



The Royal College of **Pathologists**

Pathology: the science behind the cure

### **Digital Pathology Committee**

A meeting was held on Wednesday 19 October 2022 at 10.00  
hosted by the Royal College of Pathologists via Zoom

**Dr Lance Sandle**  
**Registrar**

**Present:**

Prof Darren Treanor, Chair  
Dr Muhammad Aslam, Pathologist, Wales  
Dr Matthew Clarke, Neuropathology Trainee & Trainees' Advisory  
Committee Chair  
Dr Gareth Bryson, Consultant Pathologist, Scotland  
Prof Roberto La Ragione, Veterinary Pathology SAC Chair  
Dr Samar Betmouni, Neuropathology representative  
Prof Simon Cross, Consultant Histopathologist, Sheffield  
Dr David Shelton, Consultant Cytopathologist and Cytopathology  
SC Representative.  
Mr Ashley Ballard, IBMS  
Mr Richard Haigh, NHS Digital

**In attendance:**

Joanne Brinklow, Director of Learning  
Shane Johns, Professional Standards Manager  
Louise Mair, Governance and Committee Services Officer

**Apologies:**

Prof Sarah Coupland, Vice President Communications  
Dr Hasan Rizvi, Consultant Histopathologist, Barts and Clinical  
Director for Pathology Portal project  
Dr Paul Barrett, Histopathology representative  
Dr Bethany Williams, Digital Pathology Fellow, Leeds  
Prof Claire Verrill  
Prof David Snead





<b>Minutes (unconfirmed)</b>	
<b>DP1.24/22</b>	<b>Welcome, apologies and declarations of interest</b>
<b>a)</b>	The Chair welcomed members to the meeting. Apologies for absence were noted and recorded above.
<b>b)</b>	There were no new declarations of interest received. The Committees Services Officer provided an update on the RCPATH declaration of conflict policy, which advises that if a member has already declared their conflict of interest on their annual form, they will not be required to complete additional declaration forms. If a member has a new declaration of interest, they will need to contact the Committee Services Officer and ask to complete a declaration of interest form.
<b>DP1.25/22</b>	<b>Minutes of the last meeting, Actions, Matters Arising</b>
<b>a)</b>	The minutes of the part 1 and part 2 meetings held on 23 June 2022 were approved as a correct record.
<b>b)</b>	<p>The following updates to the action log were noted:</p> <p>DP1.27/21a Members to contact the Chair if interested in subgroup to co-ordinate DP/AI event. Action to be closed.</p> <p>DP1.31/21 Prof Cross to provide a live demonstration of the Pathology Portal at the next meeting. Action to be closed.</p> <p>DP1.04/22b Ms Brinklow to send the Governance and Committee Services Officer the link to the current syllabus. Action to be closed.</p> <p>DP1.04/22b Committee members to let the Governance and Committee Services Officer know if they want to lead or join the sub-group for the DP/AI curriculum and come up with recommendations by the next DP meeting. Action to remain open.</p> <p>DP1.08/22 Dr Williams to make proposal for The Committee to review at the November DP meeting. Action to remain open.</p> <p>DP1.12/22a Dr Treanor and Mr Johns to draft a statement for the Diamond Jubilee to include DP Committees' achievements. Action to remain open.</p> <p>DP1.14/22 The Committees Services Officer to update the Committee on the RCPATH declaration of conflict policy. Action to be closed.</p> <p>DP1.17/22 The Chair and Dr Williams to contact Bridget Wilkins for the document on data retention periods for digital pathology data and circulate to the Committee for feedback and to summarise key areas. Action to remain open.</p> <p>DP1.18/22 Ms Brinklow to investigate the exam structure for the veterinary microbiology examination and update Prof La Ragione. Action to remain open.</p> <p>DP1.20/22 Prof Cross to circulate the link to the pathology portal so committee members can contribute content to the portal. Action to be closed.</p>



