



The Royal College of **Pathologists**  
Pathology: the science behind the cure

# **College examinations for Fellowship, Diplomas and Certificates**

**Regulations and guidelines for 2018**

**December 2017  
(Superseding all previous editions)**

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Genetics (including Clinical Cytogenetics and Molecular Genetics at Part 2 only)  
Haematology  
Haematology Clinical Science  
Histocompatibility and Immunogenetics  
Histopathology  
Immunology  
Infection  
Medical Genetics  
Medical Microbiology  
Molecular Pathology of Acquired Disease  
Neuropathology  
Oral Pathology  
Paediatric Pathology  
Reproductive Science  
Toxicology  
Transfusion Science  
Veterinary Pathology  
Veterinary Clinical Pathology  
Virology

Updated information and news about the examinations, the application process, written papers from previous examinations etc. are posted on the College website:

<https://www.rcpath.org/trainees/examinations.html>

All communications and enquiries should be addressed to:

The Royal College of Pathologists  
Examinations Department  
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21 Prescott Street  
London  
E1 8BB

Tel: 020 7451 6760/6734/6757  
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Email: [exams@rcpath.org](mailto:exams@rcpath.org)  
Website: <https://www.rcpath.org/trainees/examinations.html>

# Regulations and guidelines for College examinations for Fellowship and Diplomas

## Introduction

- 1 This document, along with the relevant specialty-specific regulations, contains the information candidates must read before applying to sit a Royal College of Pathologists Fellowship, Diploma or Certificate examination. Its content is divided into policy and background information as well as specific requirements. Where a direct instruction is given e.g. *must* or *will* this is an obligation on the part of the candidate or the College. Where the text uses a passive or conditional tense e.g. *should* or *may* this is a guideline or a recommendation.

## Policy and background information

### 2 Fellowship of the Royal College of Pathologists

Fellowship of the Royal College of Pathologists (FRCPath) is a mark of professional standing and esteem achieved through one of three possible routes: examinations, publications or invitation of Council. The latter two routes are for academic and distinguished pathologists and are inappropriate for trainees.

The College maintains parity in professional standing and esteem among the three routes to FRCPath by seeking appropriate evidence of knowledge, skills and achievement.

FRCPath alone grants no right or authority for unsupervised clinical practice in a pathology specialty. For clinical practice in the UK, this right and authority is conferred by specialist registration with the General Medical Council (GMC) and by equivalent registration processes for dental practitioners, clinical scientists and veterinary pathologists.

The FRCPath examination constitutes an assessment of the candidate's knowledge of their specialty and their ability to apply that knowledge in the practice of the specialty. The tests of theory, taken as MCQ or EMQ, short answer or essay papers in FRCPath Part 1 of the examination, aim to determine whether an individual has successfully acquired a core body of knowledge that will underpin their ability to practise in their chosen specialty. The practical examinations, largely taken at FRCPath Part 2, are designed to test candidates' practical skills and understanding of the specialty and may include written tests in some specialties. They aim to show whether the candidate can apply their knowledge appropriately and safely to the practice of the specialty.

The overall aim of the examination for medical trainees is to provide external quality assurance that a trainee is on course to reach the standard appropriate for entry on the Specialist Register and practice as an unsupervised specialist in the specialty. For non-medical candidates, passing the FRCPath examination indicates they have reached the standard appropriate for unsupervised practice.

On passing the FRCPath Part 2 examination, Fellows sign a consent form agreeing to be bound by the Ordinances, Bye-Laws and Conduct Regulations of the College and any amendments to them in the future, to further the objects and best interests of the College and to uphold the best possible standards in relation to pathology and patient care.

### 3 Fellowship by examination and appointment to consultant and other senior posts

The achievement of Fellowship by examination has long been regarded as a marker of specialist status and as an indicator that a pathologist has achieved many of the competencies required for practice at consultant level. However, in the UK, completion of training programmes also requires satisfactory performance in workplace based assessments and progression through annual appraisal. Fellowship is not solely or even necessarily a criterion for appointment as a consultant.

The decision on the suitability of a candidate for appointment to a particular post is the sole prerogative and responsibility of the appointment committee acting on behalf of the employer.

The possession of FRCPATH by examination is one key criterion in determining eligibility for appointment to posts in pathology specialties in the UK, but it does not override the appointment committee's responsibility to determine that a candidate has undergone appropriate training and possesses all the competencies required to fulfil the requirements of the post. Fellowship obtained by routes other than examination is not equivalent to FRCPATH by examination in terms of conferring eligibility for appointment.

#### **4 Equality and Diversity**

The Royal College of Pathologists is committed to the principle and practice of diversity and equality in employment, Fellowship, academic activities, assessments, examinations and training. This means that everyone should be treated in a fair, open and honest manner. Our approach is a comprehensive one and reflects all areas of diversity, recognising the value of each individual. We aim to ensure that no one is treated less favourably than another on the grounds of age; disability; gender reassignment; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; or sexual orientation. Our intention is to reflect not only the letter but also the spirit of equality legislation.

