

Extensions to the time allowed to pass an examination

The 2019 ABPI Code of Practice for the Pharmaceutical Industry included requirements in Clause 16.3 that representatives have to take an examination within one year of starting such employment and pass it within two years. The supplementary information to Clause 16.3 Time Allowed to Pass an Examination, sets out the arrangements for extensions in the event of extenuating circumstances.

In addition to the information for extensions set out in the 2019 Code, further arrangements are to be put in place as the ABPI examination was not available between 13 March 2020 and 30 September 2020 due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and as a consequence certain representatives could not meet the time periods for taking and/or passing the examination as required by the Code. Extensions have been granted during 2020 when requested. Everyone's circumstances are different and will need to be taken into account. Companies should make every effort to comply with the spirit of the Code and ensure that representatives take and pass the appropriate examination as soon as possible.

An examination is now available online. In order to assist the following arrangements for all affected representatives are now put in place in late 2020 (and will be proposed for inclusion in the 2021 ABPI Code) and are set out below.

Representatives who started work as a representative for the first time from 1 July 2020

For representatives who were employed as representative for the first time from 1 July 2020 then the time periods as set out in the Code will apply.

Representatives who worked as representatives during 2019 and have continued to work as representatives in 2020

For those representatives working as such in 2019 and whose one year or two year time periods include any time between 13 March 2020 and 31 October 2020, then these eight months will not count towards their time period for taking and passing the examination. Representatives making use of this additional eight months do not need to contact the PMCPA for an extension but must ensure that their employers are informed and a record is kept.

Start date	Take exam for the first time	Pass exam
2 April 2018	No change	1 April 2020 plus 8 months ie 1 December 2020 (will need to apply for an extension)
2 May 2018	No change	1 May 2020 plus 8 months ie 1 January 2021
2 Oct 2018	No change	1 Oct 2020 plus 8 months ie 1 June 2021
2 Jan 2019	No change	1 Jan 2021 plus 8 months ie 1 Sept 2021
2 April 2019	1 April 2020 plus 8 months ie 1 Dec 2020 (will need to apply for an extension)	1 Dec 2021

2 June 2019	1 June 2020 plus 8 months ie 1 Feb 2021	1 Feb 2022
2 Oct 2019	1 Oct 2020 plus 8 months ie 1 June 2021	1 June 2022
2 Jan 2020	1 Jan 2021 plus 8 months ie 1 Sept 2021	1 Sept 2022
2 June 2020	1 June 2021 plus 5 months ie 1 Nov 2021	1 Nov 2022
1 July 2020	No change	No change

Representatives who started their first role as a representative between 1 January 2020 and 30 June 2020

For representatives who were employed as a representative in their first role anytime from 1 January 2020 to 30 June 2020, then the relevant months they worked when the examination was not available will not count towards their time period. For example, a representative starting in January 2020 will have eight months to add to the time period to take the examination for the first time, ie they must take the examination by September 2021 and pass it by September 2022. A representative starting in February or March 2020 will also have eight months to add to the time period to take the examination for the first time. A representative starting in April 2020 will have seven months to add to their time period and a representative starting in June 2020 will have five months to add to their time period. A representative starting in such a role for the first time in July 2020 will not have an extension in relation to the cancellation of the examination. Representatives making use of these additional months do not need to contact the PMCPA for an extension but must ensure that their employers are informed and a record is kept.

Representatives who were previously employed as a representative and who returned to such a role in anytime between 1 January and 31 October 2020 following a gap in service (for example due to a change of role, career break, parental leave)

For representatives who have been employed as a representative and returned to work as a representative in 2020 (perhaps after a career break, maternity leave etc), including during the time the examination was not available, then the relevant months they work when the examination was not available will not count towards their time period for taking and passing the examination. For example, a representative restarting such work in January 2020 will have eight months to add to their time period, a representative restarting in April 2020 will have seven months to add to their time period and a representative restarting in September 2020 will have two months to add to their time period. Representatives who returned to work in 2020 any time after 31 October will not have an extension in relation to the cancellation of the examination. Representatives making use of these additional months do not need to contact the PMCPA for an extension but must ensure that their employers are informed and a record is kept.

Extensions in addition to those set out above

There may be some representatives who might need longer extensions than those referred to above. This is most likely to apply to those whose time periods completed around February/March 2020. Applications should be made to the PMCPA in the usual way.