	DP2.08/22b Mr Haigh to send contact details for training lead for Mr Ballard to connect. Action to be closed.
<b>DP1.26/22</b>	<b>Governance</b>
a)	Workplan - The Committee reviewed the updated workplan for 2022 and agreed that it will continue to evolve and become more specific over time but is a sufficient document for now.
<b>DP1.27/22</b>	<b>Curriculum and training</b>
a)	There was a discussion around the Histopathology Curriculum, the Committee noted that the key document to consider is the syllabus, which offers more detail than the curriculum. Ms Brinklow made the Committee aware of the GMC rule around curriculum transition, which requires that all trainees (unless they are in their final year of study) transfer to the new curriculum; RCPATH are currently in the process of transferring students to the new curriculum, with a deadline of August 2023 for all trainees to have transitioned to the new curriculum or finished their final year on the previous curriculum.
b)	The Chair highlighted that as a committee we want digital pathology and / or pathology informatics to be recognised in the curriculum, to ensure that trainees receive relevant guidance and training. Ms Brinklow recommended that members of the Committee review the current syllabus and then feedback to the Cellular Pathology Committee on any potential amendments to the syllabus. The Chair advised that he would provide Ms Brinklow with some names of volunteers from the Committee, following the meeting.  <b>Action: The Chair to provide Ms Brinklow with some volunteer's names from the Committee to review the current syllabus and feedback to the Cellular Pathology Committee.</b>
<b>DP1.28/22</b>	<b>Examinations</b>
a)	The Committee noted the increased uptake in the International Part 1 Histopathology examinations sat since they were moved online. Whilst this is extremely positive, it has had an unforeseen impact on the numbers for the Part 2 Histopathology examinations, resulting in more sittings being scheduled to keep up with demand. Currently, the maximum number of trainees that can sit the exam is 200 at a time, to accommodate for the spike in numbers, the examinations department are reviewing the configuration and the development of the new examination and will explore all digital options to ensure this doesn't prevent trainees sitting examinations.
b)	Ms Brinklow reported that some examination responses are providing unnecessarily complex answers to standard questions for the Part 2 histopathology examinations. Ms Brinklow suggested this may reflect the content taught on RCPATH courses rather than day-to-day trainee experience. To continue to support trainees, meetings have been held with the Histopathology Training Committee and Heads of Pathology School to discuss appropriate comms to trainees, reminding them that they should be providing standard responses from what they see day to day and not to overcomplicate answers.
c)	The Pathology portal has successfully launched, with the intention to include content across all of the pathology specialties. Whilst there is already a wide range

of content available, the examinations department are looking at how this could support training. One of the issues raised at the recent Histopathology Training Committee was that slides are being outsourced because of backlogs and trainees are struggling to see them, the examinations department are reviewing how best to support trainees with this.

- d)** Mr Haigh queried when trainees should be introduced to the National Curriculum Standards, particularly for units of measure. The Chair advised that this topic would fall under a broad knowledge of pathology and informatics and is dependent on the syllabus. Mr Haigh highlighted that he has a small training team who could support with this but noted there is a timing element when developing content for the syllabus.
- e)** Mr Ballard queried whether there is a plan to transition to digital exams for the reporting and asked whether this will be the case for IBMS reporting as well? Ms Brinklow advised that this would be a sensible approach, as both exams tend to be sat at similar times but explained that the examinations department are in the process of looking at a deliverable format. The Part 2 examination will also require a GMC application, which will take time.
- f)** The Committee noted that some consideration is also needed as a number of trainees will not have had exposure to digital examinations, and therefore both paper and digital examinations may need to run concurrently.
- g)** The Committee agreed it would be extremely useful to obtain data from centres and trusts in the UK to gain better insight into the disparity in digital resources between centres and trusts.
- h)** Dr Betmouni offered to provide support in organising a survey to demonstrate what digital resources are currently available, particularly for international candidates. Dr Betmouni suggested adapting the pathology portal, to provide international trainees with access to support their training remotely, which could make digital examinations more equitable. Ms Brinklow advised that this is being considered, currently international trainees can access the portal via their membership, but international doctors can only access the portal if they are a RCPATH member. This approach is being reviewed more carefully to support equality of access.
- i)** There was a discussion that trainees who currently use glass slides would be able to apply this knowledge when working on digital slides in examinations. The Committee agreed that ensuring trainees are familiar and comfortable using the examination platform is key. Ms Brinklow noted this and advised that for Part 1 examinations, candidates are given access a week before the exam on TestReach, so that they can practice and become familiar with the system and feel competent in using it for the exam. Prof Laragione recommended using Digital Slide Box, which targets CPD's and gives access to trainees transitioning from glass to digital to ensure they have more practice.
- j)** The Chair emphasised the need to gather evidence to address any potential problems for transitioning from glass to digital slides. The Committee agreed that a survey of trainees' attitude to digital would be useful to support trainees.
- k)** Dr Aslam advised that at the recent Histopathology Training Committee, it was recommended that a pilot for the digital examinations be conducted with previous students to assess the examinations. Ms Brinklow confirmed that this would be a GMC requirement and RCPATH will need to evidence this.

