



UEMS-CESMA Meeting Brussels
Friday December 5th, 2025, and Saturday December 6th,
2025
UEMS DOMUS MEDICA EUROPAEA



Day 1: Friday December 5th, 2025 - Workshop Meeting

12:45 – 18:00* (*All times are local)

Chairs: Maeve Durkan, Ambrogio Fassina, Danny Mathysen, Albert Mifsud, Vesna Kušec

CESMA Meeting – Attendance List

No.	First Name	Last Name
1	Nanni	Allington
2	Nikolaos	Barotsis
3	Joseph	Briffa
4	Ilse	Broekaert
5	Eric	Buchser
6	Ashraf	Butt
7	Isabelle	Cremers
8	Adrien	Delaunay
9	Arthur	Felice
10	Ileana	Ghiordanescu
11	Thomas	Giesen
12	Radu	Huculeci
13	Marcel	Ivanov
14	Daiva	Jasaitiene
15	Jean-Paul	Jorris
16	Risto	Kontio



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No.	First Name	Last Name
17	Ilona	Kulakiene
18	Wolfgang	Luxenberger
19	Maurizio	Marchesini
20	Ioannis	Messinis
21	Marie	Morris
22	Alexandru	Nica
23	Aydan	Oral
24	Patricia	Peralta
25	Chris	Plummer
26	Liliana	Ramos
27	Feliciano	Ramos
28	Paolo	Ricci
29	Lynne	Robinson
30	Mari Cruz	Rodriguez
31	Olegs	Sabelnikovs
32	Anna	Spiteri
33	E.Turgut	Tali
34	Stephanie	Thibault
35	Octavian	Toma
36	Maud	Trommenschlager
37	Patrick	Twomey
38	Gauthier	Willemse
39	Tarek	Yousri
40	Alessandra	Renieri



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No.	First Name	Last Name
41	Morne	Wolmarans
42	Maeve	Durkan
43	Albert	Mifsud
44	Vesna	Kusec
45	Danny	Mathysen
46	Ambrogio	Fassina
47	Sandrine	Tshimbulu-Tendu
48	Amélia	Donighian
49	Bertrand	Daval

12.45 – 13.00

Introduction

The meeting was opened by Prof. Vassilios Papalois, UEMS President, who welcomed the participants and expressed his pleasure at seeing many new faces attending the CESMA meeting.

In his introductory remarks, Prof. Papalois highlighted the scale of the UEMS community, representing millions of medical specialists across Europe, and underlined the importance of CESMA's contribution to maintaining high standards in specialist medical assessment.

He referred to the upcoming UEMS Congress, stressing that CESMA should have a strong and visible presence. He noted that the scientific programme already includes 82 sessions over the course of three and a half days, together with abstract presentations and dedicated discussion corners for specialists, providing an excellent opportunity to showcase CESMA's work and expertise.

The UEMS President also emphasised the importance of disseminating the outcomes of the Congress. He encouraged the publication of the consensus work produced by the many colleagues involved, noting that the proceedings and key outputs should subsequently be made available through the official UEMS channels.

Reflecting on the development of CESMA, Prof. Papalois recalled that when the concept of specialist assessments and appraisals was first introduced, it was met with considerable scepticism. Over time, however, common ground was established and these assessments have become a cornerstone of CESMA's activities, demonstrating the value of collaboration and consensus-building within the UEMS.



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A roll-call was conducted, during which participants introduced themselves.

13.00- 13.35

Blueprinting the Examination

Chairs: Dr Maeve Durkan and Prof. Danny Mathysen

Dr Maeve Durkan delivered a presentation on the principles of examination blueprinting and its role in ensuring that specialist assessments accurately reflect the curriculum and intended learning outcomes.

Prof. Danny Mathysen opened the discussion by raising the question of whether examinations should primarily assess **knowledge** or **competence**, noting that an effective assessment strategy should encompass both dimensions.

The presenters outlined the assessment cycle, highlighting the key stages involved in the development of a high-quality examination:

- definition of the curriculum;
- development of the examination blueprint;
- preparation of assessment items (question writing);
- compilation of the examination paper;
- standard setting;
- delivery of the examination;
- post-examination review and evaluation.

It was emphasised that the quality and distribution of examination questions should be regularly evaluated against the approved blueprint to ensure appropriate coverage of the curriculum. The presenters further stressed the importance of defining the target candidate population. As the examination is generally intended for trainees in the penultimate year of specialist training, the blueprint should ensure a broad and balanced assessment of the competencies expected to have been acquired by that stage of training.

MW Blueprint of examinations

Dr Morné Wolmarans (EDRA)

Dr Morné Wolmarans presented the principles of examination blueprinting, describing the blueprint as a structured framework ensuring that assessments are fair, balanced and aligned with the curriculum. He emphasised that examinations should assess what is taught, with appropriate weighting of all curriculum topics to avoid overrepresentation or accidental omissions.

He explained that blueprinting requires the proportional allocation of questions to curriculum domains and learning objectives. Digital question banks facilitate this process by allowing questions to be tagged and mapped directly to the blueprint, ensuring that each examination remains consistent while maintaining sufficient variation between examination sittings.

Dr Wolmarans stressed that the blueprint should be reviewed for every examination and updated in line with curriculum developments. He also noted that publishing the blueprint is good practice, as it enables candidates to prepare appropriately and contributes to



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transparency, particularly in the context of increasing legal scrutiny of specialist examinations. The presentation further highlighted the importance of aligning assessment methods with the intended learning outcomes. Written examinations (MCQs and SBAs) assess theoretical knowledge, whereas practical components, such as OSCEs and viva examinations, are essential to evaluate clinical competence and professional skills.

During the discussion, Mr Arthur Felice reiterated that candidates should have access to the blueprint in advance of the examination. Prof. Danny Mathysen added that, during CESMA appraisal visits, candidates are routinely asked whether the examination reflected the published blueprint and met their expectations.

In response to a question from Dr Ilse Broekaert regarding the use of national versus European clinical guidelines, the CESMA President, Dr Durkan, explained that European examinations require a common benchmark. European guidelines therefore take precedence wherever available and should be used as the principal reference when developing examination questions.

Prof. Marcel Ivanov (Neurosurgery, EBNS)

Prof. Marcel Ivanov presented the structure of the European Board Examination in Neurosurgery, which assesses both theoretical knowledge and clinical competence. The examination is organised three times per year alongside European training courses.

