



The Royal College of Pathologists

Pathology: the science behind the cure

Format of FRCPATH Part 2 Examination in Medical Microbiology

Following GMC approval, the FRCPATH Part 2 Examination in Medical Microbiology underwent restructuring in Autumn 2017.

The format has been configured such that the examination takes place over two days. The table below summarises the components of the examination, however, the order of these may vary between examination sittings. Although the order of the papers is not fixed, usually Papers 1 and 2 will be taken on the first day of the examination, with Papers 3 and 4 taken on the second day. Note that candidates may not necessarily take the papers in the same order during an examination sitting, to facilitate logistical arrangements for delivery of the exam.

The exam will be 'closed book' (i.e. **NO** textbooks, manuals, other written material or equipment belonging to candidates may be used). Only reference material provided by the examiners may be used.

Each of the four papers carries equal weight. Candidates' marks from Papers 1 and 2 are combined, such that candidates may compensate for a low score in one of these papers with a high score in the other. Similarly, candidates' marks from Papers 3 and 4 are combined, so that compensation between these papers is also possible.

In order to achieve an overall pass for the FRCPATH Part 2 Examination in Medical Microbiology, candidates must achieve a pass in **BOTH** the combined score for Papers 1 and 2 **AND** the combined score for Papers 3 and 4. When a candidate fails either of these two components, an overall fail result will be obtained and the entire examination will need to be taken in a subsequent sitting. In other words, candidates may **NOT** carry forward a pass in any part of the exam into subsequent sittings.



The Royal College of Pathologists
4th floor, 21 Prescot Street, London, E1 8BB, UK
Tel: 020 7451 6700, Fax: 020 7451 6701, www.rcpath.org
Registered Charity in England and Wales no. 261035



Component	Time allowed	Format	Marking scheme
Paper 1	2.5 hours	One Essay from a choice of two. Topics for the essays typically include laboratory management issues, antimicrobial stewardship, infection prevention, or a combination of these. AND Short-answer questions (SAQs) focused on clinical scenarios, infection prevention topics, laboratory practice, and laboratory safety. A brief vignette with interpretation of clinical, laboratory or infection control data is a common format for SAQs.	The essay is allocated one third of available marks for this paper. A closed marking scheme is used for the essay question.
Paper 2	2.5 hours	Critical appraisal of a journal article (one from a choice of two). AND Short-answer questions (SAQs), as described above.	The journal article is allocated one third of available marks for this paper
Paper 3	3 hours	Complex clinical and laboratory scenarios in microbiology and infection prevention ('long cases'). These questions cover a similar range of topics to the SAQs in Papers 1 & 2. Their format is longer, allowing for progression within each scenario to reflect evolving information encountered in clinical practice. Clinical and laboratory data and/or images may be presented, however, there will be no practical manipulation of laboratory material.	
Paper 4	3 hours	Objective structured pathology examination (OSPE) format. This comprises 15 stations, each of 9 minutes' duration, plus a variable number of rest stations. The OSPE provides a flexible format that allows broad sampling of the curriculum across a diverse range of scenarios and usually includes two face-to-face stations, each with a pair of examiners. The OSPE facilitates assessment of knowledge, application of knowledge, laboratory skills, and communication in scenarios encountered by microbiologists in clinical practice.	

Marking Schemes and Setting the Pass Mark

With the exception of the essay question, examination scripts are allocated scores based on an 'open' marking scheme. This means that any score between zero and full marks may be allocated to candidates' answers, depending on how closely they align with a structured model answer.

The mark required to pass the examination is determined at each sitting based on the level of difficulty of the open-marked questions used in that particular sitting. A group of experienced examiners sets the pass mark using the Angoff, or modified Angoff, method. In certain circumstances a post-hoc standard setting method, such as the Hofstee Compromise method, may be used.

The essay question is marked in accordance with The College closed marking scheme. Each question receives a notional 25 marks for which the maximum possible score is 15 and the minimum is 10. The marking scheme for the essay papers is described in the table below. The marks available for the essay question may be increased by multiplication, to ensure that an appropriate weighting is given to the different components within an examination paper. When essay papers incorporate questions broken into several parts, the score allocated to the overall response to the whole question, not broken down and allocated to individual parts.

Closed marking Category	Mark Awarded
Excellent pass	15 (maximum)
Clear pass	14
Pass	13
Borderline fail	12
Clear fail	11
Bad fail	10 (minimum)