

# Applicant Guidance

**Northern Ireland Local Recruitment:**

**Multi-Specialty Recruitment Assessment (MSRA) 2026-27**

**CT1 Core Surgery  
ST1 Emergency Medicine**

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# PART I: OVERVIEW

## 1. Introduction

The purpose of this guidance is to outline requirements to allow successful completion of the Multi-Specialty Recruitment Assessment (MSRA) for recruitment to some Northern Ireland training programmes (Core Surgery and Emergency Medicine for posts commencing in August 2026 and February 2027

The MSRA is a computer-based assessment, delivered in partnership with Work Psychology Group and Pearson VUE, which has been designed to assess some of the essential competences outlined in the Person Specification and is based around clinical scenarios.

The MSRA is utilised as an entry to training assessment by several postgraduate medical specialties. Each speciality considers the MSRA differently as part of its selection process. It is recommended that you visit specific national recruitment websites and familiarise yourself with the appropriate guidance for those specialties. This guidance is specifically for Northern Ireland recruitment.

## 2. Sitting the MSRA

All new applicants who apply to to the following training programmes in Northern Ireland for the first time in this recruitment year are required to sit the MSRA, CT1 Core Surgery and ST1 Emergency Medicine.

**Important:** The MSRA will be delivered at Pearson VUE assessment centres and a remote testing provision will be in place, *as a reasonable adjustment*,

## 3. Structure of the MSRA

The MSRA is 170 minutes in length and there are two component parts to the MSRA - a Professional Dilemmas (PD) paper and a Clinical Problem Solving (CPS) paper. The time allocated for each paper is detailed below, inc. examples of times for those applicants have been awarded additional time in line with the Equality Act 2010 disability accommodation requirements.

Paper	Length / Time		
	Normal	+25% Extra	+50% Extra
<b>Professional Dilemmas (PD)</b>	95 minutes	122 minutes	146 minutes
<b>Clinical Problem Solving (CPS)</b>	75 minutes	93 minutes	109 minutes

The MSRA is delivered as a *single* assessment. The two papers are independently timed and the time remaining in each paper is denoted by an onscreen countdown timer.

On completion of the Professional Dilemmas paper, there will be an optional 5-minute scheduled break before the Clinical Problem-Solving paper commences. In instances where a break of longer than 5 minutes is taken, the excess time will be *automatically* taken off the available time for the Clinical Problem-Solving paper when you commence the paper.

The structure of both papers, including the question types, the competency domains being assessed and the scoring process is detailed in full in the [MSRA assessment Blueprint & Information](#) document; you are strongly advised to read this document. Sample and practice questions for both of the papers are available from the [GPNRO Resource Bank](#).

In addition to the MSRA assessment Blueprint & Information document and sample questions, Pearson VUE offer a generic demo to aid you in familiarising yourself with the controls and screen layouts in advance of the assessment. This demo can be accessed via <https://home.pearsonvue.com/nro>.

### 3.1. Revision Materials

None of the question writers take part in or endorse any preparation courses or books.

NIMDTA (Northern Ireland Medical & Dental Training Agency) understands that applicants may wish to revise and prepare for the MSRA with each other in small groups. However, sharing information about the actual assessments is unacceptable and is viewed as unprofessional behaviour. The MSRA uses many different equated assessment forms and therefore knowledge of questions in one paper will not necessarily benefit others. We would also remind all applicants that entry to specialty training is competitive.

## 4. Registering an account for the MSRA

Once the application window has closed, you will receive a message from NIMDTA asking you to register with Pearson VUE using very specific account credentials associated with your Oriol account. If you have applied to other specialties, you may receive multiple messages containing the same credentials from each. In this instance, you only need to register once.

If this is your first attempt at the MSRA or, if you created a Pearson VUE account for the MSRA **before** Round 1, 2021, you will be required to create a Pearson VUE account with the credentials contained in the message. Failure to register will result in you being unable to sit the MSRA and your application will be withdrawn. Accounts created for the MSRA prior to 2021 will not be valid.

Once you create your Pearson VUE account you will receive an automated email from [PearsonVUEConfirmation@pearson.com](mailto:PearsonVUEConfirmation@pearson.com) confirming the username for the account. Please ensure you safely retain this correspondence for your records and for future access to your account.