The College is aware that candidates come from a range of backgrounds and that for many it takes time to organise themselves for an examination. Every effort will be made to timetable examinations as far in advance as possible. For some examinations, particularly those that use university facilities or have a small number of candidates, this is not possible.

The College's examinations will avoid bank holidays. The College will make every effort to avoid scheduling examinations at the same time as other major religious festivals but this might not always be possible (for example, if a university laboratory is only available for use by the College on a particular day or if examiners are only available on certain days).

The College will make reasonable adjustments wherever necessary. Candidates with any particular requirements or concerns are urged to contact the College as early as possible to discuss their needs.

#### **5 Entry criteria for Parts 1 and 2 Fellowship examinations, Certificate and Diploma examinations**

Candidates are admitted to College examinations solely at the discretion of College Council. Council may refuse to admit to the examination procedure any candidate who infringes any of the regulations for College examinations or who has been found guilty under the terms of the Candidate Misconduct Policy (see Appendix 1).

Candidates will be admitted to an examination (subject to paragraph 16 below) if they have fulfilled the recommended training requirements and are deemed ready to apply by their educational supervisor. Candidates may apply for each part of the examination when they and their educational supervisor or other appropriate trainer consider that they are sufficiently prepared. In general the College recommends that medical candidates in a specialty training programme do not attempt the FRCPATH Part 1 examination before completing at least one year of specialty training and FRCPATH Part 2 before completing at least three years of specialty training.

##### **5.1 Medical and dental candidates**

Candidates must be registered medical or dental practitioners. Candidates who hold a primary medical or dental qualification approved by the GMC or General Dental Council (GDC) and must be currently registered with the GMC or GDC in the UK or the appropriate body in the country where they are practising. Candidates holding a medical or dental qualification not accepted by the GMC or GDC in the UK must provide appropriate documents with their application form to demonstrate current registration or permission to practise in the country or territory of domicile either in which the qualification was granted or where they are practising.

The following specialties/examinations are open to medical candidates only: Dermatopathology, Forensic Pathology, Haematology, Histopathology, Neuropathology, Paediatric Pathology, the Certificate in Higher Autopsy Training, the Certificate in Higher

Cervical Cytology Training, and the Certificate in Medical Genetics. Oral Pathology is open to dental candidates only.

Candidates should refer to the relevant specialty regulations and guidelines for further information.

## **5.2 Clinical Scientist and Biomedical Scientist candidates**

Candidates must hold a qualification approved by Council. For this purpose, Council recognises 1st and 2nd class Honours degrees or equivalent qualifications granted in the UK and Republic of Ireland in appropriate science subjects. Applications may also be considered on an individual basis from those holding other science degrees awarded in the UK and Republic of Ireland and from those holding science degrees from overseas universities. Applications from Biomedical Scientists will be considered on an individual basis for relevant FRCPATH examinations. Candidates should refer to the relevant specialty regulations and guidelines for further information.

## **5.3 Veterinary Pathology and Veterinary Clinical Pathology candidates**

Candidates must hold a qualification approved by Council. For this purpose, Council recognises the qualifications in veterinary medicine that are able to be registered in the UK. Veterinary Pathology and Veterinary Clinical Pathology are open to candidates with a qualification in veterinary medicine only. Candidates should refer to the relevant specialty regulations and guidelines for further information.

# **6 Requirements for progression through the examination procedure**

All RCPATH examinations are conducted in English. Before attempting the FRCPATH Part 1 examinations, candidates for whom English is not their first language are advised to satisfy themselves that their English language ability is the equivalent to that required to achieve an overall score of 7.5 in the academic International English Language Testing System (IELTS), and at least 7.0 in each of the four sections. For more information about IELTS, visit <http://www.ielts.org/>.

## **6.1 FRCPATH Part 1, Certificate and Diploma procedures**

FRCPATH Part 1 examinations are a written test of knowledge. In a small number of specialties there is also currently a practical component although plans are in hand to transfer all practical assessments to Part 2. Guidance as to when to take the FRCPATH Part 1 in specialty training is outlined in the specialty specific regulations.

Candidates who fail to satisfy the examiners in the FRCPATH Part 1 or Diploma written papers will not go forward to the practical and oral stage if there is one at FRCPATH Part 1 or Diploma level in that specialty. Candidates are not allowed to apply for both the FRCPATH Part 1 written and the FRCPATH Part 1 practical examinations at the same time.

Candidates successfully completing all components of an FRCPATH Part 1 examination will be offered Associate status. More information about Associate status of the College is available on the [College website](#).

Candidates successfully completing all components of a Diploma examination will be offered Diplomate status. More information about Diplomate status of the College is available on the [College website](#).

Candidates are normally only permitted four attempts at each of the FRCPATH Part 1, and Diploma examinations. Application for further attempts will only be permitted under exceptional circumstances and with permission of Council in accordance with the College's Mitigating Circumstances Policy. More information about this policy is available on the College website.

