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Issue 1

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Information and News for FRCA Exam Candidates

Welcome to our very first 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 will also be using twitter to post info on exam dates and where and when results will be published.



Examinations News

OSCE May 2011 Resuscitation Council Guidelines

The Primary Board of Examiners have agreed that they will accept answers based on either the 2005 or 2010 Resuscitation Guidelines during the May 2011 OSCE examinations. Candidates attending this examination will be briefed accordingly.

Final Written exam

In March this year the SAQ paper saw a change in the

way in which examiners marked questions - they no longer have the discretion to award marks for clarity and prioritisation or deduct marks for serious errors. All questions will be marked out of 20 following the agreed marking guides.

Primary eligibility

From September 2011 the Primary MCQ will be open to 'any anaesthetist' in the world. This is to meet the mandatory requirement to have passed the 'Primary' for entry at ST3. Further information is available on the website.

Time for TEE

Non-UK trainee anaesthetist applicants applying for the MCQ who are not eligible for any of the College's membership categories will have to pre-apply for Temporary

Examination Eligibility (TEE). TEE must be achieved 3 months before any exam being applied for. There's a TEE tab on the College website.

Single Best Answers are coming to the Primary MCQ

As from September the Primary MCQ format will change. The number of multiple true/false (MTF) questions will be reduced from 90 to 60. 30 single best answer questions (SBA) will be added to the paper.

The SBA questions will reflect topics from all three current subsections.

Mark allocation for SBAs will be four marks for each correctly answered question. The marks allocation for MTFs will remain at five marks per question, one per item.

Turn Over for:

- Exams Information and Key Facts
- Hints and Tips
- Exam statistics and e-Learning

Exams: Information and Key Facts

The Primary MCQ Exam

The Primary MCQ Exam is held three times a year, usually in February, June and September. You can apply to sit the exam in any of our six centres across the country; Birmingham, Belfast, Sheffield, Cardiff, Edinburgh and London.

- * The Primary MCQ is three hours long, starting at 2pm and finishing at 5pm.
- * Candidates must be seated in the exam room by 1.45pm for the invigilator's briefing.
- * You will need to present proof of identity, this must have your photo on, e.g.: Passport, photo driving licence. Hospital ID is not valid.
- * Your desk is identified by your 'Candidate Number' a three digit number at the top of your Admission letter. Candidate numbers are exam specific so will change from exam to exam. Make sure you know your candidate number so you can identify your desk. If in doubt ask the Invigilator.
- * The Primary MCQ in June will consist of 90 multiple true/false (MTF) questions:
 - * 30 in pharmacology
 - * 30 in physiology and biochemistry
 - * 30 in physics and clinical measurement.
- * The format will change in September this year – see the exam changes section.
- * Each MTF question has five stems or items each item carries one mark (90 x 5 = 450).

You are allowed five attempts at the Primary MCQ

A pass is valid for two years

The Next Primary MCQ Exam

The next Primary MCQ exam is on **7th June 2011**

Applications accepted from: **7th March 2011**

Application closing date: **19th April 2011**

The Primary OSCE/SOE Exam

The Primary OSCE and SOE exams are held three times a year in October, January and May. They are always held at the Royal College of Anaesthetists in London. The exams take place over a week, normally Monday to Friday but the number of days depends on the number of applicants. Subject to capacity candidates can express a preference for which day they are examined on.

- * You must have passed the Primary MCQ within two years.
- * 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 only 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 ten years as part eligibility towards the Final exams

The Next Primary OSCE/SOE Exams

The next Primary OSCE/SOE exam week commences on **Monday 16th May 2011**

Applications accepted from: **22nd Feb 2011**

Application closing date: **12th April 2011**

Exams: Information and Key Facts

The Final Written Exam

Held twice a year in March and September; The Final Written Exam consists of a three hour Short Answer Question (SAQ) paper (sat from 0930 – 1230), followed by a three hour MCQ paper (1400 – 1700). The exam is held in Birmingham, Belfast, Sheffield, Cardiff, Edinburgh and London.

- * 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 the 12 questions are summed to give a total mark 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 x 5 and 4 x 30 = 420 available marks. The pass mark is determined using GMC approved methods.
- * Final exam questions can be mapped to the Intermediate Level Curriculum or the Basic Level Curriculum including basic sciences, see Training Programme Update No 2/2011 which is available on the Training pages of the College website.
- * The pass mark for the written exam is the sum of the percentage pass marks of the MCQ and SAQ papers.

