



Guidance on the Swiss Board Examination in General Internal Medicine

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Introduction

The Swiss Society for General Internal Medicine (SSGIM) is responsible for organising the Board Examination in General Internal Medicine (GIM). The regulations of the Swiss Institute for Postgraduate and Further Education in Medicine (SIWF/ISFM) of the Swiss Medical Association (FMH) apply to all Board Examinations: www.siwf.ch.

1. The Board Examination in General Internal Medicine

The Board Examination in General Internal Medicine will be held twice in 2024: on Thursday, June 20, 2024, and on Thursday, November 14, 2024.

Registration

The dates of the examination and the registration period will be published at least six months in advance on the SIWF/ISFM (www.siwf.ch) and SSGIM (www.sgaim.ch) websites. Registrations must be submitted within the official registration period on the website of the Swiss Board Examination in General Internal Medicine: <http://www.sgaim.ch/egim/>. Any registrations sent by ordinary mail, e-mail, phone or fax will not be accepted.

Official registration periods:

Examination on June 20, 2024: from January 18th until April 11th, 2024

Examination on November 14, 2024: from June 6th until September 6th, 2024

Admittance to the examination

Only candidates with a Swiss or officially recognized foreign medical diploma (continuing education requirements, *Weiterbildungsordnung/Réglementation pour la formation postgraduée*, article 23) will be admitted to the examination. The SSGIM will consult the MedReg register of medical professions (www.medregom.admin.ch) to ensure that the above-mentioned criteria have been met. In cases where a candidate has not yet been registered in MedReg, a copy of the candidate's recognized foreign medical diploma must be presented.

It is mandatory to indicate a correspondence address in Switzerland in the registration for the examination. Registration of a candidate is **only complete after** the examination fee has been paid within ten days of receipt of the invoice. It is strongly recommended that a **minimum of three years** of clinical training in general internal medicine are completed before attempting the examination given that clinical experience will contribute greatly to preparing for the examination.

Content and form of the examination

The examination is in written form and will test the knowledge and reasoning skills of the candidate in the entire field of GIM by means of multiple-choice questions (MCQs).



2. 2024 Examination

The Board Examination in General Internal Medicine will be in written form only. The examination time is set at five hours. The examination consists of 120 multiple choice questions.

The **MC questions** are made up of questions from the **Medical Knowledge Self-Assessment Programs (MKSAP)** of the American College of Physicians (ACP) and questions generated by Swiss specialists in general internal medicine. In the MCQs, a clinical problem is presented and the candidate has to select the most appropriate answer out of 4 or 5 possibilities. All MCQs are single-select questions in English. After the examination, all questions are scrutinized for potential flaws by means of statistical analysis and comments from candidates. The Examination Board then decides whether a question will be accepted for the final result.

The content of the examination is structured as follows (the listed percentages may vary as many questions fall under multiple topics and thus are only approximations):

120 MC questions

1. General considerations incl. prevention, palliative medicine, rehabilitation, health insurance and economics, ethics, statistics and questions not allocated to a subspecialty	14 %
2. Rheumatology, allergology and immunology	9 %
3. Neurology and psychiatry	7 %
4. Cardiovascular medicine	11 %
5. Endocrinology and metabolism	8 %
6. Nephrology	8 %
7. Gastroenterology and hepatology	9 %
8. Haematology and oncology	9 %
9. Infectious diseases	9 %
10. Pneumology	8 %
11. Intensive care	4 %
12. Dermatology	4 %
Total examination questions	120 questions = 100 %

The candidates will receive three different examination papers (question booklet, answer sheet and comment sheet). It is mandatory to sign all these three documents. The answer sheet is the only document for scoring the examination. Incomplete or erroneous transfers of answers to the answer sheet are not valid grounds for an appeal.

All these documents have to remain on the candidate's table in the examination hall after the examination.

3. Preparation for the Examination

Expertise in the entire domain of general internal medicine, including primary care, hospital-based internal medicine, and intensive care, is expected from the candidates for the examination. The Examination Board checks relevance, medical correctness, and difficulty of each question.

