

## Royal College of Pathologists

### Examination regulations - 2010

#### GENETICS

**These regulations must be read in conjunction with the *Regulations and Guidelines – College examinations for Membership and Diplomas*.**

#### ENTRY & TRAINING REQUIREMENTS

There is no specific timing for entry to the examination. Candidates should obtain guidance from their educational supervisor as to when to sit the examination. Planning should take into account completion of training (where applicable) but candidates should apply only when they are ready. Some general guidance is given below, but apart from the sequence in which the examinations can be sat is not intended to be prescriptive.

##### Part 1

Part 1 will normally be taken following a **minimum** of three years' training in departments or laboratories that are recognised by the College for Part 1 training.

For medically qualified candidates, the three years' training requirement for Part 1 includes two years of higher specialist training (HST).

For scientists, it is recommended the three years' training requirement for Part 1 includes two years of clinical practice, post registration.

Candidates may sit the Part 1 practical examination at the next examination session after they are successful in the written examination. Candidates should therefore note that there is a minimum six month gap between sitting the Part 1 written and practical examinations. Those who pass the written examination but fail the practical one retain a pass in the written examination.

##### Part 2

All candidates must have passed the Part 1 examination. For medical candidates, the Part 2 examination will normally be taken after a minimum of five years' recognised training, including four years of higher specialist training.

For scientists, the Part 2 examination will normally not be taken until eight years after obtaining the degree entry qualification.

Please note this does not necessarily mean there has to be a large gap between Parts 1 and 2. A candidate entering Part 1 at about 6–7 years post-degree or later could progress rapidly to Part 2.

Candidates for the Part 2 examination are required to give evidence of widening their experience over a minimum period of two years of training by examination of a written component and an oral examination.

## **STRUCTURE AND FORMAT OF THE EXAMINATION**

Candidates must choose either the clinical cytogenetics examination or the molecular genetics examination, depending upon the nature of their training.

### **Part 1**

The examination consists of three components:

- two three-hour written papers
- two three-hour practical papers

#### **Written examination**

The written examination consists of two papers of three hours each, taken on the same day. The questions may be essays or series of short notes. The candidate must answer four out of five questions on each paper. There is one question common to both the cytogenetic and molecular genetic examinations for each paper.

#### **Practical**

The practical examination lasts for six hours: three hours in the morning followed by a lunch break, and then three hours in the afternoon. The practical examination contains a mixture of analytical, problem-solving and interpretative questions. Candidates must answer all questions. There is no oral exam at part 1.

### **Part 2**

The Part 2 examination will comprise a written component and an oral examination.

#### **Written component**

The written component of Part 2 will be one of the following options:

- a) a casebook
- b) a dissertation
- c) a minimum of three refereed published papers
- d) a PhD/MD thesis, normally completed during the training period.

The casebook should consist of seven to eight cases with a total length expected, excluding references, is in the range of 10,000 to 20,000 words and would not normally exceed 20,000 words.

The purpose of the dissertation is to allow assessment of the practical ability of the candidate based on work performed in the department in which they are employed and their ability to report and assess the significance of their findings.

The project should arise from the normal work and interests of the department.

It should usually be should be between 4000 and 6000 words in length excluding bibliography)

The research work used for the basis of a dissertation or PhD thesis should be on the topic of human molecular genetics or cytogenetics. The work should also be reasonably up to date. Thus a PhD obtained before the attainment of the Part 1 examination will probably not be acceptable for submission and the research work done can be rewritten as a dissertation that brings the results and subject matter up to date in the light of current research and publications in the subject.

Candidates are required to submit the written work within three years of having the proposal approved. Candidates who fail to submit the work within that time will be required to apply for an extension, giving reasons, or submit a new proposal.

The written option must be submitted to the College **at least four months before the entry closing date of the Part 2 examination for which the candidate wishes to enter.**

For further guidance, please see the section on 'Guidance for candidates undertaking written options for the Part 2 examination' in the ***Regulations and Guidelines – College examinations for Membership and Diplomas.***

### **The oral examination**

Candidates will not be allowed to sit the oral examination until the written option has been awarded a pass mark by the examiners

The aim of the oral examination is to establish that the candidate has demonstrated a level of competence appropriate for independent practice at consultant level.

The examination will test the candidate's:

- scientific knowledge relevant to their branch of genetics (molecular or cytogenetics), including recent relevant literature
- ability to apply basic knowledge appropriately in a clinical context
- understanding of laboratory organisation and direction, including principles of budget control, quality control, safety and staff management.

Each of these aspects will occupy approximately one-third of the examination. The candidate should pass in all three areas.

Although the dissertation, casebook or thesis has already been examined and approved, the examination may be opened by discussion of their submission and the College may ask candidates to bring it with them to the oral.

### **TIMING OF THE EXAMINATIONS**

The Part 1 written examination will be offered once a year in Spring. The Part 1 Practical examination will be offered once a year in Autumn.

The Part 2 oral examination will be offered once a year in Spring.

Examinations Department  
The Royal College of Pathologists  
November 2009