



The Royal College of **Pathologists**
Pathology: the science behind the cure

Information and Guidance

Year 1 Histopathology Assessment 2008-09

Objective structured practical examination (OSPE)

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1 INTRODUCTION

The year 1 histopathology assessment is an objective structured practical examination (OSPE). It is for histopathology trainees in ST1/Stage A of a Postgraduate Medical Education and Training Board (PMETB) approved training programme.

The assessment is designed to test a candidate's applied knowledge and skills relevant to the Year 1 histopathology curriculum. Candidates should be familiar with the curriculum. It is available on the College website at: <http://www.rcpath.org/index.asp?PageID=116>. Hard copies are provided to trainees upon registration with the College.

ST1 trainees must be registered with The Royal College of Pathologists before applying for the year 1 histopathology assessment. The registration form and guidance for ST1 histopathology trainees is available on the College website at: <http://www.rcpath.org/index.asp?PageID=486>.

2 PURPOSE OF THE YEAR 1 HISTOPATHOLOGY ASSESSMENT

The purpose of the year 1 histopathology assessment is to:

- 2.1 indicate the capability and potential of a trainee through a test of applied knowledge and skills relevant to the year 1 curriculum
- 2.2 demonstrate a trainee's readiness to progress to the next stage of training
- 2.3 measure a trainee's capacity to achieve competencies for their chosen career path
- 2.4 drive learning demonstrated through the acquisition of knowledge and skill
- 2.5 indicate suitability of choice at an early stage of the chosen career path
- 2.6 enable a trainee to collect evidence for the Annual Review of Competence Progression (ARCP) [previously RITA]
- 2.7 help to identify trainees who should be counselled out of the specialty
- 2.8 provide evidence towards the award of the Certificate of Completion of Training (CCT).

3 ELIGIBILITY FOR PROGRESSION TO STAGE B OF HISTOPATHOLOGY TRAINING

In order to progress to Stage B of histopathology training, all ST1 histopathology trainees must undergo an Annual Review of Competence Progression (ARCP). This is referred to in the histopathology curriculum as a RITA-like process. The ARCP determines eligibility for progression to ST2/Stage B of histopathology training.

The outcome of the year 1 histopathology assessment is one of the major components of the ARCP. Trainees must show evidence of a successful outcome in the OSPE assessment in order to be considered eligible to progress to the next stage of training. However, a



successful outcome in the OSPE assessment does not necessarily imply automatic progression to Stage B of histopathology training.

4 ENTRY CRITERIA FOR THE YEAR 1 HISTOPATHOLOGY ASSESSMENT

In order to be eligible for the assessment, trainees should normally, at the time of attempting the assessment have satisfactorily completed a minimum of seven months whole-time equivalent histopathology training in a PMETB approved training programme, and be on course to complete the requirements of the Year 1/Stage A histopathology curriculum.

Trainees who may not meet the training requirements can still apply to attempt the assessment but are strongly advised to discuss their potential application with their educational supervisor/programme director prior to submitting their application form. It is advised that the trainee has the support of their educational supervisor/programme director if they wish to attempt the assessment without meeting the minimum training requirements.

5 FORMAT OF THE YEAR 1 HISTOPATHOLOGY ASSESSMENT QUESTION PAPER

The year 1 histopathology assessment questions undergo a rigorous writing and editing process before inclusion in an assessment question paper. The questions are written and edited by a panel of histopathologists with relevant knowledge and experience, who ensure that questions are technically correct, clear and unambiguous. The OSPE assessment questions are mapped to the Year 1 histopathology curriculum.

The year 1 histopathology assessment will consist of 15 OSPE stations, which are made up of 13 question stations and two rest stations. Candidates will move around each station. The assessment will last for three hours. There will be internal and external assessors present for the duration of the assessment.

Slides and/or macroscopic or microscopic photographs will be provided at some stations, where candidates may be asked to write brief comments or make verbal comments in response to specific questions or a particular topic. Candidates will be asked to discuss at least one slide over a double-headed microscope with the assessor, who will test the ability to discuss a clinical problem. Unless otherwise notified, it is the responsibility of the assessor to ensure all necessary materials and equipment are available at the candidate's disposal.

