

## FACULTY OF FORENSIC & LEGAL MEDICINE

of the Royal College of Physicians of London



### Roles and Duties of FFLM Examiners

There are huge benefits from being an examiner for the Faculty of Forensic & Legal Medicine of the Royal College of Physicians. The FFLM is now well established. There are clear professional developmental advantages in joining the FFLM's examiner team. The FFLM's main objectives are "*to develop and maintain the highest possible standards of competence and professional integrity in forensic and legal medicine*", as well as to raise standards in forensic and legal medicine, and to protect vulnerable people. We expect examiners to subscribe to the FFLM's aims.

The FFLM's examinations include: DLM, LFFLM (GFM), LFFLM (SOM), and the MFFLM. For more information on each examination above please click on the links. Other information about the examinations including dates, the regulations and syllabi, is available on the Faculty's examinations webpage: <https://fflm.ac.uk/exams/>. It is essential that examiners are familiar with this information and check it regularly for changes and updates.

#### Academic Dean

The Academic Dean is responsible for the arrangement and conduct of examinations held by, or on behalf of, the Faculty and recommending to the Board any change in the list of examiners, including the appointment of Chief Examiner and Deputy Chief Examiners.

#### Chief Examiner (CE)

The role of the Chief Examiner is to assist the Academic Dean discharge their duties to the board with respect to the administration and conduct of Faculty examinations. The Chief Examiner is accountable to the Academic Committee, on behalf of the Board, for all aspects of activity relating to the examination including chairing the Chief Examiner's Committee and ensuring the probity of the conduct of the examinations.

#### Deputy Chief Examiner (DCE)

The DCE is responsible, together with the respective leads in each discipline (General Forensic Medicine, Sexual Offence Medicine and Legal Medicine (including medico-legal and dento-legal advisors) for developing the blueprint yearly, which ensures that the breadth of the syllabus is appropriately examined by the use of different types of assessment, e.g. Single Best Answer (SBA), Short Answer Questions (SAQ), Objective Structured Clinical Examination (OSCE), Objective Structured Practical Examination (OSPE), the Compendium of Validated Evidence (COVE) and Case Portfolio. The DCE and leads are responsible for the overall development and production of each discipline's examination, allocating the examiners to write and/or mark questions, as well as providing written and/or oral feedback to unsuccessful candidates. The three DCEs are members of the Chief Examiner's Committee.

## Examination Leads

There are examination leads for different parts of the exams in each discipline. They are responsible for ensuring their questions are written in a timely manner and to a high standard. They are also members of the Chief Examiner's Committee. It is the responsibility of the Lead Examiners in each discipline to ensure that questions are submitted by the deadline set, and to contact the individual examiner if the deadline is not met. It is not the responsibility of the Examinations Manager to do so. Our current Examinations Manager is Mr Jay C Barton-Costa.

## Duties of an Examiner

The role of an FFLM examiner is one of significant responsibility. There are expectations that tasks will be completed in a timely manner and to the necessary high standards. The work includes the following:

### 1. Preparation of "single-best-answer" questions (SBA)

These are required for the Part 1 MFFLM examination, which is taken by all 3 disciplines. This paper is also taken by candidates for the Diploma of Legal Medicine, which may involve those who are not practising clinicians. The pass mark for the DLM is normally around 10% lower.

SBA questions are also required for the Licentiate papers: LFFLM (GFM) and LFFLM (SOM).

Examiners can expect to be allocated a number of questions to write involving any topic area in Part 1 or in their specialty (GFM, SOM or LM) for other examinations. After the questions have been reviewed by the lead examiner, they may need to be re-written if not deemed suitable or to the correct standard.

There is one exam Part 1 and Diploma diet (session) per year, in mid-October. As the papers need to be finalised in good time for the examination, questions will be allocated some months before the examination date and it is expected that examiners will complete this task within four weeks.

### 2. Writing short answer questions (SAQ)

These questions are needed for the Part 2 MFFLM examination for GFM, SOM and MLM papers. There is one Part 2 diet per year, in mid-March. Examiners may not be allocated an SAQ to write every year, but, if requested to do so, they will be expected to write a question which is of high standard and which includes some elements to "stretch" the more able candidates. If the SAQ is not considered satisfactory at first draft by the lead examiner, the examiner must be prepared to improve or rewrite it. This is part of the learning process for the examiner.

Eight SAQ questions are required for each of the subspecialties (GFM, SOM and MLM). They will be allocated after the blueprinting has taken place, usually in early summer, and should be written and any final amended version submitted by October.

### **3. Objective Structured Clinical Examination & Objective Structured Practical Examination (OSCE & OSPE)**

The GFM and SOM OSCE examinations require 14 OSCE stations each. The MLM exam requires eight OSPE stations, of which two are written-only questions, rather than practical tasks. Examiners can expect to write a new station, or re-write/improve a previously used one each year.

