

The Candidate

July 2015: Issue 12

 @RCOA_T&E



Welcome to the July 2015 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

Differential attainment in medical education

Following the finding of Mr Justice Mitting’s Judgment; BAPIO v RCGP and the GMC, there has been a lot of discussion, research and publishing of papers regarding differential attainment across all the medical colleges and faculties. The AoMRC have created a database on the work being carried out in this area by all Medical Colleges. The GMC have published a research proposal on understanding attainment across medical training pathways.

Internally, Dr Andy Lumb has carried out significant research into ‘Investigating the influences of candidate characteristics on differential pass rates in the Final FRCA examination’ and the Examinations Department continue to collect data to ensure further longitudinal studies can be carried out in the future. Dr Andy Lumb and Dr Liam Brennan have released an article in the July edition of the Bulletin, ‘Differential pass rates in the FRCA’. The headline statements; “The Board of

Examiners and College Council take the issue of differential attainment very seriously and are committed to delivering the fairest examination possible.....” and, “Rest assured, we will commit the necessary resources, including input from experts external to the College, to answer these important questions and publish our findings and the actions arising in due course.” Make it abundantly clear that whilst the College has further work to do in regards to understanding the reasons for differential attainment, we intend to carry out extensive research and take appropriate action where required.

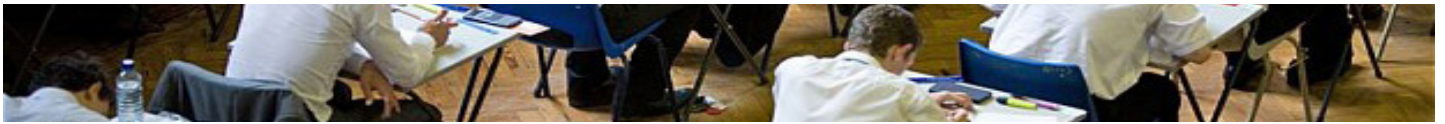
The RCoA Technology Strategy Review

The College has set up a Technology and Strategy Review Group to prepare a strategy and options appraisal for the use of new and existing technologies to enhance all areas of College work and investigate options for improving the interoperability



of existing IT systems. There were two areas, Education and Training both of which have various technologies that handle lots of data but weren’t necessarily communicating with each other. Initial discussions have spoken of a single College portal which would allow access to a number of resources and technologies.





Examination News

Primary OSCE non-interactive (Kiosk) station update.

The non-interactive (Kiosk) stations, using touch screen technology, have been used in the OSCE X-ray stations at the OSCE examinations since May 2014, the overall concept has worked well and over the coming years it is planned to increase the number of non-interactive (kiosk) stations used. To test these type of stations and other new OSCE questions being written it was agreed to increase the number of stations to 18 to allow the use of two test stations from January 2015 and until further notice. The examinations regulations already state that there may be “*up to 18 stations of which a maximum of 16 count towards the result....*”. Therefore this can be accommodated without any adjustments to the published exam structure.

GMC have now published exam data at individual level

The Committee GMC about have now published interactive reports on doctors' exam pass rates and applications to specialty training. The reports are now available on the GMC website, the reports are only based on one year of data and the reports and the data do not reveal anything that we were not already aware of. All Colleges were co-operating with the GMC and supplying data as requested. The examinations committee considered whether publishing pass rates would affect recruitment to specialties. However it was agreed that recruitment was affected by a number of factors, such as house prices for instance, especially in London where they were particularly high.

