

# The Candidate

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Issue 7  
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Welcome to the October 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 to the number of attempts.

Following their meeting on 10 September 2013, the Examinations Committee exceptionally agreed to advance the introduction date regarding the maximum number of attempts for all Primary FRCA examinations being increased to six attempts. This change to the regulations will now come into force from 1st November 2013. The reason for reducing the standard notice period (normally one year), is to provide assistance to candidates who have recently failed the Primary OSCE and/or SOE examinations at their fourth attempt, to complete the Primary exam and where possible return to a training programme.

The change of the introduction date to 1 November 2013, will allow candidates to take a 5th attempt at the January 2014 Primary OSCE/SOE examination, providing they meet all other eligibility requirements.

Candidates who intend to apply for a sixth attempt at the March Primary MCQ or the March Final Written examinations must submit an AET Form 1, three months before the date of the examinations. The need to submit an AET form 1 three months before the exam date at the final (sixth attempt), applies to all examinations after 1 January 2014, the advance of the introduction date does not affect applicants who have applied for the December 2013 SOE at their sixth attempt. For additions and amendments to the FRCA examination regulations please see the back page.

### Resources for candidates

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.

#### 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 dates for academic year 2013/2014 are 12th November 2013 and 4th March 2014. The number of candidates that sat the Primary MCQ in September was 193 with 94 securing a pass. (48.70)

- 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 the exam room more than 30min after the start time. No extra time will be 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 your ID, then you will need to produce proof of name change, such as a marriage certificate.
- The Primary MCQ consists 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 list above.

The next MCQ exam is on the 12th November 2013. Application closes 10th October 2013

The following Primary MCQ exam is 4th March 2014

Application opening date: 11th November 2013 Closing date: 23th January 2014

## The Primary OSCE/SOE

The next Primary OSCE/SOE is w/c 4th November 2013. 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 May was 286. 160 passed the Primary exam (55.94%)

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.

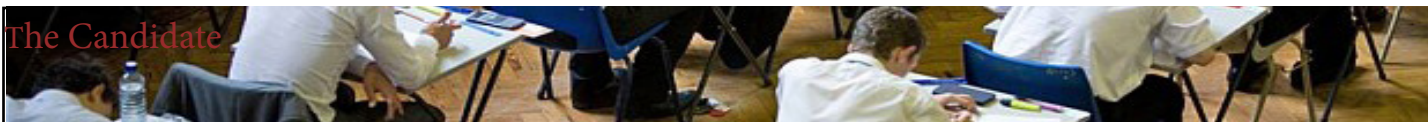
At your first attempt you must provide a copy of your IAC with your application form. If you don't, there may be a delay in processing your application which may mean you miss the application deadline for the exam.

**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 4th November 2013

Applications for this exam are now closed



# 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 March 2013 was 481. 285 passed (59.25%). At the time of publication we are still waiting to announce the results of the Final Written held on the 4th September and will publish the results on the website from 2pm Friday 4th October.

- 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.  $60 \times 5$  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

**The next Final Written exam takes place on 11th March 2014**

**Applications accepted from: 9th December 2013 Application closing date: 28th January 2014**

## The Final SOE Exam

The remaining exam dates for the academic year ending 2014 are 9th December 2013 and 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 June 2013 was 360. 234 passed (65%)

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.

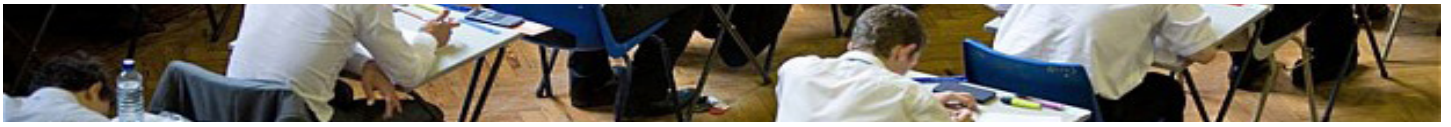
The pass mark for the SOEs is 32 marks from a maximum of 40.

