



The Royal College of **Pathologists**
Pathology: the science behind the cure

College examinations for Fellowship, Diplomas and Certificates

Regulations and guidelines for 2024

**December 2023
(Superseding all previous editions)**

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Updated information and news about the examinations, the application process, written papers from previous examinations etc. are posted on the College website:

<https://www.rcpath.org/trainees/examinations.html>

All communications and enquiries should be addressed to:

The Royal College of Pathologists
Examinations Department
6 Alie Street
London
E1 8QT

Email: exams@rcpath.org

Regulations and guidelines for College examinations for Fellowship and Diplomas

Introduction

- 1 This document, along with the relevant specialty-specific regulations, contains the information candidates must read before applying to sit a Royal College of Pathologists Fellowship, Diploma or Certificate examination. Its content is divided into policy and background information as well as specific requirements. Where a direct instruction is given e.g. *must* or *will* this is an obligation on the part of the candidate or the College. Where the text uses a passive or conditional tense e.g. *should* or *may* this is a guideline or a recommendation.

Policy and background information

2 Fellowship of the Royal College of Pathologists

Fellowship of the Royal College of Pathologists (FRCPath) is a mark of professional standing and esteem achieved through one of three possible routes: examinations, publications or invitation of Council. The latter two routes are for academic and distinguished pathologists and are inappropriate for trainees.

FRCPath alone grants no right or authority for unsupervised clinical practice in a pathology specialty. For clinical practice in the UK, this right and authority is conferred by specialist registration with the General Medical Council (GMC) and by equivalent registration processes for dental practitioners, clinical scientists and veterinary pathologists.

The FRCPath examination constitutes an assessment of the candidate's knowledge of their specialty and their ability to apply that knowledge in the practice of the specialty. The tests of theory, taken as SBA (single best answer) or EMQ (extended matching question), short answer or essay papers in FRCPath Part 1 of the examination, aim to determine whether an individual has successfully acquired a core body of knowledge that will underpin their ability to practise in their chosen specialty. The practical examinations, largely taken at FRCPath Part 2, are designed to test candidates' practical skills and understanding of the specialty and may include written tests in some specialties. They aim to show whether the candidate can apply their knowledge appropriately and safely to the practice of the specialty.

The overall aim of the examination for medical trainees is to provide external quality assurance that a trainee is on course to reach the standard appropriate for entry on the GMC's Specialist Register and practice as an unsupervised specialist in the specialty. For non-medical candidates, passing the FRCPath examination indicates they have reached the standard appropriate for unsupervised practice.

On passing the FRCPath Part 2 examination, candidates are invited to become a Fellow of the College which overrides eligibility for all other College membership grades. Fellows must agree to sign a consent form agreeing to be bound by the Ordinances, Byelaws and Conduct Regulations of the College and any amendments to them in the future, to further the objects and best interests of the College and to uphold the best possible standards in relation to pathology and patient care.

3 Fellowship by examination and appointment to consultant and other senior posts

The achievement of Fellowship by examination has long been regarded as a marker of specialist status and as an indicator that a pathologist has achieved many of the competencies required for practice at consultant level. However, in the UK, completion of training programmes also requires satisfactory performance in workplace-based assessments and progression through annual appraisal. Fellowship is not solely or even necessarily a criterion for appointment as a consultant.

The decision on the suitability of a candidate for appointment to a particular post is the sole prerogative and responsibility of the appointment committee acting on behalf of the employer. The possession of FRCPath by examination is one key criterion in determining eligibility for appointment to posts in pathology specialties in the UK, but it does not override the appointment committee's responsibility to determine that a candidate has undergone appropriate training and possesses all the competencies required to fulfil the requirements of the post. Fellowship obtained by routes other than examination is not equivalent to FRCPath by examination in terms of conferring eligibility for appointment.

4 Equality and Diversity

The Royal College of Pathologists is committed to the principle and practice of diversity and equality in employment, Fellowship, academic activities, assessments, examinations and training. This means that everyone should be treated in a fair, open and honest manner. Our approach is a comprehensive one and reflects all areas of diversity, recognising the value of each individual. We aim to ensure that no one is treated less favourably than another on the grounds of age; disability; gender reassignment; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; or sexual orientation. Our intention is to reflect not only the letter but also the spirit of equality legislation.

The College is aware that candidates come from a range of backgrounds and that for many it takes time to organise themselves for an examination. Every effort will be made to timetable examinations as far in advance as possible. For some examinations, particularly those that use university facilities or have a small number of candidates, the period of advance notice may be shorter.

The College's examinations will avoid UK bank holidays. The College will make every effort to avoid scheduling examinations at the same time as other major religious festivals but this might not always be possible (for example, if an examination venue is only available for use by the College on a particular day or if examiners are only available on certain days).

