

RCPATH/IBMS Histopathology Reporting Conjoint Board Meeting

A meeting of BMS Conjoint Board Meeting was held on Wednesday 24 November 2021 at 2:00 pm via Teams.

Minutes

Present:	Dr Gerry van Schalkwyk (GvS)	Consultant Histopathologist and Chair
	Ms Sarah May (SM)	Deputy Chief Executive, IBMS
	Ms Jo Brinklow (JB)	Director of Learning (RCPATH)
	Dr Jo Horne (JH)	Consultant Biomedical Scientist
	Prof Roger Hunt (RH)	Consultant Histopathologist
	Mr Patrick Kumah (PK)	Consultant Biomedical Scientist
	Dr Angus McGregor (McG)	Consultant Histopathologist
	Mr David Muskett (DM)	Biomedical Scientist
	Dr Guy Orchard (GO)	Consultant Biomedical Scientist
	Mr Andrew Usher (AU)	Histopathology Manager and Deputy Chair
	Mr Chris Ward (CW)	Head of Examinations, IBMS
In Attendance	Prof Mike Osborn (MO)	RCPATH - President
	Mr David Wells (DW)	IBMS - Chief Executive
	Mr Allan Wilson (AW)	IBMS - President

1. Welcome and Introductions

Mr Ward welcomed everybody to the meeting including Prof Hunt who, following the confirmation from the College, was now attending as a full member of the Board.

2. Apologies for Absence

There were apologies from Dr Lisa Ayers, Prof Berne Ferry and Dr Akhtar Husain.

3. Unconfirmed Minutes of Meeting Held on Friday 25 June 2021 and Matters Arising

The minutes were accepted as a true record of meeting.

3.1 Publication of Conjoint Board Minutes

Mr Ward explained that he had published on the Council area of the IBMS website the Terms of Reference and membership of the Board as well as the minutes from the meetings held in December 2020 and earlier in 2021. Ms Brinklow informed that she had been in discussions with Prof Osborn on this matter and that it was standard practice for the College to publish in the Fellows area of the website the minutes from the last two years.

Ms Brinklow explained that she had raised concerns with Prof Osborn that, although the minutes were an accurate representation of the discussions that had taken place at the time and that things have moved on since the meetings, the publication of the minutes as they stand may raise some issues. She stated that it was felt where the minutes currently included references to people who were not members of the Conjoint Board that it would be appropriate to redact the names of those individuals when it was not necessary to refer to them directly by name.

Board members agreed to this approach and to the publication of the minutes of the meetings held in the last two years on both the College and IBMS websites. Mr Ward agreed to liaise with Ms Brinklow over the redactions that she felt were necessary to the previous sets of minutes so that they then could be published.

ACTION: JB and CW

4. Current Issues for Reporting Qualification

Mr Ward explained that he had circulated with the papers for the meeting the document 'BMS Reporting of Histopathology - Beginning the Discussion We Need' produced by Dr Brinder Chohan which had been sent to the College and the response that Dr McGregor had written.

The Board felt it was important that it respond to the letter and the current issues, misconceptions and misunderstandings that appear to exist around the reporting qualification. Dr van Schalkwyk explained that at the recent Cellular Pathology Specialty Advisory Committee (SAC) meeting Ms Brinklow had addressed some of the factual inaccuracies in the letter.

Prof Osborn commented that the College had already undertaken considerable work to address the issues, but he recognised that there continues to be some individuals who have significant reservations relating to the initiative and that further work still needs to be done to address perceptions and concerns. It was agreed that the Board will actively engage with them to answer their concerns. Mr Wilson and Mr Wells both acknowledged the sensitivities and assured that the IBMS would be happy to support the College in any way it can to help resolve these issues.

It was agreed that communications must make it clear that the qualification is supported by Health Education England, NHS England, NHS Wales and NHS Scotland and is seen as key in resolving some of the current pathology workforce issues.

However, it must be equally clear that the development of these scientist roles is entirely at the discretion of the individual laboratories, Trusts and organisations and there is no mandate to do so.

It was felt important to stress that the Conjoint Board is the mechanism for maintaining control of the initiative of scientists undertaking reporting roles. If this Board did not provide this oversight, then local practice would be likely to develop, with an almost inevitable variation in standards and potential risk to patient safety.

Board members expressed the view that it is important that, whatever the decisions are taken on the qualification, that the candidates who are currently undertaking it are kept in mind and are regularly updated with relevant information and that the Board works to reassure them that it will support them.

It was commented that over fifty departments are actively supporting the qualification and the Board needs to engage with these, possibly through the Practice Educators, to ensure accurate information is easily available about the training, qualification and the potential scope of the roles.

