the spectrum of competences and education within General Surgery vary significantly between individual states, applicants are not expected to have attained Entrustable Professional Activity competency in each and every item listed. The Eligibility Committee will apply the correct degree of **flexibility** in its assessment of applications, allowing for equivalence and compensation of some procedures. EPAs related to basic procedures, which every General Surgeon should master, are emphasized during the Eligibility Process.

### **Q** ualification (Primary, acceptable for eligibility)

Q: What is a Primary Qualification acceptable for eligibility?

A: You need to submit evidence of successful completion of an undergraduate medical course, or a pass at final medical school examinations, or a University medical graduation diploma.

### Qualification (EBSQ)

Q: What benefits does the Qualification confer?

A: The EBSQ is essentially a quality mark. In some countries, the Qualification may be an important factor in the eligibility process for a Certificate of Completion of Training.

In countries where such a decision was adopted, the UEMS EBSQ General Surgery Examination has substituted the National Examination as a pre-requisite for Specialist Registration. In some countries, the EBSQ General Surgery may facilitate eligibility for independent practice.

This is, however, entirely subject to authorization by the national relevant regulatory body. In some countries, the EBSQ General Surgery is taken into consideration for surgical appointments. If in any doubt, you must seek clarification from the regulatory authority of the country where you are planning to practice.

### Quality improvement

Q: What is the process of quality improvement?

A: The Examination Committee (General Surgery) reviews:

- Feedback from candidates



- Feedback from examiners
- Feedback from the Chairperson of the Eligibility Committee
- Analysis and recommendations by the Head of Medical Assessment based on the course and results of the Examination
- Report by the Internal Quality Assurance Officer
- External Quality Assurance and recommendations by the Council for European Specialists Medical Assessment (UEMS-CESMA). UEMS-CESMA is an advisory body of the UEMS providing recommendation and advice on the organisation of European examinations for medical specialists.
- The Chairperson of the Examination then makes a synthesis from all the above data and submits his conclusions to the Executive.

## **Re-applying for eligibility**

Q: Can I re-apply for eligibility? Will I have to pay again?

A: Yes, if you fail the Eligibility process, you can re-apply; re-applying entails paying the Eligibility fee again.

## **Referees, recommendations**

Q: Whom can I ask to be my referees?

A: The referees must be surgeons of Consultant Grade or equivalent, who have had direct knowledge of you during your training or work period. They need not be Fellows of the European Board. One of those Referees must be the current Training tutor, Head of Department or Clinical Director. A form for recommendation is provided for downloading.

## **Registration (country of, specialist)**

Q: Do I have to be registered as a medical doctor in a European or UEMS country to be eligible?

A: No, you need to be registered as a practicing doctor with a National Authority, but not necessarily in a UEMS or European country. Specialist registration is not a necessity.

## **Resitting**

Q: Can I resit the UEMS EBSQ General Surgery examination? Is there a fee for a resit examination?



A: Yes, but you cannot sit the EBSQ General Surgery examination for more than four times in all. To resit, you do not need to go through the Eligibility process and so you do not need to pay the Eligibility Fee again. You will be required to make your intentions clear and pay the rest of the Examination Fee.

## **Results**

Q: When will I hear about the results?

A: The final comprehensive results are given shortly after the Part 2 (OSCE Circuit). The agreed quantified marks are not given; you will only be told whether you have passed or failed. FEBS certificates are issued to those successful in attaining the standard. Written feedback will be issued to those candidates not attaining the passing standard. This feedback is delayed if the candidate chooses to appeal the court of examiners ruling, pending re-discussion at the examiners committee.

## **Scholarship (International Scholarship Program)**

Q: Is there a scholarship?

A: Yes, there is one. An EBSQ International Scholarship for candidates from least developed countries amounting to 1,000 Euros will be awarded to successful candidates on condition that their place of work and country of residence is listed as one on the most current United Nations (UN) list of least developed countries (LDC). A maximum of two bursaries will be awarded to the two candidates who place best in the Exam, if contested.

The bursary will be paid after the examination results are published.

This Scholarship cannot be accumulated with the Gold Certificate.

## **Surgery (General)**

Q: The scope of general surgery varies amongst countries. How do you take this into account?

A: In its assessment of applications, the Eligibility Committee will look at the entire application and apply the correct degree of flexibility, allowing for those variations and individual situations.

## **Syllabus**

Q: Is there a Syllabus?



A: The Syllabus is to be found in the EBSQ Examinations in General Surgery section of our website.

## **T** extbooks

Q: Do you recommend any textbooks for preparation?

A: We don't have a list of recommended texts. Please refer to the syllabus for content of knowledge.

## **Timing after application**

Q: When will I hear from you after submitting my application?

A: After submitting your application, you will receive an automatic acknowledgement. Within a few days, we will then let you know whether your application is complete or not. Should your application be complete, it will be passed on to the Eligibility Committee for assessment. The Eligibility Committee is committed to letting you know of its decision as soon as possible. Should your application be incomplete, we will let you know what is missing.

## **Training (minimum number of years)**

Q: What is the minimum number of years of training to be eligible?

A: You need a minimum of 6 post-graduate years in surgical training and/or supervised surgical practice in general surgery or allied specialities. These years are counted from the date of first starting training to the closing date of application for the Examination if there is a continuum. In case of gaps, the eligibility committee will consider the evidence and explanations provided to make reasonable allowance

## **Translations**

Q: Do I need to have my documents translated? Who can translate my documents?

A: You must provide a certified translation (translation by a sworn translator or certified as correct by an official Institution: Notary, Ministry for Foreign Affairs) for any documents not in English.



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**If you have not found an answer to your questions, please contact the UEMS Office.**

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