	<p><b>l)</b> The Chair queried whether the histopathology sub-group meets regularly, Ms Brinklow advised that they do and Dr Aslam is a representative for Dig Path on the group. The group is made up of the Chair of the Histopathology Committee and various leads for examinations. The other part of the discussion are the changes happening to the exam as well as transitioning to digital. Once the group have set out what would work, there will be a wider consultation piece, which would involve this Committee.</p> <p><b>m)</b> The Chair recommended that Ms Brinklow and Dr Aslam provide an update from the subgroup meeting at the next Dig Path meeting, so that the committee can feed into this and support with next steps.</p> <p><b>Action: Ms Brinklow and Dr Aslam to provide updates from the histopathology subgroup to the Dig Path committee meeting in March.</b></p>
<b>DP1.29/22</b>	<b>Events</b>
	<p><b>a)</b> Dr Bryson advised that the planned trainee digital pathology event scheduled for 13 December will be postponed until Spring 2023, this is to ensure a larger turn out for the event. Dr Bryson will continue to liaise with the RCPATH events team and keep the Committee updated on new dates and developments.</p> <p><b>b)</b> Dr Bryson suggested weaving in the surveys of trainees for attitudes to digital and digital exams into one of the presentations at the event. As discussed in the previous item, Dr Betmouni offered to support with the trainee surveys and agreed to discuss this further with Dr Bryson.</p> <p><b>Action: Dr Betmouni to support with trainee surveys around experiences and attitudes to digital and digital examinations and to discuss this further with Dr Bryson.</b></p> <p><b>c)</b> Dr Shelton recommended that the survey include trainees' opinions and experience of digital cytopathology. Some trainees for example, may have experience in histopathology reporting, but not in cytopathology reporting. Prof La Ragione advised that veterinary trainees have experience with cytopathology and would be interesting to link them into the survey.</p> <p><b>d)</b> Prof La Ragione advised that for veterinary pathology, there has been a significant transition to digital on the commercial side, which will differ from those in an academic environment. The Committee agreed it would be valuable to hear from these groups and understand how they have transitioned, particularly as the commercial side will have around 4-5 years of experience in using digital slides.</p> <p><b>e)</b> Mr Haigh suggested raising the topic around managing the next pandemic and the potential implications for pathology and trainees, as well as responding to the new national request for rapid deployment of standards. Dr Bryson advised this would not fit into this event but should be investigated for a wider college event or pathology informatics event. Mr Haigh said he would raise this with Dr Laszlo Igali and advised that he is available if needed to support with events.</p>
<b>DP1.30/22</b>	<b>Update on NIHR HTA trial for digital pathology in screening</b>
	There was no update provided in the absence of Dr Snead, it was agreed this item will be added to the next meeting's agenda.