## **6.2 FRCPATH Part 2 and Certificate procedures**

Candidates may normally only enter for the FRCPATH Part 2 examination when they have successfully completed the FRCPATH Part 1 examination. In those specialties which require a

written FRCPATH Part 2 submission, candidates can submit a project proposal for this before completing FRCPATH Part 1.

Candidates who have unsuccessfully attempted the FRCPATH Part 2 examination four times or more will not be permitted to re-enter the examination without permission of Council. Application for further attempts will only be permitted under exceptional circumstances and with permission of Council in accordance with the College's Mitigating Circumstances Policy. More information about this policy is available on the College website.

Candidates who wish to attempt the FRCPATH Part 2 examination in a subject other than that passed in FRCPATH Part 1 must obtain the permission of Council. The exception is candidates who have passed the FRCPATH Part 1 examination in Histopathology who, after appropriate training, may attempt the Part 2 examination in one of the following: Forensic Pathology, Neuropathology or Paediatric Pathology and candidates who sit the FRCPATH Part 1 in Infection or Medical Microbiology and Virology who may proceed to either the FRCPATH Part 2 in Medical Microbiology or Virology. Candidates who pass the FRCPATH Part 1 examination in Haematology Clinical Science must attempt the corresponding FRCPATH Part 2 examination. When an FRCPATH examination for a new specialty is established, specific transitional arrangements for candidates who have already passed the Part 1 examination in a related specialty are published.

Candidates may apply for the appropriate FRCPATH Part 2 examination if recommended to do so by a GMC CESR decision.

### **6.3 Ongoing currency of individual parts or modules of an FRCPATH examination**

A pass at an individual part or module of an examination will normally remain current for up to seven years. After this time, applicants who wish to attempt a subsequent part or module must seek permission from the Director of Examinations, who will consider each such application on an individual basis. Applicants must provide a comprehensive CV and should describe the reasons for the delay in progression. They will be expected to demonstrate ongoing training and/or continuing professional development within their specialty, and explain the reasons for any career breaks. A letter of support from their supervisor must be included in the application. Any changes in the curriculum and/or examination system since the pass at the previous part or module will also be taken into account.

Potential candidates must apply to the Examinations Department, providing the information described above, no earlier than July for the next Spring session and February for the next Autumn session. If permission is granted, the candidate must submit an application to enter that session in the usual way and may proceed to further attempts at the examination if necessary following the same procedure as for all other candidates.

## **7 Guidance for candidates undertaking written projects as part of the FRCPATH Part 2 examination**

Regulations and guidance are contained in the separate document on the [College website](#) for candidates in specialties where a written project for the FRCPATH Part 2 examination is required. Candidates should carefully read the specific instructions in the relevant specialty section for guidance on which option is appropriate for their specialty.

Candidates who are HSST trainees undertaking the MAHSE DCLinSci should refer to the Memorandum of Understanding for guidance on submitting a research project.

## 8 Guidance for overseas candidates

The FRCPPath examinations are open to overseas candidates and the College has several overseas examination centres (see paragraph 13 below). Overseas candidates are reminded that the examination is orientated towards UK practice and is structured around the relevant UK curriculum. Candidates are strongly recommended to study the curriculum and UK training requirements of their specialty, as well as the relevant NICE guidelines and other recognised national guidelines, to ensure that they are appropriately prepared for the examination. In order to have a good chance of success in the examinations candidates should have access to appropriate training programmes, which must incorporate robust continuous assessment. **Overseas candidates who do not prepare in this way are unlikely to be able to demonstrate that they have reached the appropriate standard to pass the examination.**

## 9 Marking systems used in Fellowship examinations and Diploma examinations

### 9.1 Written papers examinations

The College operates a 'closed' or categorical marking system for essays and some other papers. Each question receives a notional 25 marks. Where essay papers incorporate questions broken into several parts, the marks are allocated to the overall response to the whole question, not broken down and allocated to individual parts. The marking scheme for the essay papers is given below.

Mark awarded	Category
15 (maximum)	Excellent pass
14	Clear pass
13	Pass
12	Borderline fail
11	Clear fail
10 (minimum)	Bad fail

The minimum pass mark is 50% overall. A total mark of 47.5% or less on one paper is a definite fail, but a total mark of between 48–49% on one paper may be compensated by a corresponding surplus of marks in the other paper if no egregious errors have been identified.

### 9.2 Multiple-choice question/extended matching question (MCQ/EMQ) examinations

The Part 1 examination in some specialties consists of an MCQ or combined MCQ/EMQ examination, rather than a written examination (please refer to individual specialty sections). The examination is paper-based and computer-marked.

Marks are not deducted for incorrect answers and candidates are therefore advised to attempt all questions. There is only one correct answer for each question and, if more than one answer is entered, no marks will be awarded for that question.

The pass mark for MCQ/EMQ papers is set for each individual paper by a standard setting procedure undertaken by members of the relevant Panel of Examiners to determine minimum acceptable competence. This is currently a modified Angoff method.

