

FFICM oral exam October 2021: Information for candidates

1. I'm keen to take my exams, is the Faculty planning to run the OSCE and SOE during the current health pandemic?

Given the uncertainty around social distancing the current plan is to deliver the oral component of the FFICM exam in October 2021 by video link.

Further details will be available on the FICM website as they become available and will be emailed to registered exam candidates, along with the practical details and regulations for video examination.

2. When are the exams happening?

The examinations will take place between **18-22nd October 2021**

3. Will I be able to sit the OSCE and SOE on the same day?

For candidates taking both components, we will aim for the OSCE and SOE to take place on the same day, but this may not be possible.

4. Will my exam be of the same standard as before the pandemic?

The general principle in planning the video delivery of the examinations is to replicate as far as possible the face-to-face examinations. The factual content and intellectual skills tested will be unchanged, so candidates should revise as they would have done for a face-to-face examination. Questions used will be from the question banks, and the marking standard will also be the same as in previous sittings.

5. What do I need to arrange for the exam day?

Each candidate in advance of the exam, will need to organise a quiet venue with a computer/laptop with a video platform programme downloaded and adequate internet access eg a room in their home or place of work. It is recommended that the door is closed and a 'Do Not Disturb - Exam in Progress' sign is used on the door.

6. What happens on the exam day?

Candidates will be emailed in advance with the date and time of their examination. This email will also contain an access code that will take them to a 'meeting' (initially a waiting room) where an administrator will check their identity documents. Candidates will be asked to change their name (as it appears on the screen) to their candidate number. Once the candidate has joined the meeting, they cannot leave until the exam is complete. A visual inspection of the candidate's environment will take place, to ensure that the candidate is alone in the room, without prompts or other relevant material visible to the candidate, and nothing other than the video platform is open on the candidate's computer. Candidates will be asked to turn off their mobile phones. Candidates will then be 'moved' into a 'general waiting room' and when all candidate checks have been completed, a briefing will take place. Then each candidate will be moved to the 'waiting room' before their first station.

Objective Structured Clinical Examination (OSCE)

At the start of the exam, each candidate will be 'moved' into their first station to meet the examiner and be shown relevant information about the station for 1 minute (the examiner will share a PowerPoint slide which is on their screen). On the visual prompt from the administrator, the station will start and the examiner will start asking questions. If artefacts are needed (eg x-rays) the examiner will show these by sharing their screen. At this point the video of the examiner will be a small square that the candidate can drag and move if it obscures any part of the image.

There will be a visual prompt at the end of the station, and the examiner will stop. The candidate will be 'moved' out of the station into the 'waiting room' before being moved into their next station.

The OSCE will take longer when done by video than face-to-face. This is because the gap between stations will be longer and there will be a gap before the briefing while identity checks etc are done. For this reason the 13-station OSCE will be split into two separate examinations with a pause between OSCE 1 and OSCE 2, when candidates may leave their room for refreshments etc before joining a new meeting for OSCE 2. As in the face-to-face examination, one of the OSCE stations will be a test station (unknown by the candidate and examiner) and either or both parts of the OSCE may contain a rest station.

The question types in the OSCE will be the same as in the face-to-face examination, with the exception of simulation. Artefacts (data, radiology, ECGs etc) will be presented as slides. Equipment will be presented as a photograph. In communication questions that require a role-player, an actor will be present by video link. The simulation station will be replaced by a station involving questions by an examiner about a clinical scenario that aim to test the same skills tested in simulation, such as complex data interpretation and prioritisation.

Structured Oral Examination (SOE)

After the identity and environment checks, candidates will be 'moved' out of their 'waiting room' into their first station, where they will meet two examiners. A slide showing the content of the questions to be asked will be shown, for 1 minute. On the visual cue from the administrator, the first examiner will start asking the first question. After seven minutes a visual cue will prompt the first examiner to stop, and the second examiner will start asking the second question. After seven minutes there will be another visual cue to stop the station, and the candidate will be 'moved' into a waiting room before their next station. Like the face-to-face exam, there will be four stations, each with two questions.

During the video examinations, candidates will notice 'gaps' when they are in a 'waiting room' when it appears that nothing is happening. Unfortunately we are not able to give an indication of how long you will be held in the waiting room. The delay may be due to the administrator 'moving' other candidates in and out of stations, or dealing with a technical problem.

Candidates should just sit and wait during this time and avoid the temptation to open other items on their computer, switch on their phone, send texts or step out of the room. Any breach of these regulations will be taken seriously.

As in the face-to-face examinations, an observer may be present in the station or waiting room. These observers are watching the performance of the examiner and overall conduct of the exam and do not interact with candidates or influence the marking; they will be identified by 'observer' as their name on the screen.

7. I usually receive adjustments to my exam process, Can I still request these?

Yes. If a candidate requires reasonable adjustments for the examination eg for a disability, specific learning difficulty or temporary medical condition, it is recommended that they contact the exams department as soon as possible, as the nature of the adjustment required may be different for a video exam.

8. What software is being used and can I try it before the exam?

The video platform Zoom will be used. For those unfamiliar with Zoom, there are tutorials online at: <https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/206618765-Zoom-video-tutorials>

9. I have never been examined like this before and am anxious.

Being examined by video link will be unfamiliar to most candidates. We suggest that trainees who are practicing answering examination questions with consultants and senior colleagues, should use a video format for this practice.

A [webinar](#) on the exam is now available where candidates put forward questions to the FFICM Chair of Examiners and Head of the Exams Department.