

RCoA transparency data: the cost of training

Summary

The Royal College of Anaesthetists (RCoA), Faculty of Pain Medicine (FPMRCoA) and Faculty of Intensive Care Medicine (FICM) ensure that trainees, members and fellows are provided with an appropriate breakdown of costs of supporting trainees and in the provision of the examinations that form part of the relevant training programmes. For the purposes of this analysis, the income and expenditure for FRCA, FFICM and FFPMRCA examinations have been combined, as the vast majority of the functions are managed centrally by the RCoA examinations department to improve economies of scale.

Each department within the College and each Faculty have its own budget which is managed by the relevant head of function and the overall directorate budget is the responsibility of the relevant director.

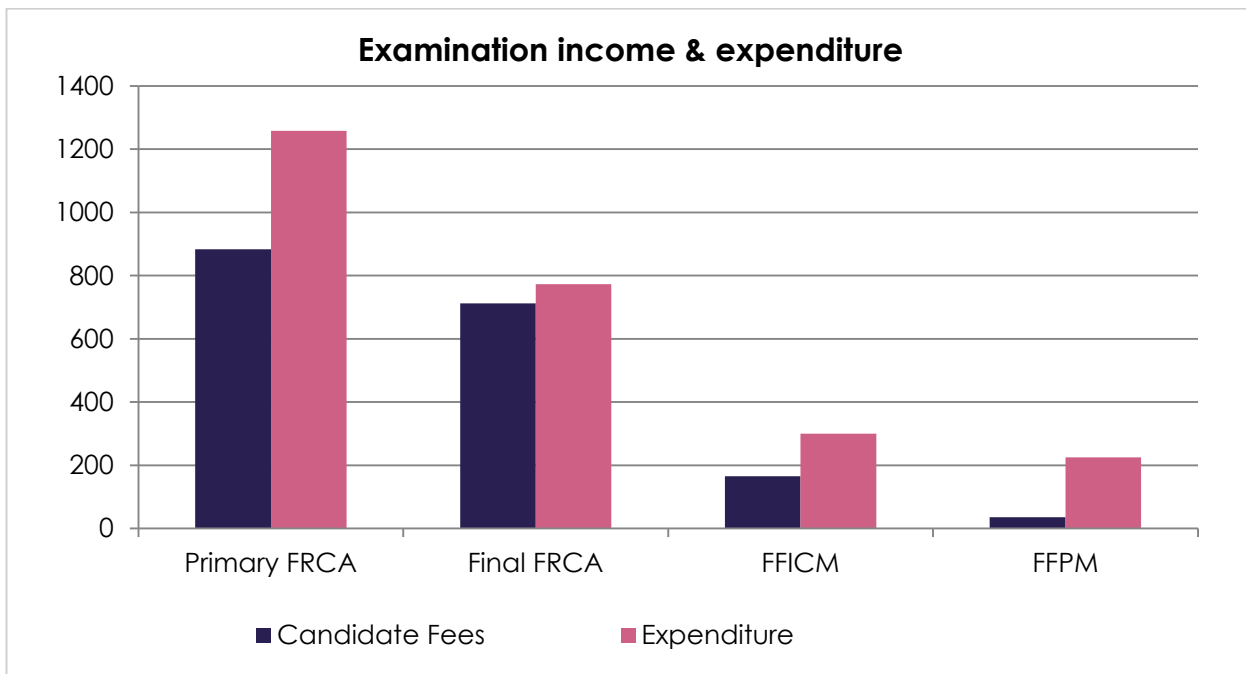
Training costs

All trainees appointed to an Anaesthetic or Intensive Care Medicine training programme are required to register with the RCoA or FICM. There is no additional cost to trainees for the provision of the e-Portfolio, curriculum development and management, or for the advice and guidance provided to support progress through the training programme. These functions are wholly subsidised from the membership subscription.