Part I – Written Examination

The written examination consists of 100 multiple-choice questions, each with five possible answers and one correct answer, to be completed in two hours. It covers the full neurosurgical curriculum, including neuroanatomy, neuroradiology, spine, infections, peripheral nerves, statistics and ethics. The question bank is reviewed and updated annually to ensure comprehensive coverage of the entire neurosurgical curriculum, including neuroanatomy, neuroradiology, spine, infections, peripheral nerves, as well as statistics and ethics etc. Faculty members participating in each training course are invited to contribute two questions based on their presentations, with the question bank being continuously expanded and refined each year. The pass mark is established using the Angoff standard-setting method.

Part II – Oral Examination

The oral examination is held annually in Barcelona and accommodates up to 90 candidates. Candidates rotate through three 30-minute stations (Brain, Spine and Emergency), each comprising five clinical cases. The examination is conducted in English, and candidates are assessed independently by two examiners using a structured scoring system. A maximum of 120 points can be achieved, with a pass mark of 80.

Prof. Ivanov also outlined the quality assurance measures in place, including examiner training to minimise unconscious bias, the use of standardised questions and answer blueprints, and regular reviews of the examination process. He noted that the overall pass rate is approximately 60–70%, with the highest-performing candidate receiving the Braakman Prize.

The Chair thanked Prof. Ivanov for his presentation.

Discussion

Prof. Turgut Tali enquired whether the oral examination relied on predefined answers.



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Prof. Ivanov confirmed that examiners are required to ask identical questions to all candidates and that each case is accompanied by a blueprint specifying the expected answers.

Dr. Ilse Broekman asked about the financing of the examination, the examination fees and the geographical distribution of candidates.

Prof. Ivanov explained that the examination is financed through candidate fees. Reduced fees are available for members of European organisations, while candidates from outside Europe pay a higher fee. Priority is given to European candidates, although applicants come from all regions of the world. Approximately 70–80% of candidates originate from Europe.

Prof. Ivanov concluded by emphasising that the examination aims to ensure that only candidates who can practise safely are awarded certification.

Dr Albert Mifsud (Microbiology, CESMA Vice-President)

Dr Albert Mifsud presented the European Board Examination in Medical Microbiology, noting that the Section is relatively young, having been established approximately 16–17 years ago. He emphasised the importance of developing the examination on the basis of a European Training Requirements (ETR) document, while acknowledging that the current ETR dates from 2017 and is under review. The Section is also continuing to develop its curriculum in close collaboration with the European Society of Clinical Microbiology and Infectious Diseases (ESCMID).

Dr Mifsud explained that the examination consists of a single paper comprising 100 single best answer (SBA) questions based on the UEMS ETR and curriculum. A pilot online examination was organised in March 2021, followed by the first diploma examination held in person in May 2022 and a second diploma examination delivered online in December 2024. He also presented the examination blueprint, illustrating the distribution of questions across the various curriculum domains.

Dr Durkan thanked Dr Mifsud for his presentation.

Discussion

Prof. Turgut Tali requested clarification on the meaning of the European curriculum.

The Chair explained that the curriculum represents a European consensus document, developed over several years by delegates from across Europe. It serves as the foundation for a harmonised European examination and reflects the close collaboration between UEMS Sections and their respective European scientific societies. Dr Mifsud added that the curriculum had been thoroughly reviewed and formally endorsed by the national representatives of all participating countries.

Dr Ilse Broekman questioned the added value of establishing a European examination in subspecialties that already have national exit examinations.

Dr Mifsud replied that the European examination facilitates professional mobility by providing evidence of competence recognised beyond the national level. The Chair added that the principal objective is the harmonisation of specialist training across Europe, while noting that success in a European Board Examination does not, in itself, confer eligibility to practise in another Member State.

Dr Liliana Ramos asked how candidates with significant knowledge gaps are managed.



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Dr Mifsud explained that unsuccessful candidates receive individual feedback on their performance, whereas detailed feedback is not routinely provided to successful candidates because of the considerable resources required. Dr Durkan noted that the European Board Examination may also be used as a formative assessment tool.

Prof. Vesna Kušec supported the value of European Board Examinations, highlighting their contribution to quality assurance, harmonisation of training standards and recognition of competencies across Europe.

Prof. Tali referred to the development of examination blueprints and the identification of "red flag" questions as additional quality assurance measures.

Mr Arthur Felice concluded that EB Examinations are intended to facilitate safe professional mobility by ensuring common standards of competence, while the legal framework for mobility is provided by Directive 2005/36/EC, for Professional Qualifications.

13.35 – 14.40

Prof Danny Mathysen & Dr Chris Plummer

Q writing - workshop refresh – MCQ Best of 5

How many Qs do you need.

AI Q writing

AI distractors

Prof. Danny Mathysen and Dr Chris Plummer delivered a workshop on writing high-quality **best-of-five multiple-choice questions (MCQs)** for European Board examinations.

Dr Plummer outlined the question development process used by the European Society of Cardiology (ESC), covering question writing, review procedures, examination blueprinting and quality assurance. He emphasised the importance of well-structured questions that assess clinical reasoning, avoid ambiguity and misleading distractors, and are based on clearly defined learning objectives. The role of metadata, references and regular review of the question bank was also highlighted. The workshop also addressed the potential use of artificial intelligence in question writing, particularly for generating distractors. Participants completed an interactive question-writing exercise during which example questions were reviewed and refined collectively. Practical guidance was provided on drafting clinical scenarios, formulating clear stems and constructing plausible answer options.

Discussion

The discussion focused on the quality assurance process for question development, including the review and revision of rejected questions, assessment of question difficulty, and the importance of providing constructive feedback to question writers.

Participants also exchanged experiences regarding translation of examination questions, ensuring linguistic consistency, and maintaining a diverse panel of question writers and reviewers.

Prof. Mathysen discussed the relationship between the number of MCQs and examination reliability, noting that the required number of questions depends on the learning objectives and the breadth of the curriculum. He indicated that, as a general guide, **100–130 questions**



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represent the minimum for a comprehensive examination, while broader curricula may require larger examinations to achieve the desired level of reliability.

The discussion concluded with questions on standard setting and pass marks, including the interpretation of reliability measures and candidate performance.

