



Royal College of Anaesthetists

### General administration

Dress Code: Smart dress (suit and tie) should be worn throughout. Appendix 5 of the Exam Regulations give further details.

The same dress code will apply for FRCA examinations as it does for day to day clinical practice/contact with patients: this means that forms of dress should not constrain the candidates' ability to demonstrate recognised skills. Forms of dress that cover the face will normally be deemed inappropriate in such examinations. Candidates are not expected to wear scrubs.

Attendance: You should arrive at the Royal College of Anaesthetists (see map) at least 30 minutes before the first call time on your Admission Notice. Please note that the earliest time you will be admitted to the College is 07.30.

On arrival you should report to the reception desk and present your Admission Notice and ID to the Commissionaire. He/she will give you clear instructions on when and where to report for each examination component.

Mobile Phones: **Mobile phones and other electronic devices have no place at examinations** and should be left at home where possible. If you do bring your mobile phone or a smart watch to the exam then you should carry out the following procedure:

- Switch off your phone in front of the College officer at reception.
- Store in secure locker/luggage for duration of time in College, Or,
- Hand to College Officer. College Officer will place in envelope and mark with candidate No. Returned in exchange for candidate badge on leaving the College. **Under no circumstances should mobile phones or smart watches be taken to the exam floor. Candidates will be disqualified if phones or smart watches are found on their person once they have entered the exam floor.**

Badges: The Commissionaire will issue you with a badge bearing your candidate number. You must wear your badge at all times when you are in the College. You must sign in and out at reception when leaving/returning throughout the day. **Badges should be returned to the Commissionaire on final departure.**

Exam brief: Every group of candidates will be given a short briefing outlining the procedures for each component prior to being examined.

Results: Results are placed on the College website on the next working day following your examination. The publication of results is explained further on your Admission Notice. Where the next working day falls on a Saturday/Sunday the College will try to publish the result by 8pm of the examining day. However it may not be possible and may not be done until the Monday.



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Changes: It is not envisaged that we will need to make any changes to the exam dates and times set out in your Admission Notice but if there is a 'National Emergency Situation' that is likely to affect a majority of College examiners or candidates, then there may be a need to implement a contingency plan to deal with the situation. If this happens and there is sufficient time available to us, we will inform you personally. In the unlikely event of this happening at short notice, then an urgent announcement will be published on the College website – homepage ([www.rcoa.ac.uk](http://www.rcoa.ac.uk)).

If you have any concerns at all, perhaps following announcements made in the media, then you should check the website before leaving for your exam.

Complaints: 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. Candidates who consider they have grounds for complaint, regarding the provision of a service by the College that does not amount to a request for a 'Review', (see paragraph 8 of the Review and Appeal Regulations) should follow the policy at paragraph 20 of the Review and Appeal Regulations. Candidates should note that complaints should be brought to the attention of a College officer as soon as possible. Complaints given orally at the time of the examination taking place will be logged on an incident report form by the College Officer. Immediate action to resolve issues as they arise will be taken wherever possible and the complainant will be advised accordingly.

## The Primary OSCE/SOE Examination

All Primary FRCA sections: MCQ, OSCE and SOE are pass or fail. All three sections must be passed to gain the Primary FRCA examination.

- Attempts:** At your first attempt the OSCE and SOE sections must be taken together. If you fail one section but pass the other, you will only need to retake the failed section. If both sections are failed then they must be retaken at the same sitting.
- Validity:** A pass in the MCQ, OSCE or SOE will be valid for three years, measured to the starting date of the sitting applied for. After this period if the whole examination has not been passed all sections must be re-taken. A pass in the Primary examination is valid for 7 years as part eligibility towards the Final examinations
- Prizes:** The criteria for the award of examinations prizes is set out in the Examinations Regulations, Appendix 4. The Nuffield Prize is awarded for achieving the *highest* levels of distinction set out in Appendix 4 at the Primary FRCA Examinations.

### Structure Oral Examination (SOE)

The Primary SOE examination is taken in two sub-sections:

- SOE part I: 30 minute Oral examination, consisting of three topics in pharmacology and three topics in physiology with biochemistry.
- SOE part II: 30 minute Oral examination, consisting of three clinical topics (including a critical incident) and three topics in physics, clinical measurement, equipment and safety.

