

The Candidate

September 2011

Issue 2

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Information and News for FRCA Exam Candidates

Welcome to the September 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 Resuscitation Council Guidelines

Please be aware that only the 2010 Resuscitation Guidelines will be used from the October 2011 OSCE examination onwards.

Validity of a Pass in the Primary MCQ

In May 2011 Council extended the validity of a pass in the Primary MCQ from two years to three years. Any one with a pass in the Primary MCQ that has been achieved in the last

three years, can use it towards eligibility for the Primary OSCE/SOE Examinations.

Primary eligibility to all anaesthetists

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.

Opening the Final FRCA Exams to any doctors practising anaesthesia in the NHS

With effect from 1st September 2012 the Final FRCA components will be open to any doctor who is practising anaesthesia in the NHS (subject to certain criteria). See the website for further details.

Single Best Answers in the Primary MCQ

The September Primary MCQ will be in the new format; 60 multiple true false (MTF) and 30 single best answer questions (SBA).

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 mark allocation for MTFs will remain at five marks per question, one per item. Due to the limited number of SBA questions in the College question bank, there are only a small number of Primary SBA questions in the public domain, 12 are available on the website and two appear in the Primary guide.

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 dates for academic year 2011—2012 are: 13th September 2011, 7th February 2012 and 12th June 2012. The number of candidates who sat the Primary MCQ in year 10/11 was 1,185 a 11.7% rise on 09/10.

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

You are allowed five attempts at the Primary MCQ

A pass is valid for three years

The Next Primary MCQ Exam

The next Primary MCQ exam is on **7th February 2012**

Applications accepted from: **14th Nov 2011**

Application closing date: **5th Jan 2012**

The Primary OSCE/SOE Exam

The Primary OSCE and SOE exam dates for academic year 2011—2012 are; w/c 10th October 2011, 16th January 2012 and 14th May 2012. All held at the Royal College of Anaesthetists in London. normally Monday to Friday but this is dependent on the number of applicants. The number of candidates that sat the OSCE and/or SOE exams in 10/11 was 911 a 4% rise on 09/10.

- * 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, 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 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 10th October 2011**
(applications for this are closed)

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 (0930 – 1230), followed by a three hour MCQ paper (1400 – 1700). The number of candidates that sat the Final Written in academic Year 2010—2011 was 820 a 15.6% drop on 09/10 figures.

- * 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 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. 60×5 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 a good performance in the other.

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 13th March 2012

Applications accepted from: 12th Dec 2011

Application closing date: 31st Jan 2012

The Final SOE Exam

The Final SOEs are held in June and December each year and always take place at the College. The SOEs normally run Monday to Friday but this is dependant on the number of candidates. 712 candidates sat the Final SOEs in academic year 2010-2011 a rise of 6.6% rise on 09/10.

- * 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 5th December 2011

Applications accepted from: 29th Sep 2011

Application closing date: 1st Nov 2011

Exams: Hints, Tips and Courses

The Primary MCQ

Submitting your fee. 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, 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 — Station spot-light - 'Simulation'.

There are two 'Sim-man' stations in the OSCE. One of these stations uses an interactive simulator to create clinical problem scenarios and assess how you identify and handle the situation. You do not need experience of using a simulator model, the monitoring displays are no different from those encountered in real life and you should conduct yourself as you would if faced with the same problem in clinical practice.

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 immediately and correct yourself.

Courses

Primary FRCA Master class, Royal College of Anaesthetists, London

12-15 December 2011

Course Code D70

Course Fee £280

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 You can call the dept direct on:

Courses

Final FRCA Course

9th—13th January 2012

Royal College of Anaesthetists, London

Course Code A82

Course Fee £350

The Final Course structure is due to change ,it will be run over one week. Further details can be found in the events section of the college web-site.

Exams Statistics

Primary MCQ

1,185 candidates attended the MCQ over the academic year 2010—2011. 616 passed that's a 51.98% pass rate.

The last Primary MCQ exam was held in June 2011. 550 candidates sat the exam. 349 passed that's a pass rate of 63.45%.

Primary OSCE/SOE

911 candidates attended the Primary OSCE and/or SOE exams over the academic year 2010—2011. 461 passed that's a 50.6% pass rate.

The last Primary OSCE/SOE examination was held in May 2011. 266 candidates sat the exam. 147 passed, that's a pass rate of 55.26%.

The next issue of the Candidate will be available in January 2012

Final Written

820 candidates attended the Final written over the academic year 2010—2011. 486 passed, that's a pass rate of 59.27%.

The last Final written exam held took place in March 2011. 439 sat the exam. 252 passed, that's a pass rate 57.4%.

Final SOE

712 candidates attended the Final SOE exams over the academic year 2010—2011. 429 passed that's a 60.25% pass rate.

The last Final SOE examination was held in June 2011. 359 candidates sat the exam, 211 passed, that's a pass rate of 58.77%.

Training update

It has been one year since the 2010 curriculum came into effect for all of CT1 trainees and other training years depending on the School. From August this year, nearly all trainees from CT1 to ST5 will be using the 2010 curriculum. SpRs 4/5, and StRs 6/7 will remain on the 2007 curriculum unless agreed locally to transfer to the 2010 curriculum. This is a significant achievement as many other specialties are running with several curriculum versions depending on when the trainee started. The benefits of having the majority of trainees on the same curriculum are that it is easier to arrange rotations, training can be standardised so all trainees work towards the same published standard, trainers know exactly what an individual trainee is required to know and the options in the higher and advanced levels provide greater opportunity for trainees to follow specific career aspirations. The implementation of the 2010 curriculum also changed the status of the Irish Fellowship exams for the award of a CCT in the UK. Trainees who have passed the Irish examination while on the 2007 Curriculum and subsequently transfer to the 2010 curriculum will have their exam credit recognised for a CCT. Any trainee who completes the Irish exam while on the 2010 Curriculum will lose their eligibility for a CCT but may be eligible for a CESR[CP]. The CESR[CP] will still allow an individual to be admitted to the specialist register and apply for consultant jobs. Further information on these issues are available on the Training section of the College website.

E-Portfolio

The Trainee e-Portfolio system is being launched and the UK rollout to all Schools of Anaesthesia will commence on the 15th August 2011.

Accessing the e-Portfolio:

If you are a member of the RCoA – check with your College Tutor and/or School Administrator about the e-Portfolio rollout within your School. Most of the Schools have decided to include their CT1's and ST3's to start with and will include additional training years over the next twelve months. Your School should be able to confirm if you will have access to the system.

Features:

Generate and approve assessments online including Workplace-based assessments (A-CEX, ACAT, ALMAT, Cbd, Mini CEX, DOPS, etc) and Multisource Feedback.

There is an 'Alerts' section which frequently updates with upcoming events as well as help text in the form of "Hints and Tips"; a diary function which provides an up-to-date audit of all your actions within the system.

The e-Portfolio system also includes: An online Personal Development Plan; and you can also create activities; add your existing qualifications; upload your CV and upload documents as evidence of work to view via the Library menu. Details on training materials and security matters are available on the website.

If you require any further information then you should email us at the eportfolio@rcoa.ac.uk mailbox.