Please note that where an examination changes from a written to an MCQ/EMQ examination, the format, mark scheme and standard setting methods change but the content (knowledge and understanding) will remain unchanged. However changes in content, knowledge and understanding may occur when a curriculum is reviewed and republished.



### 9.3 Short Answer Questions

The Part 1 examination in some specialties may comprise, at least in part, of short answer questions.

The marks allocated to each individual part of each short answer question (SAQ) are indicated on the question paper. The pass mark for SAQ papers is set for each individual paper by a standard setting procedure undertaken by members of the relevant Panel of Examiners to determine minimum acceptable competence. This is currently a modified Angoff method.

Sample questions are available on the College website.

### 9.4 Practical and oral examinations

The pass mark for practical and oral examinations is determined by an appropriate standard setting procedure undertaken by members of the relevant Panel of Examiners.

Some specialties require candidates to obtain a pass mark in certain or all sections of the practical examination, and a lower mark in one section cannot then be compensated by a corresponding surplus of marks in another section. Please refer to the relevant specialty section for further information.

### 9.5 Egregious errors

An egregious error is an **extremely serious error** of a proposed action or actions (commission or omission) made in response to a question in the oral or written examination **that is dangerous and has a high likelihood of causing serious harm to the life or wellbeing of a patient or others** which will result in the candidate being placed in the borderline category. A response suggesting unethical practice or lack of probity may also be regarded as an egregious error. The entire performance of the candidate in the examination is then considered by the senior examiners in that specialty to determine whether the error is sufficiently serious for that candidate to fail the examination irrespective of their other marks in the examination.

If this occurs during an oral examination, examiners will give candidates the opportunity to explain the rationale for their response if it is judged to be an egregious error. It must be clear that the candidate understood the scenario and was given the opportunity to review the error in order for the egregious error policy to be applied.

If one or more examiners believe that a candidate has made an egregious error during the examination an appropriate mark will be recorded and brought to the attention of the examiners at the debriefing meeting or to the moderating examiner in written examinations. If the majority of the examiners are in agreement, then the candidate will be placed in a borderline category for evaluation. As for other borderline candidates, the examiners must review the entire performance of the candidate in the examination.

The weight attached to an egregious error must take into account such factors as:

- the degree of potential danger to the patient
- whether the same error is repeated more than once during the examination
- whether the error is identified as part of a persistent or common pattern of inadequate performance.
- any relevant ethical or probity consideration

A decision to fail a candidate that involves an egregious error must be taken after discussion by all examiners involved in marking the relevant component or part of the examination. It requires a majority agreement of the examiners and the discussion and decisions are thoroughly documented by the lead examiner or Chair.

## **Specific requirements for entering and sitting Fellowship, Diploma and Certificate examinations**

### **10 Communication about Fellowship, Diploma and Certificate examinations**

Candidates must direct all communications and enquiries about their examination entry, content, format and result to the Examinations Department. Candidates must not contact any member of the panel of examiners or the Director of Examinations unless specifically instructed to do so by the Examinations Department. To attempt to do so without such instruction will be regarded as possible candidate misconduct.

All communication from the Examinations Department to candidates will be by e-mail with the exception of the final result letter.

### **11 Timing and frequency of examinations**

There are two examination sessions a year. An examination timetable for 2018 is outlined in Appendix 2.

### **12 Application forms**

Entry to any College examination is only permitted by online submission of the application form to the Examinations Department and other appropriate documentation, not later than the relevant closing date specified in the timetable on the College website. The examinations online application form is on the College website (<https://www.rcpath.org/trainees/examinations/exam-apply-and-pay-online/exams-application.html>).

Candidates will only be able to apply for one part or component of the examination in a single session (e.g. spring session or autumn session). Candidates entering for the first time for Neuropathology Part 2 examinations must apply for both components when first applying.

Applicants must be sponsored by a Fellow of the College recently involved in their training. In the UK, this is expected to be an educational supervisor. When this is impracticable, the head of the department in which the candidate is working can be the sponsor.

**Candidates must pay the correct examination fees through the College website at the same time as submitting an online application. It will not be possible to complete the online application form without making a payment.**

Before starting your application, candidates must ensure that they have the following documents or information to hand:

- passport style photo (face only, must not be edited, filtered or altered in any way) when making a first examination application
- sponsor/educational supervisor e-mail address
- qualifications from your first degree to date
- employment history
- credit or debit card for payment

An e-mail or hard copy of the form signed off by the candidate's sponsor will be e-mailed to the candidate for completion by their sponsor once the form has been completed and payment made. This form **must** be returned to the Examinations Department no later than one week after the closing deadline for the session.

Incomplete or late applications will not be accepted. Candidates who experience difficulties meeting the deadline must contact the Examination Department for advice before the deadline passes.

Candidates will be able to amend their contact details in the [My RCPATH](#) section of the College website.

### 13 Overseas examination centres

Written FRCPATH Part 1 and Diploma examinations can usually be arranged in the following centres, depending on there being a minimum number of local candidates sitting in each examination session: Cairo, Erbil, Hong Kong, Irbid, Jeddah, Khartoum, Kuwait, Delhi, Rawalpindi, and Singapore.

