

FFICM Chair of Examiners Report – MARCH 2025

Multiple Choice examination (MCQ)

The FFICM Multiple Choice examination took place online in January 2025 using the TestReach platform. 197 candidates appeared for this exam, of which 160 (81%) passed. The pass mark was 64% of the available marks and determined using the Angoff method, with each question assessed individually. Following standard practice, one standard error of measurement (SEM) was subtracted from the overall Angoff-derived score to establish the final pass mark. This sitting marks the final occasion on which the standard error adjustment will be applied.

Oral Examinations

The oral components of the examination took place in London in March 2025 over 4 days. This exam consists of the Objective Structured Clinical Examination (OSCE) and Structured Oral Examination (SOE), which are taken on the same day.

A total of 195 candidates presented for the oral components, which is consistent with the turnout in the previous March sitting in 2024. The oral components were delivered using the Riser platform, which is a secure, digital platform used to deliver, manage, and score high-stakes medical assessments.

Structured Oral Examination (SOE)

There were 158 candidates for the SOE. This consisted of eight structured questions, each comprising five predetermined sub-questions, and assessed by a pair of examiners. The pass mark was set at 26 out of a maximum of 32 marks using the borderline regression method and supported by the Hofstee compromise method. Of the 158 SOE candidates, 72.78% passed. While this represents a lower pass rate compared to recent years, it remains within the expected range.

Objective Structured Clinical Examination (OSCE)

There were 179 candidates for the OSCE. This consisted of 12 stations plus a test station. The pass mark was set by the Angoff process, applied individually to each sub-question within each station. Daily pass marks ranged from 162 to 165 out of a total of 240 available marks.

Of the 179 OSCE candidates, 81.01% passed, representing a higher-than-average pass rate while still falling within the expected performance range. Of those sitting the exam for the first time (62% of the candidates), 72.50% passed.

Both oral components: OSCE and SOE

Overall, 134 candidates (68.72%) passed both the oral components and are to be congratulated on achieving FFICM. This represents a notable increase in the overall pass rate compared to March and October 2024, both of which recorded a pass rate of 56%. Particular congratulations go to Drs David Swetman, Michael Tonkins and Nicolas Rey de Castro who jointly are awarded the FFICM exam prize for 2024-2025.

An analysis of results shows that candidates enrolled in the ICM CCT training programme at the time of application achieved significantly higher pass rates, both overall and in individual components, compared to those not in the training programme.

Topics

Each Chair's report includes a list of topics to help guide and support future exam preparation. Common areas of difficulty in the March 2025 diet included:

- Resuscitation of the pregnant patient
- Estimating the weight of a child
- Best interests decision-making
- Causes of Type 2 respiratory failure
- Understanding starvation ketosis
- Management strategies when blood transfusion is refused
- Describing the practical aspects of bronchoscopy
- Effectively assessing the capacity of a patient refusing life-saving treatment
- Basic science topics (e.g. identifying pelvic bones in radiology, interpreting ventilator curves, and understanding the physiology of oxygen delivery)
- Selecting appropriate antibiotics and understanding the clinical factors influencing that choice - a level expected by the end of Stage 2 training
- Interpretation of ECGs and radiological images
- Awareness and application of national guidelines relevant to ICM practice

Visitors

There were nine visitors (ICM consultant trainers) who observed the oral components of the exam. They commented that the standard of questions was appropriate for the end of Stage 2 training and that the exam covered a good breadth of curriculum areas, including key 'core' ICM topics. Several visitors, who had previously sat the FFICM exam, noted that it felt more clinically relevant now. They observed that examiners were fair, consistent and professional in their approach, providing a clear, calm and encouraging environment. The visitors also highlighted the variation in candidate performance, noting that while some were very well prepared, others appeared less so.

Faculty Exams Team

My thanks to Mr. Ross Stonier and Ms. Imogen O'Brien for all their hard work managing the exams and ensuring the smooth running of the written and oral components. My sincere thanks also go to the examiners, all of whom are ICM Consultants. Examiners generously contribute at least 10 days per year to support the exam process, including question writing, revision, standard setting, and examining, with most of this work carried out voluntarily and unpaid. Particular thanks to the following individuals for their continued leadership and support: Dr Jerome Cockings (Vice Chair), Dr Monika Beatty (SOE Group Lead), Dr Peter Shirley (OSCE Deputy), Dr Jonathan Coles (MCQ Lead), Dr Tom Billyard (MCQ Deputy) and Dr Barbara Philips (Lead for the new oral exam development group). Their dedication and expertise are greatly appreciated.

This is my last FFICM exam as Chair of Examiners. Dr Stephanie Strachan will take over the role from 1 July 2025 and I am confident that under Dr Strachan's guidance, the exam will continue to flourish and attaining the FFICM will remain a badge of honour in Intensive Care Medicine.

Dr Victoria Robson – Chair of Examiners

May 2025