

# The Candidate

January 2014  
Issue 8  
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Welcome to the January 2014 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

### Increase in the number of attempts at FRCA exam components

It was reported in the previous newsletter that the number of attempts for all FRCA exam components should be set at six and this would come into effect from August 2014. However, following a small number of requests from trainees who had narrowly failed the Primary OSCE or SOE examinations at their final (4th attempt), to be allowed an additional attempt at the exam before the introduction date of 1st August 2014, the Examinations Committee shorten the standard ‘notice for change period’ which is normally one year. After consideration of the exam calendar dates and the

need for applicants on their sixth attempt to submit an Additional Educational Training Form AET Form 1, three months before their final attempt, it was agreed to advance the introduction date to 1st November 2013. A copy of the AET Form 1 can be found at Appendix 8 of the Examination Regulations. A Word copy of the form can be found on the Regulations page of the College Website.

<http://www.rcoa.ac.uk/examinations/overview/regulations>

### Primary and Final SOE videos

We are also pleased to advise that the College has published the first in a series of videos designed to assist trainees in their preparation for the Primary Examination, these can be found on the Primary resources page of the website. These first videos concentrate on the Primary SOE section and are

designed to help more with candidate performance rather than knowledge. SOE requires certain key skills to be developed and an understanding of what performance characteristics examiners are looking for, will help trainees appreciate what areas to work on. We are also working on videos to assist trainees at the Final SOE and these will be available on the website soon.

### Queens New Years Honour List

The RCoA is delighted to see that two anaesthetists were recognised in the Queen’s New Year Honours List 2014:

Dr Anna-Maria Rollin received an MBE for her services to Anaesthesia

Dr Robert Linton was awarded an MBE for his services to Medicine and Defence

#### Turn Over For

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



# Exams : Information and Key Facts

## The Primary MCQ Exam

The remaining MCQ date for academic year 2013/2014 is 4th March 2014. The number of candidates that sat the Primary MCQ in November was 196 with 107 securing a pass. (54.59%)

- 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.

**The next MCQ exam is on the 14th March 2014. Application is now closed**

**The following Primary MCQ exam is 9th September 2014**

**Application opening date: 23rd June 2014 Closing date: 7th August 2014**

## The Primary OSCE/SOE

The next Primary OSCE/SOE is w/c 27th January 2014. 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 November was 380. 224 passed the Primary exam (58.95%)

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.

**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 19th May 2014**

**Application opening date: 18th February 2014 Closing date: 10th April 2014**

# Exams : Information and Key Facts

## The Final Written Exam

The only remaining exam date for the academic year ending 2014 is 11th March 2014. 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 2013 was 348. 221 passed (67.74%).

- 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.
- Questions. MTF questions have five items, each item carries one mark. SBA questions are awarded four marks for each correct question. 60 x 5 and 4 x 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.

**The next Final Written exam takes place on 11th March 2014  
Application window closes on 28th January 2014**

## The Final SOE Exam

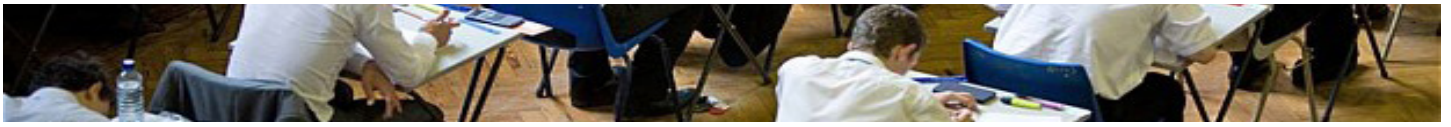
The remaining exam dates for the academic year ending 2014 is 23rd June 2014. The SOEs normally run Monday to Friday but this is dependant on the number of candidates. The number of candidates that sat the Final SOEs in December 2013 was 351. 236 passed (67%)

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.

**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 exam commences the week beginning Monday 23rd June 2014  
Applications accepted from: 3rd April 2014 Application closing date: 1st May 2014**



# 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 information sheet on the back of your application form.** The info sheet 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.

