

THE MAGIC CIRCLE GUIDE TO EXAMINATIONS

1. INTRODUCTION

This booklet sets out the procedures by which magicians can join The Magic Circle and current Members can progress to higher degrees within the Society. Hopefully it will assist all those taking the necessary examinations.

2. DEGREES OF THE SOCIETY

The two degrees of the Society obtainable by examination are:

- (a) Member of The Magic Circle, M.M.C.
- (b) Associate of The Inner Magic Circle, A.I.M.C.

Advancement to Membership of The Inner Magic Circle, M.I.M.C. is only by call of the President in Council.

3. TYPES OF EXAMINATION

- (a) Practical - Stage or Close-Up performance.
- (b) Theoretical - Written Thesis

The Council strongly prefers that a practising magician shall seek promotion by practical examination although promotion may be awarded to those who have, by their writings and in the opinion of the Council, merited such advancement. Those passing a practical examination for A.I.M.C. will be awarded a Silver Star with that degree. Similarly a Gold Star will be added to the M.I.M.C. degree to indicate an appropriate level of performance skills.

4. RECOGNISED CENTRES FOR EXAMINATION

(a) The Magic Circle Headquarters

Special arrangements are regularly made for examinations for both stage and close-up at our H.Q., where ideal conditions exist, before an audience of members. Whenever possible it is recommended that candidates be examined during our Club Night evenings, usually Monday, by arrangement with the Examinations Secretary.

Close-up examinations are normally held in the Devant Room. If any sound equipment is required this must be provided by the candidate and must have a valid Portable Appliance Test (PAT) certificate. In the theatre, where stage examinations are held, full facilities are available.

For Health and Safety reasons we have very strict guidelines regarding the use of fire anywhere in the building including on stage (See Appendix II). If your act includes any fire, even the use of a small quantity of flash paper, you must discuss this with the Examinations Secretary at least a week before the day of your examination.

(b) Shows, Competitions and Social Functions of The Magic Circle

Performers participating in Society occasions of this nature may, at the discretion of the Events or Club Night Committees, apply to the Examinations Secretary who will arrange for Examiners to attend if at all possible.

(c) Videos/DVDs

Candidates who are unable to attend an examination at H.Q. may submit an unedited

video or DVD recording of their act, performed before a live audience, for consideration by the Examiners. In particular children's entertainers may want to take up this option since it is impractical to provide a suitable audience at H.Q. However such recordings should include examples of magical technique at the appropriate level whatever the target audience.

(d) Provincial Centres

Providing it is possible to arrange for duly authorised Examiners to be available, examinations may be held at certain provincial centres.

Candidates will be required to comply with the following conditions:

- (i) At least 28 days notice must be given in writing to the Examinations Secretary.
- (ii) A suitable venue for the examination must be arranged by the candidate.
- (iii) The Examinations Secretary must be notified of the date and time of the performance and the venue.
- (iv) The candidate is responsible for ensuring that facilities are available for Examiners to attend the performance.

NOTE:- The Magic Circle will not accept liability for any expenses incurred by the candidate.

(e) Overseas Centres

Overseas candidates wishing to be examined should contact the Examinations Secretary who will endeavour to make the necessary arrangements with duly authorised Examiners or, alternatively, will accept a video/DVD recording for their consideration.

5. APPLICATION FOR EXAMINATION

Candidates applying for membership of The Magic Circle will be contacted by the Examinations Secretary to arrange an interview at which an examination date will be agreed if appropriate. Candidates for A.I.M.C. are requested to contact the Examinations Secretary for an application form on which they should state all the relevant details of the proposed examination.

6. EXAMINATION FEES

A fee will be charged for an A.I.M.C. examination and should be sent, with the completed application form, as detailed therein. The fee for the M.M.C. examination is included in the Entrance Fee.

7. EXAMINATIONS

PRACTICAL - Stage or Close-up performances

(a) Marking

Three members of the Board of Examiners will judge a practical performance and the candidate will be examined for magical ability and technique, presentation and personality, entertainment value, patter, structure of performance, originality and appearance as appropriate. The exact breakdown of the marking varies between M.M.C. and A.I.M.C. examinations and will be given to you by the Examinations Secretary.