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 **6th September 2011**

Applications accepted from: **27th June 2011**

Application closing date: **26th July 2011**

The Final SOE Exam

The Final SOEs are held in June and December each year and always take place in London at the College. The SOEs normally run Monday to Friday but the number of days depends on the number of candidates.

- * 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 and you will be asked four questions on the application of basic science to anaesthesia.
- * The pass mark for the SOEs is 32 marks from a maximum of 40.
- * Two examiners will examine you in each SOE, they mark each question independently.

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 20th June 2011**

Applications accepted from: **11th April 2011**

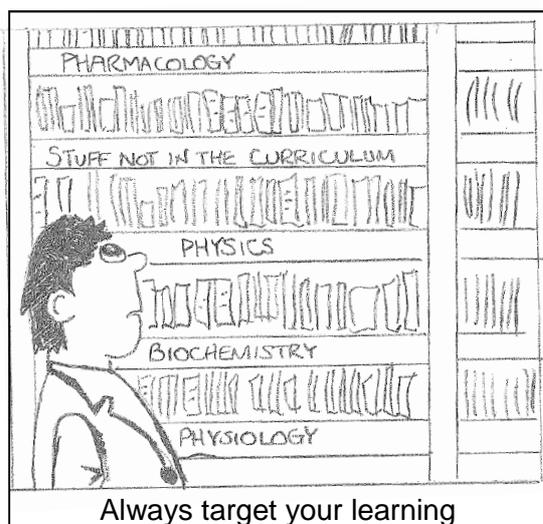
Application closing date: **10th May 2011**

Exams: Hints, Tips and Courses

The Primary MCQ

Apply early. Always submit your application in good time, plan to send it nearer to the opening date than the closing date.

Target your learning All exam questions are mapped to the relevant curriculum. The areas of the curriculum that are tested in exams are identified by the letter 'E'. These 'E' competencies make up the exam syllabus.



Always target your learning

Leave enough time. It takes around 45 minutes to transfer all the answers from the question paper to the OMR answer sheet. If you prefer to transfer all your marks at the end ensure you allow plenty of time, not just to transfer your marks, but to check through your answers too.

Don't leave blanks. Make sure you enter a choice for every MTF item. If you leave one blank it will be recorded as a 'void' and you have no chance of gaining a mark. No marks are deducted for wrong answers.

Mark one answer. If you mark both true and false for a question your answer will be void. Answer sheets are read by a scanner which identifies the pencil marks you make on the OMR answer sheet. If you mark both options (or leave both blank) the scanner pauses and the computer will ask the operator to confirm there is no answer entered.

The Primary OSCE SOE

Get your IAC issued on time and keep it safe. Ensure your College Tutor issues your IAC certificate as soon as you have completed all the relevant competencies then put it in your portfolio, so that you have a copy when you need to apply for the exam.

Arrive early. Make sure you arrive at the College at least 45 minutes before your first exam. The College is open from 7.30am. It is difficult to regain your composure if you have to rush up to the exam floor. There are very rarely any empty slots available, so if you miss your exam time you may not be examined.

On arrival John the Commissionaire will advise you where to be and at what time, he'll tell you where you can store your bags and coat and where the nearest coffee shop is etc (bring a £1 coin (returnable) for use in the storage lockers).

Have your breakfast and drink lots of water. If you are sitting the OSCE and SOEs it's a long day. The OSCE takes 1 hour 42 minutes plus briefing time and whilst SOE 1 and 2 are only 30 minutes with waiting and briefing times it is more like 1 hour each. Candidates have fainted during the OSCE because they hadn't eaten that day, keep hydrated and well fed.

Don't be affected by perceived poor performance. The OSCE pass mark is the sum of all 16 'live' station pass marks. If you think you are having a 'bad' station then try not to let it affect your performance in the rest of the OSCE. Do your best, then forget about it and focus on what's ahead of you. This philosophy applies to SOEs too, don't let what you think is an incorrect answer affect your performance later in the SOE. If you think you have failed one of your SOEs don't let it affect your performance in the other SOE or the OSCE.