Standards for candidate feedback

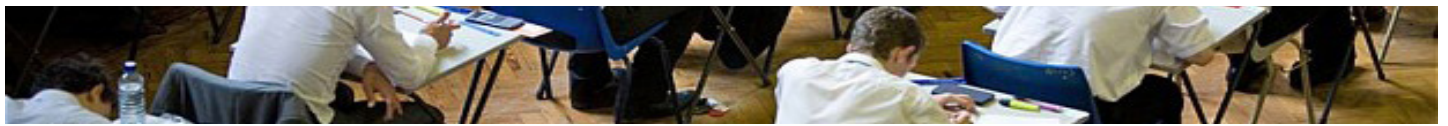
The Academy of Medical Royal Colleges carried out a survey of all Medical Colleges and Faculties last year regarding what written feedback they provided to candidates on completion of examination attempts and their document: 'Standards for candidate feedback in summative postgraduate medical examinations' was published in February 2015 and recommended the minimum standard of feedback which should be provided by all Colleges. The College already

meets the recommended standards for candidate feedback as set out in the Academy document but did not have a comprehensive policy setting out the feedback provided to candidates for each examination. Therefore to fully comply with the Academy's recommendations and to make clear to candidates what is provided in respect of examination feedback a candidate feedback policy has been agreed by the Examinations Committee and will be published in the August 2015 version of the Examinations Regulations.

Resources for candidates

The College continues to build on the examination resources available to candidates, at the beginning of July 2015 the 'Final Written examination, run through video' was released on the Resources to candidates' pages of the College website: This video is designed to guide an exam candidate through the Final Written exam day. It covers points such as structure, conduct and the documents used in each part of the exam. It is an essential resource for the first time candidate who will find this video useful in gaining an understanding of the structure of a standard Final Written exam day.

There are now 19 videos available to exam candidates. All of which are worth watching!! They include; Primary and Final Run through videos and a series of Primary and Final SOE videos. The College now has plans to produce further videos on specific areas of the Primary OSCE, such as communication and simulation. We'll keep you posted.



Exams : Information and Key Facts

The Primary MCQ Exam

The last MCQ exam for academic year 2014/2015 was held on 3rd March 2015. The first exam of the academic year 2015/2016 is 1st September 2015. The number of candidates that sat the Primary MCQ in March 2015 was 328 with 173 securing a pass. (52.74%)

- 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 listed above.

The next MCQ exam is on the 1st September 2015.
Applications window is now closed
The following Primary MCQ exam is 17th November 2015

The Primary OSCE/SOE

The next Primary OSCE/SOE is w/c 2nd November 2015. All OSCE/SOE exams are held at the Royal College of Anaesthetists. The number of candidates who sat the OSCE and/or the SOE in May 2015 was 341. 189 passed the Primary exam (55.43%). 380 candidates attended the exam w/c 26th January 197 passed giving a pass rate of 51.84%

To apply for the Primary OSCE SOE:

You must have passed the Primary MCQ within three years of the exam applied for.

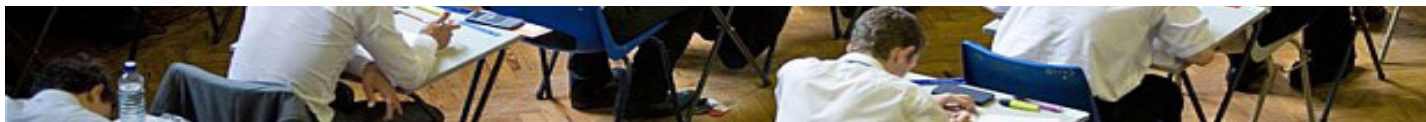
You need to have been awarded the Initial Assessment of Competency (IAC) in Anaesthesia or an overseas equivalent.

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 three years

A pass in the Primary FRCA is valid for **seven years as part eligibility towards the Final**

The next OSCE/SOE will be held w/c 2nd November 2015
Application opening date: 1st September 2015 - 1st October 2015



Exams : Information and Key Facts

The Final Written Exam

The last Final Written exam for academic year 2014/15 took place on the 10th March 2015. The 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 2015 was 459. 193 passed (42..23%).

- The SAQ consists of 12 compulsory questions (that's 1 question every 15 minutes). Each question is marked out of 20 with the pass mark determined by the board of examiners. The pass marks for all questions are summed to give a total mark. For more information see the article on the SAQ on the last page of this newsletter.
- 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 is 60 multiple true/false (MTF) 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. 60×5 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.

