

Regulations for remote FFICM oral examinations

These regulations are in addition to the FFICM examination regulations, and apply to remotely-delivered oral examinations.

1 Location

Each candidate must identify a suitable venue for their examination. This needs to be a private room (no-one else present in the room for the duration for the examination) and can be in their own home, place of work or other suitable location. There must be no material relevant to the examination present on the walls, table or other surfaces. Any books on bookshelves must be closed and out of reach of the candidate during the examination.

Candidates may bring one sheet of paper (blank on both sides) to use during the examination if they wish and a pen/pencil.

A security check of the candidate's environment will be carried out before each section of the oral examination starts, and any examiner, administrator or auditor can ask to repeat the security check at any time during the examination. This will include viewing the wall behind the computer screen; if the candidate's computer camera is fixed, they should use a mirror or mobile phone on 'selfie' mode to facilitate this. If a mobile phone is used for this security check, it must then be switched off and put out of the examination room for the rest of the examination. A candidate can also be asked at any time during the examination to keep their hands in view of their camera.

Following the security check, the candidate must remain sitting visible at their computer until the end of the examination.

2 Equipment

Each candidate must provide the following equipment for use during the examination:

- Laptop / computer with 4GB of ram (note that a screen size of 13" min is required to be able to view radiology images satisfactorily)
- A Windows v7.0+ or Mac 10.8+ operating system
- Intel Core i3 (or equivalent) and 4GB RAM
- A working webcam, microphone and speakers or a headset
- Internet connectivity with continuous internet speed of a minimum of 516kbps
- The required video platform must be downloaded onto the candidates computer/laptop prior to the examination

3 Security

No electronic devices, other than the computer / laptop being used for the examination, are permitted in the examination room. This includes mobile phones, smart watches, timing devices and other electronic devices. If the candidate is taking the examination in a room in their home which contains domestic devices such as a television/radio /etc, these may be present in the room but switched off (power disconnected). Any home automation or 'always listening' devices eg Alexa must be switched off (power disconnected).

All programmes on the candidate's computer, other than the video platform being used for the exam, must be closed prior to the start exam and remain closed throughout the exam. This includes search engines eg Google as well as word processing, communication and other applications.

Candidates must not attempt to communicate with anyone else (other than the examiners and administration staff) during the examination.

Candidates must position themselves so that they are visible to the invigilator/examiner via their camera from the waist up to the top of the head during the examination. They may move from this position to view screen artefacts displayed by the examiner for short periods if needed, then return to be visible from the waist up. A candidate can be asked at any time during the examination to keep their hands in view of their camera.

4 Candidates being unable to hear the examiner or see the artefacts

Candidates should test their computer, camera, speakers etc before the examination and are responsible for providing working equipment.

If a problem arises mid exam eg a candidate is unable to hear an examiner or see an artefact, they must say so immediately. The examiner will then attempt to rectify the problem, if it has occurred at his/her 'end'. The candidate should also try to rectify the problem eg check headphones are correctly plugged in. If the problem cannot be rectified, an administrator will be called to assist. Where the problem has arisen from the examiner's equipment, either extra time on that station or re-run of the station at the end of the examination will be provided; the candidate needs not to 'leave the meeting' at the end in order for this to occur.

5 Internet problems

Candidates are responsible for providing a working internet connection for the examination and should test out their internet connection in advance. They should do whatever is possible to maximise it eg sit close to the router, ask other house occupants not to use the internet while the examination is in progress. If an internet problem arises, eg poor connection prevents a candidate from hearing the examiner, the candidate should inform the examiner immediately, who can repeat the question as required. An examiner can, at their discretion, add up to 1 minute to the candidate's examination station to compensate of loss of internet connection.

If the internet connection is lost completely, the candidate should try to re-join the 'meeting' and resume the examination. If a significant part or all of a station is lost, then it may be possible to repeat this station at the end of the examination (at the discretion of the exams department). The candidate must stay in the 'meeting' after their last station to enable this to happen.

If a candidate cannot re-join the meeting, they should telephone the exams helpline for advice. In this circumstance the candidate is allowed to leave the computer to use their phone.

If an examiner's internet connection fails, the examiner will be replaced by a different examiner. It is likely that time will be 'lost' during the changeover; if so, the replacement examiner will either add on extra time to compensate, or the station will be run again for that candidate at the end of the examination (this decision will be made by the exams department). The candidate should not leave the 'meeting', to enable this to occur.

6 Notes

A candidate may bring one blank A4 sheet of paper and make short notes during the SOE examination, no paper is allowed in the OSCE. They must not copy out the question.

These notes must be destroyed immediately at the end of the examination; sharing or distribution of this information about questions will be viewed as academic dishonesty.

7 Unexpected external interruptions

Candidates are required to be alone in the room throughout the exam and to take the exam without assistance. If there is an unexpected interruption eg another person accidentally entering the room, doorbell ringing etc, the video recording will be reviewed to see if a breach of regulations has occurred. No additional time can be added for this interruption.

8 Breaks

No breaks, where the candidate is allowed to leave the computer, are permitted during any part of the oral examination, from the time at which the security check of the environment is completed until the end of the examination. The on-line OSCE is in two halves, with a break for all candidates after 7 stations. Another security check may be done after the break.

9 Reasonable adjustments

The regulations on reasonable adjustments in face to face examinations also apply in remote examinations. Taking into account the nature of the remote assessment, a candidate may request a different adjustment where this is appropriate.

10 Recording

The examiners will make a video and audio recording of each candidate's examination. The recording will be used only for the following purposes:

- Quality assurance on the conduct of the examination
- For review if an appeal is made about the conduct of the examination
- For review if an allegation of possible misconduct by a candidate is made

The recordings will be owned by the Faculty, and be destroyed within five days of the examination date. Candidates must not make a video or audio recording of any part of their examination.

11 Breaches of the regulations

The misconduct policy (appendix 10 of the FFICM Examination Regulations) also applies to remote examinations. Any suspected breaches of these regulations or the general examination regulations will be reported to the Examinations Sub-committee for consideration. Where the Examinations Sub-Committee agree that non-compliance is proven they will consider the following, before a penalty is agreed:

- The need to preserve the integrity of the examination.
- Consistency with previous penalties.

12 The Examinations Sub-Committee may consider awarding one of the following standard penalties or may give a more specific penalty where felt appropriate:

- No further action.
- A written warning.
- Result for an examination or part of an examination under investigation, to be declared void.
- Candidate barred from applying for an exam for a specified period.
- Referral to General Medical Council

Examination results of candidates cited for non-compliance will be withheld until a decision has been reached by the Examination Committee. Investigations will be completed as quickly and efficiently as possible and candidates will be kept informed of progress. Candidates will be informed of the outcome in writing by the Director of Training and Examinations on behalf of the Examinations Committee.