Standard Setting in Section 1 Examinations

After every Section 1 examination, the following steps are taken to finalise candidates' results and to determine the pass mark.

Step 1: Determine the cut score, using the Angoff method of standard setting

The cut score is set using the Angoff method, in such a way that it reflects the minimum performance acceptable for a candidate deemed "competent" within the purpose of this examination: a day-one consultant in the generality of the specialty.

Step 2: Review questions which have been highlighted because of odd patterns of candidate responses

Questions with odd performance statistics are reviewed by the panel of examiners, and removed from the paper before candidates' scores are finalised if the consensus is that the question was problematic (e.g. a lack of clarity or a recent change in best practice which has repercussions for what is considered the best answer).

Step 3: Apply the GMC and AoMRC standards on managing borderline candidates by adding one SEM to the Angoff cut score to determine the pass mark

Candidates whose scores falls within one Standard Error of Measurement (SEM) of the Angoff-determined cut score are defined as "borderline candidates" by the GMC [1]. Guided by the purpose of this examination, in the interest of patient safety and to meet the GMC and the AoMRC standards surrounding borderline candidates [1, 2], one SEM is added to the cut score to determine the pass mark.

[1] Holsgrove, G. (2010) Reliability issues in the assessment of small cohorts: http://www.gmc-uk.org/Reliability_issues_in_the_assessment_of_small_cohorts_0410.pdf_48904895.pdf

[2] AoMRC (2015) Guidance for standard setting: A framework for high stakes postgraduate competency-based examinations: http://www.aomrc.org.uk/doc_download/9854-guidance-for-standard-setting-a-framework-for-high-stakes-postgraduate-competency-based-examinations.html