The next Final Written exam takes place on 8th September 2015

Application window is now closed

The Final SOE Exam

The last exam for the academic year ending 2014/15 was held on 22nd June 2015. 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 June 2015 was 267. 170 passed (63.67%)

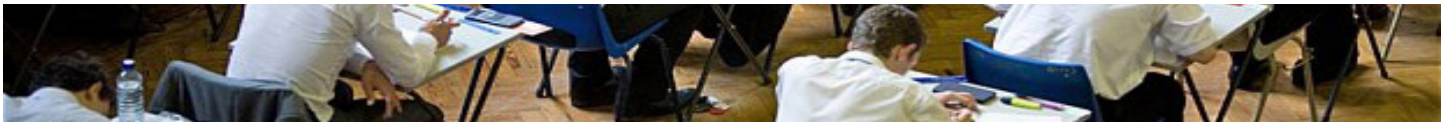
SOE1 in Clinical Anaesthesia is normally examined in the morning and SOE2 in Clinical Science is normally conducted after lunch. Clinical Anaesthesia is 50 minutes in duration, comprising of 10 minutes to view and make notes on clinical material before going into the SOE cubicles. You will be asked three 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 7th December 2015

Application window: 10th September 2015 - 22nd October 2015



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 gives you all the advice you need to complete your form correctly. Please read them. Also new to the exam resources page of the college website, are the Primary OSCE/SOE examination run through videos. They are a must watch, please see the last page of this newsletter for more information.

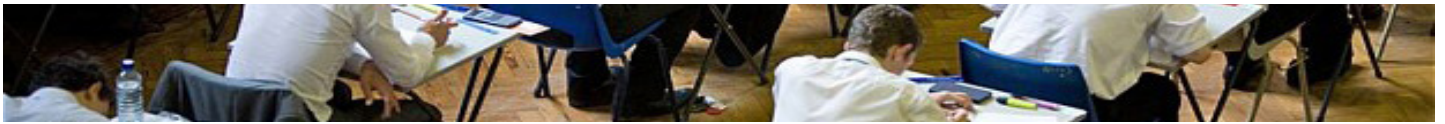
Get organised. Arrive at the College at least 45 minutes before your first exam. Bring a £1 coin for the lockers. Listen to what the doorman has to say, you'll find it helpful. Be in the reception area in good time for your exam call. Get some fresh air between exams. Eat and drink throughout the day. 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 18, 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
5th January 2016 - 8th January 2016
Course Code D26 Course Fee £305



Exams : Hints, Tips and Courses

The Final Written

09.00 – 17.00.

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. Watch the Final SOE films, available on the Resources For Candidates pages of the College website.

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.

Courses

Final FRCA Revision Course

18th January 2016 -22nd January 2016

Royal College of Anaesthetists, London

Course Code A82 Course Fee £395

The Final Course structure has changed. It will be run over one week. Details can be found in the events section of the college website.



Exams Statistics 2014-15

Primary MCQ

350 candidates sat the exam in September 2014. The pass rate was 227/350 (48.7%). 263 candidates sat the November 2014 Primary MCQ with 198 (75.29%) passing the exam. A cohort of 328 candidates sat the March 2015 exam with 173 (52.74%) passing the exam.

Primary OSCE/SOE

The first Primary OSCE/SOE exam of academic year 2014-2015 was held in November 2014, 375 candidates sat this exam with 225 (60%) of candidates passing. In January 2015, 380 candidates took the exam with 197 candidates passing, a pass rate of 51.84%. Finally, the exam held w/c 18th May 2015, saw 341 candidates attending with 189 (55.43%) candidates passing the

exam.

Final Written

There were two exams in academic year 14-15. In September 2014, 335 candidates sat the exam 279 (59%) passed the exam. In March 2014, a larger cohort of 457 sat the exam achieving a 57.77% (264 candidates) pass rate.