15.00-15.15

Prof Danny Mathysen & Dr Chris Plummer

AI reviewing

Cheating with Chat GPT – recent experiences

Danny presented- AI ASSISTED QUESTION WRITING

Prof. Danny Mathysen introduced the session as a continuation of the discussion held in Antwerp, focusing on the use of AI, particularly ChatGPT, in question writing. He emphasized that AI does not think like humans but generates responses based on prompts and previous training. He noted that educators must develop effective prompting techniques to produce higher-quality examination questions and remain ahead of students' increasing use of AI.

Prof. Mathysen demonstrated how carefully defining the purpose, question type, medical domain, candidate level (undergraduate, trainee or specialist), and desired structure significantly improves AI-generated questions. He also shared an example in which he asked ChatGPT how one could cheat during an assessment. After clarifying that he was an assessor, ChatGPT provided a list of points to consider for maintaining assessment integrity.

Dr Chris Plummer reviewed an AI-generated ESC-style question and observed that, while the content was promising, it did not fully comply with ESC formatting. He estimated that approximately two to five minutes of expert review would be sufficient to refine it into an acceptable examination question. He also noted that some distractors overlapped and that both the stem and answer options could be simplified.

Prof. Feliciano highlighted the importance of clearly defining the user's role when prompting ChatGPT.

Prof. Messinis commented that some information was unnecessarily repeated in the answer options and that the example question required further refinement.

Dr Gieten remarked that ChatGPT rarely asks clarifying questions and that obtaining high-quality outputs depend largely on the user's prompting experience. He noted that iterative refinement of prompts is essential, although excessive modifications may also move the output away from the intended result.

Dr Toma suggested requesting a larger number of answer options from ChatGPT to facilitate the selection of appropriate distractors.

The discussion concluded that AI can substantially reduce the time required to draft examination questions, but expert review remains essential to ensure compliance with examination standards, appropriate complexity, and educational quality.



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15.15 -15.45

Chair Prof Mathysen / Dr Chris Plummer

SBA – vs EMQ OBGYN (Prof Ioannis Messinis)

Prof. Messinis presented the EBCOG written examination format, with particular emphasis on the use of Extended Matching Questions (EMQs). He explained that EMQs are a reliable form of written assessment for evaluating clinical problem-solving, critical thinking, diagnostic reasoning and applied knowledge. Compared with Single Best Answer (SBA) questions, EMQs have a lower probability of correct guessing (less than 10% versus 20% for SBAs), although they are more time-consuming for both candidates and question writers. He noted that the latter challenge could be mitigated using artificial intelligence, referring to preliminary EBCOG results from 2025.

The structure of EMQs was outlined, including a common list of answer options, a lead-in statement defining the task, and three clinical scenarios linked to a common theme. Candidates are advised to read the theme, lead-in statement and clinical scenario before reviewing the answer options.

Using an example on amenorrhoea/oligomenorrhoea, Prof. Messinis illustrated how EMQs assess clinical decision-making rather than factual recall.

The current EBCOG written examination consists of two three-hour papers, each containing 125 questions (250 questions in total), with a one-hour break between the papers. SBAs account for 28% of the final mark, while EMQs contribute 72%. Examination performance data were presented, including pass rates of 56% in 2023 and 65% in 2024. The March 2025 examination achieved a difficulty (P) index of 61.9%. Reliability remained high, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.82 in the Obstetrics examination, including the 2025 examination in which AI-assisted question writing was introduced.

In conclusion, Prof. Messinis stated that EMQs are an effective and reliable method for assessing applied clinical knowledge and have made a significant contribution to the quality of the EBCOG written examination. He added that AI-assisted question writing is expected to become an important development in future examination design.

Prof. W. Luxenberger explained that, as Treasurer of the ORL Board Examination, funding the examination process remains a challenge. He asked whether EMQs could replace the oral examination component. Prof. I. Messinis replied that EBCOG continues to include an oral examination in the form of an Objective Structured Clinical Examination (OSCE). He emphasised that the OSCE provides significant added value by assessing clinical skills and competencies that cannot be adequately evaluated through written examinations alone. In his view, it should not be replaced by EMQs.

Prof. Morné raised a question regarding the use of AI in question writing, asking whether AI-generated questions become publicly accessible once they have been generated. Danny indicated that he would address this question in the subsequent discussion.



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15.45- 16.15

Q reviewing workshop - Maeve Durkan & Prof Danny Mathysen

***Request Pre-submitted Qs**

Dr Durkan presented guidance on writing Single Best Answer questions (SBAqs), stressing the use of relevant clinical scenarios, clear stems, plausible distractors, consistent answer categories, and the avoidance of negative wording, absolutes and unnecessary abbreviations.

Prof. Danny Mathysen noted that some examples resembled multiple-choice rather than true Single Best Answer questions. He emphasised that the quality of AI-generated questions depends heavily on how the system is prompted and suggested using ChatGPT as a supporting or “virtual partner”, rather than as a replacement for expert review.

Dr Feliciano Ramos recommended placing key instructions, such as “prescribe”, in the stem rather than repeating them in each option.

Dr Thomas Gieten observed that the discussion should distinguish between correcting question content and correcting formatting.

Dr Ghiordanescu highlighted that examination platforms may display symbols and spacing differently.

Dr Octavian Toma remarked that effective use of AI prompting may itself demonstrate an appropriate level of candidate competence.

Dr Morné stressed the importance of checking references and curriculum relevance, noting that ChatGPT may provide inaccurate or mixed references.

Dr Liliana Ramos asked whether repeated prompts would produce the same output. Prof. Mathysen explained that results may vary because of algorithmic randomisation.

Dr Patricia Peralta cautioned that AI should support, but not replace, examiners, particularly as candidates are also using similar tools in their learning.

Prof. Butt asked whether CESMA should recommend AI for generating MCQs. The CESMA President replied that CESMA could highlight potential benefits and risks but was not yet in a position to issue formal recommendations.

Dr Mifsud noted that pattern recognition has long played a role in examinations and that interaction with ChatGPT can also serve as a learning tool.

Prof. Tarik and Prof. Kusék proposed establishing a dedicated group to test and evaluate the use of AI in examination development.

Prof. Paul Ridgway demonstrated how AI could identify missing details in a question and suggest improvements.