It was agreed that the following actions would be taken:

Ms Brinklow to develop a draft version of a response to the open letter from Dr Chohan that had been sent to the College. This will be circulated to Prof Osbon, Dr Bateman and Board members for comment. The finalised version will be sent as a joint response from Dr van Schalkwyk and Dr Adrian Bateman to Dr Chohan. This response will be used by Ms Brinklow to develop a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) document that answers the queries that are received about the qualification and addresses some of the common misconceptions about it.

ACTION: ALL

Mr Ward to continue the work that he had undertaken since the last meeting of contacting individuals who have been awarded the Certificate of Competence of Training or who are on Stage D to get more information/case studies about what has happened in the department as a result of the individuals undertaking the qualification.

ACTION: CW

The College to host a half-day drop-in session or similar event where some of the technical questions and queries about the reporting qualification could be answered. Members of the Conjoint Board such as Dr van Schalkwyk will be asked to be part of this

event along with other College individuals including Dr Osborn, Dr Bateman and Ms Brinklow.

ACTION: COLLEGE

Following this drop-in session and taking into account the discussions at and possible issues raised at the event, in mid-2022 the Institute of Biomedical Science (IBMS), Royal College of Pathologists (RCPath) and National School of Healthcare Science is to produce a joint statement on the direction of the Reporting Qualification. This statement will also highlight the role of the National School and the work that is taking place on the Scientist Training Programme (STP) and Higher Specialist Scientific Training (HSST) programme (see item 8).

ACTION: ALL

Further work is undertaken on the promotion of the £9,000 of funding per candidate that is available to those working in a department England to support those undertaking the Reporting qualification.

ACTION: CW and SM

5. Dermatopathology Pathway Issues

The minutes of the meeting held in August that was chaired by Prof Osborn between the British Society of Dermatopathology (BSD), the British Association of Dermatologists (BAD), the Cellular Pathology SAC and members of the Histopathology Reporting Conjoint Board had been circulated with the papers. This meeting had led to the agreed list of dermatopathology specimens that would be covered in Stage D. At the end of this stage, provided the portfolio requirements were met, the individual concerned would be awarded their Certificate of Completion of Training.

Mr Ward agreed to update the guidance document 'Competence Based Framework for Scientist Reporting – Stage D of Histopathology Reporting Training' to include the Dermatopathology pathway and this would then be circulated to the Board for approval. Dr van Schalkwyk proposed, given the limited nature of agreed specimens, that rather than just sending this revised document out that it is important that the Board organises a meeting with those undertaking the dermatopathology pathway, and their educational supervisors, to communicate this information and to explain the rationale behind the decision.

ACTION: CW

Dr McGregor informed the Board of the progress of setting the Stage C exam for the Dermatopathology pathway for the one candidate who had reached this stage and that the exam would be taking place in his laboratory in early December. Dr Orchard

indicated that he would be willing to assist Dr McGregor in the setting and running of the exam.

6. Proposal for the Development of a Generic Curriculum

At previous meetings the Board had discussed and supported a proposal put forward by Dr McGregor around amending the training programme. It would have seen a move towards two bigger stages of training where candidates would undertake an initial period of generic training before they specialised in one of the approved pathways. The proposal would have led to the removal of the specialist Stage A exams in favour of a generic 'Part One' exam, but the final specialist Stage C exam and Stage D supervised reporting would have been retained.

The Board agreed that given the current issues with the Reporting qualification that now was not the time to proceed with this proposal and therefore that no further work should be undertaken on it for a period of at least six months. At that point the Board would review that decision.

7. Proposal for the Development of Limited Scope Options

Prof Osborn, Mr Wilson and Mr Wells all expressed their support for the development of limited scope reporting qualifications and the view that it would be essential to engage with the doctors from the appropriate screening programmes on this work. Members of the Conjoint Board agreed with these points.

The Board discussed the best way of approving the development of this proposal and concluded that it would be beneficial for the Board to have oversight of the work. Ms May suggested that she felt that the first step should be for members of the Board to review the GI polyps and Cervical Biopsies and LLETZ curricula that have previously been developed to see if they were appropriate.

Once that happened the proposals, which should include details on how a limited scope qualification could feed into the full qualification pathway and how it could act as a staged competence to allow for the independent reporting of a limited range of stage of specimens at an earlier stage, should be taken to the College SAC to gain the support from the College. After that the Board should approach the respective Screening Programmes to seek their input to the development.

Prof Osborn suggested that an informal communication was sent to the appropriate screening programmes to make them aware of the planned work so that once the SAC had approved the proposal that they would be asked to engage in the development work. He also suggested that it would be sensible to include reference to the proposal to develop limited scope qualifications in the response to Dr Chohan.

8. Development of Academic Qualification/ Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU)

Dr Horne and Prof Hunt outlined the work is taking place on the development of the Higher Specialist Scientific Training (HSST) for Histopathology in conjunction with MMU. He explained that expressions of interest are currently being sought from individuals who are interested in being part of the working group and that the IBMS, RCPATH and National School of Healthcare Science were stakeholders in this work and that currently the Terms of Reference and governance arrangements were being developed.