Each question will give an indication of what materials are required (if any) and whether an assessor will be present for the candidate to enter into discussions with. An indication of the maximum amount of marks achievable will be given for each section of a question.

6 FREQUENCY OF THE YEAR 1 HISTOPATHOLOGY ASSESSMENT

ST1 trainees will have two opportunities in any one year of training to attempt and achieve a successful outcome in the year 1 assessment. If they are unsuccessful it is up to their Deanery to consider, within the arrangements of the ARCP, the case for additional training. Trainees are unable to exit Stage A of training and proceed to Stage B unless they have achieved a successful outcome in the year 1 assessment.



It is expected that all eligible trainees will attempt the assessment at the first opportunity. Only in exceptional circumstances may an eligible candidate attempt the OSPE assessment at the next or later opportunity, and only if it is with written agreement from the trainee's educational supervisor **and** the training school lead in England or the programme director in Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland.

7 TIMING OF THE YEAR 1 HISTOPATHOLOGY ASSESSMENT

During 2008/09, the first opportunity to take The Royal College of Pathologists' year 1 histopathology assessment will be **Friday 3 April 2009**. The second opportunity will be **Friday 19 June 2009**.

8 ASSESSMENT VENUES

The year 1 histopathology assessment for 2008/09 will be conducted at venues in the following areas:

Friday 3 April 2009 10:00am – 1:00pm (First opportunity - £175)			Friday 19 June 2009 10:00am – 1:00pm (Second opportunity - £175)
• East Pennine Cytology Training School Leeds LS27 0WH	• University of Leicester LE1 7RH	• The Royal Free Hospital, London NW3 2QG	• University of Bristol BS8 1TS

Trainees may, on the application form, specify their preferred venue. Venues, due to limited space, will be allocated on a first-come, first-served basis. After application, trainees will be sent information about their assessment venue along with their candidate number. There will be a maximum of 30 places at each venue.

Please note that only one venue is available for the second opportunity of the year 1 histopathology assessment. Trainees requiring to attempt the second opportunity of the assessment will be sent the necessary additional information.

9 APPLYING FOR THE YEAR 1 HISTOPATHOLOGY ASSESSMENT

In order to apply for the year 1 histopathology assessment, trainees must:

- Complete the assessment application form and have it counter-signed by the training school lead or the educational supervisor in England, or the programme director or educational supervisor in Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland.
- Ensure that the full assessment fee accompanies the completed application form.
- Return the completed application form and full fee to the College Assessment Department, by the specified closing date.



By signing the assessment application form, trainees and their supervisor confirm that they have read, understood and agree to abide by the content of this document. Trainees who apply and present themselves for the year 1 histopathology assessment are deemed to be judged and judge themselves to be ready, prepared for, and capable of attempting the assessment with an intent to achieve a successful outcome. (Please refer to items 4, 6 and 12 for further clarity).

The application form is available on the College website at:
<http://www.rcpath.org/index.asp?PageID=1461>

10 FEES

First opportunity

The fee for each opportunity of the assessment is £175. Payment may be made by sterling cheque (payable to 'The Royal College of Pathologists') or credit/debit card. A card payment form is available on the College website at: <http://www.rcpath.org/index.asp?PageID=1461>

11 CLOSING DATE FOR APPLYING

The closing date for receipt of applications to attempt the:

- First opportunity is **4pm on Friday 20 February 2009**
- Second opportunity is **4pm on Friday 29 May 2009**.

Receipt of applications after these deadlines will *not* be accepted. A faxed copy of the application will be accepted if it arrives by the relevant deadline, with the original application arriving at the College no more than one week later (i.e. by Friday 13 March 2009 and Friday 5 June 2009 for the first and second opportunities respectively).

Payment, together with the completed application form, must be sent to the:

Assessment Department
The Royal College of Pathologists
2 Carlton House Terrace
London, SW1Y 5AF
Tel: 020 7451 6765
Fax: 020 7451 6701

12 WITHDRAWAL FROM THE YEAR 1 HISTOPATHOLOGY ASSESSMENT

After the application

In exceptional circumstances, a trainee may need to withdraw their application prior to the assessment. A refund or transfer of fee will be considered. Notification of withdrawal from the assessment must be given to the Assessment Department in writing prior to the OSPE attempt date. Emailed correspondence will not be accepted. Withdrawal from the assessment must have been discussed and agreed with the trainee's educational supervisor **and** training school lead (England) or the programme director (Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland).