It is important to remember that the **registration correspondence is not an invitation to attend the MSRA**; on completion of registration, your account will correctly state you *do not* have any pre-approved assessments at this time meaning you will not be able to book an appointment.

## 4.1 Signing into a registered Pearson VUE account

Following the successful completion of the registration process, applicants will be able to sign into their new or existing Pearson VUE accounts by visiting <https://home.pearsonvue.com/nro>.

Applicants who are unable to recall their login credentials can retrieve or reset this information by using the *forgot my username / password* links available on the sign-in page.

Applicants who continue to experience difficulties accessing their account are advised to direct their queries to the Pearson VUE customer services team at [nrocustomerservice@pearson.com](mailto:nrocustomerservice@pearson.com). When contacting customer services, please ensure the following information is provided:

- Your Pearson VUE Application Number (i.e., your 12-digit *Oriel Exam ID*)
- Your, full name, as registered on the Pearson VUE account
- Your email address, as registered on the Pearson VUE account
- Your postal address, as registered on the Pearson VUE account

## 5. Invitation to the MSRA

All applicants who have been assessed as demonstrating evidence of eligibility as outlined in the relevant person specification will be invited to sit the MSRA. If

you are invited, you will be required to book an appointment and undertake the MSRA. If you do not book an appointment in time, your application will not progress and you will need to re-apply for a subsequent round.

All MSRA assessments are expected to be held in Pearson VUE assessment centres.

It is recommended that you check the assessment centre area meets any requirements you may have before booking your assessment.

Details for each Pearson VUE centre can be found on the Pearson VUE website.

## **6. Reasonable Adjustments under the Equality Act 2010**

All NHSLocal Offices and Deaneries are aware of the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and will make reasonable adjustments to accommodate requests provided these are made known in advance. If you require any adjustments (e.g., wheelchair access, additional time, nursing mothers) you must request the adjustments on the application form, at the time of application and ensure the request is evidenced by supporting documentation.

Requests that are submitted outside of the application window will not be considered.

If you require a Reasonable Adjustment for your MSRA, you will need to select 'Yes,' to the question "*Do you have a disability which requires any specific arrangements / adjustments to enable you to attend a computer-based test, interview or assessment, or other selection process?*", which can be found in the Personal Details section of the application form. You will need to select the adjustment(s) you require from the list of options and attach the necessary evidence to support your request.

In some instances, to satisfy requests for adjustments, it may be necessary to schedule your assessment at a specific time or in a specific location.

### **6.1 Nursing Mothers Policy**

In line with the Equality Act 2010, NIMDTA will consider requests from nursing mothers to provide suitable facilities in the MSRA assessment centres. If this applies to you then you must submit this request with your application form. NIMDTA will then liaise with Pearson VUE to honour your request and to allow you to pause your assessment and leave the assessment centre for a short, timed period.

It should be noted that children are not permitted at any of the assessment centres and therefore it is recommended that nursing mothers check the location of the assessment centre before booking an assessment to ensure that nearby facilities meet any requirements

## 6.2 Comfort Aids

Pearson VUE list several medicines, medical and mobility devices as comfort aids which do **not** require pre-approval as an accommodation by NIMDTA or the NHS MSRA team.. Comfort aid items are listed on the Pearson VUE website in the [assessment accommodations](#) section.

The items listed will be allowed in the testing room upon visual inspection by Assessment Centre staff. Visual inspection will be done by examining the item without directly touching it (or the applicant) and without asking the applicant to remove the item, unless otherwise stated in Pearson VUE's comfort aid list.

# PART II: ASSESSMENT CENTRE DELIVERY

## 7. Assessment Centre Locations

The MSRA is delivered globally on several consecutive days in a large number of Pearson VUE Computer Testing Centres. You can find your nearest Pearson VUE assessment centre by visiting <https://pearsonvue.com/nro/locate>. Please note that capacity at each centre is finite and there may be a requirement to travel to the nearest location with availability if there is no availability at your preferred location.

