1. PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The policy provides the criteria for the conduct of the Surgical Science Examination (SSE) in Otolaryngology Head and Neck Surgery.

The SSE in Otolaryngology Head and Neck Surgery is a summative evaluation of a candidate’s knowledge, understanding and application of anatomy, physiology and pathology relevant to Otolaryngology Head and Neck Surgery.

2. KEYWORDS

SSE, Otolaryngology Head and Neck Surgery, Examinations

3. BODY OF POLICY

3.1. Format of the Examination

3.1.1. The examination consists of one paper containing 120 Multiple Choice Questions.

3.1.2. The examination is conducted over one day and runs for 2½ hours.

3.2. Eligibility to Present for the Examination

3.2.1. All trainees in a current SET program in Otolaryngology Head and Neck Surgery, having completed all prerequisites in 3.3 are eligible to apply.

3.2.2. A trainee who has deferred commencement of training or has interrupted his/her training program and has completed the prerequisites in 3.3 is eligible to apply.

3.3. Prerequisites

3.3.1. It is a requirement that a trainee attempt the GSSE either before or at the same time as the SSE in Otolaryngology Head and Neck Surgery.

3.3.2. The Generic Surgical Science Examination (GSSE) and the SSE in Otolaryngology Head and Neck Surgery can be attempted at the one sitting or at separate sittings.

3.4. Application

3.4.1. The examination dates and application closing dates are published on the Examinations page of the College website.

3.4.2. A candidate must apply for the examination through the online registration system, via the College website and pay the full examination fee at the time of registration.

3.4.3. By application, the candidate is agreeing to the conditions outlined in clause 3.13 Privacy and Confidentiality.

3.4.4. An application outside the published timeframes will not be accepted.

3.5. Timeframe and Venue

3.5.1. The examination is offered twice annually, in February and June in venues across Australia and New Zealand. Dates are set by the Examinations Department.
3.5.2. A minimum of 5 registered candidates is required in order for each site to be used in Australia and New Zealand. A candidate from New Zealand will not be required to travel to Australia and vice versa as there will always be at least one examination conducted in each country.

3.6. Progression towards Fellowship

Successful completion of this examination is a pre-requisite to apply for the Fellowship Examination in Otolaryngology Head and Neck Surgery.

3.7. Time Limitations and Number of Attempts

3.7.1. A trainee must pass the examination by the end of SET 2. Failure to pass by the end of SET 2 will result in dismissal. (Refer policy: Dismissal from Surgical Training)

3.7.2. The examination is limited to four attempts. Failure to pass on the fourth attempt will result in dismissal. (Refer policy: Dismissal from Surgical Training)

3.7.3. Each sitting of the examination undertaken will count towards the maximum four (4) attempts, irrespective of whether the trainee is in active clinical training, deferred or on interruption. (Refer policy: Trainee Registration and Variation)

3.8. Trainees who Transfer between Specialty Training Programs

Should a trainee transfer from another specialty a successful pass in the GSSE and Clinical examination will be recognised.

3.9. Conduct of the Examination

3.9.1. The conduct of the examination is the responsibility of the Surgical Science Examination and Clinical Examinations (SSE&CE) Committee.

3.9.2. The Board of Otolaryngology Head and Neck Surgery is responsible for formulating the syllabus and setting the questions of the SSE in Otolaryngology Head and Neck Surgery Specialty.

3.9.3. Invigilators play a central role in assisting the Examinations Department to ensure that the security of the written components of the examination is maintained at all times.

3.9.4. Disruptive behaviour by a candidate in any segment of the examination will be considered as misconduct. If a candidate is reported to be causing a disturbance during the examination, he/she will be removed from the examination room. The candidate involved will not be given extra time at the end of the examination for any reason including time taken to address the incident.

3.10. Prohibited Equipment or Materials

3.10.1. Equipment or materials which are not permitted to be taken into an examination room ("prohibited equipment or materials") include but is not limited to:

a. all watches, mobile phones, calculators, portable computers, tablets or other electronic audio-recording devices (e.g. audio-recording wrist bands, pens, spectacles, mp3 players, IPods, IPads, etc.).

b. notes, books, textbooks or other materials.
3.10.2. A candidate who takes prohibited equipment or materials into an examination room will be informed that he or she must leave the examination room immediately and will not be permitted to take further part in the examination.

3.10.3. The candidate’s result for the examination will not be approved and any examination fees paid will be forfeited as per terms stipulated in clause 3.16.

3.10.4. The SSE&CE Committee will report the matter to the Training Board for consideration as to whether a misconduct investigation should be conducted.

