

Cervical cytopathology examination regulations

2026

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



Entry and training requirements

Changes to the FRCPath in histopathology have meant that candidates undertake basic training in cytopathology but can then opt out of higher training in cervical cytopathology (and autopsy practice) and gain fellowship through surgical histopathology and non-gynaecological cytopathology alone.

The introduction of a separate cervical cytopathology examination is intended for candidates who wish to carry on and pursue higher training in cervical cytopathology. Successful completion of this component will result in the award of the Certificate in Higher Cervical Cytopathology Training (CHCCT).

Structure and format of the examination

Candidates who wish to attempt the specialist cervical cytopathology exam must apply during the advertised period for the examination sitting. Thin-Prep liquid-based systems slides will be available only for this examination.

The examination will be held in a single centre over the course of a single day.

The morning paper

20 single slide cases will be provided in either 10 pairs in 20-minute slots or 20 single cases in 10-minute slots over a period of 3 hours and 20 minutes on the morning of the examination. For each case, a short history including the age of the patient, the stage of the menstrual cycle if known and any previous abnormal cervical cytology will be provided. Additional information may be provided if appropriate. Cases will be a mix of negative and abnormal slides. Candidates will be expected to provide a brief description of the findings on the slide and to make an appropriate management recommendation based on the clinical history and the findings on the slide. It is expected that candidates will use the terminology of the NHS Cervical Screening Programme (NHSCSP) and management suggested should be in line with current guidelines that do allow for some local variations in practice.



The afternoon paper

The second paper for this examination will consist of a 2-hour written paper. The questions may include an understanding of the management of a cervical cytology laboratory participating in the NHSCSP, changes and developments within the NHSCSP, and interpretation of statistical data regarding individual and laboratory performance.

It should be noted that candidates will be expected to use standard NHSCSP terminology and management recommendations.

Timing of the examination

The examination will be held annually in the autumn session.

