SBA and MTF MCQs for the Final FRCA
SBA and MTF MCQs for the Final FRCA

The FRCAQ.com Writers Group

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Preface

You are currently holding a book containing 180 MCQ questions designed to help you revise for the written component of the Final FRCA exam set by the Royal College of Anaesthetists. The book provides two papers, each consisting of 90 questions, with 60 multiple true false questions (MTF) followed by 30 single best answer questions (SBA). The split of question topic areas covers all those tested by the College. These topic areas are basic sciences, medicine and surgery, intensive care medicine, clinical anaesthesia and pain medicine. The papers in this book have the correct ratio of questions from all these five disciplines and the correct proportion of SBAs and MTFs across these disciplines. For example, each paper has five SBAs in pain and five MTFs in pain as per the real Final FRCA paper. After the question papers, the second section of the book provides answers and explanations for the questions. Each question has both a short explanation that should allow the user to determine, at a glance, why they may have selected an answer incorrectly and a long explanation which provides more in-depth information on the topic area. The questions have been prepared by anaesthetists or experts in areas of tested knowledge who have either recently sat the Final FRCA or have been involved in training candidates for the exam. This book represents 180 question files from the highly popular and successful FRCAQ.com website. This website has over 2600 question files available, covering all areas of the Final FRCA syllabus. Access to the website is available with a subscription at www.FRCAQ.com.

It is our experience that candidates are still more comfortable and familiar with answering MTF questions compared to the SBA questions. SBAs were introduced in to the Final exam in September 2010 with the idea that they test an area of understanding at a higher level than an MTF question. Traditionally, MTFs have been used to test points of knowledge. They often have the structure of making a statement about a specific area and asking you whether it is true or false. You have a fifty-fifty chance of getting the answer right or wrong if you knew nothing and had a wild guess. A typical pass mark for an MTF component of the Final FRCA MCQ paper is 75–80%. The SBA section usually involves a clinical scenario followed by the candidate being asked to select a best option. For example, this may be ‘Select the best management plan’ or ‘What investigation should you perform next?’ In SBAs, typically most of the available options are interrelated and plausible; it’s just that one of the options is best. The pass mark for the SBA component of the exam is typically 50–55%. This should allow the mathematically astute candidate to realise that on average you are not being asked to select the best answer. You are being asked to...
whittle the list of five options down to two and then have a guess between the last two. Rather than Single Best Answer questions, they could be called ‘Discount the Least Good Three Answers’ questions. In training people for sitting these questions, this mindset has allowed us to teach people a very useful tactic for approaching these questions. The key is to discount the more ridiculous options and try to pare the options down to a small group (ideally a group of one, but two or occasionally three is not a disaster). Once a smaller group has been identified, an educated guess within that group will usually be sufficient to achieve an adequate score. When we first heard the news that SBAs were being launched for anaesthetic exams we thought that the answers would have to be based on emphatic knowledge and therefore guessed that questions would be drawn from areas of anaesthesia in which firm guidelines existed (such as resuscitation or the management of anaphylaxis). Subsequently it seems that this has not been the case, with the College content to examine areas in which controversy or differences of opinion occur. The criterion for determining the ‘correct’ answer is based on what the majority of a group of experienced anaesthetists would choose. The controversial nature of the SBA content and the fact that only 20% will be scored by wild guessing means that a user getting over 55% on this section of the paper is doing extremely well.

Each part of an MTF question counts for one mark in your final score. Sixty questions with five marks available for each contributes 300 marks to the final score. Four marks are given for each correct SBA question, so 30 questions contributes 120 marks to the final total of 420 available marks. If the pass mark for the SBA paper is around 50–55% and for the MTF section is 75–80%, the combined pass mark is usually around 70%.

Our general advice for using this book would be, in the first instance, to try to sit the two papers under as close to exam conditions as possible. Following an initial attempt at the questions, a review of the explanations will not only act as a revision aid, but also give some insight into how and why questions are set. If using this book has proved valuable, please come and visit us at www.FRCAQ.com, where we have nearly fifteen times the amount of content in this book for you to explore.

Good luck – and we look forward to seeing you at www.FRCAQ.com soon.

James Nickells and Ben Walton
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