



September 2012

Issue 5

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Information and News for FRCA Exam Candidates

Welcome to the September 2012 edition of 'The Candidate' a newsletter specifically designed to keep FRCA examination candidates informed of updates to exam processes, procedures, and regulations. Plus advice on exam timings, statistics and general information regarding exam sittings. We hope you find it helpful. We also use twitter to post info on exam dates and where and when results will be published.



Examinations News

New Examination Regulations for August 2012 - What's changed.

Primary: MCQ eligibility amended to allow ICM trainees to sit this exam. OSCE/SOE eligibility amended to allow ACCS (any) and ICM trainees to sit this exam.

Final: Written and SOE eligibility amended to allow doctors who have never been in UK anaesthetic training but have been practicing anaesthesia in the NHS for at

least one continuous year, immediately prior to the exam applied for, to sit these exams.

Examination dates

The examinations calendar for the new academic year 2012—2013 is now in force, the exam dates for this year are in line with previous years. However, be aware that from 2013-2014 the Primary exam dates will change. Check the exams calendar on the College website and plan accordingly. The new Primary dates will allow candidates who are successful in the Primary MCQ to apply for the next sitting of OSCE/SOE.

New exam venue in Manchester

From September 2012 a new exams venue at Manchester is available for written examinations.

Candidate Guidance

This is now conducted locally wherever possible. The College Tutors will liaise with the College to arrange a venue. It is hoped that the new process will ensure greater local involvement and ultimately greater support to the candidate.

SBA's

If you haven't already done so, then you should read the paper written by the Chairman of the Primary MCQ, on the performance of SBA questions, which is available on the Exams News pages of the website. There are also 15 more Primary SBA examples available too, with more SBA examples to be released shortly.

Turn Over for:

- Exams Information and Key Facts
- Hints and Tips
- Exam statistics
- E-Portfolio
- Spotlight on Reviews and Appeals

Exams: Information and Key Facts

The Primary MCQ Exam

The Primary MCQ Exam dates for 2012/2013 are: 11th September 2012, 5th February 2013 and 11th June 2013. The number of candidates who sat the Primary MCQ in June 2012 was 493. 302 passed (61.3%).

- * The Primary MCQ is three hours long, starting at 2pm and finishing at 5pm. Candidates must be seated by 1.45pm for the brief.
 - * No candidate will be allowed into any exam room more than 30 minutes after the start time. No extra time is given for late arrivals.
 - * **Don't forget your passport or photo driving licence. Hospital ID doesn't count.** If your name has changed from that on you ID, then you will need to present proof of name change, such as a marriage certificate.
 - * The Primary MCQ consists of 60 multiple true/false (MTF) questions and 30 single best answer (SBA):
 - * 20 MTF in pharmacology
 - * 20 MTF in physiology including related biochemistry and anatomy
 - * 20 MTF in physics, clinical measurement and data interpretation.
 - * 30 SBA questions in any of the categories listed above.
- Examples of SBAs are available on the website new ones have just been release. Also, there are a limited number of SBAs in the Primary guide.

You are allowed five attempts at the MCQ

The Next Primary MCQ Exam is 11th September 2012 Application is now closed

The following Primary MCQ exam is on **5th February 2013**

Application opening date: **12th November 2012** Application closing date: **10th January 2013**

The Primary OSCE/SOE Exam

The Primary OSCE and SOE exam dates for 2012/2013 are; w/c 8th October 2012, 14th January 2013 and 13th May 2013. All held at the Royal College of Anaesthetists. The number of candidates who sat the OSCE and/or SOE exams in May 2012 was 362. 185 passed the Primary exam a pass rate of 51.12% overall.

- * You must have passed the Primary MCQ within three years of the exam applied for.
- * You need to have been awarded the Initial Assessment of Competency (IAC) in Anaesthesia or an overseas equivalent. At your first attempt you must provide a copy of your IAC with your application form. If you don't, it will delay the process and may mean you miss the application deadline for the exam.
- * At the first attempt the OSCE and SOE sections must be taken together. If you pass one component but fail the other, only the failed component needs to be retaken.
- * Due to examiner availability and daily capacity, the College has a limited number of spaces in the OSCE and SOE exams. The College makes a commitment to always examine UK trainees. However, there is a prioritisation system (a series of waiting lists) for other types of applicants. See section 4 of the exam regulations.

