



T-17 Notes to Candidates for the First Part Examination

The College of Intensive Care Medicine is the body responsible for intensive care medicine specialist training and accreditation in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand. This document outlines the processes, standard setting, and format of the First Part Examination.

1. Overview of the examination format

The examination is held twice a year; each consists of two components: two written papers and oral Vivas held separately. The first part examination assesses knowledge and understanding of the basic sciences that form the foundation of intensive care medicine practice. It examines information contained within the Syllabus of the First Part Examination, [First Part Examination Syllabus Version 5](#).

The structure of the exam is outline below.

Section	Composition	Total Marks	Pass Requirement
Written Exam	2 x 2.5 hour written papers Each paper contains: 10 x Short Answer Questions (SAQs) 50 x Multiple Choice Questions (MCQs)	MCQs = 100 Marks SAQs = 400 Marks	Determined by the Angoff Method
<i>To progress to the oral exam a candidate must achieve above or equal the Angoff Pass Mark (determined by the angoff method and committee) in both the MCQ and SAQ components.</i>			
Oral Exam	Day 1 = 4 x 10 minute cross table VIVAs Day 2 = 4 x 10 minute cross table VIVAs	8 VIVAs = 160 Marks	Determined by Borderline Regression
<i>To be successful in the examination candidates must achieve above or equal to the Borderline Pass Mark determined by borderline regression method.</i>			



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If a candidate is successful in the written section and is unsuccessful at the orals, they are permitted to carry this written mark for the next two scheduled examinations. Should a candidate be unsuccessful at the third oral attempt the candidate will need to re-sit the written section at their next attempt.

To best understand what is expected in the examination, candidates are encouraged to read previous examination reports available on the College website and resources available on the examination's hub.

2. Application for the examination

Candidates must apply via the College specified application method outlined on the website. Applications will only be received during the advertised window. Applications will **NOT** be accepted outside of the advertised window.

Candidates must meet the eligibility criteria to sit the exam:

- Be a current and active CICM trainee.
- Have submitted appropriate and current training documentation (e.g., AVT).
- Be paid up to date with all College fees (e.g., *annual trainee fee and RPL fees*).
- If re-sitting the exam, completed a trainee action plan with their Supervisor of Training and have it submitted to the College prior to application.

Candidates may be required to meet additional criteria prior to the closing date of the advertised window (e.g., *submit outstanding training documentation, pay outstanding fees and/or submit an updated trainee action plan*).

A fee is payable at time of submitting the application to sit the exam. The candidate's application will not be considered until the required fee is paid in full.

The College endeavours to notify candidates an outcome of their application within one week of the closing date of the advertised window.

2.1 Withdrawing from the examination

Candidates who withdraw their intentions to sit the examination should notify the College Exams Administration in writing as soon as possible. As per the College regulations:

5.5.6.3 – A Candidate who withdraws their application may be refunded the fee provided the College receives written notice of withdrawal by the published date on which the applications close.

5.5.6.4 – A Candidate whose entry has been accepted and who withdraws from the examination after the date on which entries close, or who fails to attend the examination may be required to pay 30% of the examination fee unless extenuating circumstances apply.



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2.2 Special consideration and reasonable adjustments

The College is committed to ensuring the integration of the principles of equity for access, participation and opportunity for people with a disability or medical condition in regulations, policies, procedures, decisions and operations. Candidates who may require special consideration and/or reasonable adjustments for the examination should refer to the [T-19 document \(Special circumstances and reasonable adjustments policy for examinations\)](#) which outlines the criteria and process to applying for consideration/adjustments.

Applications for foreseeable special considerations and reasonable adjustments should be submitted with your exam application and **BEFORE** the exam application date deadline. This is to ensure your application is given the time for consideration and to ensure any adjustments can be organised for the exam.



3. Examination Syllabus Mapping and Cognitive Learning Objectives

3.1 Content coverage and weighting of the syllabus

The First Part Examination will cover all domains within the syllabus across the written or oral components. At least 50% of the exam (written and oral) will cover the CORE basic sciences topics; Respiratory, Cardiovascular, Neurological and Renal. The remainder will cover the rest of the syllabus or NON-CORE. There will be at least 30% coverage of pharmacology however this will be integrated across syllabus domains.

