

A REPORT ON MY OBSERVATION VISIT TO THE INTERCOLLEGIATE SPECIALTY EXAMINATION IN UROLOGY – MAY 2026 (LIVERPOOL)

Introduction

I undertook this observer role in my capacity as a head of panel of urology examiners for the College of Surgeon of East, Central and Southern Africa (COSECSA). As you may be aware, our college is young, vibrant and fast-growing. Therefore, learning from an experienced college like yours is fundamental in the way we formulate and conduct our exams.

The exam process

This was a three-day event held at the Plaza Hotel, Liverpool. The event was well patronized: there were forty-two examiners, two observers, five examiners in training and ninety plus candidates. The JCIE secretariat coordinated all the activities of the event.

On day one, it all started with a welcome remark and a briefing by the chair of the exams, reminding the examiners of their key role in this process and how to manage bias. Later, examiners took time to set the standard of the exam using preset questions from the bank; some questions were edited then accepted; some were set aside because they needed some serious revisions. There were eight separate tables as follows: Paediatric; Emergency Urology; Oncology 1; Oncology 2; Andrology and BPH; Female and functional urology; Imaging and technology; and UTIs and stone.

Later in the afternoon, and for the remaining 2 days, the ninety plus candidates took the exam. The students did the viva in one big hall with separate 20 tables, with each student having 8x20min Vivas covering all the 8 thematic areas. At the end of each day, the examiners were treated to delicious dinner meals, a treat well-earned for their commitment to the exam process.

Summary of Takeaways

- Huge turnout of examiners, very motivated to do their job, whose travel and lodging were paid for by the college.
- The introductory talk by the chair of exams set the tone on the importance of the the exams process, complimented by the talk on bias.
- Well prepared packs containing all questions on all the 8 respective tables.
- The standard setting process clarified all grey areas and ensured that all examiners were on the same page regarding the content and depth to be examined.
- During the exams, there was a very warm reception of the candidate at all tables and confirmation that it was the right candidate, right table! (Of course, I didn't

expect any mishaps on this due to the meticulous organization of Elaine and Archie)

- Despite the exam being conducted in one big hall, the candidates and examiners appeared not to be disturbed by their “neighbor’s interactions”.
- Great conduct of examiners, they did not interrupt candidates, they disclosed their conflict of interest, they masked their feelings, regardless of the candidate performance, just to mention but a few.
- The candidates appeared to have all attended an exam preparatory course, so they were quite in tune with what was expected of them. And this allowed them to progress through the scenario, offering them an opportunity to give a fair account of their knowledge.
- Clear guidelines for observers and their noninterference role in the exam process.
- Fantastic food, wonderfully comfortable venue in a great city by the docks.

Icing on the cake

- I was also privileged to observe and participate in the viva question writing process. The scenarios and model answers developed are in line with current evidence and guidelines. I should say that these take time to formulate, but it’s certainly worthy it.
- I also met the lead for Part 1 (MCQ), Ben. We have a great discussion on how we can collaborate to improve quality and size of part 1 questions bank. To achieve this, I need to re-organize my exam writing team. Fortunately, we have individuals who are keen to join the exam writing team.
- Finally, but not least, I was privileged to interact with friendly and accommodating examiners, (now colleagues). Beyond the exam processes, there are a few things on which we can collaborate on.

Conclusion

My visit was very informative. I am hopeful that the information gained and practices observed will help to improve the quality of COSECSA examination process.

My sincere gratitude to the [Joint Committee on Intercollegiate Examinations](#), and its chair for allowing me to observe the exam process. A big thank you to Urolink for funding my travel to UK. And to Suzie Venn, for her mentorship and unwavering support to COSECSA.

Reported by



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