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16.15-17.00

OSCE examination - planning & logistics

Example Paul Ridgeway – presented after Prof. Mathysen's next item.

17.00 to 17.45

Chair Prof Danny Mathysen

Choosing your standard setting method / experiences / limitations

Prof. Mathysen opened the session by discussing recent concerns regarding the potential use of ChatGPT during the Flemish medical entrance examination. While allegations received media attention, no evidence of misconduct was established. He also highlighted the increasing challenges of online examination security and presented CESMA's experience with AI-assisted remote proctoring during the ESHRE examination, where attempted cheating by CESMA observers was successfully detected. He further noted emerging risks posed by wearable technologies, including smart glasses.

Prof. Chris Plummer and Dr Maeve Durkan shared experiences with standard-setting methods in Cardiology and Endocrinology, respectively, including the application of the Hofstee and Angoff methods and their respective advantages and limitations.

Prof. Paul Ridgeway – OSCE: Challenges of Delivery

Prof. Ridgeway presented the European Board of Surgery Qualification (EBSQ) assessment model, describing the combination of blueprint-based MCQs, clinical assessment and evaluation of technical and non-technical competencies at the end of training. He discussed key challenges in OSCE delivery, including governance, standardisation, examiner consistency, costs, cultural bias, candidate cognitive load and balancing authenticity with standardisation. He stressed that AI is likely to increase the importance of assessing clinical reasoning and decision-making rather than factual recall alone.

During the discussion, Dr Maeve Durkan asked whether AI might eventually lead to replacing MCQs with greater emphasis on clinical assessments. Prof. Ridgeway replied that, despite improvements in online proctoring, he favoured returning to face-to-face assessment for high-stakes examinations due to continuing concerns over examination security.

Dr Gieten observed that some European Board examinations continue to use paper-based assessments as the most secure examination format.

The discussion concluded that, while AI and online technologies offer new opportunities, maintaining examination integrity and robust standard-setting remains a priority for European Board examinations.

17.45 -18.00

The Chairs of the meeting thanked the participants for their contributions and closed the meeting, by inviting them to the CESMA Dinner from 19.00 at:

Restaurant ***Aux Pampas Rodizio***, Pl. Jourdan 21, 1040 Etterbeek



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Day 2: Saturday December 6th, 2025

09:00 – 16:15* (*All times are local)

9.00-9.40

Dr. Maeve Durkan, President of CESMA, opened the second day of the meeting by welcoming participants and thanking Sandrine, Amélia, and the CESMA Executive Committee for their continued support and contributions. Representatives from the UEMS Sections, Boards and European Scientific Societies introduced themselves. She provided a brief recap of the first day's discussions, highlighting the importance of examination blueprints in ensuring valid, reliable and curriculum-aligned assessments. Participants agreed that blueprints should accurately reflect the competencies expected of candidates.

The meeting also reviewed different assessment formats. Multiple-choice questions (MCQs) were recognised as reliable and efficient, while Extended Matching Questions (EMQs) offer improved discrimination and reduced guessing. Oral examinations and OSCEs remain valuable for assessing higher-order clinical competencies despite requiring greater organizational resources. Finally, Dr. Durkan summarised the discussions on Artificial Intelligence (AI) in examination development. While AI can support question writing and the generation of distractors, participants agreed that all AI-generated content requires expert review to ensure clinical accuracy, educational quality and validity.

UEMS update – Bertrand Daval UEMS CEO

Mr. Bertrand Daval, Chief Executive Officer of UEMS, provided an update on current UEMS initiatives. He informed members about the ongoing redevelopment of the UEMS website, the creation of a European Fellowship Directory, the implementation of a mentorship programme, and preparations for the first UEMS Congress to be held in Leuven. The Congress aims to showcase the work of UEMS and strengthen collaboration between Sections, Boards and European Scientific Societies. Members were encouraged to actively participate, promote the event within their specialties and consider submitting scientific abstracts.

The meeting also discussed the future organisation of CESMA meetings, including the possibility of holding the CESMA Spring Meeting alongside the UEMS Congress. Members recognised the potential benefits of increased visibility and participation, while noting the financial and logistical considerations. It was agreed that the Executive Committee would develop several options and consult members before making a final decision.

Treasurers report - Prof Vesna Kušec

Prof. Vesna Kušec presented an interim financial report on CESMA's current financial position. She reported that membership contributions from UEMS Sections and European Scientific Societies remain CESMA's primary source of income, while expenditure continues to remain



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within the approved budget. Current expenditure supports CESMA's core activities, including appraisal visits, invited speakers, administrative support and meeting organisation. Members were reminded of the importance of the timely payment of membership fees to ensure the continued financial sustainability and effective operation of CESMA.

Appraisals update - Prof Danny Mathysen (video)

Through a pre-recorded video presentation, Prof. Danny Mathysen provided an update on the CESMA appraisal programme. He reported that several European Board examinations had successfully completed the appraisal process during 2025, with further appraisals planned for 2026. Members welcomed the progress made in reducing the turnaround time for appraisal reports and recognised the educational value of participating as CESMA appraisers. The Committee encouraged additional volunteers to support future appraisal activities. Following the presentation, members discussed the legal framework governing European Board examinations. As European Board examinations gain wider recognition, participants agreed that examination boards should strengthen their governance through formal risk assessments, comprehensive agreements with candidates, examiners and service providers, confidentiality and intellectual property clauses, conflict of interest declarations, and clear appeals procedures. The Committee supported the development of standard CESMA legal templates to assist examination boards across Europe. The discussion also highlighted the continued digitalisation of examinations. Members agreed that modern examination platforms improve the management of question banks, support blueprint-based examination construction, enable independent digital marking, and provide detailed candidate and examiner performance analysis. Digital systems were recognised as strengthening quality assurance and providing objective evidence to support examination decisions in the event of appeals.

Presentation of Diplomas

The meeting concluded with the presentation of CESMA appraisal certificates to several European Board examinations that had successfully completed the appraisal process. The certificates recognized the board's compliance with CESMA standards for specialist assessment and their commitment to maintaining high-quality, valid and reliable European examinations. Members congratulated the successful examination boards on their achievement and acknowledged their contribution to promoting excellence in postgraduate medical assessment across Europe.