Before the assessment

Trainees who are aware, in advance of the assessment but after submitting their application, of exceptional adverse personal circumstances, such as bereavement or temporary or permanent illness or injury which they feel may affect their performance in the assessment are strongly advised not to present themselves for assessment. Adverse circumstances known to the trainee in advance of the assessment will not normally be accepted as mitigating factors in their performance in the assessment if they could have withdrawn. However, trainees who decide to withdraw due to such adverse circumstances just before the assessment may be permitted to defer their attempt on application to the Assessment Department. This must have been discussed and agreed with the trainee's educational supervisor **and** training school lead (England) or the programme director (Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland).

At the assessment

Trainees who present themselves for the year 1 histopathology assessment are deemed to be ready, prepared for and capable of taking the assessment with an intent to achieve a successful outcome.

Candidates who experience adverse personal circumstances such as illness or injury in the course of the OSPE assessment will normally have these factors taken into consideration. Candidates wishing to have such circumstances taken into consideration must inform the Assessment Department in writing as soon as possible after the assessment, with appropriate documentary evidence.

13 MARKING SYSTEM

The College has recruited the assistance of specialist assessment advisors to ensure that appropriate standard-setting is applied, and that the year 1 histopathology assessment work towards meeting the standards for assessment set out by PMETB. A robust standard-setting methodology will be applied – this will be the borderline group method (BGM) and/or the Angoff method.

Directly following the year 1 assessment, answer sheets will be double marked by both internal and external assessors.

There are two criteria required to pass the assessment. Trainees must pass a minimum number of stations **and** also achieve a score on or above the pass mark. The minimum number of stations required and the global pass mark will be determined by the Year 1 Histopathology Assessment Panel at the standard setting meeting to be held after the assessment.

14 NOTIFICATION OF RESULTS

First Opportunity

Following the attempt of the first opportunity of the assessment, results will be posted to candidates via first class mail on Wednesday 29 April 2009. Results will not be issued to personal callers, or by telephone, fax or email. Individual results, listed according to candidate number, may be accessed online from midday on the day the results are posted.



Second Opportunity

As above, except that the results will be available and posted via first class mail to candidates on Friday 3 July 2008.

Anonymised results from the year 1 assessment will be sent to PMETB and deaneries on an annual basis.

15 FEEDBACK

Within the letter of notification of results, all trainees will be advised of the overall pass mark and their own personal pass mark. All trainees will also be advised of the titles of failed and passed stations.

16 DISABILITY AND SPECIAL SITUATIONS

Candidates with a permanent or temporary disability (defined under the Disability Discrimination Act as a physical, sensory or mental impairment which has, or had, a substantial and long-term adverse affect on a person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities), which may require a change in the year 1 assessment procedures, should inform the Assessment Department in writing as soon as they know when they wish to attempt the assessment, well in advance of the closing date.

Candidates who are pregnant and anticipate that they may need particular consideration (i.e. facilities to enable them to sit down during practical examinations) should contact the Assessment Department as soon as this need becomes apparent. Although centre organisers and assessors will do their best to give candidates full consideration on the day, year 1 assessments are conducted with the local facilities that are available and it may not be possible to meet candidates' requirements if their needs are not known in advance.

Any variation of the rules or procedures in this document will be at the discretion of the Director of Examinations and Assessment and may consist, for example, of allowing extra time to complete the assessment or the waiving or withdrawal of charges for the second opportunity. Additional marks will not be awarded under any circumstances.

17 SECURITY AT ASSESSMENT VENUES

Candidates must bring official identification with a photograph (e.g. passport, picture driving licence or a national identity card) to the year 1 histopathology assessment. The identification should be produced on arrival and must be readily available throughout the assessment. Candidates without appropriate identification will **not** be admitted to the assessment

Candidates must **not** bring books or other printed materials, mobile telephones, pagers or any other electronic equipment to the assessment. The only exception is where candidates have been given **specific written instructions** to bring electronic equipment.

Candidates must **not** enter any assessment room until invited to do so by the assessor.