Applicants who reside in or, are in employment in the UK (including the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man) during the assessment window are expected to attend a UK assessment centre. If you are outside of the UK during the MSRA window, you will have the opportunity to sit the MSRA outside of the UK at an assessment centre nearest to your location, subject to seat availability.

It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure that the necessary arrangements have been made should they be required to travel to a test centre location.

## 8. Booking an assessment

If you are invited to the MSRA, you will be required to log into your Pearson VUE account and use the self-service functionality to book an assessment at a centre, date, and time of your choosing, subject to availability. The *only exception* to this is if you have requested a special accommodation other than or, in addition to extra time, under the Equality Act 2010; in this instance, you will be contacted directly by Pearson VUE with details of your appointment *provided* you have completed the registration process outlined in Section 6. PearsonVue will accommodate your booking based on the address you have provided on your application form.

When booking your assessment, it is strongly recommended that you avoid booking from a mobile device or internet browsers that have reached the end of their product support lifecycle as these are unlikely to be supported.

When searching for seat availability at assessment centres by location, Pearson VUE will return a maximum of 30 assessment centres per location search. To view more assessment centres, you will need to alter your search criterion.

## 8.1 Confirmation of MSRA booking

Once you have booked your assessment, you will receive an automated confirmation email to your registered email address. If you do not receive this confirmation, log into your Pearson VUE account to confirm if the booking process was completed in its entirety.

## 9. Admission Policy

You must arrive at the assessment centre at least 15 minutes before your scheduled appointment time to complete the necessary check-in procedures. It is essential that you arrive on time as applicants who arrive late will NOT be admitted entry.

You should note that children are not permitted at any of the assessment centres.

Should applicants arrive to their scheduled appointment late, we are unable to guarantee that you will be able to re-book your MSRA. It is the applicant's responsibility to check their confirmation email and ensure they have prepared for the correct date and time booked.

### 9.1 Health & Safety Guidelines for COVID-19 at Assessment Centres

Before travelling to an assessment centre, it is vitally important that you familiarise yourself with the [health and safety guidelines](#) implemented at all Pearson VUE owned centres to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and for protecting testing applicants and their staff.

The guidelines contain important applicant information and anyone who fails to comply with the guidelines will be denied their testing services.

### 9.2 Identification (ID) Requirements

In line with the [Pearson VUE ID policy](#), from the list below, you are required to present one form of original (no photo copies or digital IDs), valid (unexpired) government issued ID that includes your **name**, recent **recognizable photograph**, and **signature**.

- International Travel Passport,
- Driver's license,
- Military ID (including spouse & dependents),

- Identification card (national/state/province identity card),
- Alien registration card (green card, permanent resident, visa),
- Local language ID (not in Roman characters) – *accepted only if issued from the Country you are testing in.*

All forms of acceptable IDs must be issued by the country in which you are testing. If you do not possess qualifying ID issued from the country you are testing in, an international travel passport in **roman characters** from your country of citizenship is required. If you are a European Union candidate testing within the EU zone, you may also provide a valid, unexpired EU identity card as primary ID.

ID issued by sanctioned countries will not be accepted. Please refer to the PearsonVue website for further information,

Expired forms of ID are not acceptable, unless accompanied by valid renewal papers. A government issued ID missing a visible signature or one that has an embedded signature must be supplemented with an original, valid ID that has at least a matching name and recent recognizable photo, or a matching name and signature.

The first and last name you used on your application form and thus your Pearson VUE account must match exactly the first and last name on the ID that is presented on the day of your MSRA appointment.

Should you fail to provide the correct ID, we are unable to guarantee that applicant's will have the opportunity to re-book their MSRA. It is therefore important that applicants familiarise themselves with the ID policy and ensure that they have an appropriate form of ID on the day of their scheduled test.

### **9.2.1 Correcting Name Discrepancies**

If there is a name discrepancy between your registered Oriel account, and thus your Pearson VUE account, and your government issued ID, e.g., due to typographical or transposition error or, missing middle names etc., you can update your personal details with the required corrections via the *My profile* section in your Oriel account; any changes made to your personal details in Oriel will be reflected in Pearson VUE account.

