



Federation of the
Royal Colleges of Physicians

Staff Focus

March 2018

Spotlight on...the Question bank team.

Q1. Tell us about the team

There are 10 plus Lucy Rowan in the question bank team and we all are responsible for different aspects of delivering the written parts of MRCP Part 1 and Part 2, the 11 SCEs, two London College Diplomas, Stations 2 and 4 of the clinical exams and business plan objectives. We manage and administer the journey of a question and scenario from conception to its use in an examination and support all the clinicians (about 600 in all) involved in the process.

Annually we run, manage and administer : 19 examining boards, 3 question writing group meetings, 1 scenario writing group, 3 question writing workshops, and 3 scenario editorial committees.

We are the guardians of the scenarios and question bank (CERTS) - updating, revising and adding to the bank of over 40,000 questions and images and over 400 scenarios that underpin examination delivery. The examination diets are cyclical and are all sat at different times of the year so there is no downtime.

In addition to managing this essential business function we are involved in a number of developments to the examinations. This includes revising the current coding system to reflect the introduction of the Internal medicine curriculum in 2019. Preparation of the examination and the Examining Boards for the potential introduction of SCE test equating and revising the scenario bank and processes in response to PACES 2020. As the team includes 5 of the 6 longest standing members of the department we have the experience and expertise to contribute to new initiatives, turning concept into reality such as the European examinations.

Q2. What is a typical day like?

There is no “typical” day but at any point we can be updating the scenarios/question bank, revising content, editing content, organising and carrying out all administrative tasks surrounding the examining board and question/scenario writing events, supporting clinicians in their tasks, managing deadlines, publishing examination material and preparing it for centres in the UK and internationally. We work closely with our colleagues in Policy, Research, Candidate office and PACES providing the content and metadata to support delivery and demonstrate quality.

The rest of the time is probably spent talking about food!

Q3. What is the most interesting thing about working in the team?

That there is no typical day! Also, working with a team with a vast amount of knowledge – every day someone learns something new.

We are very competitive, we like to enter competitions and win!! We have won the Christmas office decoration competition 3 years in a row and the best themed dressed team at the Christmas party for the 2nd year in a row!!

Q4. Give us a team highlight for the past month?

Celebrating Sue's 5-year anniversary at MRCP(UK), and enjoying the huge box of chocolate biscuits she brought in!

Pulling together as a team during the adverse weather conditions to ensure that the Acute medicine Examining Board and Rheumatology SSG had sufficient cover and support.

Q5. If you all won the lottery what would you spend the money on?

Buy houses in our favourite places – Tuscany, Norway, Florida, Cape of South Africa, Nerja... and have free holidays to all those places from now on; some of us would have no further need for winter clothes, others would have a need for more winter clothes!