Courses

Primary FRCA Master class, Royal College of Anaesthetists, London
 21-23 March 2011
 Course Code D26
 Course Fee £200

12-15 December 2011
 Course Code D70
 Course Fee TBC

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. Past SAQ papers are available on the website. MTF questions are available in the second edition of 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.

Manage your time effectively

Each SAQ question is split into sections (a, b, c etc) each section carries an appropriate weighted percentage of the whole score (e.g. a. ..(25%), b...(50%) etc). Therefore allocate your time accordingly. SBAs will take longer to consider than MTFs. Transferring MCQ's to the answer sheet takes around 45 mins.

Answer every question but only once.

All 12 questions in the SAQ are compulsory if you don't attempt to answer all 12 then you will fail the written exam. The questions are spread out across 6 booklets and you answer below each question. However, all 12 questions are also listed on a question paper. As you answer them in the booklets – tick them off on the paper.

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.

Hedge your bets

The pass mark for the written exam is the sum of the *percentage* pass marks of the SAQ and MCQ. Therefore 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.

The Final SOE

Bring reading material. The Final SOE day is quite spread out and as results are given on the day you can't leave early. Bring something to read. If you go out for lunch or just fresh air make sure you sign out. Keep yourself as calm as you can, don't get anxious, once you've done one Oral forget about it and focus on the next one.

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 You can call the dept direct on: 020 7092 1528 /1522/1523/1524/1525/1526. Examinations Manager 020 7092 1521.

Courses

27 June – 6 July 2011

Final FRCA Course

Course Code A79

Royal College of Anaesthetists, London

Course Fee TBC

Details on course booking can be found in the events section of the college website.

Exams Statistics

Primary MCQ

The first Primary MCQ of 2011 took place on 8th February.

322 candidates attended the exam across our 5 exam centres.

159 candidates passed, that's a pass rate of 49.4%.

Primary OSCE/SOE

The first Primary OSCE/SOE of 2011 took place from 17th – 21st January 2011

317 candidates attended the exam. 218 to take both parts, 44 to take the SOE only and 55 the OSCE only.

Various combinations of pass/fail are now possible (complete fail, partial pass/fail or complete pass).

Of the 317 candidates, 162 (51%) passed or completed Primary; 69 (22%) failed both parts and 86 (27%) have a single part left to pass.

Final Written

The last Final Written exam took place on Wednesday 16th March 2011.

439 candidates were scheduled to sit the exam.

We'll print the statistics for this exam in the September edition of 'The Candidate'.

In the September 2010 Final Written Exam, there was a 61.4% pass rate.

Final SOE

The last Final SOE exam took place from 6th – 10th December 2010.

353 candidates sat the exam, 218 (62%) passed.



Hear ye...e-Portfolio..Read all about it...
The Training e-Portfolio on-line system is being piloted now and is coming soon...
The following links will tell you more:
<http://www.rcoa.ac.uk/e-Portfolio>
<http://www.rcoa.ac.uk/e-PortfolioPilot>

What is e-LA?

E-Learning Anaesthesia is an interactive online resource developed by the Royal College of Anaesthetists in partnership with the Department of Health's e-Learning for Healthcare. Available for free to all UK Anaesthetists practicing in the NHS, e-LA is an important learning tool in helping you prepare for the FRCA examination at a time and place relevant to your own personal circumstances.

E-LA has been authored and edited by anaesthetists who are experienced in both the delivery of teaching at a local level, and the examination of FRCA candidates to a nationally recognised standard. Our editors and authors have aimed to create sessions that present the best factual elements of an expert lecture or textbook, while maintaining the interactive benefits of a face-to-face tutorial.

There are over 600 knowledge and clinical scenario based sessions covering the anaesthetic curriculum, with each session taking around 20-30 minutes to complete. Sessions are carefully cross-referenced and presented in a format that encourages reflective learning with numerous multiple true/false and single best answer questions to introduce you to the standard expected at the FRCA exam.

The Learning Management System (LMS) that underpins the online resource, will keep track of your progress through the curriculum, in addition to offering free and direct access to thousands of full-text journal articles which have been mapped to the anaesthetic curriculum.

For further information and details on how to register please log on to www.e-LA.org.uk

The next issue of the Candidate will be available in September 2011