NOTE: the content weightings are meant to guide candidates and provide approximate weightings of examination content. This will vary between examination sittings.

CORE Syllabus		MCQ	SAQ	VIVA
Section	Domain			
C	Respiratory System	At least 50% of the MCQs will examine material covered in the CORE syllabus.	Up to 3 SAQs will examine material covered in this domain.	At least 1 VIVA will examine material covered in this domain.
D	Cardiovascular System		Up to 3 SAQs will examine material covered in this domain.	At least 1 VIVA will examine material covered in this domain.
E	Renal System		Up to 2 SAQs will examine material covered in these domains.	At least 1 VIVA will examine material covered in these domains.
F	Acid – Base			
G	Fluids and Electrolytes			
H	Neurological System		At least 2 SAQs will examine material covered in these domains.	At least 1 VIVA will examine material covered in these domains.
I	Musculoskeletal System			
CORE Pharmacology			Up to 3 SAQs will examine material covered in these domain.	The oral exam may examine material from these domains integrated throughout the exam.



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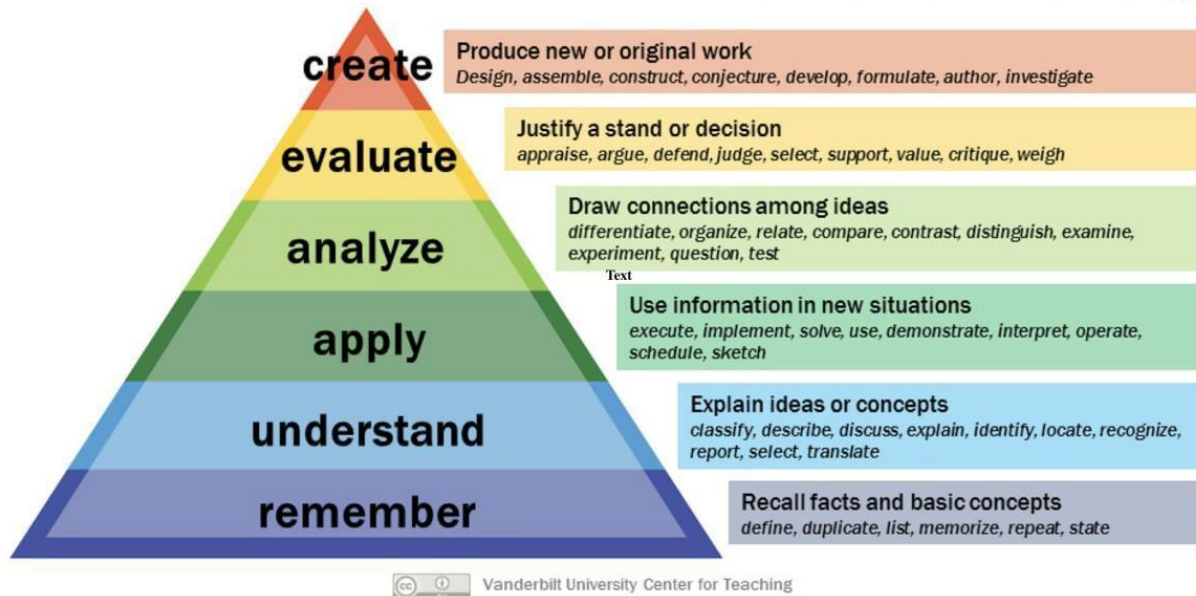
NON-CORE Syllabus		MCQ	SAQ	VIVA
Section	Domain			
A B	Cellular Physiology Concepts in Pharmacology	At least 40% of the MCQs will be material covered in the NON-CORE Syllabus	Up to 2 SAQs will examine material covered in these domains.	Each oral exam may have up to 1 VIVA covering these domains
J K L M	Gastrointestinal System Nutrition and Metabolism Endocrine System Thermoregulation		Up to 3 SAQs will examine material covered in these domains.	Each oral exam may have up to 1 VIVA covering these domains
N	Haematological and Immune Systems		Up to 2 SAQs will examine material covered in these domains.	Each oral exam may have up to 1 VIVA covering these domains
O	Microbiology			
P	Obstetric and Neonatal		Up to 1 SAQs will examine material covered in these domains.	Each oral exam may have up to 1 VIVA covering these domains
Non Core Pharmacology (including Q)			Up to 2 SAQs will examine material covered in these domains.	The oral exam may contain information across these domains integrated throughout the exam.



