

**Specialty Advisory Committee on Cellular Pathology (SAC)
Minutes**

A meeting of the Specialty Advisory Committee on Cellular Pathology was held on Thursday
11 June 2026 at 2:00 pm – 4:00 pm via MS Teams

Professor Sarah Coupland
Registrar

- Present:** Professor Adrian Bateman, Chair
Dr Bipin Mathew, Chair, Dermatopathology SC
Dr Katie Hawkins, RCPATH Trainee Representative
Dr Muhammad Gill, Chair of the Histopathology Panel of Examiners
Professor Sarah Coupland, President, Pathological Society (Observer)
- In Attendance:** Miss Shelaine Kissoon, Governance and Committee Services Officer (*minutes*)
Ms Reshma Patel, RCPATH Consultations and Engagement Officer
Ms Diane Gaston, RCPATH Director for Communications
- Apologies:** Professor Newton Wong, Specialty Member
Professor Sebastian Brandner, Chair, SAC on Neuropathology
Dr Paul Barrett, Chair, NQAAP in Cellular Pathology
Dr Neelaveni Duhli, The Association of Clinical Pathologists representative
Dr Edmund Cheesman, Chair, Histopathology CSTC
Mr Andrew Usher, Chair, RCPATH IBMS Histopathology Reporting Conjoint Board
- Absent:** Dr Sian Morgan, Chair, Genomics and Reproductive Science SAC
Dr Anthony Maddox, Interim Chair, Cytopathology SC
Dr Laszlo Igali, RCPATH Vice President for Professionalism/Pathology Informatics representative
Dr Gareth Rowlands, Chair, Cellular Pathology Workload Scoring Group

CP.11/26 1. Welcome, introductions, declarations of conflict of interest and apologies for absence

- 1.1 The Chair opened the meeting by welcoming all members.
- 1.2 Apologies for absence were received and noted above.
- 1.3 There were no declarations of conflict of interest.

CP.12/26 2. Previous minutes

- 2.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 3 February 2026 were reviewed and approved as a correct record.
- 2.2 There were no matters arising 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**
The Chair noted that the move towards making meeting guidance and related information web-based forms part of the College's longer-term strategy. It was agreed that this item would remain an ongoing strategic objective rather than a



specific action for the SAC and would be progressed in due course. The SAC agreed to close the action.

- **CP.21/24 Proposal for the RCPATH to drive subspecialty cellular pathology groups for genomics and genomics test directories**

The Chair noted the progress made in improving cellular pathology input into the genomics test directories through engagement with relevant groups and committees. Professor Coupland and Dr Mathew provided updates on the ongoing work, including alignment of the test directories with WHO tumour classifications and continued involvement of pathologists in genomic advisory groups. The SAC agreed to close the existing action point, while recognising the importance of continuing to support the genomics agenda and receive regular updates through the SAC.

CP.13/26 3. Reports

3.1 RCPATH IBMS Histopathology Reporting Conjoint Board

No update was provided as the representative had submitted apologies for the meeting.

3.2 Working Group on Cancer Services'

No update was provided as the representative had submitted apologies for the meeting.

3.3 NQAAP for Histopathology Incorporating the Steering Group for Interpretive EQA

No update was provided as the representative had submitted apologies for the meeting.

The Chair noted that progress had been made towards the College reforming an Oversight Group, particularly in relation to diagnostic pathology EQA schemes. The group aims to support individual schemes and develop a clearer pathway for managing cases where participants are identified as poor performers. Further updates will be provided as the work progresses.

3.4 Pathology Informatics Group

No update was provided as the representative was not in attendance at the meeting.

3.5 Cancer Genomics Focus Group

No update was provided as the representative was not in attendance at the meeting.

3.6 Dermatopathology Sub-committee

Dr Mathew provided an update on the work of the Dermatopathology Subcommittee. The Subcommittee has continued to meet regularly and has engaged with the IBMS regarding reporting by advanced practitioners. Following these discussions, membership of the conjoint board has been offered, and work is ongoing to identify a suitable representative to take up this role.

The SAC was also updated on early discussions regarding a potential intercollegiate faculty involving dermatology and dermatopathology. Dr Mathew noted that the proposal would align with RCPATH's values of teamwork, service provision, quality improvement and innovation. Further discussions are planned to explore the potential structure and next steps, and the proposal remains at an early stage.

3.7 Research Committee

It was noted that Professor Wong had stepped down from the role on the Research Committee, and that a new representative would be sought.

CP.14/26 4. Trainees'

Dr Hawkins provided an update on trainees. She reported that the current cohort appeared to be progressing well, with trainees feeling well supported. No significant concerns had been raised, and the recent Part 1 examination had reportedly proceeded smoothly.

The SAC discussed future histopathology training numbers and workforce requirements. Previous concerns regarding reductions in training posts were noted, and further information will be sought on the current position and any plans to increase training capacity.

It was noted that some departments currently have higher trainee numbers than anticipated, partly due to less-than-full-time working and trainees taking time out of programmes for activities such as PhDs. The potential conversion of middle-grade posts into training posts was also discussed.