9. Training for Candidates on Reporting Qualification

Dr van Schalkwyk informed that the British Association of Gynaecological Pathologists (BAGP) had delivered training for those preparing to sit the Stage C exam and that there were plans to deliver further training in the future. He added that the BAGP website would publicise other events that may of interest to those undertaking the gynaecological pathway so candidates should be reminded of the importance of regularly visiting the site.

Board members expressed the hope that associations that represent the gastrointestinal and dermatopathology may also deliver training that would be open to and benefit both medics and scientists.

It was recognised that whilst some training is happening locally, work needed to be done to offer exam preparation events for candidates on both the Stage A and Stage C exams across all three approved pathways. Board members were once again reminded by Mr Ward to inform him of any training events that they become aware of that would be of interest to those undertaking the Reporting qualification so that he could inform the relevant candidates.

ACTION: ALL

10. Current Status of Candidates and Assessment Arrangements for 2022

Mr Ward had circulated a report showing how many candidates were at each stage of the qualification. He offered his thanks to all those involved in the Stage C exam for the Gastrointestinal and Gynaecological pathways that had taken place in October, and

stated that, in an update to the information provided in the paper, that he was pleased to state that eight out of nine candidates had passed.

Mr Ward explained that he wanted to communicate the assessment arrangements in 2022 to all the registered candidates before Christmas. Board members agreed to the proposals put forward in the paper by Mr Ward around the submission dates of the Stage B and Stage D portfolios.

Dr McGregor indicated that he had had discussed with Miss Brinklow the potential dates for the Stage A and Stage C exams in 2022. He informed that it had been provisionally agreed that there would be two Stage A exam series in 2022 (one in March and the other in September) with the Stage C exam taking place in October. It was agreed that rather than having to wait until receiving confirmation of a pass in the portfolio before candidates could apply to the College to sit the exam that they would be able to do so whilst their portfolio was being marked. This will mean that candidates will get more time to complete the portfolio.

Mr Ward indicated that he would liaise with Dr McGregor and Ms Brinklow to agree the exam dates and from that he would work out the deadline of the submission of the portfolios. He would then inform all registered candidates of the assessment arrangements in 2022.

ACTION: CW, JB and McG

11. AOB

11.1 Advert for Reporting Qualification

Dr van Schalkwyk asked about recruiting new candidates to the reporting qualification. Mr Ward explained that candidates could now apply to join at any time throughout the year and that the IBMS website had been updated to reflect this fact. It was agreed that the IBMS and College should do more to promote the availability of the reporting qualification but that this should not take place until after the drop-in session referred to in Item 4.

12. Date for Next Meeting

It was proposed that the next meeting of the Conjoint Board would take place in early 2022 and Mr Ward agreed to do a Doodle Poll to set a date for this meeting.

ACTION: CW

The meeting concluded at 16:00.

Action Log

ACTION	WHO	DATE
Minutes of Board meetings to be made available through the websites of the respective organisations	JB CW	
Board members to comment on the draft response prepared by Ms Brinklow to the open letter from Dr Chohan	ALL	10/01/2022
Mr Ward to contacting individuals who have been awarded the Certificate of Competence of Training to gather further information on the impact of undertaking this qualification	CW	14/01/2022
College to organise and host a drop-in session to address issues around the qualification	College	TBC
Produce joint statement on the direction of the Reporting Qualification	ALL	Summer 2022
Promote the availability of the HEE Funding for those undertaking the Reporting Qualification	CW and SM	31/01/2022
Update Competence Based Framework for Scientist Reporting – Stage D of Histopathology Reporting Training to include agreed Dermatopathology specimens and then circulate to Board for comment	CW	07/01/2022
Arrange meeting with Dermatopathology candidates and their supervisors to inform them of agreed specimens for this pathway	CW	31/01/2022
Mr Ward to inform all registered candidates of the assessment arrangements in 2022 once they have been agreed with Ms Brinklow and Dr McGregor	CW JB McG	07/01/2022
Date for next Conjoint Board Meeting to be agreed via a Doodle Poll	CW	14/01/2022
On-Going Actions		
Dr van Schalkwyk to highlight key issues from Board meetings to the Cellular Pathology Specialty Advisory Committee (SAC)	GvS	
Board members to inform Mr Ward of training courses/events that would be of benefit to those on Reporting qualification	ALL	
Mr Ward to discuss with Ms May production of regular newsletter for those on Reporting qualification	SM CW	
On-Hold Actions - This action to picked up if and when it is decided to proceed with the development of the Generic Curriculum		
Dr McGregor to produce paper summarising options for future assessment arrangements for Reporting qualification	McG	