

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:

<http://www.fmh.ch/bildung-siwf.html> – <http://www.fmh.ch/fr/formation-isfm.html>

1. The Board Examination in General Internal Medicine

The Board Examination in General Internal Medicine will be held twice in 2020: on Thursday, June 25, 2020, and on Thursday, November 05, 2020.

Registration

The dates of the examination and the registration period will be published both in the Swiss Medical Journal, *Schweizerische Ärztezeitung (SÄZ) – Bulletin des médecins suisses (BMS)* (www.saez.ch – www.bullmed.ch), and on the FMH (www.fmh.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/>

Admittance to the examination

Only candidates with a Swiss or officially recognized foreign medical diploma (continuing education requirements, *Weiterbildungsordnung/Réglemmentation 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. 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 two 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 field of GIM by means of multiple choice questions (MCQs).

2. 2020 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-choice 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%

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. **The majority of MCQs are chosen from MKSAP 16 – 18 and 30 to 40 % of the questions originate from Swiss medical experts.** It is **recommended** that candidates use **MKSAP 18** for revision purposes. If you study the whole of this edition (not only the questions), you will also be able 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”, or “Harrison’s Principles of Internal Medicine”.

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”, 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 6 - 10 weeks of the examination.

5. Legal regulations

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. **Normal laboratory values** are indicated on a separate sheet in the question booklet.

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 result (pass/fail), consulting the dossier will allow you to verify your suspicions.

In accordance with art. 56 of the Swiss Federal Act on University Medical Professions (MedBG/LPMéd)¹ 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 FMH homepage.

<http://www.fmh.ch/bildung-siwf.html> – <http://www.fmh.ch/fr/formation-isfm.html>

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)², 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.**

¹German: SR 811.11 *Bundesgesetz über die universitären Medizinalberufe, MedBG*

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

² Continuing education regulation of June 21, 2000, current version dated June 13, 2019.

In German: <https://www.fmh.ch/bildung-siwf/weiterbildung.html>

In French: <https://www.fmh.ch/fr/formation-isfm/formation-postgraduatee.html>



The appeal must be sent to the Appeals Commission in duplicate and in writing (**in German, French or Italian**), indicating the grounds and conclusions, citing 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 FMH instruction sheet. If no appeal is filed by the stated deadline, the decision of the Examining Board shall enter into force 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 (<https://www.fmh.ch/bildung-siwf.html>).

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 in the case of a candidate not turning up for the examination.

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Please note that we cannot provide any information by telephone.

Berne, December 2019

Dr. med. Ulrich Stoller, President of the Swiss Examination Board

Further documents

SIWF/ISFM continuing education regulation of June 21, 2000 (last revised on June 13, 2019)

In German: https://www.fmh.ch/files/pdf19/wbo_d.pdf

In French: https://www.fmh.ch/files/pdf21/wbo_f.pdf

Continuing education programme of January 1, 2011 (last revised on December 20, 2018) to achieve the title of Specialist Physician in General Internal Medicine

In German:

<http://www.fmh.ch/bildung-siwf/fachgebiete/facharzttitel-und-schwerpunkte.html>

<http://www.sgaim.ch/de/weiterbildung/programm-weiterbildung-aim.html>

In French:

<http://www.fmh.ch/fr/formation-isfm/domaines-specialises/titres-formation-postgraduee.html>

<http://www.sgaim.ch/fr/formation-postgraduee/programme-de-formation-postgraduee-mig.html>