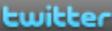




January 2013

Issue 6

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Information and News for FRCA Exam Candidates

Welcome to the January edition of 'The Candidate' a newsletter specifically designed to keep FRCA examination candidates informed.

**Did you know that the validity of a pass in the Primary exam as part eligibility towards the Final was reduced from 10 years to seven years in September 12 this also applies to exemption qualifications.**



## Examinations News

### Withdrawal from exams Examination Regulations paragraph 25:

“Candidates withdrawing from examinations before the closing date for applications, may receive back the full amount of the fee paid, less a deduction for admin charges, [which currently stands at £35]. Withdrawals must be received in writing, [email to exams@rcoa.ac.uk will suffice].

A candidate who withdraws in any other circumstances including non-issue of entry visa

or who fails to appear for an examination will not normally be entitled to any refund of fee.”

The applicant and the College Tutor sign examination application forms to say that the applicant is 'adequately prepared' for the exam applied for. Therefore the College will not give any refund if withdrawal is due to a lack of preparation on behalf of the candidate. The Examinations Manager, on behalf of Council, will consider a refund after the closing date on the grounds of illness or bereavement. However, the College Tutor will need to confirm the reason for withdrawal before a refund is agreed. All refunds are subject to a £35 admin charge.

The Primary exams in particular have experienced a high level of withdrawals/absence, with the OSCE/SOE seeing a 10% non-attendance rate over the last 12 months. The College fully appreciates that the

vast majority of candidates have strong and genuine reasons for withdrawal. However candidates are urged to consider their position carefully when submitting applications for examinations and to contact the College and their College Tutor as soon as possible if they are, for any reason, considering a withdrawal.

### Mobile Phones

Candidates are reminded that mobile phones have no place at examinations. They should be switched off and left in bags or lockers. Alternatively they can be given to the Invigilator or College Officer who will place the phone in an envelope which will be marked accordingly. Phones will be returned in exchange for exam papers or candidate badges on leaving the exam.

The College is presently considering a no tolerance policy with regard to mobile phones and electronic devices. Further information to follow.

### Turn Over for:

- Exams Information and Key Facts
- Hints and Tips
- Exam statistics
- GMC data collection

# Exams: Information and Key Facts

## The Primary MCQ Exam

The Primary MCQ Exam dates for 2013 are: 5th February 2013, 11th June 2013 and 10th September 2013. The number of candidates who sat the Primary MCQ in September 2012 was 255. 124 passed (43.63%).

- \* 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.

You are allowed five attempts at the Primary MCQ

**The Next Primary MCQ Exam is 5th February 2013 Application is closed**

The following Primary MCQ exam is on 11th June 2013

Application opening date: 4th March 2013 Application closing date: 23rd April 2013

## The Primary OSCE/SOE Exam

The Primary OSCE and SOE exam dates for 2013 are; w/c 14th January 2013, 13th May 2013 and 4th November 2013. All held at the Royal College of Anaesthetists, please note the change of date from Oct to Nov. The number of candidates who sat the OSCE and/or SOE exams in October 2012 was 376. 208 passed the Primary exam saw a pass rate of 55.32% 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 valid for seven years as part eligibility towards the Final

**The Next Primary OSCE/SOE Exams**

The next Primary OSCE/SOE exam week commences on Monday 14th January 2013 and runs through to Friday 18th January inclusive (applications for this are now closed)

# Exams: Information and Key Facts

## The Final Written Exam

The Final Written Exam dates for 2013 are: 12th March and 4th September 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 September 2012 was 343. 178 passed (51.90%).

- \* 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.  $60 \times 5$  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 12th March 2013

Applications accepted from: 10th Dec 2012

Application closing date: 29th Jan 2013

## The Final SOE Exam

The Final SOE exam dates for 2013 are: w/c 24th June 2013 and 9th December 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 December 2012 was 297. 187 passed (63%).