All candidates who sit the written papers overseas are required to pay the overseas fee at the time of application. Applications must be submitted to the College in the normal way and candidates **must not contact local examination centres unless instructed to do so**.

For FRCPATH Part 1 specialties which have a practical component, candidates who pass the written paper may then apply for the practical in the next examination session.

It may be possible to arrange to sit either the FRCPATH Part 2 in Histopathology in Irbid (Jordan) or Cairo (Egypt) or the FRCPATH Part 2 in Haematology in Dubai but all other FRCPATH Part 2 examinations are only available to be taken in the UK. Availability of overseas Part 2 examination centres will be indicated on the application form and candidates should contact the Examinations Department to express their interest in taking the examination in the available centre.

### 14 Fees

Fees for the Part 1, Part 2, Diploma and Certificate examinations are set by the College's Trustee Board. The current fees are listed on the College website.

### 15 Disability and special situations

Candidates with a disability (as defined under the Equality Act), which may require a reasonable adjustment to the examination procedures, must inform the Examinations Department in writing as soon as they know when they wish to attempt the examination, well in advance of the closing date.

Candidates with dyslexia must submit a post-16 assessment report from a chartered or practitioner psychologist or a specialist teacher holding a current assessment practicing certificate and a letter of support from their educational supervisor or training programme director (or an individual of equivalent standing if applying from outside of the UK).

Candidates who are pregnant and anticipate that they may need particular consideration (i.e. facilities to enable them to sit down during practical examinations) must contact the Examinations Department as soon as this need becomes apparent. Although examiners will do their best to give candidates full consideration on the day, examinations are conducted with the local facilities that are available and it may not be possible to meet candidates' requirements if their needs are not known in advance.

Candidates who present themselves for the examination are deemed to be prepared for and capable of taking it. Candidates who are aware, in advance of the examination, of exceptional adverse personal circumstances, such as bereavement or temporary or permanent illness or injury, which they feel may affect their performance in the examination, are advised not to present themselves for examination.

Candidates who decide to withdraw due to such adverse circumstances just before the examination may be permitted to defer their attempt upon application to the Examinations Department, subject to the provision of appropriate documentary evidence. Withdrawal from the examination because of exceptional adverse personal circumstances will not count as an attempt (see paragraph 17).

Adverse circumstances known to the candidate in advance of the examination will not normally be accepted as mitigating factors in their performance in the examination if they could have

withdrawn. In such circumstances, the candidate's papers will be marked and their result issued as normal.

Candidates who become ill immediately before or during the examination itself and who wish this to be taken into consideration must inform the Examinations Department in writing as soon as possible after the examination, and before the results are issued, with appropriate documentary evidence. Candidates must provide independent corroboration of their situation, such as a certificate or letter from their general practitioner, consultant or clinical psychologist.

Any variation of the examination regulations or procedures will be at the discretion of the Director of Examinations and may consist, for example, of allowing additional time for written papers or the waiving of withdrawal or re-sit charges. Additional marks will not be awarded under any circumstances.

## 16 Prioritisation of applications

The College's ability to admit all applicants may be determined by the total number of applicants and the availability of suitable premises. While all reasonable steps will be taken to ensure there is the capacity to examine all applicants the College will prioritise applications in the very unlikely situation that it is necessary.

### FRCPATH Part 1 written or FRCPATH Part 2 oral examinations

There is no limit to the number of candidates for any of the FRCPATH Part 1 written examinations or FRCPATH Part 2 oral examinations.

### Practical examinations

Subject to their being eligible in all other respects to sit practical examinations, at either FRCPATH Part 1 or FRCPATH Part 2, priority will be given to applicants who are:

- registered trainees currently in a GMC-approved training programme
- trainees currently in an approved training programme in the European Union (EU)
- current UK and EU-based clinical scientists
- applicants directed by the GMC to undergo an assessment by FRCPATH examination to support an application for entry to the Specialist Register under Article 14.

The following candidates will be accepted, **in the order listed**, if the College has the capacity to examine them at the sitting applied for:

1. currently practising in the NHS in a grade and position relevant to the examination applied for;
2. formerly in a GMC-approved training programme;
3. formerly in an approved training programme in the EU; and
4. other applicants.

Candidates in the above categories will be told as soon as possible after the published closing date for applications whether or not their application has been accepted. If an application cannot be accepted candidates will be given the option of a full refund of fees, joining a waiting list or transferring to the next session.

## 17 Withdrawal from the examination

Notification of withdrawal from the examination must be given to the Examinations Department in writing. This can be done by email.

Candidates who withdraw from the examination up to two weeks after the relevant closing date may have their fee refunded. **Candidates who withdraw later than two weeks after the relevant closing date will forfeit the entire fee.** Forfeiture of the fee will be waived only in exceptional circumstances.

Whilst candidates may withdraw up until the day before the examination, candidates in smaller specialties should make every effort to provide as much notice as possible if they are unable to attend an examination.