9.40-10.20

Prof Ashraf Butt – Legal insertions for “exam result” challenges – a recap Q&A

Prof. Ashraf Butt summarised the legal guidance delivered by the UEMS legal adviser in December 2024. He noted that, while examination boards are highly experienced in developing and administering examinations, they may have limited expertise in legal risk management. Boards should therefore conduct formal risk assessments, maintain risk registers and identify legal, technical, organisational and contractual risks at an early stage. Prof. Butt stressed that disputes should, wherever possible, be resolved through discussion, mediation or established complaints procedures, with litigation considered a last resort. Legal proceedings can be lengthy, costly and unpredictable, even when an examination board is



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confident that its procedures are compliant.

He explained that jurisdiction generally depends on the country in which the examination is legally registered, although candidates may seek to bring proceedings in their own national jurisdiction depending on applicable European legislation. Examination documentation should therefore clearly specify the applicable law and jurisdiction.

Examination boards have a contractual responsibility to ensure that examinations are properly designed, fairly administered and delivered according to accepted standards. Legal challenges may concern both examination results and the integrity of the examination process. Boards should ensure that published blueprints are followed, questions are appropriately reviewed, standard-setting and quality assurance procedures are documented, and technical failures are properly managed.

Contracts with examination platforms and other external providers should clearly address governing law, service and performance standards, technical support, data protection, confidentiality, intellectual property, indemnity and subcontracting. Examination materials should remain the intellectual property of the examination board, and responsibility for losses caused by provider-related technical failures should be clearly defined.

Candidates should formally accept comprehensive terms and conditions before registration is completed, including examination regulations, misconduct policies, appeals and complaints procedures, confidentiality requirements and legal jurisdiction. Appeals should normally be limited to procedural grounds, such as failure to follow the published blueprint, procedural irregularities or technical failures, rather than disagreement with academic judgement.

Candidates should also have access to the examination blueprint in advance.

Prof. Butt also recommended contractual clauses limiting financial liability, for example to reimbursement of the examination fee or credit towards a future examination, together with appropriate force majeure provisions.

Finally, formal written agreements should be in place with examiners covering confidentiality, data protection, intellectual property, non-discrimination and conflicts of interest. Examiners should declare potential conflicts in advance and should not assess candidates where their impartiality could reasonably be questioned.

Dr Morne Wolmarans – Digitalization era of exams Q&A

Dr. Morne Wolmarans explained that, although his original presentation was intended to focus on artificial intelligence and examination cheating, the preceding discussions on legal challenges prompted him to concentrate on how digitalisation can strengthen examination governance, quality assurance and the defensibility of examination decisions. He noted that high-stakes examinations increasingly face legal scrutiny and that boards must be able to demonstrate robust, transparent and well-documented procedures when results are challenged. Traditional paper-based examinations and face-to-face assessment methods may present limitations in consistency, documentation and traceability, whereas digital systems can provide a clearer and more defensible record of the assessment process.

Attention was given to oral examinations, where differences in examiner personality, seniority and marking behaviour may influence outcomes. Digital systems can reduce this risk by requiring examiners to assess candidates independently before scores are compared. Dr. Wolmarans explained that his board uses three independent examiners for oral assessments,



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further reducing the influence of individual bias. Digitalisation also enables boards to analyse examiner performance and identify systematic differences in marking, including consistently strict or generous examiners. Such data can support targeted examiner training and calibration, although participants noted that average examiner performance should not automatically be regarded as the definitive standard. Dr. Wolmarans emphasised the importance of providing detailed, structured feedback to unsuccessful candidates. Candidates who understand where and why they underperformed are generally more accepting of the outcome, whereas simply informing them that they have failed may lead to complaints and appeals. Electronic marking systems facilitate structured comments and scoring, allowing personalised feedback reports to be produced more efficiently and consistently.

His board has progressively digitalised both written and practical examinations. The system supports secure question banks, standardised question formats, blueprint-based categorisation and automated examination generation. Automated blueprinting helps ensure that examination content reflects the approved weighting of subject areas and reduces the risk of challenges concerning unbalanced examination content. Electronic marking for viva examinations and OSCEs also improves independence, consistency and traceability.

The recording of oral examinations was also discussed as a potential source of evidence in the event of an appeal. Participants stressed, however, that recording raises important legal and data protection considerations. Consent, retention and deletion arrangements should be clearly defined, and boards should obtain jurisdiction-specific legal advice before introducing recording policies. Dr. Wolmarans briefly addressed the growing challenges posed by AI and increasingly sophisticated cheating methods, noting that examination security will need to evolve alongside emerging technologies. He indicated that this subject could be explored in greater depth at a future CESMA meeting.

In conclusion, Dr. Wolmarans emphasised that digitalisation should be regarded as an important component of modern examination governance rather than simply technological improvement. Digital systems can enhance objectivity, documentation, candidate feedback, examiner quality assurance and transparency, while providing stronger evidence to support examination boards when their decisions are challenged.

10.20 – 11.00

Train the trainer –

Else Gien Statema

Q&A

Ms Else Gien Statema presented the Belgian experience of developing structured "**Train the Trainer**" programmes to strengthen postgraduate specialist education. She explained that Belgian legislation requires recognised medical tutors to participate annually in continuing professional development, including training related to assessment and supervision, as a condition for renewing their accreditation every five years. The programme developed by the Vrije Universiteit Brussel extends beyond regulatory requirements by focusing on improving the overall quality of workplace learning. Ms Statema emphasised that assessment should not be viewed in isolation, but as part of a broader educational process in which supervisors play a key role in supporting residents' professional development. She distinguished between the



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formally appointed medical tutor, who is responsible for supervision and assessment, and the wider group of clinical supervisors who contribute to residents' day-to-day learning through observation, teaching and feedback.

The presentation highlighted that effective postgraduate training depends on three key elements: a supportive learning environment, educationally competent supervisors and a culture of continuous quality improvement. Clinical tutors were encouraged to promote learning throughout their departments by engaging all members of the clinical team in educational activities and integrating teaching into routine clinical practice. Ms Statema outlined the educational principles underpinning the programme, including experience-based learning and social learning theory, both of which emphasise the importance of reflection, coaching, feedback and role modelling. To support these principles, the programme offers interactive workshops on topics such as effective feedback, clinical coaching, balancing resident autonomy with patient safety, workplace learning and trainee wellbeing. Structured InterVision sessions also allow tutors and supervisors to share experiences and discuss common educational challenges.