(b) Duration of the act

The length of performance should not be less than 8 minutes and should not exceed 12 minutes.

For advice, and more details, regarding practical examinations please see Appendix I.

THEORETICAL - Written Thesis

In the event of the Council agreeing that a candidate shall be examined in theory, a candidate must submit a magical subject for approval. The candidate must then submit, within 6 months, a thesis of at least 3,500 words for M.M.C. and 6000 words for the A.I.M.C. degree.

An appropriate Examiner(s) will report upon the thesis and the joint agreement of the Examiner(s) and the Examinations Secretary will be necessary for the Council to consider whether the standard of the thesis qualifies the candidate to be passed to M.M.C. or A.I.M.C.

For advice, and more details, regarding written examinations please see Appendix III.

8. RESULTS

Candidates will be notified of the results of the examination by the Examinations Secretary after the Examiners' reports have been considered by the Council. Successful candidates will be sent the appropriate badges for the M.M.C. and A.I.M.C. degrees. Jewels, etc. may be purchased from the The Magic Circle Showcase. Upon promotion to the degree of M.I.M.C. members will automatically receive the appropriate badge and jewel.

All communications relating to Examinations, including requests for advice or practical help, should be directed to the Examinations Secretary -
examsec@TheMagicCircle.co.uk - or write to:

The Examinations Secretary, The Magic Circle, 12 Stephenson Way, London, NW1
2HD.

A stamped (or International Postal Coupon) and addressed envelope should be included for a postal reply.

APPENDIX I

GUIDELINES FOR PRACTICAL EXAMINATIONS

1. Introduction

The following notes are to give you an idea of what the Examiners are looking for and to guide you towards the preparation of your performance.

2. Magical ability and technique

(a) Technique

In order to gain marks in this section it is not necessary to attempt difficult sleights, although it is essential that you have something beyond self-working tricks. It is advisable to include moves which can be performed with confidence and certainty as you should make some allowance for the inevitable nerves which play a part in any performance. A flowing programme, which indicates that practice has enabled you to present movements well within your ability, is far more pleasing than advanced sleight of hand clumsily executed.

(b) Handling

Careful routining and thought will enable props to be used and disposed of smoothly. Know where everything is and exactly what you will do with it after use. Avoid having to search pockets or a cluttered table for props but rehearse the handling so they can be displayed cleanly and confidently without more movements than are necessary and natural.

(c) General ability in magic

The Examiners will expect to see that you have prepared your performance with some thought to putting together an entertaining sequence of effects. A flowing routine should be the aim using items well within your capabilities, performed with confidence, allowing you to concentrate on the presentation. If you are not happy during your rehearsals with any item, change it for something you enjoy doing. Always search for ways of simplifying any moves which feel unnatural or clumsy in performance.

3. Presentation and Personality - Entertainment Value and Patter

Very few candidates have failed their M.M.C. examination due to their lack of magical ability but there are two major headings under which the vast majority of weaknesses occur... presentation and patter!.

(a) The 'Patter' act is when the effects are accompanied by talk. The tricks can be a mixture of general magic or specialising in one area - mentalism for example. Whatever your own views, racist, sexist and crude jokes or comments are not welcome at The Magic Circle. If in doubt - leave it out.

The main thing is to be natural, be yourself. Beware trying to be a comedian for, unless this particularly suits you, it is a difficult path to tread. Your patter must be planned and polished to perfection. Polished patter will help to prevent 'dead' pauses and repetitive words and phrases - but avoid giving the impression that you are delivering a carefully written script which may sound false. Keep your patter mature - avoid story-lines which are obviously contrived and childish.

Ensure that your lines are delivered to the audience so that you can be heard by all. Most of the people in your audience are more attractive than your table top (even at The Magic Circle!). Please look at them and NOT the table - eye contact is vital. If you use a stand microphone be sure that its use is rehearsed along with the tricks so that you do not have to keep moving away from it during your patter.