## **9.3 Alternative Identification Documents**

If you are unable to present any of the documents listed above or, your first name and last name does not match EXACTLY with the one on the documents that you intend to present

on the day of your assessment, you must contact the MSRA team at the earliest opportunity at [england.msra@nhs.net](mailto:england.msra@nhs.net) for further advice and instructions on suitable alternatives.

Failure to notify NIMDTA or the MSRA team of any discrepancies will result in you not being permitted entry to sit the assessment.

## 9.4 Personal belongings

You will not be allowed to take any personal items with you into the testing room. This includes all bags, books or other materials not authorised for the MSRA, notes, phones, pagers, watches, and wallets.

## 9.5 Breaks and refreshments

There is a short 5-minute scheduled break between the Professional Dilemmas and the Clinical Problem-Solving paper. In instances where a break of longer than 5 minutes is taken, for applicants sitting the test via OnVue, the test will automatically be revoked, and you will not have the opportunity to re-sit.

### **Important:**

Unscheduled breaks are not allowed during the assessment for any reason. If you leave your device during your assessment in an unscheduled period, the Proctor will end your session and you will be unable to continue testing. This will result in the automatic withdrawal of your application.

You are advised to take a comfort break prior to the commencement of your assessment or during the scheduled break.

If you require refreshments, water in a clear glass is allowed during testing. Eating, smoking, and chewing gum are prohibited.

# PART III: OnVUE DELIVERY

## 10. What is OnVUE Delivery?

OnVUE offers a secure and convenient online proctoring solution for home-testing and maintains a consistent testing experience with assessment centre delivery. OnVUE delivery is offered as a *reasonable adjustment* to applicants extenuating circumstances..

### 10.1 Eligibility for OnVUE Delivery

Applicants will have the opportunity to request a remote, OnVUE delivery. Remote testing is available to applicants with extenuating circumstances. NIMDTA will approve requests on a case by case basis in collaboration with the NHS MSRA team.

## 11. OnVUE Minimum Requirements

Before booking an assessment, applicants should ensure that their equipment and environment meet Pearson VUE's required specification for the successful delivery of an online proctored assessment.

You should visit <https://home.pearsonvue.com/nro/onvue> and run the system test **and** read the system requirements to ensure that the device you intend to use to sit the MSRA meets the minimum specification requirement. You should also ensure that your testing environment is a quiet, private location with a strong and reliable internet connection.

It is strongly recommended that you avoid sitting the assessment at work or on a work computer as it is likely that your employer's strict network security / firewall will disrupt the online assessment delivery.

You are also strongly advised to familiarise yourself with Pearson VUE's policies and procedures <https://www.pearsonvue.com/us/en/nro/onvue.html> which must be strictly adhered to. You should be aware that any violation of policies and procedures will result in the immediate termination of your assessment and withdrawal of your application on grounds of misconduct.

Assessments that are terminated on grounds of misconduct will not have the opportunity to re-book their MSRA. The score received in the terminated assessment will be the final score used against their application. It is therefore essential for all applicants to familiarise themselves with PearsonVue's policies and procedures.

**Important:** all applicants sitting the assessment via OnVUE are solely responsible for their testing environment, internet connectivity, the device(s) used for the assessment and any other devices connected to their network that could interfere with delivery, and for ensuring that minimum internet bandwidth requirements are maintained on their network for the entire duration of their Pearson VUE assessment appointment. Any equipment or connectivity failures that occur during the assessment which result in the disruption or early termination of the assessment will not lead to further attempts at the assessment if responsibility for the failures does not lie with Pearson VUE. Please note that technical support will not be available from NIMDTA or the NHS MSRA team..

## 12. Booking an assessment

If you are approved to sit the MSRA remotely, you will be required to log into your Pearson VUE account and use the self-service functionality to book an assessment on a date and time of your choosing, subject to availability within the specified testing window. If you have requested any reasonable adjustments, other than extra time, you will not be able to sit the MSRA via remote testing. .

When booking your assessment, it is strongly recommended that you avoid booking from a mobile device or internet browsers that have reached the end of their product support lifecycle as these are unlikely to be supported.

Please note, that when booking the ONVUE MRSA, it is essential that you check the time period (AM/PM) and the time zone, as ONVUE runs for 24 hours.