18 CANDIDATE MISCONDUCT

Candidates are obliged to observe all the regulations relating to the confidentiality and proper conduct of the assessment. Any allegation of cheating, deception, fraud or attempting to gain an unfair advantage will be fully investigated by the Director of Examinations and Assessment. A candidate accused of such misconduct will be advised of the investigation and the procedures that will be followed.

A candidate found guilty of misconduct will be reported to his/her employer, and the relevant professional bodies, such as the UK General Medical Council. If any information comes to light at any stage that indicates the regulations have been breached, the Royal College of Pathologists reserves the right to retrospectively annul the relevant assessment result.

19 RULES

- 19.1 The year 1 histopathology assessment materials used at the assessment venue(s) must not, by any individual, be reproduced or removed from the assessment venue for the purpose of distributing.
- 19.2 The year 1 histopathology assessment will take place at the times and venues published. The question papers and answer sheets will carry candidate number and **not** candidate name. Therefore, the answer sheets will be anonymously marked. It is the candidate's responsibility to ensure that they know their candidate number, the correct date, time and location of the assessment at which they are required to attend to present themselves at the appointed time and place.
- 19.3 It is the candidate's responsibility to check that they have been given the correct assessment paper. If there is any doubt, the candidate should immediately attract the attention of the assessor.
- 19.4 Candidates arriving late will not be permitted to attempt the year 1 histopathology assessment if two or more stations have been completed. This constitutes a fail.
- 19.5 A candidate may not speak to or otherwise communicate with another candidate during the assessment and may not act in such a way as to disturb other candidates.
- 19.6 Candidates who need to take medication during the assessment should inform the assessor before the start of the assessment.
- 19.7 In the event of an emergency, candidates must follow the instructions given by the assessor. Candidates must maintain silence throughout the assessment.
- 19.8 Candidates must not remove any of the assessment materials from the venue. Removal of any material will result in disqualification.
- 19.9 If, for any reason, a candidate is unable to attend the scheduled year 1 histopathology assessment, they should contact either the Assessment Department or the Training and Educational Standards Department on 0207 451 6700 at The Royal College of Pathologists before the scheduled start time. Discussions prior to withdrawal must have been agreed with the trainee's educational supervisor **and** training school lead (England) or the programme director (Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland). Any candidate who fails to notify the College of their inability to attend the assessment



before the scheduled start time will be issued with a fail result and will forfeit the assessment fee, unless the absence was due to illness, in which case the candidate should obtain a medical certificate from a qualified medical practitioner and submit it to the College as soon as is reasonably practicable.

20 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY - STATEMENT OF INTENT

The Royal College of Pathologists is committed to the principle of diversity and equality in employment, membership, academic activities, assessment, examinations and training. As part of this commitment we are concerned to inspire and support all those who work with us directly and indirectly.

Integral to our approach is the emphasis we place on our belief that everyone should be treated in a fair, open and honest manner. Our approach is a comprehensive one and reflects all areas of diversity, recognising the value of each individual. We aim to ensure that no one is treated less favourably than another on the grounds of ethnic origin, nationality, age, disability, gender, transgender, sexual orientation, race or religion. Our intention is to reflect not only the letter but also the spirit of equality legislation.

21 APPEALS

A candidate who has taken the College year 1 histopathology assessment has the right to appeal if there is evidence of a procedural or administrative irregularity by the College or its contractors in the conduct or content of the assessment that has adversely affected the candidate's result. Any such appeal should be made by the candidate himself/herself, and must be made in writing to the Director of Examinations and Assessment at the College within four weeks of the issue of the result.

The Director of Examinations and Assessment will decide what further action is appropriate. Such action may comprise a review of assessment procedure, refund of the assessment fee or waiving the fee for the next opportunity to attempt the OSPE assessment etc. A reasoned response will normally be provided within four weeks of receipt of the appeal.

Appeals submitted on the grounds that a candidate seeks to challenge the professional or academic judgement of the assessor will **not** be considered. **In no circumstances** will papers be re-marked.

Further information is available at:

http://www.rcpath.org/resources/pdf/Complaints_and_appeals.pdf

22 SAMPLE QUESTIONS

The sample questions may be printed from the website in order for trainees to familiarise themselves with the format of the question paper.

Sample assessment questions are available on the College website at:

<http://www.rcpath.org/index.asp?PageID=1461>

