

Royal College of Pathologists

Examination regulations - 2021

REPRODUCTIVE SCIENCE

These regulations must be read in conjunction with the Regulations and Guidelines

College examinations for Membership and Diplomas.

ENTRY & TRAINING REQUIREMENTS

There is no specific timing for entry to the examination. Candidates should obtain guidance as to when to sit the examination, by speaking to a senior colleague who has knowledge of the candidate's expertise and by consulting the online resources available at www.rcpath.org. Planning should take into account completion of training (where applicable) and state registration, 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. In all examinations the entire performance of the candidates will be assessed for egregious errors that suggest dangerous, harmful or unethical practice, or lack of specialist knowledge that is sufficiently serious to fail the candidate irrespective of an average mark above the pass mark.

Part 1

Part 1 will normally be taken following a minimum recommendation of three years training for Part 1 including three years of autonomous clinical practice or 1 year post HCPC registration.

Part 2

All candidates must have passed the Part 1 examination. For science graduates, the Part 2 examination will normally not be taken until eight years after obtaining the degree entry qualification.

Please note this does not necessarily mean there has to be a large gap between Parts 1 and 2. A candidate entering Part 1 at about 6–7 years post-degree or later could progress rapidly to Part 2.

Candidates for the Part 2 examination are required to give evidence of widening their experience over a minimum period of two years of training by examination of a written component, an oral examination and objective structured practical style examination with stations that assess a mixture of different: dry practical, theoretical, communication and problem-solving tasks.

STRUCTURE AND FORMAT OF THE EXAMINATION

Part 1

The examination consists of two three-hour written papers

Written examination

The written examination consists of two papers of three hours each, taken on the same day. The first requires written answers to four out of five questions, in note or essay format. The second paper comprises 20 short answer sections each with several sub-sections, all of which should be answered.

Part 2

The Part 2 examination will comprise a written component, a one hour oral examination and a three hour objective structured practical style examination. Candidates will not be allowed to sit the oral and practical examination until a proposal for a written option has been submitted and approved by the examiners.

Candidates who have passed the Part 1 Practical examination or who were awarded Part 1 through the 'grand parenting' route and wish to proceed to Part 2 before 2020 will not be required to sit the practical component and will sit a one-hour oral examination covering the areas given in the guidelines for the speciality.

Written component

The written component of Part 2 will be one of the following 3 options:

1. **A minimum of three published peer reviewed papers;** where the applicant is the first author and had involvement in the experimental design. With multi-author publications proportionately more publications would be required, the number depending upon the extent and significance of the contributions made by the candidate. A statement from the other authors or at least the senior author as to their agreement of the candidate's proportion of attribution to the papers will be required. The papers should be accompanied by a narrative placing the papers in context with the applicant's practice and relevant surrounding literature. In the case of multi-authored papers, the candidate should explain exactly his/her contribution to the work. For each paper the applicant should outline the research question, describe how the question was addressed, the main findings and how these could advance the field.
2. **A PhD or MD thesis;** normally completed during the training period. The research work used for the basis of a dissertation or PhD thesis should be in the field of Reproductive Science. The PhD should also be up to date. A recent PhD thesis that has been approved by a University may be submitted without further work. However, a PhD obtained before the attainment of the Part 1 examination will probably not be acceptable for submission alone. In this situation, an update addendum to the thesis can be submitted together with an older PhD thesis. The update addendum should bring the thesis results and subject matter up to date in the light of current research and publications, and should explain relevance to current clinical embryology practice. Such an addendum would be expected to be approximately 5000 words with at least 30 references cited.
3. **A casebook;** consisting of eight cases. The word limit of each case should be in the region of 2000 words excluding references.

Candidates must submit 8 cases in the casebook, which must provide an overview of Reproductive Science practice. At least four cases must include a substantial laboratory component. All cases must provide discussion of the context, review of published literature or relevant practice, and evidence of reflective learning. Further information regarding the format of the casebook is available on the specialty page for Reproductive Science.

4. The DClinSci thesis awarded by MAHSE for trainees in an HSST programme.

Candidates are required to submit a proposal of their intended Part 2 Written component, as described in the College guidance (detailed below). Candidates are required to submit the written work within three years of having the proposal approved. Candidates who fail to submit the work within that time will be required to apply for an extension, giving reasons, or submit a new proposal. Candidates will be required to submit their written work both electronically and in duplicate hard copy. The electronic submission will be passed through source matching software which will highlight any passages or phrases that match with material available on the internet or in other submitted work. This is a means by which plagiarism can be detected. Candidates submitting material electronically to the College will be deemed to have consented to this test. It is therefore vital that all sources of information in written submissions should be correctly documented and referenced to avoid allegations of plagiarism. Applicants whose submitted work gives cause for concern will be invited to explain themselves and may be penalised. Each case will be considered individually.

The completed written option can either be submitted before or after attempting the practical and oral examination but the proposal must be approved prior to applying for the Part 2 examination. 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.

The oral and practical examination

Candidates will not be permitted to sit the oral and practical examination until a proposal for the written option has been submitted and approved by the examiners. The examination will take place over the course of one day: a one hour oral examination and a three hour objective structured style practical examination. The aim of this examination is to establish that the candidate has demonstrated a level of competence appropriate for independent practice at consultant level. The examination will test the candidate's:

- Scientific knowledge relevant to clinical embryology, including recent relevant literature
- Ability to apply basic knowledge successfully and appropriately in a clinical context
- Understanding of laboratory organisation and direction, including principles of budget
- Quality control, safety and staff management
- Practice in terms of ethics, regulations and standards.

Each of these areas will occupy approximately one quarter of the examination. The candidate should answer all questions and pass in all areas. The oral and practical examination contains a mixture of analytical, problem-solving, interpretative tasks. These may include interpreting laboratory results, devising and communicating a patient management plan, evaluating the design or feasibility of a research project, or discussing areas of specialist practice and regulation. Tasks will involve data, images, reports, and simulations that do not make use of live human gametes or embryos.

Candidates who have previously taken and passed the Part 1 Practical examination will be eligible to proceed to the Part 2 Oral examination until Autumn 2020.

Candidates who have passed the Part 1 Written examination but not the Part 1 Practical examination will proceed to the new format Part 2 Oral and Practical Examination, as above.

Candidates will no longer need to have passed their Part 2 written option before proceeding to the Oral/Practical and Oral examination however they must have submitted and had approved a proposal prior to sitting the appropriate Part 2 examination.

Candidates who have sat the old format Part 1 examinations

All candidates entering Part 2 for the first time will have to take the Part 2 practical and oral examination.

Re-sitting Candidates

Candidates re-sitting the old format Oral examination only will not be required to re-sit the Part 2 practical examination if this has previously been awarded a pass at Part 1.

TIMING OF THE EXAMINATIONS

The Part 1 examination is offered once a year in the Autumn.

The Part 2 examination is offered once a year in the Autumn.

The Part 2 Oral-only option will be offered for the last time in Autumn 2020.

Examinations Department
The Royal College of Pathologists
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