**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 9th December 2013**

**Applications accepted from: 12th September 2013 Application closing date: 24th October 2013**





# 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.

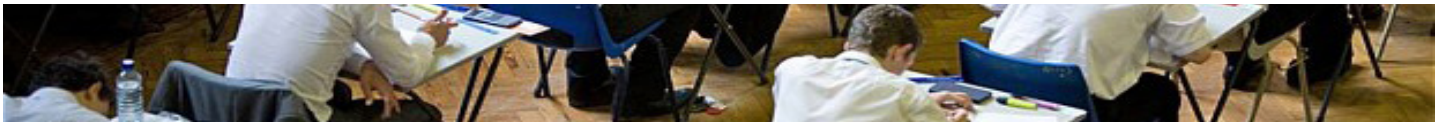
## Oral exam technique.

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**  
13th - 16th January 2014  
Course Code D26  
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**  
**20th - 24th January 2014**  
**Royal College of Anaesthetists, London**  
**Course Code A79**  
**Course Fee £395**

**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

491 sat the June 2013 exam 290 (59%) passed and 201 (41%) failed. 19 candidates sat the exam in September 2013. The pass rate was 94/193 (48.70%), compared with 48.62 for September 2013

### Final Written

The overall pass rate for the combined written examination in March 2013 was 59.40%. This compares to 51.69% (September 2012). This represents an 8% improvement since September 2012

### Primary OSCE/SOE

286 candidates sat the exam in May 2013. 160 passed the Primary exam (56%). The number of candidates sitting both parts was 197. 88 (44.67%) of these candidates passed the Primary. Component pass rates were 84.31% in the OSCE and 76.32% in the SOE.

### Final SOE

The Final SOEs were held over a four day period from 23rd June 2013. 360 candidates attended. 234 (65%) passed and 126 (35%) failed. Opening date for application to sit the December 2013 SOE open on the 24th October.

## 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<br>24 Jun 13   | Monday<br>02 Sep 13   | Monday<br>11 Nov 13   |                                 |                                 |                                 | Applications and fees not accepted before | Monday<br>24 Jun 13  | Monday<br>09 Dec 13  |                       |                       |
| Closing date Primary MCQ Applications          | Thursday<br>08 Aug 13 | Thursday<br>10 Oct 13 | Thursday<br>23 Jan 14 |                                 |                                 |                                 | Closing date Final Written Applications   | Tuesday<br>23 Jul 13 | Tuesday<br>28 Jan 14 |                       |                       |
| Primary MCQ examination                        | Tuesday<br>10 Sep 13  | Tuesday<br>12 Nov 13  | Tuesday<br>04 Mar 14  |                                 |                                 |                                 | Final Written examination                 | Tuesday<br>03 Sep 13 | Tuesday<br>11 Mar 14 |                       |                       |
| Applications and fees not accepted before      |                       |                       |                       | Tuesday<br>03 Sep 13            | Tuesday<br>29 Oct 13            | Tuesday<br>18 Feb 14            | Applications and fees not accepted before |                      |                      | Thursday<br>12 Sep 13 | Thursday<br>03 Apr 14 |
| Closing date Primary OSCE & SOE Applications   |                       |                       |                       | Thursday<br>03 Oct 13           | Thursday<br>12 Dec 13           | Thursday<br>10 Apr 14           | Closing date Final SOE Applications       |                      |                      | Thursday<br>24 Oct 13 | Thursday<br>01 May 14 |
| OSCEs and SOEs (probable date of commencement) |                       |                       |                       | Monday<br>04 Nov 13             | Monday<br>27 Jan 14             | Monday<br>19 May 14             | SOEs (probable date of commencement)      |                      |                      | Monday<br>09 Dec 13   | Monday<br>23 Jun 14   |
| Examination Fees                               | £310                  | £310                  | £310                  | Both OSCE SOE<br>£565 £315 £285 | Both OSCE SOE<br>£565 £315 £285 | Both OSCE SOE<br>£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<br>23 Jun 14   | Monday<br>01 Sep 14   | Monday<br>10 Nov 14   |                                 |                                 |                                 | Applications and fees not accepted before | Monday<br>23 Jun 14  | Monday<br>08 Dec 14  |                       |                       |
| Closing date Primary MCQ Applications          | Thursday<br>07 Aug 14 | Thursday<br>09 Oct 14 | Thursday<br>22 Jan 15 |                                 |                                 |                                 | Closing date Final Written Applications   | Tuesday<br>22 Jul 14 | Tuesday<br>27 Jan 15 |                       |                       |
| Primary MCQ examination                        | Tuesday<br>9 Sep 14   | Tuesday<br>11 Nov 14  | Tuesday<br>03 Mar 15  |                                 |                                 |                                 | Final Written examination                 | Tuesday<br>02 Sep 14 | Tuesday<br>10 Mar 15 |                       |                       |
| Applications and fees not accepted before      |                       |                       |                       | Tuesday<br>02 Sep 14            | Tuesday<br>28 Oct 14            | Tuesday<br>17 Feb 15            | Applications and fees not accepted before |                      |                      | Thursday<br>11 Sep 14 | Thursday<br>02 Apr 15 |
| Closing date Primary OSCE & SOE Applications   |                       |                       |                       | Thursday<br>02 Oct 14           | Thursday<br>11 Dec 14           | Thursday<br>09 Apr 15           | Closing date Final SOE Applications       |                      |                      | Thursday<br>23 Oct 14 | Thursday<br>30 Apr 15 |
| OSCEs and SOEs (probable date of commencement) |                       |                       |                       | Monday<br>03 Nov 14             | Monday<br>26 Jan 15             | Monday<br>18 May 15             | SOEs (probable date of commencement)      |                      |                      | Monday<br>08 Dec 14   | Monday<br>22 Jun 15   |
| Examination Fees                               | TBC                   | TBC                   | TBC                   | TBC                             | TBC                             | TBC                             | Examination Fees                          | TBC                  | TBC                  | TBC                   | TBC                   |