Final SOE

267 candidates sat the exam in June 2015 with 170 securing a pass (63.67%) 243 candidates attended the December 2014 exam with 157 (64.67%) of candidates passing and therefore achieving the Fellowship.

FRCA Examination Calenders 2015 - 2017

	PRIMARY FRCA						FINAL FRCA				
	MCQ EXAM			OSCE & SOE EXAM			WRITTEN EXAM		SOE EXAM		
Applications and fees not accepted before	Monday 15 Jun 15	Monday 31 Aug 15	Monday 9 Nov 15				Applications and fees not accepted before	Monday 22 Jun 15	Monday 7 Dec 15		
Closing date Primary MCQ Applications	Thursday 30 Jul 15	Thursday 8 Oct 15	Thursday 21 Jan 16				Closing date Final Written Applications	Tuesday 4 Aug 15	Tuesday 26 Jan 16		
Primary MCQ examination	Tuesday 1 Sept 15	Tuesday 17 Nov 15	Tuesday 1 Mar 16				Final Written examination	Tuesday 8 Sep 15	Tuesday 8 Mar 16		
Applications and fees not accepted before				Tuesday 1 Sep 15	Tuesday 27 Oct 15	Tuesday 23 Feb 16	Applications and fees not accepted before			Thursday 10 Sep 15	Thursday 31 Mar 16
Closing date Primary OSCE & SOE Applications				Thursday 1 Oct 15	Thursday 10 Dec 15	Thursday 7 Apr 16	Closing date Final SOE Applications			Thursday 22 Oct 15	Thursday 28 Apr 16
OSCEs and SOEs (probable date of commencement)				Monday 2 Nov 15	Monday 25 Jan 16	Monday 16 May 16	SOEs (probable date of commencement)			Monday 07 Dec 15	Monday 20 Jun 16
Examination Fees	£320	£320	£320	Both OSCE SOE £590 £325 £295	Both OSCE SOE £590 £325 £295	Both OSCE SOE £590 £325 £295	Examination Fees	£470	£470	£555	£555

	PRIMARY FRCA						FINAL FRCA				
	MCQ EXAM			OSCE & SOE EXAM			WRITTEN EXAM		SOE EXAM		
Applications and fees not accepted before	Monday 13 Jun 16	Monday 5 Sep 16	Monday 7 Nov 16				Applications and fees not accepted before	Monday 20 Jun 16	Monday 5 Dec 16		
Closing date Primary MCQ Applications	Thursday 28 Jul 16	Thursday 13 Oct 16	Thursday 19 Jan 17				Closing date Final Written Applications	Tuesday 2 Aug 16	Tuesday 24 Jan 17		
Primary MCQ examination	Tuesday 6 Sept 16	Tuesday 15 Nov 16	Tuesday 28 Feb 17				Final Written examination	Tuesday 13 Sep 16	Tuesday 7 Mar 17		
Applications and fees not accepted before				Tuesday 23 Aug 16	Tuesday 25 Oct 16	Tuesday 21 Feb 17	Applications and fees not accepted before			Thursday 8 Sep 16	Thursday 30 Mar 17
Closing date Primary OSCE & SOE Applications				Thursday 6 Oct 16	Thursday 8 Dec 16	Thursday 6 Apr 17	Closing date Final SOE Applications			Thursday 20 Oct 16	Thursday 27 Apr 17
OSCEs and SOEs (probable date of commencement)				Monday 7 Nov 16	Monday 23 Jan 17	Monday 15 May 17	SOEs (probable date of commencement)			Monday 05 Dec 16	Monday 19 Jun 17
Examination Fees	TBC	TBC	TBC	Both OSCE SOE TBC TBC TBC	Both OSCE SOE TBC TBC TBC	Both OSCE SOE TBC TBC TBC	Examination Fees	TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC

Examinations Calendars

The Examinations calendars for academic years 2015-2016 and 2016-2017 are now available on the College website.