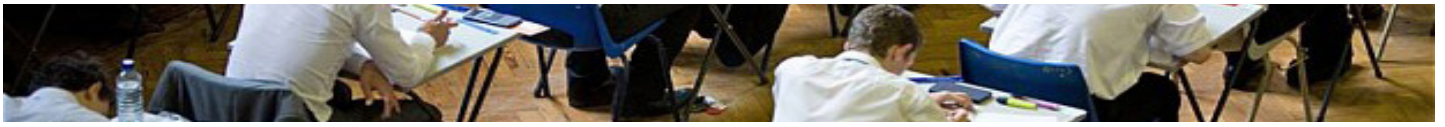
## Oral exam technique.

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**  
**30th June- 3rd July 2014**  
**Course Code D70**  
**Course Fee £305**

**The Royal College of Anaesthetists**



# Exams : Hints, Tips and Courses

## The Final Written

**09.00 – 1700.** 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

7th July - 11th July 2014

Royal College of Anaesthetists, London

Course Code: A79

Course Fee: TBC

**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

196 sat the November 2013 exam 107 (54.59%) passed and 89 (45.41%) failed. 193 candidates sat the exam in September 2013. The pass rate was 94/193 (48.70%), This compares with 59% for June 2013

### Final Written

The overall pass rate for the combined written examination in September 2013 was 67.76%. This compares to 59.40% (March 2013). This represents an 8.36% improvement since March 2013

### Primary OSCE/SOE

380 candidates sat the exam in November 2013. 224 passed the Primary exam (58.95%). The number of candidates sitting both parts was 313. 177 (56.55%) of these candidates passed the Primary. Component pass rates were 76.92% in the OSCE and 65.85% in the SOE.

### Final SOE

The Final SOEs were held over a four day period from 9th December 2013. 351 candidates attended. 237 (67%) passed and 115 (33%) failed. Opening date for application to sit the June 2014 SOE opens on the 3rd April 2014.

## FRCA Examination Calenders 2013 - 2015

2013/2014	PRIMARY F.R.C.A.						FINAL F.R.C.A.				
	MCQ EXAM			OSCE & SOE EXAM			WRITTEN EXAM		SOE EXAM		
Applications and fees not accepted before	Monday 24 Jun 13	Monday 02 Sep 13	Monday 11 Nov 13				Applications and fees not accepted before	Monday 24 Jun 13	Monday 09 Dec 13		
Closing date Primary MCQ Applications	Thursday 08 Aug 13	Thursday 10 Oct 13	Thursday 23 Jan 14				Closing date Final Written Applications	Tuesday 23 Jul 13	Tuesday 28 Jan 14		
Primary MCQ examination	Tuesday 10 Sep 13	Tuesday 12 Nov 13	Tuesday 04 Mar 14				Final Written examination	Tuesday 03 Sep 13	Tuesday 11 Mar 14		
Applications and fees not accepted before				Tuesday 03 Sep 13	Tuesday 29 Oct 13	Tuesday 18 Feb 14	Applications and fees not accepted before			Thursday 12 Sep 13	Thursday 03 Apr 14
Closing date Primary OSCE & SOE Applications				Thursday 03 Oct 13	Thursday 12 Dec 13	Thursday 10 Apr 14	Closing date Final SOE Applications			Thursday 24 Oct 13	Thursday 01 May 14
OSCEs and SOEs (probable date of commencement)				Monday 04 Nov 13	Monday 27 Jan 14	Monday 19 May 14	SOEs (probable date of commencement)			Monday 09 Dec 13	Monday 23 Jun 14
Examination Fees	£310	£310	£310	Both OSCE SOE £565 £315 £285	Both OSCE SOE £565 £315 £285	Both OSCE SOE £565 £315 £285	Examination Fees	£455	£455	£540	£540
2014/2015	PRIMARY F.R.C.A.						FINAL F.R.C.A.				
	MCQ EXAM			OSCE & SOE EXAM			WRITTEN EXAM		SOE EXAM		
Applications and fees not accepted before	Monday 23 Jun 14	Monday 01 Sep 14	Monday 10 Nov 14				Applications and fees not accepted before	Monday 23 Jun 14	Monday 08 Dec 14		
Closing date Primary MCQ Applications	Thursday 07 Aug 14	Thursday 09 Oct 14	Thursday 22 Jan 15				Closing date Final Written Applications	Tuesday 22 Jul 14	Tuesday 27 Jan 15		
Primary MCQ examination	Tuesday 9 Sep 14	Tuesday 11 Nov 14	Tuesday 03 Mar 15				Final Written examination	Tuesday 02 Sep 14	Tuesday 10 Mar 15		
Applications and fees not accepted before				Tuesday 02 Sep 14	Tuesday 28 Oct 14	Tuesday 17 Feb 15	Applications and fees not accepted before			Thursday 11 Sep 14	Thursday 02 Apr 15
Closing date Primary OSCE & SOE Applications				Thursday 02 Oct 14	Thursday 11 Dec 14	Thursday 09 Apr 15	Closing date Final SOE Applications			Thursday 23 Oct 14	Thursday 30 Apr 15
OSCEs and SOEs (probable date of commencement)				Monday 03 Nov 14	Monday 26 Jan 15	Monday 18 May 15	SOEs (probable date of commencement)			Monday 08 Dec 14	Monday 22 Jun 15
Examination Fees	TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC	Examination Fees	TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC

