

# The Candidate

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Issue 6

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Welcome to the May addition 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 2012. This also applies to exemption qualifications.**



## Examination News

### Changes to the Examination Application form

The examination application forms are due to change. In order to prepare for on-line application, which should come to fruition in autumn 2014 we have changed parts of the application form, making them more straightforward to complete and bringing all the notes and instructions together to form a comprehensive ‘Information sheet’ which will advise the applicant on how to complete the form, check it and give advice on despatch and gaining confirmation of receipt. The current forms will be replaced by the end of June 2013.

#### Turn Over For

- Exam Information and Key Facts
- Hints and Tips
- Exam Statistics
- Other News

The most radical change you will notice on the new forms is that an applicant will **no longer have to obtain their College Tutor’s or Supervising Consultant’s signature.** Of course Trainees/MTI (IP) applicants will still need to discuss their application with their College Tutor and obtain their full support to sit the exam applied for. Non-trainees will require their supervising Anaesthetic Consultant’s support too. When completing the new application forms, all applicants will be required to print the name of their CT or supervising Consultant at the appropriate section of the form and then declare that they have their full support. Remember when signing the application form you will not only be confirming you have spoken to your CT/Consultant and have their support but that you are adequately prepared for the exam you are applying for.

### Mobile Phone, Complaints.

In response to the increased potential for cheating and the disturbance to other candidates the examinations committee have introduced a comprehensive policy regarding the rules for mobile phones and electronic devices at examinations, full details can be found at Appendix 6 of the examination regulations.

The College recognises that on occasion candidates may wish to express their dissatisfaction with the way in which something has been done and feel confident that any such complaint is handled in a fair and consistent way. To this aim the Committee has introduced a set of procedures for the handling of complaints. Further details can be found in the examinations (reviews and appeals) Regulations, paragraphs 20 – 30.



# Exams : Information and Key Facts

## The Primary MCQ Exam

The Primary MCQ Exam dates for 2013 are 11th June 2013 and the 10th September 2013. The Number of candidates who sat the Primary MCQ in February was 248 with 127 securing a pass. (51.2%)

- The Primary MCQ is three hours long starting at 2pm and finishing at 5pm. Candidates must be seated by 1.45pm for the brief.
- The Primary MCQ consists of 60 multiple true/false (MTF) questions and 30 single best answer (SBA)
- No candidate will be allowed into the exam room more than 30min after the start time. No extra time will be given for late arrivals.
- 20 MTF in pharmacology
- Don't forget your passport or photo driving licence. Hospital ID doesn't count. If your name has changed from that on your ID, then you will need to produce proof of name change, such as a marriage certificate.
- 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 list above.

## You are allowed five attempts at the Primary MCQ

The next MCQ exam is on the 11th June. Application is now closed

The following Primary MCQ exam is 10th September 2013

Application opening date: Monday 24th June 2013 Closing date: Thursday 8th August 2013

## The Primary OSCE/SOE

The next Primary OSCE/SOE is w/c 4th November 2013. All OSCE/SOE exams are held at the Royal College of Anaesthetists, please note the change of date from October to November. The number of candidates who sat the OSCE and/or the SOE in May was 286. 160 passed the Primary exam (55.94%)

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, there may be a delay in processing your application which may mean you miss the application deadline for the exam.

## High numbers expected for the November 2013 Primary OSCE/SOE exam

Please be aware that due to changes made in the exams calendar 2013-2014, which allows candidates who pass the Primary MCQ to apply for the next OSCE/SOE and the last sitting of the June MCQ from the 2012-2013 calendar, it is highly likely there will be an exceptionally high number of applicants for the Primary OSCE/SOE commencing 4th November 2013. Whilst the College will ensure that they are able to examine Anaesthetic trainees, non UK trainees and former trainees are subject to a waiting list system, see 'Prioritisation of Applications' at Section 4 of the Examination Regulations. Although every effort will be made to examine as many candidates as possible, due to the expected high number of candidates, it is possible that not all applicants placed on a waiting list will be given a place at the November exam.

## 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 OSCE/SOE exam week commences on Monday 4th November 2013

Application opening date: Tuesday 3rd Sept 2013 Closing date: Thursday 3rd Oct 2013



# Exams : Information and Key Facts

## The Final Written Exam

The only remaining Exam date for 2013 is 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 March 2013 was 481. 285 passed (59.25%).

- 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 question.
- 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 achieving a good performance in the other.

**You are allowed six attempts at the Final Written. A pass is valid for 2 years**

### The Next Final Written Exam

The next Final Written exam takes place on 3rd September 2013

Applications accepted from: 24th June 2013 Application closing date: 23rd July 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

Application is now closed.



# 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 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**  
8th – 11th July 2013  
Course Code D70  
Course Fee £305

**The Royal College of Anaesthetists**



# 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:**  
**020 7092 1528 /1522/1523/1524/1525/1526.**  
**Examinations Manager 020 7092 1521.**

## Courses

### Final FRCA Revision Course

1—5th July 2013

Royal College of Anaesthetists, London

Course Code A79

Course Fee £395

**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

255 sat the September 2012 exam 124 (48.63%) passed and 131 (51.37%) failed. 248 candidates sat the exam in February 2013. The pass rate was 127/248 (51.2%), compared with 55% in February 2012.

### Final Written

The overall pass rate for the combined written examination in March 2013 was 59.40%. This compares to 51.69% (September 2012). This represents an 8% improvement since September 2012.

### Primary OSCE/SOE

359 candidates sat the exam in January 2013. 166 passed the Primary exam (46%). The number of candidates sitting both parts was 257. 89 (34.63%) of these candidates passed the Primary. Component pass rates were 52.9% in the OSCE and 57.49% in the SOE.

### 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. There are 370 candidates booked onto the June 2013 exam.

### GMC proposal for exam data to be collected at trainee level

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'. This will allow the GMC to establish validated datasets and integrate exam results with ARCP and recruitment data etc. To achieve this, the GMC have asked that we 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 will only publish pass or fail results against the GMC number. The application forms will carry the GMC 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 (CCT)."**

The GMC will publish the data using an online reporting tool from September 2014.

### Standard provisions for Dyslexia

The College allows standard provisions for candidates with dyslexia who provide satisfactory written assessment from an educational psychologist. 25% (45 minutes) extra time is allowed for all written examinations. There are no standard arrangements for OSCE or SOE. All written examinations where extra time is allowed are held in a separate room at the College, 35 Red Lion Square, London WC1R 2SG. A request for provision must be provided with application forms along with the written assessment form. Other reasonable accommodations, such as coloured overlays, specific fonts can be requested through the examinations manager. Full details are available at Appendix 3 of the Examination Regulations.

### Misconduct policy

The Integrity of FRCA examinations is fundamental to the values promoted by the College. It is important that all candidates are judged on their ability, and no candidate be allowed to gain an advantage unfairly over others. By virtue of entering to sit an examination, candidates are deemed to have understood and agreed to abide and respect all examination regulations and policies. Any aspect of misconduct at FRCA examinations will be investigated and acted upon in accordance with the College Misconduct policy.

### Examinations Calendars

The examinations calendars for the next two academic years, (2013-2014 and 2014-2015), are now available on the College website. The fees for the forthcoming year, can be found on the relevant calendar and at the top of the exams dates, fees and applications page: <http://www.rcoa.ac.uk/examinations/dates-fees-and-applications>