Divisional Written Examination Pass Mark

How is the pass mark determined?

The pass mark of the Divisional Written Examination is set using a criterion-based approach and sophisticated psychometric models to ensure consistency from year to year.

Setting the pass mark: The RACP uses a modified Angoff procedure to set the standard for the Written Examination. In this process, each question is reviewed by a panel of expert Fellows and the pass mark is set based on a composite of the difficulty of each question. Historically, the pass mark has been between 50 per cent and 60 per cent.

Ensuring consistency: Rasch modelling* is used to ensure each examination is sample independent so that examination success is not influenced by comparisons to others sitting the examination at the same time. A linking process guarantees fairness to all candidates: by including some non-scoring 'marker' items in each exam, it is possible to link the examination to a common scale thereby ensuring that the same level of performance required to pass an examination is maintained from year to year. As well, differences in difficulty between examinations are accounted for in the linking process.

The Rasch model is a psychometric approach for analysing examination data using a statistical function between (a) the respondents' ability levels and (b) the item difficulty.

What happens if there is a problem with one of the questions?

All questions are analysed for their performance using standard statistical measures that are able to identify anomalous item performance. These can include more than one correct answer, ambiguity or degree of difficulty. Poorly performing questions are further scrutinised and a decision is then made whether to exclude the question(s) from the calculation of the results. Poorly performing questions are very rarely found on the examination and if one is found, the item is removed only if we can ensure that the removal improves the validity of the examination.

Are candidates required to pass both papers?

No. There is no requirement to pass each paper separately. The pass score is the sum of the scores for each paper.