

Royal College of Pathologists

Examination regulations - 2010

HISTOPATHOLOGY

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 planned CCT date (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

Trainees will normally require two years' experience of specialty training in Histopathology in order to achieve the standard required to pass the Part 1 Examination. UK trainees must have reached ST2 training having successfully completed the year 1 review.

Part 2

It is anticipated that most trainees will sit the Part 2 Examination after three years of specialty training in Histopathology. Candidates will normally not sit the Part 2 Examination until 12 months after successfully completing the Part 1 Examination. . UK trainees must have reached the end of Stage C.

STRUCTURE AND FORMAT OF THE EXAMINATION

Part 1

The Part 1 examination consists of 125 multiple-choice questions (MCQ) and extended matching format questions (EMQ). The three-hour examination is generally orientated towards assessing the candidate's overall knowledge and understanding of histopathology/cytopathology, including the full range of autopsy practices undertaken in a district general hospital in the UK and the basic science underpinning pathology.

Part 2

The Part 2 examination consists of two separate components:

- autopsy
- practical and oral examination in histopathology/cytopathology.

Candidates must initially apply for both components in the same session. Both components will be held within the three-week Part 2 practical examination period, as stated in the College Regulations and Guidelines, but may not be on consecutive days and may or may not be at the same examination centre. If both components are failed, the candidate must apply to retake both in the same future session. If one component is passed and the other is failed, the candidate will retain the pass and will need to re-sit only the failed component. Candidates must pass both parts to complete Part 2.

The autopsy component

The candidate will attend a specialist 'autopsy centre' for one day within the three-week practical examination period to undertake an autopsy examination. There will also be an oral examination in which the candidate will present and discuss their findings with two examiners and interpret post-mortem histology and toxicological data (normal values will be given and do not need to be learnt).

Practical and oral examination in histopathology/cytopathology

This part of the examination takes place over two days within the three-week examination period. The scope of this examination includes elements of interpreting and writing reports on histopathological slides and gynaecological and non-gynaecological cytopathology. The cases used for these two elements of the examination will be representative of the material encountered in a district general hospital and will be standardised across centres.

Cases will include those with a specific diagnosis and others where the diagnosis is not immediately apparent from the material submitted. In the latter, the candidate will be expected to show their proficiency to practice by outlining the realistic and appropriate steps they would undertake to pursue a diagnosis.

Candidates will be assessed in the following areas:

- Surgical pathology
- Cytopathology - gynaecological and non-gynaecological
- Objective structured practical examination (OSPE)
- Macros
- Frozen sections

Each area is marked separately against an agreed specimen answer and a pass or fail awarded on the basis of aggregate score. However, because of the special place of histopathology and cytopathology in diagnosis, only a certain level of inaccuracy is allowed in these components of the examination. Failure to distinguish across the benign/malignant boundary (or similar errors of equal magnitude in terms of affecting patient outcome) in 15-25% of cases in either the surgical pathology or cytopathology elements will result in failure of the practical/oral component of the Part 2 examination, with no leeway to compensate, no matter how well other cases are addressed.

TIMING OF THE EXAMINATIONS

The Part 1 and Part 2 examinations will be offered twice a year in Spring and Autumn.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Liquid-based cytopathology

Candidates entering the practical and oral examination for the first time must choose to be examined by either SurePath or Thin Prep liquid-based cytopathology (LBC) systems.

Only candidates re-sitting and who were previously examined by conventional cytopathology may choose this option as an alternative to a LBC system. Please note the conventional cytopathology option will no longer be available after Autumn 2010.

Examinations Department
The Royal College of Pathologists
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