The SAC highlighted the importance of proactive workforce planning to ensure an appropriate number of trainees are available to support future consultant workforce requirements. It was noted that the ongoing workload project may provide data to help inform future workforce planning.

CP.15/26 5. Examinations

Dr Gill provided an update on the recent examinations. He reported that the FRCPATH Part 1 examination had 225 candidates, of whom 170 were successful (76% pass rate). The Part 2 examination had 170 candidates, with 86 successful candidates (51% pass rate). Three examination centres were withdrawn due to global conflict, which affected candidate numbers. The autopsy examination had 13 successful candidates out of 17 (73% pass rate).

It was noted that the examination team had received support from a Royal College statistician, which provided reassurance that the current processes for question setting, central marking and assessment were robust. Further work with the statistician was planned to support the ongoing development and refinement of the examination system.

The SAC noted the work undertaken to review and expand examination centre provision, particularly to improve accessibility for overseas candidates. Feedback from trainees following the Part 1 and Part 2 examinations had been positive, with no significant concerns identified.

It was reported that analysis of Part 2 examination outcomes had not identified a single component contributing to unsuccessful results; rather, candidates who were unsuccessful generally experienced difficulties across more than one component. It was also noted that previous differences in performance between UK-based and international candidates appeared to have reduced, although the available data had some limitations.

CP.16/26 6. Workforce update

Reshma Patel provided an update on the histopathology workforce project. She reported that the survey had received 51 completed responses, representing a 39% response rate, with a broad geographical spread across the UK. Further responses had since been received from Northern Ireland, including training and workload data, and work was ongoing to incorporate these into the report.

The report was in development, with a draft expected to be available for review in the coming months. The SAC noted the value of using robust workforce and workload data to support future planning and inform the RCPATH's position.

CP.17/26 7. Best Practice Recommendations

The SAC received and noted the document providing the status of the BPRs.

The following was discussed and noted:

- *Cross specialty BPR: G047 Guidance for handling of medicolegal samples and preserving the chain of evidence*
- The SAC discussed potential sources of expertise to support this guidance and suggested that the Forensic Pathology SAC may be able to contribute, given their experience in handling medicolegal cases and maintaining chains of evidence. It was also suggested that the composition of the New Consultants Committee should be reviewed to identify members with relevant subspecialty expertise who may be able to contribute to BPR development. It was agreed that Shelaine Kissoon would feed back to Ms Retneswaran the suggestion to engage with the Forensic Pathology SAC and review the composition of the New Consultants Committee to identify relevant expertise.
- *G132 Provision of intraoperative diagnostic opinions for patients with known infectious diseases*
- The SAC noted the update that the BPR was awaiting a first draft and that a co-author from Cellular Pathology was sought. The SAC discussed the need to identify an appropriate contributor and agreed that a further request for expressions of interest should be circulated, including to the subspecialty advisors, to broaden engagement beyond SAC members.
- *G107 Guidelines on staffing and workload for histopathology and cytopathology departments*
The SAC discussed the workload guidance and noted that a web-based system was now available to enable ongoing feedback. The importance of ensuring that the guidance remained current and reflective of evolving practice was highlighted, particularly given the delay between versions. It was noted that the intention was for the guidance to become a “live” document, with regular review and updates informed by feedback received.

The SAC also discussed the impact of artificial intelligence (AI) on pathology services and the potential implications of AI in diagnostic practice, including questions around responsibility and accountability. The need for a clearer process to ensure that guidance documents are regularly reviewed and updated was noted. It was suggested that defined milestones and timelines should be established for guideline development and revision, with appropriate support and oversight where required. It was agreed that the process for collating web-based feedback and incorporating this into future updates should be clarified, with a more structured approach to maintaining guidance documents developed.

CP.18/26 8. College committee minutes

8.1 Cytopathology Sub-committee

None to note.

8.2 Dermatopathology Sub-committee

The SAC received and noted the minutes of the Dermatopathology Sub-committee meeting held on 20 April 2026.

CP.19/26 9. To approve Fellowship by Invitation of Council - By-law 7(iv)

9.1 Xavier Matias-Guiu

The SAC discussed the application and noted the applicant’s significant contributions to pathology, including involvement in research, education and professional organisations. Further consideration by the wider SAC was required, and it was agreed that approval would be sought from SAC members by email.

9.2 Iman Talaat

The SAC considered the application and noted the applicant's broad subspecialty interests and supporting citations. Further consideration by the wider SAC was required, and it was agreed that approval would be sought from SAC members by email.

Post meeting note: Both applications were circulated and approved by the SAC and subsequently submitted to College Council for approval.

CP.20/26 10. Any other business

10. NHS Cancer Plan

- 1 Diane Gaston highlighted the positive engagement with the National Cancer Plan work and noted the opportunity to continue to advocate for histopathology workforce requirements through ongoing discussions, including engagement with the Royal College of Radiologists.

The Chair acknowledged the positive progress made through involvement in the National Cancer Plan discussions and noted the importance of ensuring pathology representation in future work. The need for continued consideration of MDT processes and opportunities for improvement was also highlighted.

CP.21/26 11. Date of the next meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, 5 November 2026 at 2pm for a duration of 2 hours.