<b>DP1.31/22</b>	<b>Pathology Portal Project</b>
a)	Prof Cross presented the pathology portal to the Committee. The aim of the pathology portal is to be the sole repository of eLearning materials, which is hosted within the NHS Learning Hub. It was officially launched in August 2022 and there are over 2000 pieces of content available. Prof Cross advised that the digital images available are smooth and clear, and while there are some challenges, such as only being able to upload one case instead of batch cases, anyone can register and upload their own cases onto the portal.
b)	The Committee noted that a large and concerted effort is needed across pathology to contribute more cases to the portal, Prof Cross provided an example, that a trainee would need access to around 1000 cases to acquire sufficient training for areas such as GI.
c)	Dr Islam praised the portal and the opportunities it will afford trainees and asked about the process for sending cases to the portal. Prof Cross explained that once you register on the portal you can upload cases, there is also an editorial team which approves the cases for quality control.
d)	The Committee noted one of the challenges is the time taken to upload images onto the portal, Prof Cross has mitigated this issue by being selective and provided an example of scanning one level of a biopsy for the portal, as the file will be smaller to upload and provide clearer imaging of the tissue. However, Prof Cross emphasised you would need to scan a whole slide if using the slide for diagnostic purposes.
e)	Dr Sleeman advised that he is part of the Pathology Portal editorial board and overseeing the neuropathology cases uploaded. Dr Sleeman has also uploaded molecular results of particular cases, and the portal has the functionality to create different pages for a case. For example, the trainee can answer a question and then move onto the next page, which teaches them a training pathway.
f)	The Committee agreed that the pathology portal project item can be removed as a standing item from the agenda going forward and be added when necessary to provide an update on the portal.
	<b>Action: The Committees Services Officer to remove the pathology portal project as a standing item on the digital pathology committee meeting agenda.</b>
g)	Dr Betmouni advised that she recently attended a Kings Fund Digital Health Conference, where the interim CEO of NHS Digital, Simon Bolton, gave a talk. Some of the topics of interest to Dig Path, were around commoditisation, consumerisation, data, culture and connectedness.
<b>DP1.32/22</b>	<b>Environmental Sustainability</b>
a)	The Chair encouraged members to consider how environmental sustainability can be improved in laboratory practices. The Committee agreed that meeting remotely is helping with environmental sustainability.
<b>DP1.33/22</b>	<b>Updates from External Representatives</b>
a)	NHSX (Dominic Cushnan/Francois Lemarchand)

	There was no update provided in the absence of Dominic Cushnan and Francois Lemarchand.
<b>b)</b>	<b>Institute of Biomedical Science (Ashley Ballard)</b>
	Mr Ballard provided an update on the progress of the new qualification for Laboratory Scientists, Certificate of Expert Practice. Mr Ballard confirmed that IBMS are on track to launch the qualification from January 2023. The qualification will include six generic modules aimed at Biomedical Scientists in Pathology, with module design structure to be finalised in November 2023. The Chair congratulated IBMS on the progress made at getting the qualification to its current stage.
<b>c)</b>	<b>NHS Improvement (Jane Mills)</b>
	There was no update provided in the absence of Jane Mills.
<b>d)</b>	<b>NHS Digital (Richard Haigh)</b>
	Mr Haigh advised that the internal governance structure which Dr Laszlo Igali sits on, has endorsed the Units of Measure as standard, this is now out for wider consultation and Mr Haigh confirmed he would circulate details to the committee if needed.
	Mr Haigh confirmed that there has also been endorsement to consider semi-quantifiable results as a standard, NHS Digital has tested this out and reported positive engagement from the Medical Microbiology SAC and its Chair, Dr Natasha Ratnaraja.
	The Chair queried whether the semi-quantifiable results are solely for microbiology and biochemistry? Mr Haigh confirmed that the initial focus will be around microbiology as it has been the focus of the UTL so far, but that the scope will expand and won't be exclusive to microbiology in the future. Mr Haigh advised that if there are areas that members think could be of high value to consider for standardising semi-quantifiable results to feedback to him.
<b>e)</b>	<b>Public Health England (Anne Mackie)</b>
	There was no update provided in the absence of Anne Mackie.
<b>DP1.34/22</b>	<b>Any Other Business</b>
<b>a)</b>	The Chair asked for volunteers for the upcoming RCPATH workshop on how to collect data about pathology workforce on 14 November, it is a three-hour virtual workshop being held in London.
<b>DP1.35/22</b>	<b>Dates of Future Meetings</b>
	Wednesday 1 March 2023, 12.00pm.
	The meeting closed at 11.54am.