

## **FFICM Examination Report March 2021**

### **Background**

The FFICM examination is required to complete Stage 2 training of the CCT in Intensive Care Medicine. However, a GMC COVID 'derogation' currently in place allows trainees to progress to Stage 3 training without completing the examination, but is a requirement for the award of a CCT.

One sitting of both the FFICM multiple choice (MCQ) exam and oral components (VIVA) was cancelled due to the Covid pandemic, in March and July 2020 respectively. However, in subsequent exams (which have all been 'virtual') capacity was increased to accommodate all eligible candidates to sit the exam.

The first 'remote' sitting of the FFICM multiple choice exam (MCQ) took place in January 2021. 169 candidates (a record number) sat using the TestReach platform from home (or a location of their choosing). The pass rate was 93% which is higher than usual, although the pass mark of 69% was within the expected range.

The second 'remote' sitting of the FFICM oral examinations (VIVA) took place in March 2021. All of the 161 eligible applications (also a record number) were accepted and as the virtual exam took longer than having it face-to-face, six full days of examining had to take place (compared to the usual two days). The 'Zoom' platform was used again for these sets of exams. The College staff and exam leads remotely administered this exam from home as the College was closed.

Extra time was added to all stations to allow for internet problems such as an examiner or candidate 'dropping out' completely. These were dealt with by adding extra time to a question, substituting in a spare examiner or on a few occasions, re-running a station completely. It was noticeable that this happened fewer times than in the previous remote exam.

A small number of candidates did not inform the Faculty/Exams department that they were not going to virtually attend, thus causing the exam to be delayed while College staff attempted to contact them in case they were having internet problems.

### **The FFICM Objective Structured Clinical (OSCE)/Structured Oral (SOE) Examinations**

As additional time was required in the remote format, the OSCE was divided into two halves, with candidates and examiners being given short comfort breaks mid exam.

A candidate can have a maximum of six attempts at each of the oral components. A derogation was introduced to exclude the first 'remote' attempt from this total. This derogation will be coming to an end on 31 July 2021.

## **OSCE**

149 Candidates (including 9 with a prior pass in the SOE) were examined. 92 (62%) passed, for those 9 taking the OSCE only, 78% passed.

## **SOE**

137 Candidates (including 21 with a prior pass in the OSCE) were examined. 102 (74%) passed. For those 15 taking the SOE only, the pass rate was 71%.

## **Overall**

The overall exam pass rate was 56% with 89 candidates to be congratulated on being awarded the FFICM. These pass rates are within the range of those from previous face-to-face and virtual FFICM examinations.

The examiners noted that many candidates had answered a number of topics poorly. These included some which continue to feature in these reports such as, applying basic sciences, radiology interpretation, non-invasive ventilation, dermatology as relevant to ICM, the coroner/procurator fiscal's process (this question had a number of versions according to the region of the candidate) and consent. The lack of systematic description of radiology images and ECGs had been commented on in a number of these reports. It was, however, noted that some candidates did this very well, while others still missed marks by omitting this.

A number of candidates were noted to perform poorly on questions involving communication with relatives or patients and would benefit from teaching and feedback in the workplace on these skills.

We intend the oral component of the exam to return to the 'face-to-face' format. However, in the current climate it is unclear when this will be. It will be dependent on what rules (if any) there are on travel and social distancing in place at the time of the examination. The multiple choice paper (MCQ) will remain on the TestReach platform, with the summer sitting being moved to June 2021

The successful running of any exam, especially remotely, involves a huge amount of work by both examiners and the Exams Department who have many responsibilities relating to the exam such as question writing, revising and standard setting, as well as examining the oral section.

My thanks go to the senior examiners who have additional responsibilities: Dr Jerome Cockings (Deputy Chair and Audit), Dr Barbara Philips and Dr Stephanie Strachan (SOE), Dr Jeremy Cordingly and Dr Anthony Bastin (OSCE), Dr Jeremy Bewley and Dr Carol McMillan (MCQ) as well as all of the examiners and the Exams Department.

**Dr Vickie Robson – Chair, FFICM Board of Examiners**

**March 2021**