Overseas candidates should note that failure to obtain a visa would not normally be considered an exceptional circumstance.

## 18 Requirements at examination centres

### 18.1 Security at examination centres

Candidates must bring official identification with a photograph (i.e. passport, driving licence, national identity card or military warrant card) to all College examinations. **NHS identity cards are not accepted.** This identification should be visible on the candidate's desk at all times during written examinations, and must be produced when requested at practical, oral and autopsy examination centres. Where necessary visual identity checks will be carried out discreetly and with appropriate cultural sensitivity. Candidates without appropriate identification will not be admitted to the examination. Candidates whose official identification is in a different name to that used on the application form (e.g. following a change in marital status) must notify the Examinations Department prior to sitting the examination. Please note that communications about forthcoming examinations such as the provision of a candidate number and the time and location of an examination will only be made with the candidate him/herself.

Candidates must **not** bring books or other printed materials, mobile telephones, tablets or any other electronic equipment (including those with internet or mobile network connectivity such as smartwatches and smartglasses) into any examination room. The only exception is for practical examinations where candidates have been given **specific instructions** about the equipment they may bring. Candidates must **not** enter or leave any examination room until permitted to do so by the local examiner or invigilator. Candidates must bring any stationery required for their examination in a clear plastic pencil case or bag.

Candidates may only use calculators where specifically indicated in the regulations and guidelines for that specialty but must not use programmable calculators or devices with internet or mobile network connectivity. Calculators will not be provided by examination centres.

### 18.2 Dress code at examination centres

Candidates presenting themselves for examination should dress as they would for day-to-day clinical practice or equivalent. For practical examinations, clothing should conform to health and safety requirements. Candidates are requested not to wear forms of dress that cover the face while undertaking oral examinations in order to ensure effective communication.

### 18.3 Microscopes for examinations

For examinations where an individual microscope is required candidates must provide their own.

## 19 Confidentiality of examination materials

Question papers and other question matter such as images must not be removed from the examination centre, and questions must not be copied, removed from the examination centre or memorised and thereafter reconstructed or distributed. To attempt to do so will be regarded as possible misconduct and may be dealt with under the Misconduct Policy (see Appendix 1). Possible penalties include the candidate's attempt at that examination being declared void or part void.

The questions in College examination papers are covered by copyright law. It is a breach of copyright to reproduce and/or distribute any examination materials, other than past papers and sample questions that are made available on the College website in order for candidates to familiarise themselves with the format and type of questions.

All examination papers, materials and candidate scripts remain the property of the College.

## **20 Candidate misconduct**

Candidates must familiarise themselves with, and observe, all the regulations relating to the confidentiality and proper conduct of the examination. Appendix 1 sets out the College's Misconduct Policy.

## **21 Notification of results**

Results will be published on the College website by midday on the specified results day. Formal letters will be sent to candidates by first class post on the same day; these letters will be sent to the address provided by the candidate on the day of their examination.

The College sends personal data for all GMC registered candidates, including data about examination results, to the GMC for quality assurance and research purposes and to facilitate the awarding of CCTs. For candidates who are HSST trainees, the College sends personal data, including data about examination results to Manchester Academy for Healthcare Scientist Education and the National School of Healthcare Science. For candidates who are trainees in JRCPTB specialties, this data will be sent to the JRCPTB for release into the e-portfolio.

## **22 Feedback**

Candidates should note that exams are a summative test of whether they meet the set standards and that detailed feedback should not be expected. Feedback will provide a summary of performance at the particular sitting concerned. It is not intended to offer direct guidance on what steps would be required to pass. Candidates should not use it as the sole basis of preparing for future attempts. It should be used in conjunction with evidence about their overall progress in the specialty but should not, on its own, be the only piece of evidence used to determine a plan for remediation.

The College encourages unsuccessful examination candidates to seek guidance from specialty advisers and educational supervisors. To support this, the College will provide specialty advisers and educational supervisors with further relevant information upon request.

For MCQ/EMQ examinations, candidates' result notification will include their score and the pass score. No further feedback is provided to candidates, speciality advisers or educational supervisors.

For written essay/SAQ examinations, candidates will be informed of their result and no feedback is provided directly to them. The result notification will advise unsuccessful candidates to contact their specialty adviser or educational supervisor to discuss their result. To inform that discussion, the specialty adviser or educational supervisors can obtain a summary of a candidate's performance for each question from the Examinations Department. Feedback must be requested within four months of the notification of the result.

For practical and oral examinations, feedback sent to unsuccessful candidates with their result notification is restricted to a list of the sections/components passed and summary reasons for the failure. Candidates are advised to contact their specialty adviser or educational supervisor to discuss their result. For practical examinations, the specialty adviser or educational supervisor can obtain a numeric breakdown for each individual component, including any comments provided by the examiners, from the Examinations Department. Further feedback must be requested within four months of the notification of the result.

Examination scripts will not be released to anyone for review after an examination.

