

Anatomy Automation FAQs

1 Introduction

1.1 Why is the way the Anatomy exam is delivered changing?

Since 2014 the College has been working on an 'automation project' - the development of a digital platform for the delivery of those written components of the FRCR that involve the display of images, namely the First FRCR Anatomy and Final FRCR Part B rapid reporting and reporting elements.

The FRCR exam is an internationally respected assessment and a highly sought after qualification. However, there are a number of issues with the way in which the Anatomy exam is delivered at the College - there are limitations on candidate numbers due to equipment, space and marking constraints; multiple sets of papers are required for each sitting; and the manual marking of candidate answers represents a heavy time commitment for both examiners and College staff. Finally, with limited numbers of candidates sitting any given paper, psychometric analyses of both individual questions and complete exams can be challenging. The project will utilise automated marking and introduce multiple exam venues to alleviate these issues and make attempting the Anatomy exam easier for candidates and the College.

1.2 What is the impact of the change on candidates?

Candidates will continue to view images on a computer workstation, but will be required to type their answers via a keyboard rather than writing them into an answer book. Candidates will no longer need to travel to the College in London to attempt the Anatomy exam but will be able to select a venue from a range of locations.

1.3 When is the change being introduced?

From Spring 2018.

1.4 How can I familiarise myself with the platform prior to the exam?

A demonstration site is being created to enable candidates, and trainers, to acquaint themselves with the platform in the months leading up to its introduction. This will be available via the College website from mid-January, eight weeks before the first automated Anatomy exam. It is essential that candidates familiarise themselves with the platform via the demonstration site prior to attempting the Anatomy exam as there will be no opportunity to practise using the software, or watch any instructional material, at venues on the day of exams.

2 Exam delivery

2.1 If the College is no longer delivering the exam at it's London office, where can I attempt it now?

The exam will continue to be run in London, Singapore and Hong Kong, although not at the same venues as pre-2018. Additional venues being introduced as a result of the automation project are Stockport, Birmingham, Glasgow and Belfast. Specific venue details will be provided on timetables and via the College website as usual in the New Year.

The College is working with a test centre provider to ensure that its requirements - including building, personnel and technical elements – are met and that the candidate experience is uniform irrespective of the venue selected.

2.2 How will the College allocate candidates to venues now there is more choice?

Candidates will be required to select a first and second choice venue on the application form and places will be filled using the first come, first served principle. The College will endeavour to allocate candidates to their first or second choice however allocations will depend on demand and number of places available; there is an amount of flexibility with the test centre network to introduce more seats at a particular venue if it is oversubscribed. Candidates will not be advised of their venue allocation until after the closing date.

2.3 What are the implications for the Physics module?

There are no changes to the Physics module itself, although the venue choices for Physics have been amended so that candidates will be able to sit both Anatomy and Physics in the same city, or very close by, on consecutive days. It is very likely that the College will be able to accommodate all candidates in their chosen Physics venues, but candidates are required to indicate a second choice should the first choice be at full capacity. In the event that candidates wishing to sit both modules are allocated to their second choice Anatomy venue, they will be placed at the Physics venue in the same location.

2.4 I am an overseas candidate. Can I now be guaranteed a place?

The introduction of automation will increase capacity for the Anatomy exams, however the College will continue to run a ballot if the exam remains oversubscribed. The ballot will be run on candidates' first choice venue only. If there are remaining spaces at any exam venue after all ballots have been run, then the College will randomly allocate places based on candidates' second choice venues. If a candidate is allocated their second choice Anatomy venue they will be given the option to change their Physics venue accordingly.

2.5 Has the change affected when the exam is delivered?

The Anatomy exam will continue to be offered in March, June and September. As the platform enables all candidates to attempt the same material, there will be one start time for each time zone, which will be confirmed with timetables.

2.6 Has the change affected the amount of time allocated to answer questions?

The Anatomy exam will still contain 100 questions and will remain at 90 minutes duration.

2.7 I have sat the exam previously, when candidates had the opportunity to try out a couple of questions at their workstations before beginning the exam proper. Will this continue?

No. Candidates previously were able to view two sample cases prior to beginning the exam because there was not the facility to experience the exam delivery software prior to coming to the College. The introduction of the demonstration site (1.4 above) will address this.

3 On the day

3.1 What information will I need to log into the exam on the day?

Candidates will require a PIN to access the exam, which is common to all candidates and will be displayed in the exam room. In addition to the PIN, all candidates will need their unique log-in number, in order that responses can be attributed to individuals. Candidates will be provided with their log-ins in advance of the exam and assistance can be provided on the day if necessary.

3.2 What if I have problems with the platform, or any other issues on the day of the exam?

Candidates should raise their hand as normal and speak to an invigilator; technical support will be available at all venues. In a continuation of current practice, spare workstations will be available for candidates who experience problems at their desk. The platform offers continuity workstation to workstation, in that responses submitted prior to the move will be viewable on the new workstation upon moving desks.

4. Quality assurance/policy

4.1 Have there been any changes to the content of the exam?

Anatomy images and associated questions will be selected from the current question bank, with the bank being continuously updated and improved as usual.

4.2 How can I be sure that my responses will not be lost in the system?

Like the candidate numbers under the previous paper system, candidate log-ins ensure that responses are attributed to individuals.

4.3 Is the platform reliant on an internet connection to run the exam?

The platform is run via a web-browser but is not dependent on an internet connection to deliver the Anatomy exam or collect candidate responses. If an internet connection is available during the exam then candidate responses are sent to the server in real time. If, however, internet connection is lost during exam delivery then the exam continues off-line with candidate responses stored locally.

The platform has been thoroughly tested in environments with no internet connection, an existing connection or an intermittent service. Ultimately all candidate responses will be submitted to the server for marking.

4.4 To what degree is the College utilising automated marking? I think I would prefer my answers to be looked at by an examiner.

Prior to automated marking commencing, the platform will be programmed with acceptable Anatomy answers, which will be matched with candidate responses and marks awarded by the system accordingly. Any answers that do not exactly match those within the platform will be reviewed by examiners and awarded an appropriate mark. The system presents all identical responses grouped together – rather than the pre-2018 view of one candidate's complete set of answers – which streamlines the manual marking process for examiners. If a candidate suggests an answer that the examiner deems correct, but that is a permutation that does not already feature in the marking scheme, the awarding of points for this response will automatically populate the score of all other candidates who gave the same response.

4.5 What happens if I make a typo/spelling mistake in my answers? Will my answers be marked as incorrect?

The exam is not a spelling test and, as previously, the examiners will exercise common sense when considering responses and will overlook minor spelling mistakes or typing errors, such as transposed letters, if the meaning is clear and unambiguous.

4.6 Will the automated marking definitely work?

The platform has been rigorously tested by the College to be a reliable and valid method of an *initial* mark of the exam. However, anatomy examiners will continue to review all responses prior to results awarding whilst in the transition between 'old' and 'new' formats.

4.6 Should I be worried about my typing speed?

The College's pilot exams, which ran in all UK venues over summer 2017, did not suggest that the duration of the Anatomy exam should be extended. If, however, you anticipate difficulties with typing due to disability then you should consult the College's adjustments policy or contact the Examinations Team for advice.

4.7 Does this change have an impact on any of the Colleges existing exams policies?

All policies, including the FRCR regulations, remain unaffected by the change. Candidates with disabilities, who feel the format change will necessitate adjustments, should follow the published procedure and advise the College at the time of entering for the exam.