



Specialty Advisory Committee on Cellular Pathology

A meeting of the Specialty Advisory Committee on Cellular Pathology was held on Thursday
6 November 2025 at 2:00 pm – 4:00 pm via MS Teams

Professor Sarah Coupland
Registrar

Minutes

Present:

Professor Adrian Bateman, Chair
Mr Andrew Usher, Chair, RCPATH IBMS Histopathology Reporting Conjoint Board
Dr Paul Barrett, Chair, NQAAP in Cellular Pathology
Professor Newton Wong, Specialty Member
Professor Sebastian Brandner, Chair, SAC on Neuropathology
Dr Katie Hawkins, RCPATH Trainee Representative
Dr Bipin Mathew, Chair, Dermatopathology SC
Dr Edmund Cheesman, Chair, Histopathology CSTC
Dr Neelaveni Duhli, The Association of Clinical Pathologists representative

In Attendance:

Miss Shelaine Kissoon, Governance and Committee Services Officer (*minutes*)
Mrs Thadcha Retneswaran, RCPATH Professional Guidelines Officer (*item 7*)
Ms Katherine Kean, Workforce Administrator

Absent:

Dr Sian Morgan, Chair, Genomics and Reproductive Science SAC
Professor Sarah Coupland, President, Pathological Society (Observer)
Dr Anthony Maddox, Interim Chair, Cytopathology SC
Dr Gareth Rowlands, Chair, Cellular Pathology Workload Scoring Group
Ms Diane Gaston, RCPATH Director for Communications
Dr Laszlo Igali, RCPATH Vice President for Professionalism/Pathology Informatics representative
Dr Muhammad Gill, Chair of the Histopathology Panel of Examiners

- CP.24/25 1. Welcome, introductions, declarations of conflict of interest and apologies for absence**
- 1.1 The Chair opened the meeting by welcoming all members, followed by brief introductions.
 - 1.2 No apologies were submitted, and the absences are recorded above.
 - 1.3 There were no declarations of conflict of interest.
- CP.25/25 2. Review and approve minutes of the previous meeting**
- 2.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 12 June 2025 were reviewed and approved as a correct record.
 - 2.2 Matters Arising from the previous minutes
There were no matters arising that were not already covered on the agenda.
 - 2.3 Action log



The action log was reviewed, and the following updates were noted:

- **CP.20/21** Suggestion for College to make the guidance available as web-based
As part of the College Digital Transformation project, the College website is currently being re-developed and re-platformed. It was noted that the suggestion to make the guidance web-based will be proposed for inclusion on the new platform, which is expected to support such functionality by 2026. **Action remains postponed.**
- **CP.21/24** Proposal for the RCPATH to drive subspecialty cellular pathology groups for genomics and genomics test directories
It was noted that clearer input from subspecialties, beyond pathology, is needed for the genomic test directories. It was mentioned that the Dermatopathology Subcommittee has successfully influenced skin tumour panels, providing a potential model. As an action from the last meeting, Dr Igali stated that he would discuss the matter at the College Council and provide feedback. Shelaine Kissoon is to follow up with Dr Igali for an update. **Action remains in progress.**

CP.26/25 3. Reports

3.1 RCPATH IBMS Histopathology Reporting Conjoint Board

Mr Usher provided the following verbal report:

- The placental reporting qualification remains under review with Dr Srinivas Annavarapu, and is progressing through the Prenatal, Perinatal and Paediatric Pathology SAC.
- In November 2026, two additional candidates completed their training and will be submitted to College Council for ratification, bringing the total number of qualified individuals to 44, with the most recent qualifiers in Gastroenterology (GI).
- Approximately 30 individuals are currently undergoing training, fairly evenly spread across the main specialties.
- In total, over 100 individuals are either qualified or in training.

3.2 Working Group on Cancer Services'

Professor Brandner provided an update on the WHO subscription for pathologists in the UK. He informed that NHS England is considering funding a national subscription through block contracts, with discussions ongoing. In the meantime, local implementation is recommended, as a national rollout may take more than a year. A national subscription would allow clinicians, pathologists, and geneticists to access a centralised resource under a single invoice for the entire country.