3.11. Cheating

3.11.1. Cheating is defined as, but is not limited to:

   a. gaining or attempting to gain access to any materials such as specimens or images, or patients involved in the examination, prior to an examination;
   
   b. copying, or allowing another candidate to copy, answers during the course of an examination;
   
   c. disseminating or making available questions or answers to another candidate or prospective candidate relating to the current examination;
   
   d. procuring knowledge of the questions, and their answers, from anyone before the examination.

3.11.2. An examiner or other person supervising an examination segment will, upon identifying suspected cheating during the examination, complete an incident report for consideration by the SSE&CE Committee.

3.12. Report of prohibited equipment or materials or cheating

3.12.1. Upon receipt of an incident report of the taking of prohibited equipment or materials into an examination room or cheating, the Chair of the SSE&CE Committee will transmit the report to the Training Board for consideration pursuant to the College’s Misconduct policy and the Board’s regulations;

3.12.2. If a report on the taking of prohibited equipment or materials into an examination room or cheating is received by the SSE&CE Committee, or if a Training Board receives the report directly:

   a. prior to the examination taking place; the candidate’s application for presenting to an examination will be withheld until such time an investigation has concluded; if an allegation is upheld in addition to any penalty imposed by the Training Board, the candidate’s application will not be valid and the entire examination fee paid will be forfeited as per terms stipulated in clause 3.16 of this Policy.
   
   b. during the examinations and prior to the examination results being made available to candidates - the examination result will be withheld until such time as an investigation has concluded; if the allegation is upheld, in addition to any penalty imposed by the Training Board, the examination result will not be approved and the candidate will be regarded as having an unsatisfactory performance.
c. after the examination results have been made available to candidates; if the allegation is upheld, in addition to any penalty imposed by the Training Board, the examination result will be withdrawn and the candidate will be regarded as having an unsatisfactory performance.

3.13. Privacy and Confidentiality

Any person involved with the SSE in Otolaryngology Head and Neck Surgery as per clause 3.9 and candidates presenting for the examination shall treat as strictly confidential any materials, images, content or discussions of any examination component viewed or discussed for the purposes of conducting the SSE in Otolaryngology Head and Neck Surgery. Any breach of confidentiality by any candidate may be treated as cheating and dealt with according to College process.

3.14. Special Circumstances Relating to Examinations

3.14.1. Refer to policies EDA-EXA-034 Special Consideration and EDA-EXA-035 Reasonable Adjustments for Disability

3.15. Results

3.15.1. A panel of Fellows of the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons specialists in Otolaryngology Head and Neck will define and set the standards.

3.15.2. The results of the SSE in Otolaryngology Head and Neck Surgery are approved by the SSE & CE Committee.

3.15.3. Candidates will be awarded a result of pass/fail only.

3.15.4. The candidate will be informed of his/her result via email.

3.15.5. Results of this examination will be communicated to the Board of Otolaryngology Head and Neck Surgery by the Examinations Department.

3.16. Withdrawals

3.16.1. A candidate who wishes to withdraw from the examination must do so in writing to the Examinations Department, who will provide written confirmation of receipt of the withdrawal notification.

3.16.2. A percentage of the examination fee will be refunded in accordance with the following timeline.

a. Withdraw from the examination prior to the application closing date; the candidate will be refunded 100% of the examination fee.

b. Withdraw from the examination after the application closing date and more than 10 working days prior to the commencement of the first scheduled day of the examination; the candidate will be refunded 50% of the examination fee.

c. Withdraw from the examination after the application closing date with 10 working days or less prior to the commencement of the first scheduled day of the examination, the candidate will be refunded 25% of the examination fee.

3.16.3. A candidate will not be refunded for any part of the Examination Fee for non-attendance of the examination without prior notification.
3.16.4. A candidate will not be refunded any part of the Examination Fee if he/she is prevented from participating in the examination as a result of taking prohibited equipment or materials into an examination room or cheating or misconduct.

4. ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTS

Policies
- EDA-EXA-010 Conduct of the Fellowship Examinations
- EDA-EXA-034 Special Consideration
- EDA-EXA-035 Reasonable Adjustments for Disability
- ETA-SET-007 Dismissal from Surgical Training
- ETA-SET-010 Trainee Registration and Variation
- ETA-SET-026 SET Misconduct Policy

Forms
- Application for Special Consideration
- Application for Reasonable Adjustment for Disability
- Examination Rules for Candidates (Schedule 1)
- Examinations Incident Report

Approver: Education Board
Authoriser: Council