Examinations income v expenditure

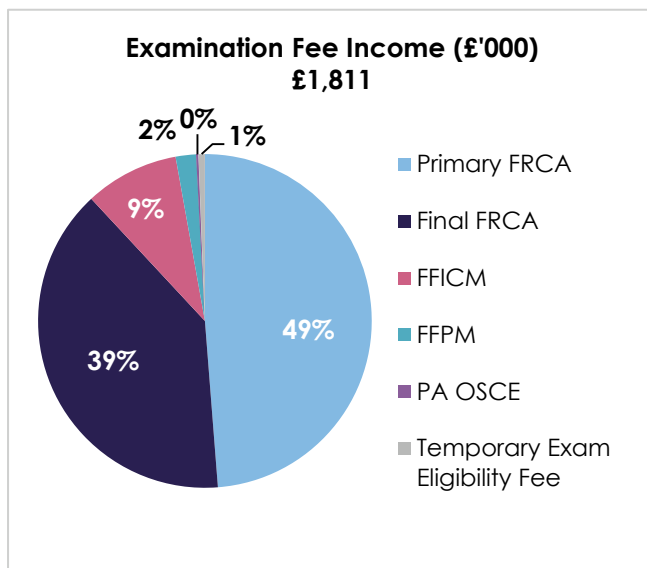
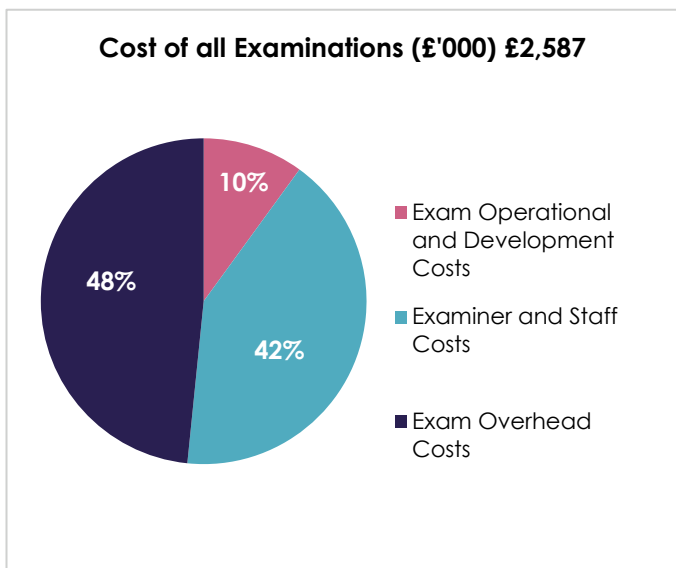
The overall expenditure for running and supporting all exams for academic year 2015-2016 was £2,688,000. The overall income for all exams run by the College and the faculties for academic year 2015-2016 was £1,811,000, £877,000 lower than the expenditure. The bar chart below shows the income received for each exam set against the overall expenditure for that exam or set of exams. This chart demonstrates that the College subsidises the running of examinations.

Variation in overall exam costs is dependent on the number of candidates, the exam complexity, equipment required, plus external venue and additional staff costs. The Primary and FFICM exams incur further staff, resources and equipment costs in conducting OSCE exams which increases the overall running costs. The FFPM exam requires a higher subsidy due to the very small numbers of candidates, around 14 candidates on average attend these exams, FFICM exams also need further subsidy due to smaller candidate numbers (approx. 80 per exam). The FRCA exams benefit from economy of scale, with approximately 320 candidates attending each exam.



Examination fees

As stated above the overall income from exam fees for all exams run by the College and the faculties for academic year 2015-2016 was £1,811,000. The chart below right shows what proportion of this income was received in respect to exam fees for: all FRCA exam parts (Primary and Final), all FFICM examinations, all FFPMRCA/DFPMRCA examinations plus the additional fee paid by overseas candidates for Temporary exam eligibility for academic year 2015-2016.



Areas of expenditure

So why does expenditure outstrip income? The expenditure for all exams can be broken-down into three main areas:

1. Operational and development costs
2. Examiner and staff costs
3. Overhead costs

The chart above left identifies what proportion of the overall cost of all examinations run through the College examinations department is attributed to the three main areas of expenditure. A more detailed list of what costs are incurred in each of the main areas is set out below:

Operational and development costs cover the day-to-day administration and running costs of each exam. This includes but is not limited to: The standard setting processes of the exam, marking analysis and candidate feedback, exam review and management, question writing and exam content management, data analysis, exam equipment, hardware and software costs. Candidate resources, guidance and candidate support. Development covers exam technology and future operational development costs such as; moving all written exams to Computer Based Testing, the development of on-line application and payment, electronic marking, question writing and pilot exams in respect to changes of exam formats. This is to ensure that all College and faculty examinations stay in line with the changes in medical education and assessment and continue to remain fit-for-purpose.

Examiner and staff costs, the College and faculties do not pay their examiners but do cover day to day expenses associated with the role including, hotel accommodation and travel expenses. On average each FRCA examiner commits 12 days to examinations per annum. Faculty examiners commit around 6 days per annum. The examinations department is relatively small in comparison to other Colleges and consists of a Head of examinations, an examinations manager, two exam coordinators and four examinations administrators. Some aspects of Faculty examinations are administered by the FICM and FPM secretariats. Additional invigilators, actors and specialist contractors are employed as required to support the exams.

