

Passing the Final FRCA – a guide

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Overall

I found the FRCA exam to be a mind game, which is similar to any other great challenge in life. To pass my final FRCA, I used the following tricks that I learnt from my primary exam:

- You will always feel like you have no time left for revision. Always remember that previous candidates who managed to pass their exam had similar work/family commitments and managed to have time to revise. It's all about time management.
- You will never know everything, nor will you feel 100% ready to take the exam. Accept this fact and just do your best and go for it.
- Everyone is different; your technique for revising will vary from others so just do what seems right for you and stick to your methods.
- If the examiners want you to know something that might be on the exam, then learning those concepts is what's going to get you through the exam, not moaning about why you need to know it.
- Confidence is a key. Confident candidates have higher pass rates.

Timing

It took me six months of revision work to prepare for the exam. I began collecting BJA Education (formerly known as CEACCP) related articles a couple of months before I officially started my revision. This gave me a better understanding of what was expected for me to learn. With work and family commitments six months is not a lot of time.

Written

SBA: I always go for the revision method that allows me to revise using my iPad, so I do not need to carry books around. I used mainly <http://www.onexamination.com>. I found on examination a useful way to monitor my progress, but I have to admit that I found the actual exam MCQ/SBA slightly harder than on examination. But a lot of those questions were from BJA education.

Coventry course's SBAs are very useful. Unfortunately, they do not include model answers to the questions. Even so, I remember having SBAs on the exam that were straight from Coventry website's SBAs; in the end, it was helpful that I had already done the thinking for those questions which saved me time to contemplate response to other questions.

SAQs: I improved my writing by joining the Merseyside course writer's club. It was a good way to start SAQ practice, and it also gave me an insight into how other trainees would approach tricky SAQs. However, I did not continue with the writer's club, as I found the questions were random. I wanted to focus on hot topics that had a higher potential of appearing on my exam paper. I started to narrow down topics by asking consultants in different subspecialties about hot topics and with the help of BJA education I created my hot topic list.

I used BJA education (CEACCP) for my SAQ revision. I printed out the last ten years and divided them into topic. I used <http://www.nischoolofanaesthesia-finalfrca.org.uk>. It saved me a lot of time, as all previous SAQs are collected and divided by specialty. I did not rely on their answers; instead I used the BJA education.

I find mind-maps a useful tool of revision. Mind-map is a type of diagram representing all of the information you need to learn. Mind-maps enable you to organise information better visually, through the use of branches and sub-branches. Luckily I found <http://www.frcamindmaps.org/contents.html> which includes almost the whole curriculum divided by subspecialty.

Structured Oral Examination

At this stage, I was left with roughly six weeks to prepare for the Structured Oral Examination (SOE). I felt that was not enough time to prepare, but the reality was I had done most of the hard work preparing for SAQs.

Fortunately, I kept myself motivated by reminding myself it's my last mandatory exam.

On the one hand, I did my revision for clinical SOE during the evenings after work, as I felt I did not need much energy to revise a clinically related topic. On the other hand, I did all of my basic science revisions on weekends, days off and early morning before work. I did most of my SOE practice with my wife (a pharmacist). I think practicing with a non-anaesthetist was helpful, as it forced me to organise and structure all of my answers, and I was able to practice at home.

Clinical SOE: I used [The Final FRCA Structured Oral Examination: A Complete Guide \(MasterPass\)](#) by Bobby Krishnachetty (Author), Darshinder Sethi (Author). It was not very popular when I used it, as it was new. However, I can attest that it is an excellent book, covering both clinical and basic science. The book is easy to read and very similar to the exam structure.

Basic Science: For me, this is a very dry topic, and I found that I needed to work smarter as I could not learn everything. To accomplish this task, I used mainly books that I had originally used for my primary exam as it was a lot easier to revise from a book that I have already used. My main concern was getting a tricky anatomy question, but luckily they always ask a clinical related question in the anatomy station. I also used [The Anaesthesia Science Viv Book](#), by Simon Bricker.

I attended Merseyside's SOE weekend course. I found it useful, as previous trainees sent them their questions, recording what they were asked on the test exactly word for word.

Tips

Anatomy is your first basic science station, so master your anatomy to impress the examiners. It's not as hard as it sounds! The exam is repeatable, so have a list of previous anatomy topics and learn them.

Do not forget to read [The Royal College of Anaesthetists. Guide to the FRCA Examination. The Final. \(Guide to the FRCA examination\)](#) by Dr Andrew J Mortimer BSc MD FRCA (Editor) twice at least.

Work Hard! The post FRCA feeling is worth it. Good Luck!