3.2 Cognitive Learning Domains – Blooms Taxonomy

The First Part Examination endeavours to examine the syllabus across most of the cognitive domains outlined in Bloom’s Taxonomy or Taxonomy of Education Objectives.

Bloom’s Taxonomy



Due to the nature of the knowledge the syllabus will focus on the Remember (knowledge), Understand, Apply and Analyse domains.

- Remember – recall facts and basic concepts
– *define, list, recall and state.*
- Understand – explain ideas or concepts
– *classify, describe, discuss and explain.*
- Apply – use information in new situations and draw connections among ideas
– *use, demonstrate and interpret.*
- Analyse – draw connections among ideas
– *implement, compare, contrast, differentiate and relate.*

The written exam will tend to require candidates to demonstrate knowledge recall, understanding with less requirement for application of this knowledge. The oral component will examine the application and analyse domains of Blooms Taxonomy.



4. Written Section

There are two papers, each consisting of 50 MCQs and 10 SAQs. The time allowed for each paper is 2.5hrs allowing 1 minute per MCQ and 10 minutes for each SAQ.

Morning and/or Afternoon Paper	
Section	Time Allocated
Labelling Time	5 minutes
Reading Time (no writing)	10 minutes
MCQ	50 minutes
SAQ	100 minutes
Total per paper	165 minutes (2hrs 45mins)

An example of the written day timing has been provided below and should be used as a guide only, this is subject to change on the day of the examination.

Timing of the Written Exam	
Morning Paper	Time
Admit, seat candidates and receive instructions	0835-0845
Labelling and Reading Time	0845-0900
Writing Time	0900 - 1130
Afternoon Paper	Time
Admit, seat candidates and receive instructions	1305-1315
Labelling and Reading Time	1315-1330
Writing Time	1330-1600

Candidates will be provided a break between each paper. There is no catering provided at the exam and candidates are encourage to either bring lunch or investigate nearby catering facilities.

Candidates should present at the specified examination venue at the nominated sign-in time. A valid photographic ID will be required to verify candidate identity/details. Candidates who are more than 10-minutes late past the commencement of the examination or do not have valid photographic ID may not be permitted inside the exam room.



4.1 Guide for answering the Short Answer Questions

Candidates are provided double spaced line answer booklets to write their answers, these should be clearly labelled with their candidate ID number on the front cover of each booklet and the top of each page. Each SAQ is to be answered in a separate booklet.

In preparing for the exam candidates should note the following;

- All SAQs are derived from the syllabus.
- The verb and the topic of the question determine the breadth of the answer required.
- The depth of information presented is determined by the time limit for the question.
- All SAQs are of equal value.
- SAQs with more than one part will have the marks apportioned for each section represented I in the question further guiding the depth of the answer expected.
- All marking rubrics are calibrated by examiners such that full marks are possible within 10 minutes.
- When not represented marks are usually weighted to more important or influential components of the topic.
- Note form is acceptable and encouraged as is lists or diagrams if this is the most efficient way to demonstrate the concept.
- Abbreviations used commonly in ICU or medical notes are acceptable. If you are using a personalised shorthand please explain this when first used in each question.
- Indicate units or measurement or normal values where applicable.
- Use Black or Blue pen only – the papers are scanned and sent digitally to examiners to be marked – anything other than these colours do not scan well.



4.2 Guide for answering the Multiple-Choice Questions

All answers must be completed on the prescribed multiple-choice answer sheet. Candidates are advised to carefully follow the instructions printed on the answer sheet and ensure they have labelled their candidate number in the appropriate box/field.

In addition, Candidates are advised:

- Select **ONE** answer from the four options.
- Do **NOT** select multiple answers for the question.
- Use a 2B pencil **ONLY** when completing the MCQ answer sheet.
- Do **NOT** use ballpoint, felt tip pens or highlighters.
- Erase any mistakes fully using an eraser
- Do **NOT** fold or bend the MCQ answer sheet.