You are allowed four attempts at the Primary OSCE/SOE

A pass in the OSCE or SOE is valid for two years

A pass in the Primary FRCA is presently valid for ten years towards the Final exams

The Next Primary OSCE/SOE Exams

The next Primary OSCE/SOE exam week commences on **Monday 8th October 2012** and runs through to **Friday 12th October 2012** inclusive (**applications for this are now closed**)

Exams: Information and Key Facts

The Final Written Exam

The Final Written Exam date for 2012/2013 are 4th September 2012 and 12th March 2013. The Written Exam consists of a three hour Short Answer Question (SAQ) paper (0930 – 1230), followed by a three hour MCQ paper (1400 – 1700). The number of candidates that sat the Final Written in March 2012 was 418. 273 passed (65.31%).

- * The SAQ consists of 12 compulsory questions (that's one question every 15 minutes). Each question is marked out of 20 with the pass mark being determined by the board of examiners. The pass marks for all questions are summed to give a total mark.
- * Each SAQ question is split into sections (a, b, c etc) each section carries an appropriate weighted percentage of the whole score for the paper.
- * The MCQ consists of 60 multiple true/false (MTF) questions and 30 single best answer (SBA) questions. MTF questions have five items, each item carries one mark. SBA questions are awarded four marks for each correct question. 60×5 and $4 \times 30 = 420$ available marks. The pass mark is determined using GMC approved methods.
- * The overall pass mark for the written exam is the sum of the percentage pass marks of the MCQ and SAQ papers. Each part carries equal weight, so if you narrowly fail in one exam component you can still pass by a good performance in the other.

You are allowed six attempts at the Final written

A pass is valid for two years

The Next Final Written Exam

The next Final Written exam takes place on 4th September 2012. Applications are now closed. The next exam is on **12th March 2013** — the opening date is **10th December 2012**.

The Final SOE Exam

The Final SOE exam dates for 2012/2013 are: w/c 3rd December 2012 and 24th June 2013. The SOEs normally run Monday to Friday but this is dependant on the number of candidates. The number of candidates that sat the Final SOEs in June 2012 was 363. 249 passed (68.6%).

- * SOE1 in Clinical Anaesthesia is normally examined in the morning and SOE2 in Clinical Science is normally conducted after lunch.
- * Clinical Anaesthesia is 50 Minutes in duration, comprising of 10 minutes to view and make notes on clinical material before going into the SOE cubicles. You will be asked three questions in 20 minutes based on the clinical material you just viewed.
- * After 20 minutes the examiners will ask you three short case questions which are based on other clinical topics.
- * The Clinical Science SOE lasts 30 minutes. You will be asked four questions on the application of basic science to anaesthesia.
- * Two examiners will examine you in each SOE, they mark each question independently.
- * The pass mark for the SOEs is 32 marks from a maximum of 40.

You are allowed six attempts at the Final SOE

If you pass you will be awarded the FRCA. Successful candidates have to attend a ceremony (normally lasting about 45 minutes) at the end of the examining day.

The Next Final SOE Exams

The next Final SOE exam commences the week beginning **Monday 3rd December 2012** Applications accepted from: **27th September 2012** Application closing date: **25th October 2012**

Exams: Hints, Tips and Courses

The Primary MCQ

Submitting your fee. Currently, the College only accepts cheques, a sterling draft or postal order for exam fees. The College will not accept bank transfers. Therefore, if you leave your application to the last day you will need to submit it by hand or courier as faxed copies cannot be accepted without payment. Ensure you have sufficient funding in your account, if the College cannot secure payment you will be removed from the exam.

Check the address and whereabouts of your centre: The College holds written exams in London, Birmingham, Cardiff, Manchester, Sheffield, Edinburgh and Belfast. Whilst the cities remain constant the centre used may vary. If it is your first attendance then work out where the venue is and how long it will take to get there, always allow for delays and arrive early.

Practice, practice and then practice some more. Always practice as many MCQs as you can. Reading is important but practice is essential. There are many MTF questions in the public domain. Examples of the Primary SBAs are available on the website, 27 in total with more to come there are also two in the Primary guide, these come with advice and rationale to why the answer is the single best answer from the options. There are also Final SBA examples on the website.

Don't leave blanks and mark only one answer. Make sure you enter a choice for every MTF item and SBA question. If you leave one blank it will be recorded as a 'void' (no marks awarded). No marks are deducted for wrong answers. If you mark both true and false for an MTF question your answer will be void. More than one response to an SBA question will result in a void. *Always check you have not done this.*

It's all a matter of timing. Practice doing 60 MTFs in less than two hours. 30 SBAs should take one hour. Ensure you are progressing as you expected. Allow enough time to transfer answers from question book to answer sheet, this should take around 45 minutes.