## **23 Complaints**

There is a complaints procedure for all activities managed by the Examinations Department not directly linked to an outcome of an examination. The complaints procedure is available on the [College website](#).

## 24 Appeals

A candidate who has taken any College examination has the right of appeal if there is evidence of a procedural or administrative irregularity by the College or its contractors in the conduct or content of the examination that has adversely affected the candidate's result. Any such appeal must be made by the candidate him/herself, in writing to the Examinations Department (and not to any individual examiner) within one month of issue of either the examination result or further feedback. The candidate must state summary grounds for the appeal.

**In no circumstances** will papers be re-marked or be sent back to candidates. Only in exceptional circumstances, where it is clear that a paper has been overlooked or marks incorrectly totalled, may a fail mark be converted to a pass. Appeals submitted on the grounds that a candidate seeks to challenge the professional or academic judgement of the examiners will **not** be considered.

The appeals procedure is available on the [College website](#).

## **Appendix 1: Misconduct Policy**

### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 The College expects and requires a very high degree of professionalism from its candidates. It expects candidates to be honest. Any attempt by a candidate to gain an advantage over others will be treated most severely.
- 1.2 Any misconduct at any RCPATH examination will be investigated and dealt with according to this policy. Candidates are deemed to have understood and agreed to respect and abide by all regulations, including this Misconduct Policy, by virtue of entering to sit an examination.
- 1.3 This policy does not apply to anyone employed by or acting in any official capacity on behalf of the College, including invigilators and college officers. Such staff should expect their conduct to be investigated under disciplinary procedures and/or the facts to be reported to their manager, supervisor or equivalent. Fellows acting as College examiners are subject to a separate policy (the Examiner Code of Practice).

### **2. Definition of misconduct**

2.1 Misconduct includes, but is not limited to:

- 2.1.1 Failure to abide by the reasonable instructions of an invigilator or College officer;
- 2.1.2 The introduction and/or use of any materials or documents other than those specifically permitted for the examination;
- 2.1.3 Any attempt to communicate with another candidate;
- 2.1.4 Any attempt to gain access to or read the work of another candidate;
- 2.1.5 Unacceptable or disruptive behaviour during the examination;
- 2.1.6 The inclusion of inappropriate, offensive or obscene material in answers;
- 2.1.7 Continuing to write or give answers after the allotted time;
- 2.1.8 Removal of material or content from an examination, other than those documents specifically permitted;
- 2.1.9 The release of content from an examination to a third party without the express permission of a College officer;
- 2.1.10 Bribing or attempting to bribe an invigilator or College officer;
- 2.1.11 Fabrication or alteration of eligibility or identification documents;
- 2.1.12 Impersonation of a candidate or allowing oneself to be impersonated;
- 2.1.13 Any other form of cheating, deception, fraud or conduct that is likely to give an unfair advantage to a candidate or candidates; and
- 2.1.14 Encouraging or assisting any of the above.

### **3. Reporting misconduct**

- 3.1 The College acknowledges the serious nature of allegations of misconduct and their adverse effect on a candidate's reputation and career. The process for dealing with alleged misconduct is therefore kept strictly confidential.



### Under examination conditions

- 3.2 If misconduct is suspected under normal examination conditions, it should be reported to the College by an Incident Report Form. An Incident Report Form can be completed by anyone who becomes aware of any incident that may affect the running of the examination (including examiners, invigilators, College officers and examination candidates). Forms completed by examination candidates must be counter-signed by a witness.
- 3.3 Incident Report Forms must be completed as soon as possible and with as much detail as possible.
- 3.4 Any material that an invigilator or College officer reasonably believes is not permitted for the examination will be confiscated. Electronic devices will be returned at the end of the examination with details recorded in an Incident Report Form. The candidate concerned will be asked to acknowledge agreement of the confiscation of other materials on the Incident Report Form, which will be included as part of the report.
- 3.5 A candidate suspected of misconduct should be allowed to complete the examination, provided that no disturbance is caused to other candidates, in which case he should be removed and their examination terminated.

### Outside examination conditions

- 3.6 If misconduct is suspected outside examination conditions, a written report should be submitted to the Director of Examinations, giving full details of the person suspected of misconduct, the nature of the alleged misconduct and the person submitting the report. Anonymous reports will not be used to initiate formal misconduct inquiries.

## **4. Review of alleged misconduct**

- 4.1 Once an allegation of misconduct has been made, it will be investigated and assessed by the Director of Examinations.
- 4.2 If the Director of Examinations believes that no misconduct has occurred or that misconduct has occurred but it is minor or only a technical breach of the rules, then the matter will not be taken further. Where a minor breach of these rules has occurred, the Director might remind the candidate in writing of the standard of behaviour expected from candidates, but the case will not be recorded in a candidate's personal file.
- 4.3 If the Director believes that there is a case to answer, he will write to the candidate setting out the allegations. The candidate has 14 calendar days from the date of the letter to accept the allegations or challenge them.
- 4.4 If the candidate admits the allegations in writing, the Director of Examinations will determine an appropriate penalty. Where allegations are admitted, the candidate can submit a written statement with their response that may be considered by the Director of Examinations.
- 4.5 If a candidate denies all or part of the allegations of misconduct against him in writing, the matter will be determined by the Misconduct Inquiry Board.