### 12.1 Confirmation of MSRA booking

Once you have booked your assessment, you will receive an automated confirmation email to your registered email address. If you do not receive this confirmation, log into your Pearson VUE account to confirm if the booking process was completed in its entirety.

## 13. Admission Policy

The MSRA delivered via OnVUE is proctored in English only. There is not an option for local language proctoring for this assessment.

All applicants are advised to log into their accounts 30 minutes early to start the self-check-in process, run through ID authentication protocols using artificial intelligence and to allow for any troubleshooting. If you are more than 15 minutes late after your scheduled assessment time you will be unable to begin your assessment.

Should applicants arrive to their scheduled appointment late, we are unable to guarantee that you will be able to re-book your MSRA. It is the applicant's responsibility to check their confirmation email and ensure they have prepared for the correct date and time booked, and all system checks have been carried out prior to the assessment taking place.

To log into your account:

- Visit <https://home.pearsonvue.com/nro> and click on the Sign In button
- Click on your scheduled assessment under 'Purchased Online Assessments'
- Click "Begin Assessment" and follow the on-screen prompts to complete the check-in process
- Once you have completed the check-in process you will be contacted by a Proctor to begin your assessment

Please note that you are required to have a clean and clutter free workstation. During check in, the Proctor will ask you to perform a room and desk scan using your webcam and will inspect any materials near your workstation.

If a third party is detected in the physical room where you are seated during the assessment, the assessment will be immediately terminated, and your application will be withdrawn.

### **13.1 Identification (ID) Requirements**

The Identification (ID) requirements for online proctored assessments differ to the requirements for an assessment delivered at an assessment centre. Therefore, it is important that you understand the requirements for this occurrence.

Before testing online, you'll need to provide identification (ID) that meets the requirements outlined below.

- All IDs must be valid government-issued originals (i.e., not a photocopy)
- IDs must include the applicant's name and a recent, recognizable photo

- The first and last name on the ID must match the first and last name used to register for the exam
- Acceptable forms of ID:
  - International travel passport
  - Driver's license
  - Identification card (national, state or province ID card)
  - Alien registration card (green card or permanent resident/visa)
- Unacceptable IDs:
  - Restricted IDs\*, including the U.S. Department of Defence (DoD) Common Access Card (CAC) or certain secure access IDs
  - IDs from countries where OnVUE delivery is restricted: North Korea, Cuba, Syria, Sudan, Iran, and the Sevastopol/Crimea region of Ukraine.

\* Pearson VUE cannot accept restricted IDs—those prohibited by law from being photocopied, digitized, or captured on camera—as identification for online testing.

Please note that Pearson VUE are unable to accept the following IDs for an online proctored assessment:

- Renewal forms with expired ID's
- Government-issued name change documents with Government ID.
- ID issued by sanctioned countries will not be accepted. Please refer to the PearsonVue website for further information,

### **13.1.2 Correcting Name Discrepancies**

If there is a name discrepancy between your registered Oriel account, and thus your Pearson VUE account, and your government issued ID, e.g., due to typographical or transposition error or, missing middle names etc., you can update your personal details with the required corrections via the *My profile* section in your Oriel account; any changes made to your personal details in Oriel will be reflected in Pearson VUE account.

## **13.2 Alternative Identification Documents**

Alternative identification documents cannot be accepted for assessments delivered through OnVUE. If you are unable to satisfy the ID requirements, you must contact the MSRA team immediately at [england.msra@nhs.net](mailto:england.msra@nhs.net) for further advice.

Failure to notify the MSRA team of any discrepancies will result in you not being permitted to sit the assessment.

Should you fail to provide the correct ID, we are unable to guarantee that applicant's will have the opportunity to re-book their MSRA. It is therefore important that applicants

familiarise themselves with the ID policy and ensure that they have an appropriate form of ID on the day of their scheduled test.