The Primary OSCE SOE

Read the notes on the back of your application form.

The notes on the back of the application form give you all the advice you need to complete your form correctly. Please read them.

Get organised.

Arrive at the College at least 45 minutes before your first exam. Bring a £1 coin for the lockers. Listen to what the doorman has to say, you'll find it helpful. Be in the reception area in good time for your exam call. Get some fresh air between exams. Eat and drink throughout the day. Once you have done one exam forget about it and focus on what comes next.

OSCE — Station spot-light - 'Simulation'.

There are two 'Sim-man' stations in the OSCE. One of these stations uses an interactive simulator to create clinical problem scenarios and assess how you identify and handle the situation. You do not need experience of using a simulator model, the monitoring displays are no different from those encountered in real life and you should conduct yourself as you would if faced with the same problem in clinical practice.

Oral exam technique.

Technique improves with practice. Try to look confident, smile, and speak slowly and clearly. Listen to the question. Pause before you answer, it gives you time to think. Be precise, avoid using 'probably' or 'maybe' as it could undermine any correct answer you give. If you know there are a number of different approaches to a problem, then say so and follow up by confirming the technique that you *would* use. Remember you are trying to demonstrate that you are knowledgeable and decisive not vague and non-committal. If you make a mistake, say so immediately and correct yourself.

Courses

Primary FRCA Master class, Royal College of Anaesthetists, London

26th-29th Nov 2012
Course Code D70
Course Fee £285

Exams: Hints, Tips and Courses

The Final Written

0915 – 5.15 It's a long day with an early start. If you have a long trip to your exam centre, consider travelling down the day before.

Prepare, Practice, Prepare, Practice The MCQ and the SAQ require two different exam techniques. When you decide to sit the Final Written exam don't allow any distractions, remain 100% focussed. Practice both types of exams. Past SAQ papers are available on the website. MTF questions are available in the Final guide and SBA questions are available on the website. Practice mock exams. Attend an appropriately aimed course. Talk to your training team and take advice.

SAQ Technique The SAQ paper is hard work, candidates rarely finish the paper and leave the exam room in less than three hours. It also takes a lot of practice, as answering SAQs is not always intuitive. Be disciplined you have 15 minutes for each question, allow 13. If you stick to this you will have enough time left at the end of the paper to review each question and add extra info as you check them. The College has been made aware that many courses recommend candidates use one sheet of A4 paper to prepare each SAQ question, the exams dept will ensure sufficient paper is provided.

Answer every question but only once.

All 12 questions in the SAQ are compulsory, if you don't answer all 12 then you will fail. The questions are in 6 booklets you must put your answers in the correct booklets, don't get this wrong. As you answer them in the booklets – tick them off on the question paper provided.

In the MCQ ensure you give an answer for all MTF and SBA questions, there are no marks deducted for wrong answers. Ensure you check you haven't indicated more than one answer for each MTF or SBA or you'll receive no marks for those questions.

SAQ White booklet. Candidates will now be supplied with a 'rough note booklet', it's the white one. This is for preparation work only.

The Final SOE

Manage your day. The Clinical SOE (Long case, short case) is normally held before lunch and the Science SOE after lunch. Arrive at the College at least 45 minutes before your first exam. Bring a £1 coin for the locker. Get some fresh air between exams. Bring reading material as there will be lots of time between exams. Ensure you eat and drink throughout the day. Once you have finished the morning exam forget about it and focus on Science.

Listen to the question. Listen carefully to the questions and make sure you answer the question that was asked in a careful but considered manner. Don't just regurgitate a list of facts in a scattergun approach hoping that you might just give some key answers. If the answer is not immediately obvious to you try talking it through from first principles, draw a diagram if it helps.

Technique helps. Attend practice orals or a Final course. Whilst you will have done orals at Primary level, the Final is quite different.

Speak to us. If you have any concerns, queries or questions about exams don't hesitate to contact the Exams Department, we are always happy to help. General queries should be emailed to: exams@rcoa.ac.uk or call 020 7092 1525/1528.

