

FFPMRCA Examination

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Purpose

- A high stakes examination
- Stated purpose and intention- “The examination will be designed and conducted in accordance with the highest standards and further raise standards of Pain Medicine in the UK.”
- Or- to “pull the standard of pain medicine up by its bootstraps” - Kate Grady

A strategic success

- Evidence that it is doing this (some trainees NOT going into APT because of it)
- “Gold standard” qualification- good trainees want to “prove” themselves- and do!
- “Exit” exam- to a standard that you would like to see of a new consultant colleague
- Held twice a year since Sept/Nov 2012- culmination of 3-4 years of work
- Now a mature exam in all respects
- Fit for purpose (GMC)

Structure

- MCQ broad test primarily of knowledge
- SOE comprehensively tests breadth and depth of knowledge and understanding as only a dynamic interaction can
- MCQ- 40 MTF, 25 SBA, 25 EMQ
- SOE Clinical- 1 long, 3 short -1 session
- SOE Science- 4 short- 1 each from Pharmacology, Physiology, Anatomy, Miscellaneous (epidemiology, measurement, psychology) – 1 session

Question scope

- Anything in the curriculum (except optional specialist modules- not examined in the detail laid out)
- Anything that is relevant and important to safety and quality of consultant level practice
- Example Qs on the website- a wake-up call to trainees!
- All questions set for SOE exam are specifically tested for relevance/ difficulty

Standard

- Aim – to discriminate the “just passing candidate” from the failing one (clear passes and fails easy to spot)
- This requires “control” of all other variables- including the Questions (validity) and the Examiners (training)
- Focus of the standard setting process after each part of the exam is to set the pass mark

Pass mark setting

- FRCA II- benefit of large numbers, long history, established, preset passmark
- FPM MCQ and SOE- small numbers, short history, new exam → passmark scrutiny
- Anghoff, Ebel, Hofstee, linear regression of Global rating all used.
- Unique to FPM- scrutiny of ALL questions prior and use of validated techniques AND group discussion regarding the “just passing candidate”
- Court’s decision is valid/final- we define the passmark

Standard setting

- The only variable should be the candidate
- Requires standardisation of ALL other variables- process and content
- The Questions-relevant, standard format, peer reviewed pre and post exam
- The Examiners-competitive, prior experience (as examiner or candidate), trained in technique and marking consistency, audited
- The Examination- balanced paper set and reviewed, prior Anghoff (MCQ) Ebel (SOE) scoring, questions reviewed post exam and scrutinised for consistency, pass mark set

Trainee Preparation

- Trainees, LPMES and RAPM → FPM website
- Expectation of at least 6/12 scholastic endeavour
- Learning resources
- Local tutorials and exam practice
- FPM tutorials

FPM tutorials

- 2 pa
- Timetabled between MCQ and SOE
- Different agenda and speakers- complimentary, designed to be taken together
- Combination of resource signposting, tutorials, lectures, mock vivas
- Excellent feedback

Candidate numbers

- Approx 30 per year = number of APTs
- Total number of sittings to date- 210 MCQ, 169 SOE
- Pass mark, independently determined, for both exams remarkably consistent- 12 MCQs, 11 SOEs

Results

- Pass rate cohort dependent!
- Average pass rate for MCQs- 77% SOEs- 65%
- First time pass rate for MCQs- 69%
- Pass rate for resit SOEs- successive increase to 100% for the 4th!
- No one has resat and completely failed to date

FPM examination Guidance

- A meeting- to identify candidate deficiencies in their exam strategy (knowledge, understanding, performance or other issues)
- Attendees- an examiner, a college rep, and candidate
 - Open to any candidate after X₁ unsuccessful SOE attempt
 - Offered to all candidates after X₂ unsuccessful SOE attempts

Take home messages

- This exam will make the candidate a better pain doctor
- A world-class standard- and the de facto qualification for job interviews
- Eminently “passable”
- At least 6 months hard study required
- Resources available to help- including guidance
- Quality Assurance of every aspect peerless
- If at first you don't succeed...
- FPM Website