

Veterinary clinical pathology examination regulations

2026

These regulations must be read in conjunction with the 'Regulations and guidelines – College examinations for membership and diplomas'.



There are currently 2 veterinary examinations. The first is veterinary pathology, which is concerned with morbid anatomy and histopathology. The second is veterinary clinical pathology, which covers the disciplines of clinical biochemistry, haematology and cytology.

Entry and training requirements

There is no specific timing for entry to the examination. Candidates should obtain guidance from their training supervisor as to when to sit the examination. Some general guidance is given below, but apart from the sequence in which the examinations can be sat, it is not intended to be prescriptive.

The examination is intended for graduates in veterinary medicine who have undergone suitable postgraduate training in veterinary clinical pathology. Training may be undertaken either in a full-time training (residency) post in the pathology department of a university veterinary school or in another institution able to provide a suitable training programme. Training should be as broadly based as possible.

Training is normally conducted under the supervision of a fellow of the Royal College of Pathologists, who should also act as the candidate's sponsor.

Candidates are strongly advised to select a sponsor/supervisor who will actively provide guidance and support during training and examination preparation.

Part 1

Candidates will usually sit the Part 1 examination after 2 years' training when the candidate is in a full-time training post. Where candidates combine training with other duties, a longer training period is likely to be required.

Part 2

The Part 2 examination will usually be taken at least 1 year after successfully completing the Part 1 examination and a further year of full-time supervised diagnostic practice.

Candidates will be required to provide a written recommendation from their supervisor/sponsor of fitness to sit the examination with details of activities undertaken in veterinary pathology since passing Part 1.



Structure and format of the examination

Part 1

The Part 1 examination comprises a written component only.

Written component

The written component consists of two 3-hour papers comprising 20 compulsory short answer questions (SAQs). There will be an emphasis on understanding of general pathology, pathophysiology, theory and methods for haematology, biochemistry, other types of testing, cytology and laboratory quality management.

The SAQs are designed to test factual knowledge and understanding across the range of the curriculum. Each question comprises a stem and 6 sub-questions. The stem defines the topic of the question and may include a short scenario or vignette. Each sub-question is designed to elicit a specific piece of information, or demonstrate understanding of the topic and its context. Unless stated otherwise, the answer required will relate specifically to the material provided in the stem and not to the topic in general.

Part 2

The Part 2 examination comprises a practical component only.

Practical examination

The Part 2 practical examination is a 2-day examination. It is made up of the following sections:

- part 1: haematology – examination of glass slides and case data with description and interpretation required (3 hours)
- part 2: cytology – examination of glass slides and case data with description and interpretation required (3 hours)
- part 3: case analysis – full case data sets for any domestic species or data sets from laboratory animals with case analysis and interpretation required (2 hours)
- part 4: projected images – to include images from haematology and cytology, and data from biochemical/hormonal/immunological tests in graphic form (1 hour).



Timing of the examinations

The Part 1 examination is offered once a year in spring. The Part 2 practical examination is offered once a year in spring.