The MKSAP is helpful to candidates as they prepare for the examination and practise MCQs. This program may be ordered for a fee from the SSGIM office. **45 to 55% of MCQs are from Swiss medical experts, and the remainder of questions is taken from MKSAP 16 – 19.** It is **recommended** that candidates use **MKSAP 19** for training purposes. To study the entire edition (not only the questions, but also the background, the explanatory evidence and the added literature), **will also help** you to answer questions from earlier MKSAP editions and Swiss questions. It is further **recommended** that you consult one of the **standard textbooks**, e.g. "Current Medical Diagnosis and Treatment", "Oxford Textbook of Primary Medical Care", "Harrison's Principles of Internal Medicine" and of course *Uptodate*.



4. Grading of the Examination

The minimum passing score of the Board Examination in General Internal Medicine is established by the examination committee as part of a content-based assessment. Consistency of the difficulty level of the examination is assured from year to year by means of recycled anchor questions. Experience shows that 88 to 92 % of candidates pass the examination.

To attain the Swiss federal title “General Practitioner”¹, evidence must be provided of a pass in the Board Examination in General Internal Medicine. The pass mark is set at a relative percentage that is 10 % lower than that for candidates aiming to become specialists in general internal medicine, for example 63 % instead of 70 %.

Candidates will receive a feedback sheet containing the number of questions that counted towards their result, the total score achieved, the score achieved in each subgroup, and the percentile rank. There will be no grading. The examination will only be marked as pass or fail.

The results will be announced within 3 - 8 weeks of the examination.

5. Legal Regulations

The answer sheet is the only document for scoring the examination. Incomplete or erroneous transfers of answers to the answer sheet are not valid grounds for an appeal.

Material permitted for use during the examination

The use of electronic devices such as mobile phones, handheld computers, laptops, etc. is not allowed during the examination. **Only translation dictionaries (containing no medical information) in print form are permitted.**

Unusual English words in the question booklet will be **translated** into French and German, and the supervisors will assist should any translating problems arise. Reference ranges for those laboratory values, for which MKSAP also provides reference ranges, will be indicated within the questions (no separate sheet anymore), and in SI format only.

Anyone who uses improper means in the written examination will be disqualified from the examination. This includes copying results from another candidate, the use of unauthorized documents and the use of electronic devices such as smartphones, tablets and other internet-enabled devices. Failure to comply with this regulation will result in immediate exclusion from the examination and the candidate will be listed in the examination records with the qualification “failed”. Exclusion from the examination is decided by the president or a member of the Board of Medical Examiners.

Right to consult the dossier in the event of failure to pass

In the event of failure to pass the examination, you have the right to view a limited part of your examination documents. The aim is not, however, to allow candidates to learn from their mistakes. Rather, if you suspect an error on the part of the Examining Board, which may have affected your

¹ This advanced training title “General Practitioner” should not be confused with the title “Specialist in General Internal Medicine, curriculum „Family Medicine“.

According to Art. 30ff of EU Directive 93/16 (consolidated version of 1.5.2004), each member state is obliged to offer “specific training in general medical practice”, which includes at least 3 years of full-time training.

The Federal continuous medical education title “General Practitioner” was created within the Federal Law on University Medical Professions (Medical Professions Law, MedBG) and the Medical Professions Regulation (MedBV) and corresponds to 3 years of continuous education in accordance with the EU Directive.



result (pass/fail), consulting the dossier will allow you to verify your suspicions. Please note that there is a fee for the administrative expenses (450.- CHF VAT 8.1 % included).

In accordance with art. 56 of the Swiss Federal Act on University Medical Professions (MedBG/LPMéd)² and given the nature of the examination (MC questions), you may only consult the questions in dispute. The time permitted for this is limited in accordance with the requirements of the Examination Board for Human Medicine. For all other queries, please refer to the “Instruction sheet for appeals against the result of a board certification examination or specialist examination”, which is sent to all candidates who fail the examination and may be viewed on the SIWF/ISFM homepage:

German: https://siwf.ch/files/pdf26/merkblatt_einsprachen_d.pdf.