The programme further provides tailored educational support to hospital departments and offers training for specialist residents in workplace learning, reflective practice and their own teaching responsibilities. Since its introduction in 2017, participants have shown greater appreciation for structured feedback and educational supervision, while departments increasingly seek educational support to strengthen their learning environments. During the discussion, members welcomed the presentation and agreed that high-quality educational supervision is fundamental to maintaining high standards in specialist training. Participants highlighted the need for protected time for educational activities, early identification and support of trainees experiencing difficulties, and greater recognition of educational responsibilities within clinical practice. The discussion concluded that harmonisation across Europe should focus on shared educational principles and outcomes while allowing flexibility to accommodate differences between specialties and national training systems.

11.40am – 12.05

AI software

Mindooo – Medical software in clinic

Gauthier Willemse Belgium Confirmed

Q & A

Mister Gauthier Willemse presented an overview of the rapidly evolving role of artificial intelligence (AI) in healthcare, postgraduate medical education and clinical practice. Drawing on his background in surgery, public health and digital health innovation, he explained how advances in AI, particularly large language models, are transforming healthcare from simple digital record-keeping towards intelligent systems capable of supporting complex clinical workflows. While acknowledging his role as co-founder of Mindooo, he emphasised that the presentation focused on the broader opportunities and challenges of AI rather than on a specific commercial product.

The presentation introduced the concept of agentic AI, describing systems capable of performing defined clinical and administrative tasks under human supervision. Examples



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included conducting structured patient history interviews before consultations, automatically documenting clinical encounters, preparing consultation letters and organising medical information for clinicians. He emphasised that these technologies are intended to support healthcare professionals by reducing administrative workload, allowing more time for direct patient care, communication and clinical decision-making. He noted that AI systems can be adapted to the needs of individual specialties without requiring programming expertise, enabling clinicians to define workflows and the type of information required. Such flexibility offers opportunities to improve efficiency, continuity of care and communication between healthcare professionals while addressing increasing pressures associated with ageing populations, chronic disease and workforce shortages.

During the discussion, members considered the regulatory implications of AI in healthcare. It was noted that AI systems which organise and present clinical information remain decision-support tools, with responsibility for diagnosis and treatment continuing to rest entirely with the physician. Should AI systems begin making diagnostic or therapeutic recommendations, they would fall within the scope of the European Medical Device Regulation and require appropriate regulatory approval. Participants also emphasized the importance of full compliance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), highlighting the need for secure management of patient information within European or institutional data environments. The discussion then focused on the implications of AI for postgraduate specialist education and assessment. Participants agreed that the increasing availability of AI is likely to influence both training and examination methodologies. Future educational programmes may need to place greater emphasis on clinical reasoning, critical thinking, communication skills and professional judgement rather than factual recall alone. Similarly, assessment strategies may increasingly focus on evaluating higher-order competencies that cannot readily be replaced by AI.

Members also discussed patient acceptance of AI technologies, recognising that adoption is likely to vary and that implementation should preserve patient choice while maintaining physician oversight. The Chair concluded that AI should be regarded as a valuable tool rather than a replacement for healthcare professionals. Its successful integration into clinical practice and postgraduate medical education will depend on appropriate governance, regulatory compliance, continued human oversight and a sustained commitment to patient safety and educational quality.

12.05 – 12.30

Security of exams - do we need to reset the narrative back to basics - on site and proctored.

TESTREACH – proctoring and exam security - Confirmed.

Q & A

Security

AI assisted proctoring

Representatives from TestReach presented an overview of current developments in secure digital assessment and AI-assisted remote proctoring for high-stakes professional examinations. Introducing the session, Dr. Maeve Durkan highlighted the growing importance



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of ensuring that remote examinations maintain the same standards of security, validity and public confidence as traditional invigilated examinations.

Ms Luella Morton explained that TestReach provides an integrated digital assessment platform supporting the full examination process, including question authoring, examination delivery, candidate management, marking, psychometric analysis and results reporting. The platform hosts data on secure European servers and combines examination delivery with remote proctoring within a single system, allowing examination activity, video recordings and candidate behaviour to be reviewed together when required. The presenters emphasised that examination security should be viewed as a layered process combining secure technology, operational procedures and trained human oversight. Before an examination, candidates undergo identity verification and environmental checks. During the examination they are monitored by trained human proctors, supported by artificial intelligence that identifies behaviours requiring further review, such as prolonged absence from the screen or unusual activity. AI serves only as a decision-support tool, while all investigations and decisions remain under human supervision.

The platform also incorporates security measures that prevent access to internet browsers, communication software and other unauthorised applications during examinations.

Integrated monitoring enables detailed post-examination forensic analysis where concerns arise, allowing examination boards to review candidate behaviour, response patterns and system activity before reaching any conclusions. During the discussion, delegates explored emerging threats to examination security, including the use of wearable technologies such as smart glasses, concealed cameras and communication devices. The presenters described practical security measures, including examination environment checks and additional verification procedures, while acknowledging that examination security must continue to evolve alongside technological advances.

Participants also discussed the importance of balancing robust security with a positive candidate experience. Excessively intrusive procedures may increase candidate anxiety, particularly in high-stakes examinations. Members agreed that well-trained human proctors play an important role not only in maintaining examination integrity but also in supporting candidates and resolving technical issues throughout the examination process. The discussion concluded by considering the broader impact of artificial intelligence on future assessment. Members recognised that, as AI becomes increasingly integrated into clinical practice, specialist examinations may need to place greater emphasis on clinical reasoning, judgement and decision-making rather than factual recall alone. The Chair concluded that maintaining examination integrity will require a combination of secure technology, appropriate governance, experienced human oversight and continuous review as digital assessment continues to evolve.



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12.30 -1.10 pm

Dr Chris Plummer & Dr Maeve Durkan

Standard setting – Methods

Setting the cut score - Endocrinology / Cardiology

Q & A

Dr. Maeve Durkan introduced the final scientific session by highlighting the importance of standard setting in maintaining the credibility and fairness of European Board examinations. She noted that while considerable effort is invested in developing valid examination questions, determining the pass mark is equally critical, as it defines the minimum level of knowledge and competence expected of a newly qualified specialist. Examination boards must therefore be able to justify not only the content of their examinations but also the methodology used to establish the cut score, particularly when responding to candidate appeals. She reminded delegates that although several recognised standard-setting methods exist, there is no single preferred approach. The essential requirement is that boards adopt a scientifically accepted methodology, apply it consistently and fully understand the principles on which it is based.