For Example:

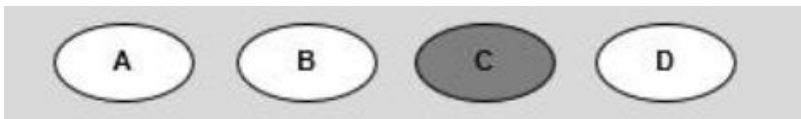
Question 1.

In which city is the CICM office based?

- A. Adelaide
- B. Auckland
- C. Melbourne
- D. Sydney

The correct answer is C. Melbourne

Option C on the MCQ answer sheet should be shaded as shown. All other options should be left unshaded.





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5. Written Exam Venues

Candidates are advised to carefully read and adhere to the venue specific correspondence from the College when preparing to attend the written component. Invigilators are thoroughly briefed by the College prior to the examination.

Items permitted in the examination room:

- 2B pencils, erasers (*no markings and/or labels*).
- Black and/or blue ballpoint pens.
- Clear water bottle (*no adhesive labels*).
- Ear plugs (not Bluetooth enabled) – *The College aims to achieve optimal exam conditions at all times; however absolute silence cannot always be guaranteed.*
- Non-programmable calculator.
- Pencil sharpener (*no markings and/or labels*).
- Rulers (*no markings and/or labels*).
- Analogue clocks or watches (must be silent and non-bluetooth or internet capable) – *where possible a digital clock will be displayed at the front of the room.*

Candidates will be provided with blank paper for use during the exam; this will be collected and disposed of at the end of the exam.

Items NOT permitted in the examination room:

- Food - *if you have a medical condition and require food, you must apply for special consideration to the College prior to the exam.*
- Highlighters or coloured ink pens.
- Personal computers, laptops, tablets, and any other electronic equipment.
- Programmable calculators.
- Textbooks.
- Smart watches.
- Mobile phones.
- Water bottles with adhesive labels or non-transparent bottles.

Candidates are NOT permitted to take any materials or the exam paper(s) from the venue.



6. Oral section – Cross table Vivas

Candidates are divided into cohorts to complete 8 individual stations of 10 minutes each over 2 days. VIVA 1 to 4 will be held on Day 1 for all candidates and VIVA 5 to 8 will be completed on Day 2. Candidates with the longest quarantine time on Day 1 will have the shortest quarantine time on Day 2 and vice versa.

During the examination, Candidates are allocated 2-minutes reading time of the introductory question(s) outside the station, before being able to enter the station. There are up to two Examiners at each station. There may be additional observer(s) present in the room also. *Observers may be but not limited to new Examiners, Supervisors of Training, unit directors or Examiner assessors.* Each VIVA is allocated 10minutes.

No stoppage or changing of the rotation is allowed and candidates may not return to a station. All stations carry equal marks. The Examiner(s) at the station will assess the performance on a mark sheet according to pre-set criteria.

A candidate may start at any point in the sequence above.

Cross-table VIVAs			
Day 1	Day 2		
Pre-exam Briefing and Quarantine			
VIVA 1	VIVA 5	Reading Time	2 minutes
		Examination Time	10 minutes
		Exit room/booth and move to next station to immediately commence reading.	
VIVA 2	VIVA 6	Reading Time	2 minutes
		Examination Time	10 minutes
		Exit room/booth and move to next station to immediately commence reading.	
VIVA 3	VIVA 7	Reading Time	2 minutes
		Examination Time	10 minutes
		Exit room/booth and move to next station to immediately commence reading.	
VIVA 4	VIVA 8	Reading Time	2 minutes
		Examination Time	10 minutes
		Exit room/booth and move to next station to immediately commence reading.	
Rest Station			12 minutes
Post-Exam Briefing and Quarantine			



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6.1 Rest periods

The viva section can include up to 2 mandatory rest periods to ensure depending on candidate numbers presenting to the exam and the facilities available. During these breaks, candidates are NOT permitted to access any personal items but will have access to bathrooms and water.

6.2 Quarantine periods

To ensure the confidentiality and integrity of the examination process, Candidates will be quarantined at the venue prior to and after the examination. The length of each quarantine period may vary for each cohort and are subject to change without notice. For quarantine exceeding 1 hour light refreshments will be provided. Access to mobile phones or digital devices will not be available during this time. Candidates may utilise non-blue tooth enabled headphones to help with distraction, stimulation and concentration during this time.

