

Royal College of Pathologists

Examination regulations - 2021

CLINICAL BIOCHEMISTRY

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

ENTRY & TRAINING REQUIREMENTS

There is no specific timing for entry to the examination although it is expected that medical trainees will normally have passed the FRCPATH Part 1 examination by the end of ST3(5). Trainees who have not passed the FRCPATH Part 1 examination by the end of ST3(5) will be prevented from progressing to Stage C of training. This may result in an extension to training through the ARCP process.

Medical trainees must pass the FRCPATH Part 2 examination by the end of ST4(6). Trainees who have not passed the FRCPATH Part 2 examination by the end of ST4(6) will be prevented from progressing to Stage D of training. Trainees will be allowed to progress to Stage D if their written project (an existing element required to achieve FRCPATH has been submitted to the College and will be complete within the first six months of Stage D. Where the project was considered of such poor quality to require significant additional work or re-write, it will need to be re-submitted and approved before Stage C can be considered complete.

It should be noted that proposals for the FRCPATH Part 2 written project can be submitted to the Examinations Department at any time, including prior to attempting the FRCPATH Part 1 examination. Work on the project can begin as soon as the project proposal has been approved. The final project cannot be submitted until after passing the Part 1 examination.

Candidates should obtain guidance from their educational supervisor as to when to sit the examination. Planning should take into account the duration of fixed-term training contracts and planned CCT date (where applicable) but candidates should apply only when they are ready and some general guidance is given below.

Part 1

Candidates will usually sit the Part 1 written examination when they have gained about two years of laboratory experience at specialty registrar trainee level or equivalent.

Part 2

Candidates may sit the Part 2 examination at an appropriate time after they have passed the Part 1 examination, although it is advised that candidates leave at least twelve months between passing the Part 1 and applying for the Part 2. The time of entry should be as advised by their Educational Supervisor, who must support the application. It is anticipated that most candidates will attempt the Part 2 examination in the fourth year of Specialist Training.

Candidates may apply to sit modules individually. Candidates should apply to sit either module 1, module 2 or both modules. A module pass will be carried forward and this module will not need to be taken again when the other modules are attempted.

STRUCTURE AND FORMAT OF THE EXAMINATION

Part 1

The Part 1 examination is a single three hour paper comprising of 125 single best answer questions (SBAs).

Part 2

The Part 2 examination is be a modular examination consisting of:

Module 1	Practical skills module
Module 2	Clinical, scientific and management skills module
Module 3	Written component module

Candidates may take the modules in any order however candidates may only apply for either Module 1 or Module 2 before submitting a proposal for Module 3. Candidates must have had their proposal for Module 3 approved before making an application for the remaining module.

In order to pass the entire examination and receive the award of FRCPath candidates must pass all three modules.

Module 1 - Practical skills module

Paper 1 is a three hour 19 station objective structured practical examination (OSPE). Candidates will be provided with laboratory material such as:

- analytical outputs (e.g. electrophoretic strips, chromatography scans)
- clinical scenarios (e.g. sample requirements, investigation protocol questions)
- quality control and/or external quality assurance data
- analytical, physiological or pharmacological calculations

One station will test communication skills such as using a simulated encounter with a clinician.

Paper 2 is a three hour bench practical which tests the candidate's ability to plan an experiment, execute simple bench practical work, record results, analyse raw data and draw appropriate conclusions. Candidates will be provided with raw experimental data and will be required to perform simple laboratory bench practical work.

Candidates are not permitted to take books or other reference material into the examination. Appropriate equipment such as pipettes and scientific calculators will continue to be permitted; further information about this will be available prior to each session of the examination.

Module 2 - Clinical, scientific and management skills module

Paper 3 is a three hour written paper in which candidates are required to interpret clinical cases and critically appraise journal articles. In the clinical cases section candidates are given six questions comprising a brief history and laboratory results and are asked to describe and interpret them. In the journal article evaluation section candidates are required to answer questions that test their critical reading and appraisal skills and their understanding of experimental methods and statistical techniques based on two journal articles.

The Oral examination has two parts. The first oral covers clinical patient management (medical candidates), laboratory problem solving (scientist candidates) and laboratory management (all candidates). The second oral comprises general clinical biochemistry issues (including patient and laboratory safety). Candidates will be given 30-minutes to prepare their answers to the scenarios used in the first oral.

Module 3 - Written component module

The written component module requires the candidate to demonstrate competence in the specialty by carrying out a laboratory project that is written up and presented in a dissertation. Alternatively, evidence of experience and competence in the specialty may be presented in the form of a collection of peer-reviewed papers or a research degree (PhD or MD), for which the work was carried out during or shortly before training.

Candidates intending to submit a dissertation must obtain agreement for their project proposal from the College. It is advisable to submit the project proposal well in advance of starting the project in case it is not deemed suitable or requires modification. Failure to submit a proposal or make any required amendments will mean that the dissertation will not be accepted. Candidates are recommended to begin to plan their project and submit a project proposal as soon as possible after entering specialist training or equivalent, and before completion of the Part 1 examinations.

Candidates wishing to submit evidence of a research degree or published papers are advised to do so as soon as they have submitted their application for the Part 1 examination to ensure that, should these not be acceptable, there is sufficient time to undertake a dissertation.

For further guidance, please see the section on 'Guidance for candidates undertaking written options for the Part 2 examination' in the ***Regulations and Guidelines – College examinations for Membership and Diplomas.***

TIMING OF THE EXAMINATIONS

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

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Candidates who have sat the old format examinations

Candidates who have passed the Part 1 written examination but not the old Part 1 practical examination will transfer to the examination structure described above.

Candidates who have passed the old Part 1 examinations (written and practical) by will proceed to the old style Part 2 Oral Examination. In order to pass the entire examination and receive award of FRCPATH they will still have to submit a satisfactory written component (dissertation, MD/PhD or portfolio of published works) but candidates may take the Oral Examination at any session after entry for Part 2 and will not have to wait until the written component is completed. Candidates will continue to be subject to the maximum number of re-sit attempts stipulated in the Regulations.

The old format viva examination will be offered for the final time in Autumn 2021.

Examinations Department
The Royal College of Pathologists
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