Courses

Final FRCA Course

21st—25th January 2013

Royal College of Anaesthetists, London

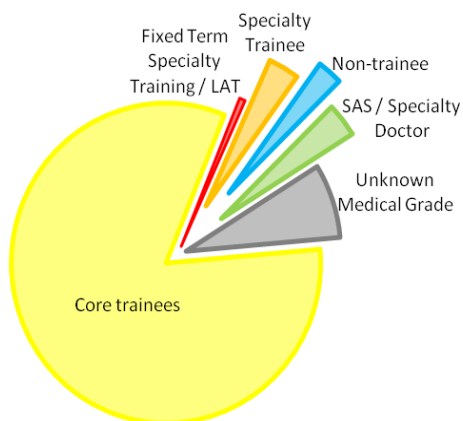
Course Code A82

Course Fee £360

The Final Course structure has changed, it will be run over one week. Further details can be found in the events section of the college website.

Examination Statistics

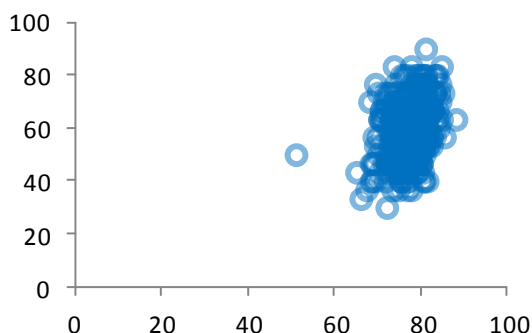
Primary MCQ – June 2012



At June’s Primary MCQ there were 407 Core Trainees sitting the examination, comprising 83% of the cohort. This group achieved a pass rate of 67.57%, over 6 percentage points higher than the overall pass rate for this diet (61.26%).

Final Written – March 2012

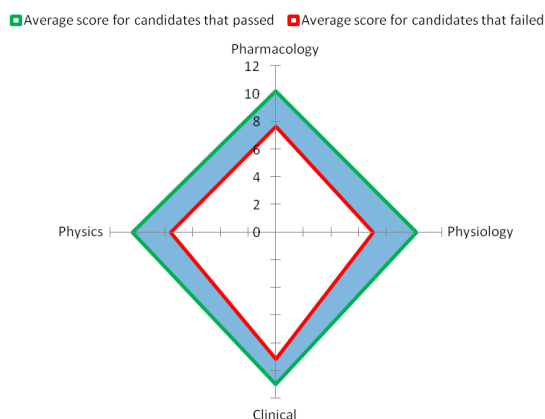
MTF vs SBA Scores



On the face of it the correlation between MTF and SBA scores appears to be poor in the chart above, but the two components measure different skills; this gives us a Pearson’s product moment coefficient of 0.32.

Primary OSCE & SOE – May 2012

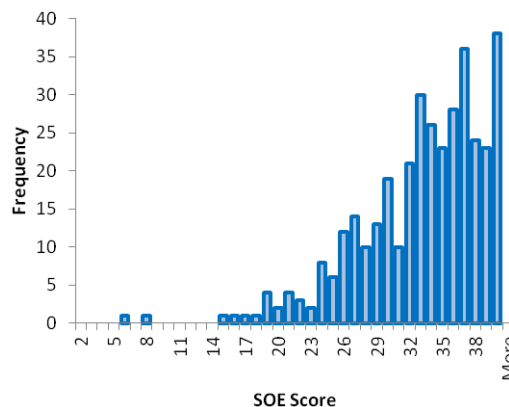
SOE Component Proportions



The chart above shows that although candidates that passed performed similarly in each component, candidates that failed the exam achieved a distinctly better average score in the clinical component and marginally lower average score in the physiology component, than in the physics and pharmacology components. This suggests that physiology is a more discriminating section and the clinical less so.

Final SOE – June 2012

Histogram of Final SOE Scores



The histogram shows that the range of scores for the Final SOE is far from normally distributed. In fact, 198 candidates (53%) achieved a maximum score in one or more components.

Forthcoming examinations

The Closing date has fallen on the next rounds of examinations; the September Final Written, the Primary MCQ and the October Primary OSCE/SOE examinations. There are 353 candidates booked on for the Final Written and 295 for the Primary MCQ which are comparable to previous September exams. The numbers for the OSCE/SOE exam continue to remain above average with 416 candidates booked onto this exam. Numbers have risen with OSCE and SOE only candidates coming back to sit single components. The very first Faculty of Pain Medicine MCQ exam takes place on 19th September with 31 candidates booked on to this exam.

E-Portfolio

The RCoA e-Portfolio has now been available for a year having been rolled out in August 2012. Take up has been encouraging and there has been a noticeable increase in use from August 2012.

Usage Statistics to date

To date, assessments have been the most frequently used feature of the e-Portfolio, with 30,000+ assessments having been completed in the last year.