### **13.3 Breaks and refreshments**

There is a short 5-minute scheduled break between the Professional Dilemmas and the Clinical Problem-Solving paper. In instances where a break of longer than 5 minutes is taken, the test will automatically be revoked

For applicants sitting the test via OnVue, the test will automatically be revoked, and you will not have the opportunity to re-sit

If you choose to take the optional scheduled break, your computer will be locked by the invigilator for security purposes. Once you have completed your break, you will need to ask the invigilator to unlock your computer before you can continue with the MSRA

You may leave the assessment room for an unscheduled water or a comfort break, however the time will be deducted from your assessment. If you wish to leave the room, you must ask the invigilator.

You are prohibited from taking food and drink into the assessment room and you will not be permitted to eat whilst in the assessment centre

# PART IV: OTHER POLICIES

## 14. Reschedule Policy

If you wish to reschedule your assessment, you may do this via your [Pearson VUE account](#) for the assessment in question, within the assessment booking period. If you are an applicant with a pre-approved adjustment and wish to reschedule your assessment, please contact Pearson VUE via email at [nrocustomerservice@pearson.com](mailto:nrocustomerservice@pearson.com). You must reschedule assessment appointments at least 24 hours before the appointment.

## 15. Cancellation Policy

If you wish to cancel your assessment, you may do this via your [Pearson VUE account](#) for the assessment in question, within the assessment booking period. You must cancel assessment appointments at least 24 hours before the appointment.

## 16. Missed Appointments

If you miss your assessment and wish to schedule another appointment, please contact the MSRA team at [england.msra@nhs.net](mailto:england.msra@nhs.net) immediately; you will not be able to re-book online via self-service without first being re-authorised by the MSRA team. Assessment centre availability is likely to be limited at this point and that you may be required to travel beyond your preferred locality. The MRSA Team will be unable to accommodate you if you miss an appointment on the final day of the MSRA window; it is not NIMDTA or the MRSA Teams responsibility to find you a date, time, and location suitable to you. All availability can be found at the time of re-booking your assessment via the PearsonVue website.

## 17. Applicant Expenses

Expenses incurred by applicants in sitting the MSRA will *not* be reimbursed by NIMDTA.

# **PART V: MSRA OUTCOMES**

## **18. MSRA Outcomes**

All applicants will be notified of their results, and thus their performance/outcome a short time after the conclusion of the testing window, The date by which you can expect your results is disclosed in the recruitment timeline for each round.

The results will be published in your Oriel account against your application as interview scores. Top scoring candidates will subsequently be invited to interview based on the declared interview capacity for their specialty. Detailed guidance on how to locate or view these scores is contained in the Oriel Handbook.

### **18.1 Maximum Achievable Score**

Due to the above mentioned normalisation of all MSRA scores, there is no maximum achievable score. For a given cohort of applicants, normalisation is dependent on the average performance of said cohort and therefore, it is not considered meaningful to interpret the scores achieved in the MSRA with a maximum value.

### **18.2 Appealing the Outcome**

All applicants will receive feedback when they are notified of their outcome. The outcome is final and cannot be reviewed, re-marked, or disputed. There is no appeals process.

## **19. Complaints Procedure**

All national recruitment offices use a nationally agreed process for handling complaints about recruitment. If you feel your application has not been managed correctly and have

evidence of a failure in the process, you should explore this route. For further information, visit <https://medical.hee.nhs.uk/medical-training-recruitment/medical-specialty-training/complaints>

## **Prepare yourself for the MSRA with these tips.**

### **Take a test tutorial**

A generic tutorial is available to allow you to familiarise yourself with the controls and screen layouts in advance – see Pearson VUE or Oriel for details.

### **Use the medical glossary**

A glossary of frequently used terms and a list of abbreviations is available for reference throughout the exam. This is particularly useful for those less familiar with the UK medical system.

### **Negative marking**

Papers are not negatively marked so make sure you answer all the questions. A wrong answer can score more marks than a missed question.

### **Read carefully**

Read the instructions and questions carefully. There may be times when you would like more information to answer questions; you need to give your best answer using the information provided in the question.

### **Understand the marking**

For the Situational Judgement Test (SJT) it is important to bear in mind that answers are marked against a predetermined key, based on a near-miss approach. Your performance on the test as a whole will be used to determine your level of situational judgement.

### **Try the MSRA Practice Paper**

The Practice Paper contains example questions with answers and rationale to help you prepare for the MRSA.