He also noted that a draft Genomic Medicine Service specification has been circulated, outlining potential leadership opportunities for pathologists, including Medical Director roles, to ensure pathology interests are represented. While the role references large-scale services, experience in service setup and management is highly valued. Ongoing monitoring will be required to track the draft's progression toward final publication and associated appointments.

3.3 NQAAP for Histopathology Incorporating the Steering Group for Interpretive EQA

Dr Barrett provided an update on the status of the External Quality Assessment (EQA) schemes and the National Quality Assurance Advisory Panels (NQAPP). He noted that the scheme organisers will meet in the upcoming week, after which the NQAPP panel report will be available.

Dr Barrett reported that he had been informed via the College Bulletin that certain panels, including those he chairs, may be temporarily paused or stood down. The

proposed changes are primarily due to the College's financial position, as maintaining multiple panels and an overarching quality assurance structure is costly. He emphasised the critical role these panels play in both technical oversight of assays and interpretive guidance. Dr Barrett also highlighted the importance of College indemnity for panel chairs, which allows them to manage follow-ups on performance issues and patient safety concerns. Without this support, key aspects of the role could not be fulfilled.

Dr Barrett noted that further clarification is expected following a College quality assurance meeting scheduled for late November 2025. He expressed disappointment with the College that scheme chairs were not consulted prior to the announcement and highlighted the value of the panels in supporting colleagues through challenging periods, even where such activities represent a small component of the role.

3.4 Pathology Informatics Group

Dr Igali was not in attendance, and therefore there had been no update.

3.5 Cancer Genomics Focus Group

Dr Sian Morgan was not in attendance, and therefore, there had been no update.

3.6 Dermatopathology Sub-committee

Dr Mathew provided an update on the work of the Dermatopathology Subcommittee and noted progress in several key areas, and the following was highlighted:

- Alignment of the national test directory with the skin WHO book has been completed in collaboration with the Genomics Unit and is currently being considered by the Genomic Medicine Service for approval.
- In relation to the skin datasets, most have been assigned lead authors, with one dataset still requiring an author.
- The diploma in dermatopathology exams is proceeding successfully, with good candidate engagement and increasing interest from potential examiners.
- The External Quality Assurance (EQA) program continues to run effectively.

Dr Mathew raised concerns about biomedical scientists (BMS) reporting beyond their intended scope in some hospitals or departments. He highlighted the need for a clearer, standardised curriculum to define the limits of BMS reporting and responsibilities. He emphasised that the Sub-Committee members and stakeholders, including the British Association of Dermatologists should be engaged in curriculum development and review. Dr Mathew stressed the importance of appropriate training, supervision, and pastoral support for all reporters, including BMSs and new consultants. He also noted that historical debates about BMS reporting continue, but the focus should remain on safe, high-quality reporting and training.

CP.27/25 4. Trainees'

Dr Hawkins reported that trainees are generally positive about their training, with good support and engagement, though variation exists between deaneries in implementing curriculum guidance and providing access to training opportunities, particularly cervical cytology and autopsy training. She informed that the recent exam session faced challenges, including technical issues affecting approximately 30–40 histopathology trainees and venue disruptions, which the College managed effectively.

Dr Duhli enquired about regional variation and concerns regarding ARCP case numbers. Dr Cheesman confirmed that the curriculum emphasises quality of training over absolute numerical targets, with suggested numbers provided only as guidance. Some ARCP panels continue to use older number-based approaches, which can create pressure on trainees. Dr Hawkins added that trainees can demonstrate

competency through complex cases and College complexity points, particularly where numerical exposure is limited, and stressed the importance of independent reporting for trainee development.

CP.28/25 5. Examinations

Dr Gill was not in attendance, and therefore, there had been no update.

Dr Cheesman reported that the 2021 curriculum is under review, as part of a normal post-implementation process. The review focuses on areas where trainees face difficulties accessing required training elements, including postmortem work and cervical cytology. Any recommendations arising from the review will require GMC approval and the process is expected to continue into the next year.

