

Royal College of Pathologists

Examination regulations - 2021

HISTOPATHOLOGY

These regulations must be read in conjunction with the *Regulations and Guidelines – College examinations for Fellowship and Diplomas.*

ENTRY & TRAINING REQUIREMENTS

Candidates should normally have undertaken at least one year of histopathology training and be in ST2 before applying to attempt the Histopathology FRCPath Part 1 examination and a further two years of histopathology training before applying to attempt the Part 2 examination. Candidates should obtain guidance from their educational supervisor as to when to sit the examination. Planning should take into account the candidate's planned CCT date (where applicable) but candidates should apply only when they are ready. Some general guidance is given below, but apart from the sequence in which the examinations can be sat is not intended to be prescriptive.

The most recent histopathology curriculum and assessment system was approved by the General Medical Council (GMC) and implemented in August 2015. The FRCPath Part 2 examination for this curriculum does not include assessment of autopsy or gynaecological cytology practice.

Details of the 2015 curriculum are available on the College website - <https://www.rcpath.org/trainees/training/training-by-specialty/histopathology.html>.

Part 1

Trainees will normally require experience of specialty training in Histopathology in order to achieve the standard required to pass the Part 1 Examination. UK trainees must normally have reached Stage B of training having achieved a satisfactory Annual Review of Competence Progression (ARCP) outcome for Stage A.

Part 2

It is anticipated that most trainees will sit the Part 2 Examination after three years of specialty training in Histopathology. Candidates should not normally attempt the Part 2 Examination until at least twelve months after successfully completing the Part 1 Examination. UK trainees must not attempt the Part 2 examination until they are in Stage C of training.

STRUCTURE AND FORMAT OF THE EXAMINATION

Part 1

The Part 1 examination consists of 125 single best answer questions (SBA) and extended matching format questions (EMQ). The three-hour examination is generally orientated towards assessing the candidate's overall knowledge and understanding of histopathology/cytopathology, including the full range of autopsy practices undertaken in a district general hospital in the UK and the basic science underpinning pathology.

Part 2

This part of the examination takes place over two days within the examination period. The scope of this examination includes elements of interpreting and writing reports on histopathological slides and non-gynaecological cytopathology. The cases used for these two elements of the examination will be representative of the material encountered in a district general hospital and will be standardised across centres.

Cases will include those with a specific diagnosis and others where the diagnosis is not immediately apparent from the material submitted. In the latter, the candidate will be expected to show their proficiency to practice by outlining the realistic and appropriate steps they would undertake to pursue a diagnosis.

Candidates will be assessed in the following six sections of the examination:

- Surgical histology
- Cytopathology (non-gynaecological cytopathology)
- Objective structured practical examination (OSPE)
- Macros
- Frozen sections
- Long cases

Each section is marked separately against an agreed specimen answer and a pass or fail awarded for the section. Each section of the exam assesses a distinct set of professional skills, each essential to performance as an independent medical practitioner in histopathology and cytopathology. Candidates must hence pass each section of the examination. Because of the special place of cellular pathology in medical practice only a certain level of inaccuracy is allowed. Failure to distinguish across the benign/malignant boundary (or similar errors of equal magnitude in terms of affecting patient outcome) in 15-25% of cases in any section of the exam will result in failure of the exam as a whole, with no leeway to compensate, no matter how well other cases are addressed.

TIMING OF THE EXAMINATIONS

The Part 1 and Part 2 examinations will be offered twice a year in Spring and Autumn.

Information about the Certificate of Higher Autopsy Training (CHAT) and Certificate of Higher Cervical Cytology Training (CHCCT) are available separately.

Examinations Department
The Royal College of Pathologists
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