

Royal College of Pathologists

Examination regulations - 2010

VIROLOGY

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

Medically qualified candidates are required to have trained in a recognised Regional Specialist Training Programme in microbiology or virology for a period of normally not less than 12 months.

Non-medically qualified candidates are required to have trained in a recognised training programme in microbiology for a period of normally not less than 12 months. In addition, they must be state registered, or the equivalent of state registered in another country.

Part 2

Medically qualified candidates are required to have trained in a recognised Regional Higher Specialist Training Programme in virology for a period of normally not less than three years.

Non-medically qualified candidates must be state-registered and normally have at least four years' experience in a clinical virology laboratory recognised for higher specialist training.

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 designed to test both knowledge and understanding.

Part 2

The Part 2 examination will consist of three separate components:

- assessed virology examination portfolio
- written examination
- practical/clinical examination

Assessed virology examination portfolio

Successful completion of the module assignments will be an integral part of the Part 2 examination in virology.

- The curriculum contains six core modules, which have written assignments as part of the assessment
- These module assignments will form a significant proportion of the **core examination portfolio**.
- This portfolio is separate from the training portfolio, as it specifically relates to core (compulsory) virology topics in the curriculum. The virology examination portfolio may, however, be part of the documents used by the Record of In-Training Assessment (RITA) process.
- Each assignment will be prepared by the trainee under the guidance of their educational supervisor or trainer for that module.
- The educational supervisor and module trainers will have an active role in the continuous assessment of the assignments.
- When an assignment is complete, it will be formally assessed by an external member of the Virology Examining Panel, who will award the work a grade of 'satisfactory' or 'not satisfactory'.
- Portfolios from overseas trainees will be assessed by members of the Virology Examining Panel. The educational supervisor and module trainers should send a brief abstract of the assignment before it is carried out to the College Examinations Department. This is to ensure that the portfolio contents are standardised and avoid any delays in the training programme.
- Trainees should be encouraged to start their virology examination portfolios early in their career and may start their portfolios before taking the Part 1 examination.
- Assignments will normally be virological but some flexibility is acceptable, e.g. an assignment which describes the trainee's experience of the management of an outbreak of infectious gastroenteritis caused by salmonella. Trainees should always take advice from their educational supervisor before embarking on any assignment.
- Candidates should submit their completed portfolios to the Examinations Department, together with a Part 2 Written Option application form (available on the website www.rcpath.org/exams) and current CV.

- **Candidates entering the Spring 2010 Part 2 examination must have already submit at least 11 of the 17 individual assessments** (ie in batches of at least two modules each, one batch of which must include the Clinical Virology module).
- **Candidates entering the Autumn 2010 Part 2 examination must submit all 17 individual assessments (i.e. the completed portfolio) at least four months before of the Part 2 examination entry closing date of 2nd July 2010.**
- The portfolio must be approved before a candidate may attempt the formal written and practical/clinical modules of the Part 2 examination in virology.

Written and practical/clinical examination

The written and practical components of the Part 2 examination will be held together. Candidates must apply for and attempt both components in the same session. The written and practical components component will carry equal weight and candidates will be required to pass both components in the same session to pass the Part 2 Examination.

Format of the written examination

- The written component will consist of two parts, each of 90 minutes.
- The first part will consist of two compulsory essay questions, one on a general clinical topic and the second on service delivery and management.
- The marking for each question in the first part will be based on model answers.
- Essay topics will map across the curriculum and will, wherever practical, avoid topics already the subject of in-course written assignment in the portfolios of intending candidates.
- The second part of the written examination will consist of nine compulsory questions of the 'structured short-answers' variety.
- The marking for each question in the second part will be based on model answers and the questions will map across the curriculum.

Format of the practical/clinical examination

- The formal practical/clinical examination will take place over two days.
- Some 'wet' manipulation will be retained but this will be less than in the 'old style' practical examination.
- OSCE-style stations with result interpretation and clinical scenarios will make up a major component of the examination.
- The final oral assessment will be retained to ensure candidates' clinical competence.

TIMING OF THE EXAMINATIONS

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

Examinations Department
The Royal College of Pathologists
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