A great deal of work needs to be completed before March. We usually have an OSCE and an OSPE rehearsal day in mid-January, with actors.

Therefore, when an examiner is allocated an OSCE/OSPE to write, this will be requested by May and the work needs to be submitted by the end of July with final revisions completed by October.

### **4. Standard Setting**

All examinations are standard-set to ensure that they are fair. The FFLM uses the Angoff method to establish the pass marks of each paper (See: <https://fflm.ac.uk/exams/examiners-area/>).

All examiners should expect to be involved in this work for at least one paper each year. This involves individual work considering the paper, and estimating the proportion of borderline candidates who are likely to pass each individual question, and then completing the spreadsheet with their scores.

This is submitted to the examinations manager, and a teleconference, requiring at least six examiners, is arranged to review only those questions where the variance in scores is more than 30%. This process is essential so that the examination and its outcome are robust.

Standard-setting meetings are normally done remotely, via Teleconference. However, The OSPE (MLA) examiners will need to attend to Angoff and weight all stations in the morning of the OSPE exams day.

### **5. Marking**

The SAQ papers need to be marked manually and we require two examiners for each paper: to mark the paper individually first and then to have a discussion about any areas of disagreement with their fellow marker so that a consensus mark can be reached. Each examiner will do their first marking with an experienced marker, and then the following year mark alongside a new marker. In addition GFM and SOM examiners will be expected to mark COVE and Case Portfolios, which are written projects, for the LFFLM examinations.

### **6. Examining**

For the OSCE examinations, which take part in mid-March, on a Saturday, at least 14 examiners will be needed for each OSCE circuit (14 for GFM and 14 for GFM) and at least

six examiners for each OSPE circuit (however, as stated above, stations 7 and 8 are written-only stations, which only require an invigilator). OSPE examinations usually take place during the week, in the afternoon.

Examiners will be allocated a station to mark and those who are dually qualified in GFM and SOM may be allocated a station on each circuit, which may mean that they will be needed for the whole day on OSCE exams day.

For information, the OSCE exam (GFM or SOM) that has fewer candidates will take place in the morning; the other in the afternoon. Please note that examiners are not needed for the Part 1 and Diploma exam days, where only invigilators are required.

## **7. Other preparatory work**

From time to time other preparatory work may be required. Examiners will be approached individually about this and such work will usually be on a voluntary basis.

## **8. Training, Probity and Records**

- All examiners must undergo initial training, and professional development as an examiner as determined by the Chief Examiner or as required by other organisations, e.g. the GMC.
- It is a requirement that the Academic Dean, with the Chief Examiner, keeps a record of the appointed examiners, their service and attendance at examinations.
- At the time of appointment, each examiner will be expected to provide confirmation that they have completed training in Equality & Diversity, which must be updated every three years. Similarly they will be required to assent to the Examiners' 'Form of Faith'.

## **9. Quality Assurance of Examiner Performance**

Examiners will receive feedback from the Chief Examiner and from their Leads, after the March exam. Examiners may use this feedback in their annual appraisal, at their place of work. It is hoped that this will assist examiners in demonstrating the breadth of their work.

Although the role of the examiner is a voluntary one, nevertheless there are important responsibilities and it is essential that examiners communicate in a timely fashion with the Examination Manager and with their Leads. This is particularly important if they envisage there will be a delay, for whatever reason, in complying with the deadlines for receiving work.

Appointment as an examiner is for three years, in the first instance, subject to approval by the Board. Re-appointment/continuing as an examiner is dependent on the examiner contributing to the examinations as described above and their continuing appointment being ratified by the Board.

It is our expectation that all examiners will take an active part in quality assurance of examiner performance. If the latter is not satisfactory, the Board may not give initial approval of examiner status and/or may review examiner status.

If an examiner should require a 'sabbatical' or break from their duties, this may be agreed subject to the approval of the Chief Examiner for a maximum period of 12 months. Should an examiner require a longer period of exemption from their duties, it would be necessary to resign and reapply when their circumstances allow.

#### **10. Financial Matters**

Travel and accommodation costs are paid for (please refer to the FFLM's expenses claims rules); the Faculty aims to provide all examiners with training at least yearly and an honorarium of £250 per day is available for examiners who participate in events in person, for example in practical or clinical exams, rehearsals and training days. If it is a half-a-day event, the honorarium available will be £125. For examiners who are on standby, on the morning of the exams – when the exam they are helping with is in the afternoon – £250 will be payable.

**Caroline Jones, Chief Examiner**

**Brian Westbury, Academic Dean**

**Margaret Stark, President**

Last updated in April 2020