- \* 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 24th June 2013

Applications accepted from: 4th April 2013

Application closing date: 2nd May 2013

# 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, 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 new Primary SBAs are harder to come by at present as the College is still populating the question bank. There are 12 on the website and 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. It is estimated that 30 SBAs should take approximately one hour. The invigilator will give time checks, 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**

The OSCE is a matter of endurance, there are 17, 5 minute stations. You have one minute to read the information outside the station, ensure you take it all in. Concentrate on each question asked you and give an answer, the Examiner can't go back. If you feel your station didn't go particularly well, then forget it and worry later, ensure you go to each new station with a clear mind. The X-ray stations do not have an examiner in attendance complete the OMR sheets as instructed don't miss an answer.

### **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 and correct yourself.

## Courses

**Primary FRCA Master class, Royal College of Anaesthetists, London**

4—7th March 2013

Course Code D26

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.

### 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 spread out across 6 booklets and 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.

**Exam Syllabus.** Exam questions are mapped to the relevant curriculum (Final = Intermediate Level, although questions can be made up from competencies in the Basic level). The areas of the curriculum that are tested in exams are identified by the letter 'E'. These 'E' competencies make up the exam syllabus.

## 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](mailto:exams@rcoa.ac.uk) You can call the dept direct on:

## Courses

### Final FRCA Course

1—5th July 2013

Royal College of Anaesthetists, London

Course Code A79

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.

## Exams Statistics

### Primary MCQ

493 candidates sat the exam in June 2012. The pass rate was 302/493 (61.3%), compared with 49.4% in February 2011.

255 sat the September 2012 exam 124 (48.63%) passed and 131 (51.37%) failed.

### Primary OSCE/SOE

376 candidates sat the exam in October 2012. 208 passed the Primary exam (55.32%). The number of candidates sitting both parts was 298. 149 (50%) of these candidates passed the Primary component pass rates were 68.2% in the OSCE and 61.1% in the SOE.

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

### Final Written

The overall pass rate for the combined written examination in September 2012 was 51.6%. This compares to 68% (September 2011), 61.4% (September 2010), 65.9% (September 2009). It is therefore a lower pass rate than seen in the last three years.

### Final SOE

The Final SOEs were held over a four day period from 3—6th December 2012. 297 candidates attended. 187 (63%) passed and 110 (37%) failed.

## GMC proposal for examination data to be collected at individual trainee level

The GMC already receive aggregated examination data from Colleges and Faculties through the Annual Specialty Report (ASR). The ASR is specifically designed to provide assurance to the GMC and the public that Colleges are driving the quality of training and the delivery of curricula in line with the GMC's standards. The present aggregated examination data received by the GMC allows them to analyse the performance of UK trainees by gender, country of origin and Primary Medical Qualifications etc. However, aggregated data is difficult to validate and the analysis of such data is limited.

Therefore in order to improve data quality and completeness, which in turn will allow the GMC greater control in the analysis of progression patterns, they have requested that Colleges and Faculties provide data at 'trainee level' which will allow the GMC to establish clean and validated datasets and integrate exam results with ARCP and recruitment data etc.

To achieve this, the GMC have asked that Colleges/Faculties provide individual data fields for all UK trainees, the required fields include: GMC number, First name, Surname, Trainee level and Deanery, exam result, marks, date of success and a marks breakdown. The GMC have confirmed that they will only publish aggregated exam data against GMC number in the form of pass or fail. Other specific data will be retained and may be used for research.

The College has been in discussion with the GMC to ensure that the provision of data requested and that data storage/governance is in accordance with The Data Protection Act 1998 (DPA 1998). The College is satisfied that the provision of data for doctors registered with the GMC is permitted under the DPA 1998 Schedule 2. The GMC have recommended the following privacy notice:

*"If you are registered or anticipate being registered with the GMC then your personal data, including data about your exam results, will be passed to the GMC for quality assurance and research purposes and to facilitate the awarding of certificates of completion of training (CCTs)."*

The privacy notice will be put in place no later than 31<sup>st</sup> March 2013. The GMC's privacy notice will be in addition to the College's 'Disclosure of Information' notice which is already reflected on examination application forms and covered in the College's data protection policy.

Individual candidate data will be published by the GMC using a password protected online reporting tool from September 2014. The report will use data collected over the 2013-2014 academic year.

For further information please see:

<http://www.gmc-uk.org/education/postgraduate/14171.asp>