## **5. The Misconduct Inquiry Board**

- 5.1 The Misconduct Inquiry Board ("the MIB") comprises:

- 5.1.1 Two Examination Panel Chairs from a non-related specialty; and

- 5.1.2 A lay representative.

5.2 The MIB will investigate and determine the allegation of misconduct electronically. The standard of proof is the balance of probabilities. Should an allegation be proven, the MIB will agree a penalty. The MIB may convene a telephone conference, if necessary.

5.3 The Examinations Manager (or a College officer appointed by the Examinations Manager) will act as the MIB's secretary. The secretary will:

5.3.1 Co-ordinate and prepare documentation for all parties;

5.3.2 Advise parties on the deadline for submission of further evidence and the date the MIB will announce its decision;

5.3.3 Provide secretarial support as required;

5.3.4 Maintain communication with the candidate and provide advice as required; and

5.3.5 Produce and distribute the decision of the MIB to all parties.

5.4 The timetable for the MIB should run as follows:

5.4.1 The Director of Examinations submits the case against the candidate to the MIB and the candidate via the MIB's secretary.

5.4.2 The MIB's secretary will set a deadline by which the candidate may submit evidence for consideration in response. This deadline might vary depending on the nature and complexity of the allegations but should usually be within 7 calendar days. The candidate's response is sent to the MIB's secretary who will confirm receipt and then distribute it to the MIB.

5.4.3 The MIB's secretary will set the date for the MIB's decision. This should usually be no more than one month from the date the candidate denied misconduct in writing.

5.5 A candidate can reverse their answer to allegations up to 48 hours before the date of the MIB's decision. Where allegations are accepted, the candidate can submit a written statement to the MIB that may be taken into account by it.

5.6 Neither the MIB nor the candidate will be given any information about the candidate's result or performance at the examinations in question.

## **6. Penalties**

6.1 Where a case against a candidate is proven, whether through the candidate's own admission or by the findings of the Misconduct Inquiry Board, the following issues will be considered before a penalty is agreed:

6.1.1 The need to preserve the integrity of the examination;

6.1.2 The severity of the misconduct;

6.1.3 Consistency with previous penalties; and

6.1.4 Evidence of remorse and an admission of understanding of the seriousness of the case.

6.2 The following penalties may be awarded following proven misconduct:

6.2.1 No further action;

- 6.2.2 A written warning;
  - 6.2.3 The result of an examination to be declared void or part void;
  - 6.2.4 The candidate to be barred from applying for an examination for a specified period;
  - 6.2.5 Such other penalty that the MIB or Director of Examinations (as applicable) consider appropriate.
- 6.3 Should an allegation of misconduct be proven, the College reserves the right to send details of the case to the General Medical Council (or equivalent) and, in the case of UK trainees, to the candidate's Educational Supervisor and Training Programme Director. In certain circumstances, it may be appropriate to inform the police.
- 6.4 Where theft of intellectual property is suspected, the College reserves the right to initiate civil proceedings, criminal prosecution or both.
- 6.5 Where a candidate's examination result is declared void, the attempt will be recorded against the candidate's examination history. Examination papers will not be processed.

## Appendix 2: FRCPATH Examination Timetable 2018

	<b>Spring</b> <b>Monday 19 March – Friday 18 May</b> <b>Closing deadline: Friday 5 January</b>	<b>Autumn</b> <b>Monday 24 September – Friday 23 November</b> <b>Closing deadline: Friday 6 July</b>
<b>Part 1</b>	Clinical Biochemistry Haematology Histopathology Immunology Infection Medical Microbiology and Virology Oral Pathology Toxicology (written) Transfusion Science Veterinary Clinical Pathology	Clinical Biochemistry Genetics Haematology Haematology Clinical Science Histopathology Histocompatibility and Immunogenetics Immunology Infection Medical Microbiology and Virology Molecular Pathology Oral Pathology Reproductive Science Toxicology (practical) Veterinary Pathology
<b>Part 2</b>	Clinical Biochemistry Clinical Cytogenetics Forensic Pathology Genetics Haematology Haematology Clinical Science Histocompatibility and Immunogenetics Histopathology Immunology Medical Microbiology Molecular Genetics Neuropathology Oral Pathology Paediatric Pathology Toxicology Veterinary Clinical Pathology Virology	Clinical Biochemistry Forensic Pathology Haematology Histopathology Immunology Medical Microbiology Molecular Pathology Neuropathology Oral Pathology Paediatric Pathology Reproductive Science Veterinary Pathology Virology

<b>Diploma</b>	Dermatopathology (written)	Dermatopathology (practical)
<b>Certificate</b>	Autopsy Combined Infection Medical Genetics	Autopsy Cervical Cytology Combined Infection