He highlighted that outsourcing of routine pathology work reduces trainee exposure to common specimens, with complex cases generally retained in-house. Departments were encouraged to ensure trainees review outsourced cases both before and after they are sent out, including associated investigations such as immunohistochemistry, to maintain learning opportunities. This is particularly relevant in haematology, cervical cytology, and paediatrics, where centralisation and outsourcing may restrict training experience.

Dr Cheesman also reported that the paediatric and perinatal pathology exam has been reviewed, and a new modular format will be introduced in 2027, following the approach of the adult exam. The postmortem component will be assessed via a logbook and written evidence, rather than a practical exam, aligning it with the adult pathology exam format.

CP.29/25 6. Workforce update

Ms Kean gave an update regarding the draft NHS 10 Year Workforce Plan. She reminded the SAC that the plan was sent on 24 October for review. Although the original SAC deadline was 3rd November, late feedback is still welcome and should be sent to Amy Johnson (Workforce and Engagement Manager) to allow incorporation before submission to NHS England on 7th November.

Key areas highlighted for SAC consideration are:

- Section 1: Digital pathology, AI, automation, preventative medicine, and community testing.
- Section 3: Cellular pathology, autopsy capacity, and trainee completion of CHAT.

Members of the SAC noted that the document is extensive and time consuming to review, and it was suggested that future large documents could be shared via SharePoint, allowing multiple reviewers to comment directly and facilitating easier contribution.

Ms Kean confirmed she would contact Amy Johnson to resend the document and emphasised that SAC members should provide feedback as able, focusing on the highlighted sections.

CP.30/25 7. Best Practice Recommendations

Mrs Retneswaran provided an update on the progress of current and upcoming BPR guidelines, including recently published guidance, those under consultation, and guidelines in draft preparation.

The SAC had a discussion regarding the involvement of key authors, particularly early-career contributors, and the need for experienced lead authors to support them.

Members of the SAC members were invited to suggest lead authors for guidelines where additional guidance is needed.

CP.31/25 8. College committee minutes

8.1 Cytopathology Sub-committee

The SAC received and noted the minutes of the Cytopathology Sub-Committee meeting which took place on 23 July 2025.

8.2 Dermatopathology Sub-committee

The SAC received and noted the minutes of the Dermatopathology Sub-Committee meeting which took place on 29 July 2025.

CP.32/25 9. Pathology Portal

A pre-recorded presentation by Luke Thrower on the Pathology Portal was discussed. Due to technical difficulties during the meeting, the presentation could not be viewed collectively. It was agreed that the recording would be recirculated via a secure link so members could review it individually.

CP.33/25 10. For interest - Professor Adrian Bateman's interview about England's Cancer Plan

The SAC received and noted the Chair's recent interview with *Pathology Magazine* regarding England's Cancer Plan, which was circulated for information only and required no formal discussion.

CP.34/25 11. Any other business

11.1 Patient Safety Steering Group

Mrs Retneswaran provided an update on the newly formed Patient Safety Steering Group and noted that it was launched in May 2025 under the College Professional Practice Directorate and is chaired by Dr Mike Eden. She highlighted that membership includes representatives from NHS England, UCAS, the NHS, lay members, and fellows across specialties. The group's work aligns with the Patient Safety and Quality Strategy 2024–2029 and currently focuses on identifying risks using national data to improve diagnostic accuracy, reviewing guidance on point of care testing, and developing safe staffing guidance. She also advised that an updated patient safety survey will be redistributed to gather representative feedback from members. Looking ahead, the group plans to focus on pathologist wellbeing in coordination with workforce research as part of its next phase of activities.

11.2 Research Committee

Professor Wong, now representing the SAC on the College Research Committee, reported that the committee will host a webinar for all pathologists on pathways to engaging in research, including procedural requirements and Ethics Committee processes (expected within six months). He also noted that new funding opportunities are being developed to support trainees commencing research projects and invited members to email him any messages they would like conveyed to the Research Committee.

Action: Shelaine Kissoon to add Research Committee as an item on future meeting agendas.

CP.35/25 12. Date of the next meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, 3 February 2026 at 2pm for a duration of 2 hours.