### The Marking system

Two examiners mark each part of the SOE and you will have a different pair of examiners for each SOE. All examiners that examine you independently mark every question and enter their marks onto an optically marked (OMR) sheet. All OMR sheets are removed after each round of examining, examiners are not aware of any marks awarded to you by other examiners.

There are 12 questions, 2 marks are given for a pass, 1 mark for a borderline performance and 0 marks for a fail, giving a maximum total score of 48 marks.

The pass mark for the Primary SOE is 37 which was determined using a modified Rothman system.



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Objective Structured Clinical Examination (OSCE)

The testing of clinical skills takes the form of an objective structured clinical examination (OSCE).

An OSCE circuit consists of up to 18 stations. Presently the College uses a 18 station OSCE, this of course can change from exam to exam. Only 16 of these will be marked towards the candidate's result; the other stations are there for validating new questions. You will not know which are live and which are test stations, therefore all should be approached equally.

Whether a candidate passes the OSCE will be determined by the **total score from all 16 live stations**. Every question offers the same number of marks towards that total, and candidates should therefore attempt to answer as many questions as possible on all stations. **There is no negative marking** in any station in the OSCE.

**Every station must be attempted**; a fail mark will automatically be awarded if one or more stations are not attempted.

Stations will test skills in clinical assessment (e.g. history-taking, physical examination), anatomy, medical image interpretation, communication (e.g. obtaining consent, explaining possible complications and side effects of treatment, giving instructions through nurses or others, dealing with complaints from patients) and technical procedures (e.g. checking equipment, demonstrating techniques on manikins).

At least one station tests aspects of resuscitation. One or more stations may use a Sim-Man simulator. Do not worry if you have not used Sim-Man simulators before; their data displays conform to normal formats.

**Please note**; The Primary Board of Examiners have agreed that they only accept answers based on the current (2015) Resuscitation Guidelines. Candidates attending this examination will be briefed accordingly.

Some stations may be testing more than one type of clinical skill; if so, this will be clearly indicated on the briefing note before you enter the station. One or more of the OSCE stations may require the use of a stethoscope and candidates are encouraged to bring their own.

#### SUMMARY OF MOVEMENT

At the start, you should wait at your first Information Point for approx. 1 minute.

During this minute, the Floor Supervisor will check you are at the correct station.

Double bell

Into your first OSCE station (for 5 minutes)

Bell

To your next Information Point (for 1 minute)

Bell

Into your next OSCE station (for 5 minutes)

and so on...

At the end, double bell

You will start at the Information Point of your first OSCE station. Your starting station will be indicated on your Admission Notice. You should read the briefing note outside the station,



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which gives you information about what is involved. For example, the briefing note before a history-taking station will give you some information about the patient you are about to meet.

After the 1 minute to read the station instructions, a bell will sound to signal the start of your first OSCE station; you should **immediately** enter the station and begin to carry out the tasks indicated on the briefing note. The examiner may talk to you at some stations; however, you should not wait for him/her to do so before beginning the task which has been indicated on the briefing note.

All stations are allocated 5 minutes. When the 5 minutes are up, a bell will sound indicating that you should leave the station and immediately move clockwise to the Information Point at your next station. You will then have 1 minute to read the briefing note for the next station. This is ample time as the briefing notes are short. On the sound of the next bell, you will then enter the station. This process is then repeated for the whole OSCE round.

If a triple bell sounds at any point during the OSCE, all candidates and examiners must stop immediately.

There will be an examiner at most stations, although some stations such as imaging stations you will be answering questions yourself by the use of a touch screen computer. **A member of exams staff will monitor these stations. Candidates should follow the prompts on the computer screen.** If you complete the questions on the screen before the five minutes are up remain in the station until the bell rings.

At stations where you meet a patient, for standard history-taking, physical examination or demonstration of communication skills, the examiner will introduce you to the patient and will then observe your performance and allocate marks according to standard guidelines.

*There may be occasions when your examination in a particular station is completed within the time allowed. When this occurs the examiner may indicate this and change from an examination to a social conversation. Please do not consider this to be anything but normal practice and is not an indicator of your performance.*