(b) The 'Silent' act is when magic is performed without patter, normally to musical accompaniment.

The silent act is maybe easier to rehearse alone but obviously a higher standard of technical ability and smooth routining is necessary. Recorded music must be carefully chosen and prepared, put together to blend in with the effects and timed to fit the act. At the Headquarters facilities are available for playing a variety of recording media.

Personality is an abstract quality possessed to a greater or lesser extent by us all. As a magician your aim is to entertain people while apparently performing feats which are impossible to explain. It is therefore essential that you avoid the 'look how clever I am' approach and develop that greatest of all attributes for any performer - warmth, avoiding any suggestion of arrogance and enabling the audience to like you as a person.

4. Structure of Performance

Examinees should look at their performance and consider attracting the audience right from the start, taking them on an entertaining journey with a powerful end.

5. Originality

Examiners are looking for some originality, particularly in examinations for A.I.M.C., in either presentation or effect, or both.

6. Appearance

Depending upon the style of your performance, suitable dress can take various forms but you must show that you have gone to some trouble in this regard. As a general rule you should try to be smarter and better dressed than the audience and some may consider that formal evening wear is invariably appropriate. The props used in your act, like your attire, should be immaculate. Your appearance will inevitably play a large part in the audience's assessment of your personality.

7. Effects

Do not feel obliged to perform difficult tricks because your audience will consist of fellow magicians. It makes sense to work within your abilities. Sleight-of-hand can be self-satisfying but it's merely a tool - a means to an end.

Your audience makes a judgement about you within the first fifteen seconds - so make sure your 'Opener' is speedy, visual and magical and perform it with confidence and a smile. You must be at ease during those all important fifteen seconds - a good, trouble-free, self-working trick could make sense.

However, an act consisting entirely of a succession of standard self-working dealer tricks is unlikely to earn you sufficient marks. Give yourself a challenge and make yourself an expert performer of one of the magical classics - 'The Cups and Balls', for example. Read everything you can, seek expert help and keep working on the trick until you have mastered it.

8. Final Tips and Hints

During rehearsals use a camcorder to highlight any weak spots in your performance. Be self-critical. The biggest room in the house is the room for improvement!

Know exactly - EXACTLY - what you are going to say as your opening lines and deliver them with confidence, even if you have to fake that confidence.

Ensure that the audience knows when an effect has come to an end so they know when to applaud.

In particular tell your audience when you are about to perform your last trick - don't catch them by surprise - give them a fair warning. They need this information to give you a good end-of-act round of applause.

During the summer months the 'SUMMER SCHOOL OF MAGIC', arranged at HQ on our club nights, gives instruction aimed particularly at enabling members to successfully advance towards the higher degrees within The Magic Circle.

APPENDIX II

GUIDELINES FOR THE PERFORMANCE OF TRICKS USING FIRE AT THE MAGIC CIRCLE HEADQUARTERS.

The following guidelines have been issued for the information of performers, stage crew and fire officers at The Magic Circle. Nevertheless, if your act includes any fire, even the use of a small quantity of flash paper, you must discuss this with the Examinations Secretary at least one week before the day of your examination.

These guidelines have been developed to protect The Magic Circle building and everybody is asked to take care when using fire etc in the building.

1. No Fire Eating or Juggling with Flaming Torches anywhere in the building.
2. No devices which use explosives, fire etc. to be used in the building.
3. The Stage Manager to ensure that artistes who are using any form of fire in their acts are made aware of the location of the fire extinguishers.
4. When tricks using fire of any sort are being performed on the stage the person nominated as Fire Officer to be available should an accident happen.
5. Flash paper/wool can be used in small quantities but NOT directly under a Fire/Smoke alarm and must be kept in fire-proof containers.
6. SHOULD ANY ACCIDENT HAPPEN AND THE GUIDELINES HAVE BEEN IGNORED, WE WILL NOT BE COVERED BY OUR INSURANCE.