## FRCA Primary Guide - Fourth Addition

In December 2013 the fourth edition of the Guide to the Primary was released. This new edition gives further details on MCQ validation and Standard Setting. A full example set of MTF and SBA questions and answers. The layout in the Guide being exactly as it would be in the examination with 60 MTF and 30 SBA. There are also further MTF and SBA examples available on the College website, these can be found on the 'Candidate Resources' page.

The Guide also contains new questions in all sections of the Primary SOE and updated OSCE questions. The Guide can be ordered online via the website:

**The Royal College of Anaesthetists**



## Updates to exam Regulations

### Regulations

With effect from 1 November 2013 – the following amendments were made to the Examination Regulations.

#### Section 3: Examinations, Regulation 5(e)

Candidates will be allowed six attempts at the MCQ, OSCE and SOE, subject to remaining eligible under Regulation 13. Candidates will be required to provide evidence of additional educational training for the sixth attempt at each component. Details of additional evidence are set out in Regulation 8. Candidates must complete the 'Additional Educational Training form AET Form 1' found at Appendix 8.

#### Section 3: Examinations, Regulation 8(c)

Candidates will be allowed six attempts at the Written and SOE, subject to remaining eligible under Regulation 17. Candidates will be required to provide evidence of additional educational training for the sixth attempt at each component. Details of additional evidence are set out in Regulation 8. Candidates must complete the 'Additional Educational Training form AET Form 1' at Appendix 8.

#### Section 11: Failures and Guidance, Regulation 34

There are no mandatory requirements for candidates to attend guidance interviews up to the fifth attempt for each component. At the sixth attempts candidates must have attended a guidance interview subject to Regulations 34 (b) and 34 (c).

#### Sections 5, 6 and 7 at Regulations 14, 16 and 18

A person shall not be eligible to enter for the [\*Primary \*MCQ, \*OSCE and/or SOE] [\*Final \*Written, \*SOE] who has failed the [\*relevant] examination of the [\*Primary/\*Final] FRCA six times. Evidence of additional educational training/experience must be provided in accordance with Section 3 Regulation 8 at the sixth attempt.

#### With effect from 1 November 2013 – the following additions were made to the Examination Regulations: added to Section 3

8. In addition to remaining eligible under Regulations 13 or 17 as applicable, at the sixth attempt at any component of the Primary or Final FRCA, a candidate must provide evidence of additional educational experience/training as follows:

A. Prior to application for further attempts after the fifth attempt a candidate must:

i. Discuss their final attempt and suitability for anaesthetic training with their College Tutor or equivalent. Their College Tutor or equivalent must support a further attempt in writing through the submission of the 'Additional Educational Training form AET Form 1' at Appendix 8 of the examinations regulations.

ii. The form must be submitted to the Director of Training and Examinations at least three months in advance of the date of the next intended sitting.

If a candidate has not already attended a guidance interview for this component then they must attend a guidance interview in accordance with Section 11 of the Regulations.

iii. Re-application must be made after a period of additional training which has been discussed and agreed by the College Tutor or supervising Anaesthetic Consultant after consultation with the in-house anaesthetic training team. A full training programme is mandatory and is set out on the form as follows:

A. Attendance at a recognised FRCA course either locally or nationally.

B. Examination practice for the relevant component (e.g. OSCE, SOE practice, MCQ practice etc).

C. Evidence of modules undertaken in e-LA if applicable to the relevant examination component since failing at the fourth attempt.

D. Further clinical exposure and training as discussed with a College Tutor appropriate to the relevant examination component.