

My Experience of Participating as External Examiner in Online Radiology Residents Exit Examination During COVID Pandemic

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Submitted: 24 Jul 2020; Accepted: 27 Jul 2020; Published: 11 Aug 2020

Life has brought us to such a point, where we are forced to think, whether we actually have done any progress or not, in last so many years. COVID 19 has forced everyone to standstill and most developed nations are biggest sufferers. Till date, most modes of travel, including International flights, are more or less stopped, and we yet don't know, when all this will start again. We are slowly and steadily accepting COVID as part and parcel of life, and steadily trying to return to work. In Medical schools in India, Postgraduate Exit Examination (PEE) are usually scheduled in April to June, with atleast two External Examiners travelling to Medical College, from same or different state. Due to restriction on travel and Government advisory, PEE couldn't be held in April 2020; and henceforth Medical Council of India (MCI) had to change its policy in regard to PEE. Board of Governors (BOG) MCI held a meeting on 15 May 2020 and decided to give one-time relaxation to Medical Universities, for appointment of External Examiners (EE) for year 2020-2021, in view of COVID pandemic. Medical Universities were asked to complete PEE until 30 June 2020, with following options:

- Try to adhere to existing norms as on 15 May 2020, if possible. This means two EE will travel to Medical College and conduct PEE. These EE should be from different university and from same/different states.
- If option a) is not possible, then one EE will be physically present and second EE will participate through video-conferencing.
- If option b) is also not possible, then both EE from different University will participate through video-conferencing.
- EE can also be appointed from other Medical College under same State Health University and both EE will be physically present during PEE.
- EE can also be appointed from Institutes of National Importance (INI).

Following these guidelines, I was appointed as EE for one of Medical school in Jharkhand, India. Second EE appointed was Head of Department, Radiology in one of prestigious Medical College in Bihar. I was junior to Second EE, and we both along with Coordinator Examination (COE) were apprehensive about, how all this will materialize, and what difficulties, we can face during Online Practical Exit Examination. Exit Examination was scheduled for two days, with total six Examinees. One day prior to examination, link was sent to check whether online two-way communication system was working properly, as regards to audio and video communication. COE scanned and sent Theory paper answer sheets to both EE via email, one day prior to examination. At Examination Centre, a dedicated room was set up, with live projection of both EE on big screen. Both EE were provided live transmission of examination room, with facility to interact with examinees (Fig 1, Fig 2). On day one of examination, both EE interacted with COE and then sent their long and short cases for each candidate via email. All six candidates were allotted one long case and two short cases, and were given 60 minutes to write all three cases on answer sheet. In meantime, both EE shared their respective 20 spotters each, with COE. After one hour, COE started spotter session for all six candidates, with one-minute time allotted for each spotter. Examinees were asked to write their answer for each spot, on answer sheet. Then, answer sheets of all six candidates were scanned and shared with both EE, via email. Thereafter, Viva started one by one for each candidate, with thirty minutes fixed for each candidate. This viva's continued till evening, with break in between for 60 minutes, for lunch. At end of day one, four examinees could appear for viva for long and short cases.

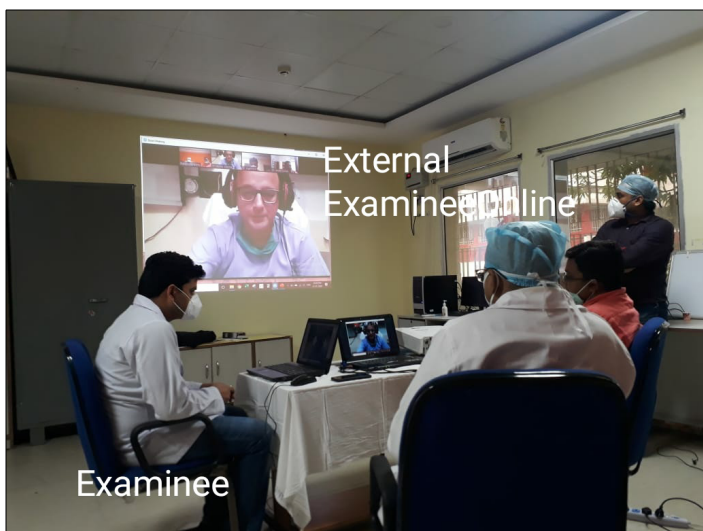


Figure 1



Figure 2

On day two, EE took viva of remaining two examinees. Thereafter, both EE checked theory answer sheets and sent their evaluation sheets for theory papers, spotters, long and short cases. Finally, one by one examinees were called for table viva, including questions on radiation protection, contrast, physics and special investigations. Each candidate was evaluated for table viva, for 30 minutes by both EE. Finally, both EE submitted their evaluation sheet for table viva's to COE. Both EE appreciated excellent arrangements, done by COE, and shared their experience of feeling like actually sitting in front of examinees, on both days. There was no technical glitch during this entire Examination process, and Examinees gave positive feedback for entire examination process. COE thanked both EE for their kind cooperation and for smooth conduct of PEE within stipulated time, which wouldn't have been possible, if BOG MCI hadn't permitted both EE to participate via online mode. Moreover, substantial time and money was saved, which would have been wasted on travel and food, had both EE travelled to different state to conduct PEE.

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