Using the European Board Examination in Endocrinology as an example, Dr. Durkan described the modified Angoff method currently used to establish the pass mark. Before each examination, a panel of experienced examiners independently reviews every question and estimates the probability that a borderline or minimally competent candidate would answer it correctly. Examiners consider the educational importance, level of difficulty and discriminatory value of each question before discussing items where significant differences of opinion exist. These discussions help achieve a shared understanding of question difficulty while allowing individual experts to revise their ratings where appropriate. The final cut score is then calculated from these expert judgements. Dr. Durkan emphasised that standard setting is not simply a statistical exercise, but an educational judgement supported by psychometric methodology. She also noted that modest variations in annual cut scores are expected because examination difficulty inevitably varies from year to year, while the underlying standard of competence remains unchanged.

Dr. Chris Plummer then presented the methodology used by the European Society of Cardiology. Like the Endocrinology examination, the process combines expert judgement regarding the minimally competent candidate with detailed psychometric analysis of examination performance. Following each examination, statistical indicators such as question discrimination, item performance and overall examination reliability are reviewed carefully. Questions demonstrating poor psychometric performance are discussed, revised or, where necessary, removed from future examinations. Historical examination data are also analysed to ensure that standards remain stable over successive years while maintaining fairness for candidates and supporting continuous improvement of the question bank. The discussion broadened to consider candidate eligibility and the wider role of European Board examinations. Members recognised that many boards now receive applications from experienced specialists and candidates from outside Europe, creating increasingly diverse



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examination cohorts. While broader participation enhances the international recognition of European Board examinations, delegates agreed that examination standards must remain consistent regardless of candidate numbers or financial considerations. Participants also reiterated that European Board examinations assess achievement of an agreed educational standard but do not in themselves confer specialist registration or a licence to practise, responsibilities that remain with national regulatory authorities.

Looking ahead, members reflected on the influence of artificial intelligence and digital healthcare on future assessment strategies. As AI becomes increasingly integrated into clinical practice, examinations may need to place greater emphasis on evaluating clinical reasoning, professional judgement, communication and decision-making rather than factual recall alone. Concluding the session, Dr. Durkan observed that the presentations throughout the meeting had demonstrated the close relationship between high-quality training, effective educational supervision, secure examination delivery, robust assessment methods and appropriate standard setting. She thanked the speakers and delegates for their active participation and concluded that CESMA should continue promoting harmonised assessment standards while supporting innovation that strengthens educational quality, fairness, transparency and public confidence in European Board examinations.

Lunch 13.10– 14.00

14.00 – 14.40

Post exam - keeping the cut score

When more fail than expected

Looking at the optics

The afternoon session of the CESMA meeting was chaired by Dr Maeve Durkan, who welcomed participants and introduced the final part of the programme. She noted that the meeting would focus on issues arising after the examination process, the work of the CESMA appraisal programme, and future developments aimed at strengthening the quality and harmonisation of European Board examinations. Throughout the session, participants actively exchanged experiences from their respective specialties, reflecting the diversity of examination systems across Europe while reaffirming the shared objective of promoting high standards in postgraduate medical assessment.

The session opened with a discussion on the role of European Board examinations within specialist training and their relationship to professional recognition. Participants reiterated that the primary purpose of these examinations is to assess specialist knowledge and provide evidence that a candidate has achieved a recognised standard of theoretical competence. It was emphasised that the examinations are intended to complement accredited specialist training programmes rather than replace them. Successful completion of a European Board examination should therefore be regarded as an additional academic achievement that demonstrates a candidate's level of knowledge but should not be interpreted as a licence to practise independently. Several participants referred to discussions with national medical authorities and professional societies, where candidates had questioned why passing a



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European examination did not automatically allow them to obtain employment or registration in another country. The meeting clarified that recognition of professional qualifications and licensing remain entirely within the competence of national Medical Councils and regulatory authorities. European Board examinations cannot replace national legal requirements relating to specialist registration or employment.

A detailed discussion followed regarding eligibility to sit European Board examinations. Participants acknowledged that considerable variation exists between specialties. In many disciplines, examinations are intended for trainees approaching the completion of recognised specialist training and therefore represent an assessment of readiness for independent practice. In contrast, some specialties have experienced increasing demand from established consultants wishing to obtain certification in emerging subspecialties or to demonstrate continued professional development. The meeting recognised that different national systems and regulatory requirements inevitably influence examination eligibility and that a single European policy may not be feasible. Nevertheless, there was broad agreement that the intended purpose of each examination should be clearly defined and communicated to candidates to ensure that eligibility criteria remain aligned with the educational objectives of the examination.

14.40 – 15.25

Chair Dr Maeve Durkan & Prof Danny Mathysen (video)

Exam appraisal -

Updates – appraisals so far / appraisers

Experiences of the appraisers –

Dr Octavian Toma

Dr Ashraf Butt

Experiences / feedback using template.

English speaker at Q reviewing?

On site

Online

The Chair introduced a discussion on post-examination review procedures, including the statistical and psychometric evaluation of examination performance. Participants highlighted the importance of reviewing questions that perform unexpectedly, while emphasising that statistical indicators should always be considered alongside expert judgement, as a difficult question is not necessarily defective.

Procedures for removing ambiguous or flawed questions were also discussed. Participants agreed that such decisions should follow careful expert review and should not compromise the integrity of the standard-setting process. Maintaining a stable and defensible cut score was considered essential to ensuring fairness and confidence in examination outcomes.

Prof. Danny Mathysen provided an update on the CESMA Core Appraisal Group, with particular emphasis on examination security and online examinations. Participants



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distinguished between examination delivery platforms and online proctoring systems and discussed the potential of AI-assisted proctoring to identify suspicious behaviour and support investigations, while stressing the need to comply with European data protection requirements.

Prof. Mathysen also reported progress on developing a comprehensive register of UEMS examinations to provide an overview of examination structures across specialties and support future quality assurance activities. Guidance for CESMA appraisers will also be revised to incorporate lessons learned from recent appraisal visits.