Completed forms	
Workplace Based Assessments	31809
Multi-source Feedback	837
Unit of Training Sign Offs	5053

Since the initial rollout, the number of requests for user accounts have steadily increased on a monthly basis, with over 70% of the user base actively using the system.

Accounts created		
Trainee	4443	77% have used the system
Trainer	11227	70% have used the system

Future Releases

New functionality is being developed and is planned to be made available by October 2012. These developments include:

Revised 'Educational Supervisor's Structured Report' – the form has been reconstructed to be more in line with 'ESSR' documentation previously completed on paper.

Updated MSF process – where trainees will have the ability to track the progress of their MSF directly and can therefore chase those selected to provide feedback.

Watch this space, training materials will soon be available in the form of online training sessions providing "How To" instructions on specific features within the RCoA e-Portfolio system for trainees.

Further information and contact

News, supporting information and guidance can be found on the College website:

<http://www.rcoa.ac.uk/e-portfolio> or contact e-Portfolio@rcoa.ac.uk

This Autumn, the RCoA are launching an Online Booking System for events organised by the College.

Features of your personal online events space include:

- A booking process that is efficient, quick and user friendly
- A full events listing that allows multiple event bookings
- An area to update your personal details
- An online event feedback process
- Secure payment



**BOOK
ONLINE**

Exams: Spotlight and Finally

Spotlight on the Review and Appeal Process.

Reference: Primary and Final FRCA Examinations (Reviews and Appeals) Regulations October 2010

Recalculations:

Exam marks are awarded following strict guidelines. **The College does not remark papers** The marks given to candidates have been confirmed by the Board of Examiners and cannot be changed. Prior to the confirmation of marks, all exam papers undergo a number of approved and thorough checking procedures. All marks are verified by the Board of Examiners. Candidate who fail by a slim margin (1% or less) will have their papers checked a further time by the chairman or exams manager, it is very unlikely that your papers have been added up incorrectly. However, a candidate who remains dissatisfied with the determination of his/her result but is not alleging any impropriety or bias, may, after receipt of the Result letter, request an additional calculation. Re-calculation will incur a £50 charge. You will get your money back if we find an error. You must request a re-calculation within 1 month of the exam in writing to the exams manager and include a cheque for £50. We have not to date, found any errors in calculation.

Reviews:

Candidates must request a Review before an Appeal, this is the first part of the process. Reviews will be entertained which **allege impropriety or bias of some kind in the organisation, content, conduct or determination** of the result of their exam. The burden of proof lies with the candidate requesting the review, who must prove clear reason to why their performance was affected by impropriety or bias. The most important point here is;

“No Review ... may be made of matters which relate solely to examiner judgment.”

Therefore a Review based on the fact that you felt the examiner did not give you marks for saying this or that or you felt you performed better than the marks awarded you, will not succeed.

Reviews must be submitted in writing, to the Director of Training and Examinations at the College address,

setting out in full the matter on which alleged impropriety or bias is based. The Director will investigate the matter and make a decision based on the facts of the case. If the Director concludes that the matter on which the Review is based provides proof of impropriety or bias of some kind, whether in whole or in part then he will take any action necessary to rectify the situation identified and the candidate will be informed of the findings and any corrective action to be taken. If no impropriety or bias is proved then the candidate will be informed so in writing.

Appeals:

If a candidate who has received a reply from the Director, following a Review process, saying no impropriety or bias was found, remains dissatisfied with the findings and wishes to challenge the points set out in the decision letter, then they can submit an Appeal. They must use the application form at Annex A of the Review and Appeal Regulations along with a cheque for £1,500. The fee covers professional and travel costs which are chargeable/incurred by the Appeal Panel. The fee may be refunded should the Panel agree that the Appeal is justified. The Appeal proceeding follow a formal process which is set out in the Regulations, witnesses may be called, the final decision lies with the Panel.

And Finally.....

Did you know:

The SAQ exam is held in March and September each year. It consists of 12 Short Answer Questions. Candidates write their answers in six coloured question booklets, two questions/answers in each booklet. The candidates are also supplied with an additional 'white rough note paper booklet'. This contains 14 A4 pages for candidates to make notes and practice answers. Notes put into the white booklet will not be considered by the examiners. All white booklets left on candidates' desks are destroyed by the administration staff on completion of the exam. Therefore all answers must be entered into the appropriate coloured booklet.

The next issue of the Candidate will be available in January 2013