Overhead costs: To ensure the effective running of the examinations the College and the faculties is dependent on the support of various departments and individuals from the College, the faculties and external stakeholders and in the provision of this support incur costs in respect of facility needs such as; the hire or use of internal and external exam venues and rooms, desks and equipment, financial services, human resources, support advice and direction from Committees, working parties and RCoA Council / Faculty Boards.

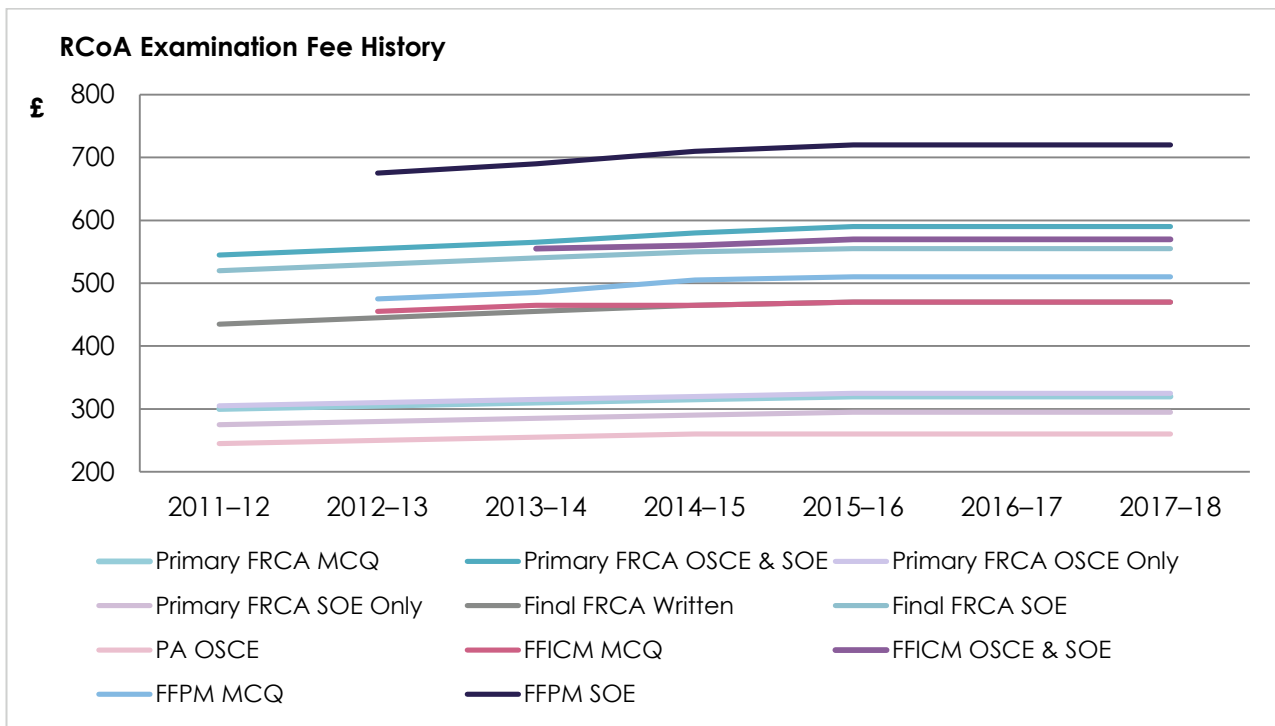
Minimising costs

The RCoA, FPM and FICM are committed to minimising the cost of training and all examinations commensurate with maintaining the high quality of training for all trainees. As stated above due to a small number of candidates applying for the FFICM and FPPMRCA/DFPPMRCA examinations the faculties encounter a greater fixed cost per candidate for their examinations and this additional cost is reflected in the higher exam fees. However, the College and the faculties will always ensure value for money in the provision of training and examinations processes and therefore will only increase exam fees where absolutely necessary.

Candidate fees

The information provided above shows that overall the examinations run at a deficit. However the College and faculties are mindful that junior doctors face enormous personal and financial pressures during their training. Therefore, the College and faculties have not increased exam fees above the cost of inflation and more recently have made a decision to freeze exam fees at the rate set for academic year 2015 -2016 and they will remain at the 15-16 rate for academic year 2017-2018. Please click here for further information on [Dates, Fees and Applications](#).

The graph below shows how the exam fees have risen in line with RPI, (no more than £5/annum) from July 2011 to June 2015, the chart also reflects the freeze in exam fees from July 2015 to June 2018:



Tax deductibility

All exam dates and fees are set out on the College and faculties websites. The College and faculties are aware that trainees who sit examinations as part of a training programme can claim tax relief on their exam fees. Whilst in a training programme trainees can also claim tax relief on membership fees. In order to assist trainees in the reclaiming of tax adjustments, we have provided [a template](#) which can be used to request a refund of tax paid.