French: https://siwf.ch/files/pdf26/merkblatt_einsprachen_f.pdf

Furthermore, the documents are made available solely for the purpose of consultation. Making photocopies or copying them down in their entirety is prohibited. You may only take notes for the purposes of filing an appeal. Consultation of the questions in dispute is carried out under the surveillance of a third party responsible for compiling a report on the consultation (date, times, procedure, etc.).

Candidates who have not passed the examination will receive, together with the feedback sheet, an information sheet containing instructions on how to obtain access to the examination documents and how to file an appeal with the Appeals Commission (see below).

Deadline for appeals

Under the terms of articles 27 and 58ss of the continuing education regulation (WBO/RFP)³, you may file an appeal against the decision of the Examining Board with the **Appeals Commission** for Postgraduate Training Titles (AC PTT, c/o FMH Legal Department, Elfenstrasse 18, Postfach 170, 3000 Bern 15) **within 60 days of the announcement of the result.**

The appeal must be sent to the Appeal Commission in duplicate and in written (**in German, French or Italian**), indicating the reasons and conclusions, citing the evidence and bearing the signature of the plaintiff or his/her representative. If you wish to file an appeal, we advise that you follow the instructions on the aforementioned SIWF/ISFM instruction sheet. If no appeal is filed by the stated deadline, the decision of the Examining Board is definitive and may no longer be challenged or reviewed within the scope of the procedure for obtaining the title.

Title

Passing the Board Examination in General Internal Medicine does not give a candidate the right to use the title “Specialist in General Internal Medicine” or “General Practitioner”, as candidates have to fulfil all the conditions of the continuing education regulation. An application for the title must be sent to the SIWF/ISFM (www.siwf.ch/weiterbildung/e-logbuch.cfm).

Cancellation policy and fees

If notification of withdrawal from the examination is received more than 14 days before the written examination, the examination fee will be reimbursed minus an administrative fee. If notification of withdrawal is received within 14 days of the written examination, the full amount remains due, irrespective of the reason for withdrawal. An administrative fee will also be due if the registration could not be validated.

²German: SR 811.11 *Bundesgesetz über die universitären Medizinalberufe, MedBG*

French: RS 811.11 *Loi fédérale sur les professions médicales universitaires, LPMéd*

³ Continuing education regulation of January 1, 2023

In German: https://www.siwf.ch/files/pdf7/wbo_d.pdf

In French: https://www.siwf.ch/files/pdf7/wbo_f.pdf

The following fees apply in case of withdrawal from the examination:

Examination on June 20, 2024:

If written cancellation is received before May 16th, 2024: CHF 75.–

If written cancellation is received before June 6th, 2024: CHF 150.–

No reimbursement will be made for withdrawals after June 7th, 2024.

Examination on November 14, 2024:

If written cancellation is received before October 10th, 2024: CHF 75.–

If written cancellation is received before October 31st, 2024: CHF 150.–

No reimbursement will be made for withdrawals after November 1st, 2024.

Office address

SSGIM
Monbijoustrasse 43, Postfach
3001 Bern
E-mail egim@sgaim.ch
www.sgaim.ch

President's address

Prof. Dr. Jürg H. Beer
SSGIM
Monbijoustrasse 43, Postfach, 3001 Bern
E-Mail: fapk@sgaim.ch

Please note that we cannot provide any information by telephone.

Bern, January 8th 2024

Prof. Dr. med. Jürg H. Beer, President of the Swiss Examination Board

Further Documents

SIWF/ISFM continuing education regulation of January 1, 2023

In German: https://www.siwf.ch/files/pdf7/wbo_d.pdf

In French: https://siwf.ch/files/pdf28/wbo_f.pdf

Continuing education programme of January 1, 2022 to achieve the title of Specialist Physician in General Internal Medicine

In German: <https://www.siwf.ch/weiterbildung/facharzttitel-und-schwerpunkte/allgemeine-innere-medizin.cfm>

In French: <https://www.siwf.ch/fr/formation-postgraduee/titres-specialiste-formation/medecine-interne-generale.cfm>