Dr Octavian Toma and Dr Ashraf Butt shared their experiences as new CESMA appraisers. They described the appraisal process as a valuable opportunity to observe different examination systems, identify good practices and support professional development. They stressed the importance of documenting observations during appraisal visits and encouraged colleagues from other specialties to participate as future appraisers.

The discussion also addressed question writing and review. Although online meetings offer flexibility and reduce costs, participants considered face-to-face workshops more effective for detailed discussion, immediate revision and consensus-building. Investment of examination income in question-writing workshops, examiner training and other quality improvement activities was therefore strongly encouraged.

Finally, participants emphasised the value of the CESMA appraisal process as a structured quality assurance mechanism. Standard appraisal templates provide a consistent framework for reviewing governance, examination organisation, question quality, standard setting and delivery. The process was regarded as constructive and developmental, supporting continuous improvement and maintaining high standards across European examinations.

15.25 – 15.55

Prof Danny Mathysen (recorded) & Prof Vesna Cusek comments *

Update from appraiser meeting (Monday Sept 29, 2025)

Prof. Danny Mathysen provided a brief update on the activities and discussions of the CESMA Core Appraisal Group, focusing particularly on the experience gained from the appraisal of online examinations.

The first meeting after the summer break focused primarily on examination security and online proctoring. The discussion was partly prompted by experience from an examination held in Flanders in 2025, where concerns had arisen regarding candidates potentially using ChatGPT during the examination.

Prof. Mathysen emphasised the importance of distinguishing between two separate elements of an online examination:

the examination delivery platform, through which candidates' access and complete the examination; and

the online proctoring system, which is used to supervise candidates and protect the integrity of the examination.

Although closely related, these are separate components and should not be confused when evaluating the security and quality of an online examination.

The Core Appraisal Group also discussed concerns regarding the use of multiple cameras during online proctoring. Experiences in the Netherlands had raised legal and privacy



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questions, with some candidates challenging the use of additional cameras as potentially intrusive. Legal opinions had suggested that monitoring through a single webcam might be sufficient from a privacy perspective. However, practical experience with online examinations indicated that a second camera can provide important additional safeguards, particularly by allowing the proctor to monitor the candidate's surroundings and detect activities that may not be visible through the computer's integrated webcam. The appropriate use of two-camera systems therefore remained an issue requiring further discussion, including consultation with Maître Hanoteau regarding the legal and privacy implications.

At the second Core Appraisal meeting in November, the group further considered the advantages and limitations of online versus face-to-face examinations. Experience gained through CESMA appraisals demonstrated that online examinations could offer significant practical and financial advantages. When appropriate security measures and reliable proctoring systems are in place, online examinations can provide an effective alternative to traditional face-to-face assessments. At the same time, online examinations introduce specific risks. For example, suspicious activity may include another person entering the candidate's room or the candidate accessing unauthorised documents or devices. Effective camera positioning and online proctoring procedures are therefore essential for identifying and documenting potential irregularities. Prof. Mathysen noted that participation as a CESMA appraiser is itself a valuable learning experience, allowing the appraisal group to continuously improve its understanding of the different examination formats and technologies used by European examination boards.

The discussion concluded that AI-supported online proctoring, when implemented within appropriate guidelines and combined with human oversight, can be an efficient and useful tool. Experience from CESMA online appraisals will continue to inform the development of recommendations in this area. The Core Appraisal Group is also preparing an overview of UEMS European examinations, including information on their structure, format, number of examination components and methods of delivery. This document is expected to provide a clearer picture of the different assessment models currently used across UEMS and will be circulated once finalised. In 2026, the Core Appraisal Group will continue to develop its experience with online examination appraisal, drawing on lessons learned from previous assessments. Attention will be given to improving guidance on online examination delivery, proctoring, security, privacy and the appropriate use of emerging technologies.

15.55 -16.10

Prof Ambrogio Fassina 'Ideas on a common Q bank database'

Prof. Ambrogio Fassina presented proposals for the development of a common European question bank database to support UEMS specialist examinations. Referring to the CESMA publication *A Guide to Successfully Writing MCQs: Executive Summary* (2015), he emphasised that high-quality multiple-choice questions (MCQs) should be valid, reliable and closely aligned with approved European Training Requirements (ETRs). Knowledge-based assessment should form one component of specialist certification, complemented by assessment of clinical skills and professional behaviours through other educational methods. A key element of the proposal was the creation of a structured database containing validated examination



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questions together with comprehensive metadata for each item. This information would include the curriculum domain, organ system, author, date of creation, review history, frequency of use, level of difficulty and candidate performance. Such metadata would support continuous quality assurance, enable routine psychometric analysis and facilitate the regular review and improvement of examination questions. Prof. Fassina stressed that question quality can only be fully evaluated after use and that statistical analysis should identify questions that effectively discriminate between stronger and weaker candidates while highlighting items requiring revision.

The proposed database would allow individual specialties to maintain their own secure question banks while contributing to a common European infrastructure capable of supporting examination development across multiple disciplines. Prof. Fassina also highlighted the advantages of electronic MCQ-based assessment, including objective scoring, reduced measurement error, improved consistency, enhanced examination security and more efficient long-term management of question banks. Participants welcomed the proposal as an ambitious long-term initiative that could strengthen collaboration between UEMS Sections and European Scientific Societies, reduce duplication of effort and promote greater harmonisation of examination standards across Europe. Members also recognised that a common database could support examiner training, educational activities and continuing professional development. However, they acknowledged that successful implementation would require robust governance arrangements, secure information technology infrastructure, appropriate data protection measures, clear ownership of examination content and sufficient resources to support multiple specialties. The meeting agreed that the proposal represented an important concept worthy of further exploration.

16.10 -16.15

In her closing remarks, Dr Maeve Durkan thanked all speakers for their valuable presentations and acknowledged the active participation of delegates throughout both days of the meeting. She noted that the quality of the discussions reflected the commitment of the UEMS Sections, Boards and CESMA to maintaining high standards in specialist medical education and assessment. Appreciation was expressed to Prof. Chris Plummer, Prof. Danny Mathysen, the invited speakers, the members of the Core Appraisal Group, and all participants who had contributed their expertise and experience. The Chair concluded by informing delegates that details of the next CESMA meeting, to be held in Brussels, would be circulated in due course and wished everyone a safe journey home.