APPENDIX III

GUIDELINES FOR THEORETICAL EXAMINATIONS

1. Introduction

The object of the submission of a thesis is to demonstrate to the appointed examiners that the candidate has a sound theoretical knowledge of an appropriate aspect(s) of conjuring and/or its history, and has engaged in some original research.

2. Requirements

The thesis will normally relate to a specific topic or field of magic which must be approved by the Examinations Secretary before the research is undertaken.

To demonstrate the required depth of knowledge it is expected that a thesis submitted for the M.M.C. degree will be of at least 3500 words, and for the A.I.M.C. degree of at least 6000 words in length.

Candidates must submit two copies of their thesis which must be typewritten or word processed. At the conclusion of the examination process one copy of each successful thesis may be placed in The Magic Circle Reference Library and the other returned to the candidate.

3. Original Research

If relating to theoretical aspects of the performance of magic, the candidate must demonstrate some originality of thought, or of approach, to the selected topic. For example, the straightforward collation of all published articles on, say, "False Counts in Card Magic", would not in itself be acceptable. It would be necessary for the candidate to compare, contrast and offer a personal evaluation of the various techniques and generally to display a significant awareness of the subject under discussion.

If relating to the history of magic, the candidate must engage in research on an approved topic which offers the opportunity for some original findings or observations. Thus the simple collation of material on that topic from recognised texts on magical history without some personal input would not in itself be acceptable. There must be evidence that the candidate has made some contribution to knowledge of the area under consideration. As a suggestion, sometimes a fruitful field for original contributions is the candidate's own local area and the appearance of magicians at theatres and halls in the vicinity. Local Reference Libraries usually carry files of newspapers from the middle of the 19th century onwards and these can often yield interesting information and reviews of performers and events associated with their presence in the town. Such findings could then be related to previously published information about the performer(s).

4. Format of Thesis

In general, the thesis should have a clear structure which, where possible, should embrace:

(a) Title page bearing the title of the thesis, the candidate's name, and the following statement:

A Thesis Submitted for Promotion to the Degree of M.M.C./A.I.M.C. (as appropriate).

(b) Each submission must carry (on the page immediately after the title page) the following declaration and be signed and dated by the applicant:

DECLARATION

I certify that I am the sole author of this thesis submitted as a requirement for promotion to the Degree of M.M.C./A.I.M.C. (as appropriate); that due acknowledgement is made in the text to all individuals who have assisted in any way in its preparation and that all published sources consulted are duly cited.

Signed:

Date:

(c) Summary: A brief statement of the topic of the research and, where applicable, the conclusions reached.

(d) Introduction: The reasons for choice of topic, its particular interest to the candidate, its historical context (where applicable) and reference to any previously published work relating to it.

(e) Presentation of the body of the material.

(f) Discussion of the findings, observations, etc. and conclusions drawn. (Sections 3 and 4 might, in some circumstances, benefit by being combined.)

(g) References: All citations of published articles, books etc. must be properly referenced with the following information, arranged in alphabetical order of author.

For books: Author(s) name and initials. Year of publication. Title of book. Publisher.

For periodicals: Author(s) name and initials. Year of publication. Title of article. Title of periodical. Volume number, issue number, first and last page numbers.

Examples:

Hatton, H. & Plate, A. (1911). *Magicians' Tricks: How They Are Done*. Upcott Gill.

Minch, S. (1991). *The Collected Works of Alex Elmsley*, Vol. 1. L & L Publishing.

Silverman, K (1996) *Houdini!!!* Harper Collins.

Gardner, R. (1997). 'Bottom Card Cover Slap Pass.' *Abracadabra* **104** (No.2680), 36-37.

Krenzel, K. (1997). 'Gaze Detection.' *Magic* (May), 70-71

5. Special Cases

In special circumstances, for example where the candidate has already published commercially a book or monograph on a relevant topic, this publication might be submitted in place of a thesis. Candidates who believe they might be eligible in this way should, in the first instance, consult the Examinations Secretary.