## FRCA Primary Guide - Fourth Addition

Work is currently underway to produce the fourth addition of the FRCA Primary guide and we expect this to be available for purchase by the end of the year. This new edition will include updated questions on all sections and you will be pleased to know the Multiple Choice Question section will contain a full exam of single best answer question.





# Changes to Examinations Regulations

## Regulations

With effect from 1 November 2013 – the following amendments will be 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 will be made to the Examination Regulations: To be 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.



## A Year in the World of Exams - Stats Round Up

The number of attempts at the Primary MCQ was 994. The 2012/2013 pass rate was 54.4%. There were 1,021 attempts at the Primary OSCE/SOE. The 2012/2013 pass rate was 52.4%. Under the current rules candidates must sit both the OSCE and SOE components at their first attempt. If they pass one component but fail the other, they only have to re-sit the failed component. The pass rate for single components was 72% for SOE and 84% for OSCE. Therefore, the chance of candidates passing with just one component outstanding is significantly higher.

The Final examination is in two sections; Written (SAQ/MCQ) and SOE. There were 823 attempts at the Final Written. 463 (56.3%) passed. Candidates made 657 attempts at the Final SOE examination. 421 candidates achieved the Fellowship in 2012/2013. The overall number of individual candidates who attended FRCA exam components in 2012/2013 was 2,242. Including multiple attempts in the same academic year, there were 3,495 attempts recorded in all FRCA exams and the overall pass rate recorded against all attempts was 56%.

## What Are We Working On ?

When not preparing for the next FRCA exams and more recently faculty exams, the exams team and examiners are always looking at ways to improve the quality and delivery of the examinations we hold. In recent years this included the introduction of electronic marking in the Final SOE exam, which has so far been a huge success. Below are a few of the projects or improvements currently being undertaken by the college and we look forward to sharing more information on these in the not to distant future.

- Continued technological enhancement of all College Examinations to include:
  - Full implementation of E-marking for all Oral and OSCE FRCA examinations.
  - Introduction of online services for examination booking enabling candidates to apply and pay online for examinations.
- Continued upgrading/replacing of OSCE equipment, including the replacement of Sim-Man Simulators.
- Implementation and running of the FFPMRCA and FFICM examinations.
- Continue to provide support, advice and guidance to trainees, examiners and trainers on all College Examinations through maintaining an efficient, coherent and motivated administrative team.
- Continued provision of relevant information through the enhancement of Examiner and Candidate Newsletters and the implementation of examination videos.
- Ongoing improvement to all examination processes.