6.3 Conduct

The College has an expectation that respect to Examiners, staff (*including venue staff*), other candidates and members of the public/community is always shown. This includes keeping noise levels down and adhering to examination conditions.

In addition, Candidates are expected to be punctual and arrive at the venue as stipulated by the College. An individual Candidate not adhering to the arrival time(s) will have an impact on all Candidates and Examiners, leading to an increase in the length of quarantine periods and/or a delay in the release of results.

6.4 Examination venue (Vivas)

Candidates will be provided with secure place to leave personal items that will only be accessible after the examination and quarantine periods are completed.

Candidates are NOT permitted to access the following items during the examination:

- personal food and water bottles*
- personal laptops, computers, tablets, mobile phones, smart watches or electronic equipment.
- programmable and non-programmable calculators.
- textbooks or study material
- timers or clocks
- writing material or stationery*

** Light refreshments are provided if a quarantine period exceeds 1hr however candidates should ensure they have eaten prior to arriving to the exam venue. Writing materials required in the exam are supplied in each station.*



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7. General

Each individual VIVA are marked separately and does not influence the marks in any other section. If a Candidate is unhappy with a performance in one, they are encouraged to move on and not let it detract from performing in subsequent stations. Candidates must not assume that a poor performance on a specific question or topic will result in failure of the entire section or examination.

8. Results

Written and oral section results are sent to candidates electronically via email. The College does NOT send results via SMS nor can results be requested by/given to another Candidate, Examiner, colleague, relative or given over the telephone.

Due to the introduction of standard setting processes and psychometric evaluation of the exam results take longer to be released to candidates. Written results require at least 5 weeks from the date of the written exam and the Oral component requires at least 10 days.

Should there be a delay in releasing the results the College Exams Department will notify candidates as soon as possible.

8.1 Breakdown of results

Unsuccessful candidates are given a breakdown of their performance in each section of the examination. The feedback letter includes a cover letter with an overview of the marking process, and a breakdown of the questions which were passed and failed. Candidates are provided with their mark, the pass mark, the average mark and the highest mark achieved on that question as well as brief feedback indicating the primary reason for not scoring above the pass mark.

Candidates are advised to consult their Supervisor of Training or mentor with their feedback in conjunction with the examination report, to formulate an action plan for remedial training/learning. Feedback Letters may take several weeks to collate and distribute however the importance of efficiency of this process is recognised and we endeavour to make them available to candidates within a fortnight on the conclusion of each exam.

9. Examination Report

A detailed report is compiled by the Chair and Deputy Chairs of the Exam, following the completion of the oral component of the examination. The report is made available on the College website and examinations hub. The report contains the following information for each section:

- Overall statistics of the exam results, including pass mark and pass rates for each section.
- Written: The SAQ followed by examiner feedback this is usually distilled into a summary of the key points required to answer the question. This is NOT an ideal answer template.



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- Vivas: The introductory question given to the candidate as well as a summary of the topics covered.
- A summary of the exam and notes to candidates from the Chair and Deputy Chairs.

10. Examination Attempts

Trainees have a maximum of FIVE attempts at the examination. Trainees should familiarise themselves with both the [T-13 Framework for Supporting Trainees](#) and the [College Regulations](#).

College regulation 5.14.3 – *A trainee who is unsuccessful in either the written or oral components of the First Part Examination on the fifth attempt will be removed from the training program.*

11. Appendix

The following college documents, policies and resources should be read in conjunction with this document to help candidates prepare for the First Part Exam and remediate following an unsuccessful attempt.

11.1 Resources

[CICM First Part Examination Eligibility, Dates and Application](#)

[First Part Examination Syllabus. V5](#)

[SAQ Marking Examples](#)

[Trainee Action Plan](#)

[First Part Exams \[CICM\] Recommended Reading](#)

11.2 Policies

[College Regulations.](#)

[T-13 Framework for Supporting Trainees](#)

[T-19 Special Circumstances and Reasonable Adjustments](#)

[Appeals, Reviews and Reconsideration Processes](#)



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This version updates	Change in syllabus for the exam thus change in coverage of topics. Also, inclusion of labelling time, and time required for standard setting processes.