The College will make reasonable adjustments for candidates with disabilities or health issues wherever necessary. Candidates with any particular requirements or concerns are urged to contact the College as early as possible to discuss their needs.

5 Entry criteria for Parts 1 and 2 Fellowship examinations, Certificate and Diploma examinations

Candidates are admitted to College examinations solely at the discretion of College Council. Council may refuse to admit to the examination procedure any candidate who infringes any of the regulations for College examinations or who has been found guilty under the terms of the Examination Candidate Misconduct Policy (see Appendix 1).

Candidates will be admitted to an examination (subject to paragraph 16 below) if they have fulfilled the recommended training requirements, normally within the last five years, and are deemed ready to apply by their educational supervisor/sponsor. Candidates may apply for each part of the examination when they and their educational supervisor/sponsor consider that they are sufficiently prepared. In general, the College recommends that medical candidates in a specialty training programme do not attempt the FRCPATH Part 1 examination before completing at least one year of specialty training and FRCPATH Part 2 before completing at least three years of specialty training.

5.1 Medical and dental candidates

Candidates must be registered medical or dental practitioners. Candidates who hold a primary medical or dental qualification approved by the GMC or General Dental Council (GDC) must be currently registered with the GMC or GDC in the UK or the appropriate body in the country where they are practising. Candidates holding a medical or dental qualification not recognised by the GMC or GDC in the UK must provide appropriate documents with their application form to demonstrate current registration or permission to practise in the country or territory of domicile either in which the qualification was granted or where they are practising.

The following specialty examinations are open to medical candidates only: Dermatopathology, Forensic Pathology, Haematology, Histopathology, Infection, Neuropathology, Paediatric Pathology, the Certificate in Higher Autopsy Training, the Certificate in Higher Cervical Cytology Training, and the Certificate in Medical Genetics. Oral Pathology is open to dental candidates only.

Candidates should refer to the relevant specialty regulations and guidelines for further information.

5.2 Clinical Scientist and Biomedical Scientist candidates

Candidates must hold a qualification that is acceptable to Council. For this purpose, Council recognises 1st and 2nd class Honours degrees or equivalent qualifications granted in the UK and Republic of Ireland in appropriate science subjects. Applications may also be considered on an individual basis from those holding other science degrees awarded in the UK and Republic of Ireland and from those holding science degrees from universities outside of the UK. Applications from Biomedical Scientists will be considered on an individual basis for relevant FRCPATH examinations. Candidates should refer to the relevant specialty regulations and guidelines for further information.

5.3 Veterinary Pathology and Veterinary Clinical Pathology candidates

Candidates must hold a qualification that is acceptable to Council. For this purpose, Council recognises the qualifications in veterinary medicine that are able to be registered in the UK. Veterinary Pathology and Veterinary Clinical Pathology are open to candidates with a qualification in veterinary medicine only. Candidates should refer to the relevant specialty regulations and guidelines for further information.

6 Requirements for progression through the examination procedure

All FRCPATH examinations are conducted in English. Before attempting the FRCPATH Part 1 examinations, candidates for whom English is not their first language are advised to satisfy themselves that their English language ability is the equivalent to that required to achieve:

- an overall score of 7.5 in the academic International English Language Testing System (IELTS), and at least 7.0 in each of the four sections, or
- an overall B grade and above for the Medicine Occupational English Test (OET) with at least grade 'B' in each testing area (speaking, listening, reading and writing).

The scores/grades should be obtained in the same test.

6.1 FRCPATH Part 1, Certificate and Diploma procedures

FRCPATH Part 1 examinations in all specialties are a written test of knowledge. These examinations are taken online via TestReach, an online examination platform. More information on TestReach is available in the [Frequently Asked Questions](#) section of the College website. Guidance as to when to take the FRCPATH Part 1 in specialty training is outlined in the [specialty specific regulations](#).

Candidates who fail to satisfy the examiners in the Diploma in Dermatopathology written papers will not go forward to the practical and oral stage.

Candidates successfully completing all components of a Part 1 or Diploma examination will be offered Diplomate status. More information about Diplomate status of the College is available on the [College website](#).

Candidates are normally only permitted four attempts at each of the FRCPATH Part 1, Certificate and Diploma examinations. Application for additional attempts will only be permitted under exceptional circumstances and with permission of Council in accordance with the College's Additional Attempts Guidance for Candidates and Supervisors. Candidates will not be permitted more than six (i.e. two additional) attempts at Part 1. More information about this policy is available on the [College website](#).

6.2 FRCPATH Part 2 and Certificate procedures

Candidates may usually only enter for the FRCPATH Part 2 examination when they have successfully completed the FRCPATH Part 1 examination.

In those specialties that require a written FRCPATH Part 2 submission – with the exception of Forensic Pathology where candidates should refer to their specialty regulations - candidates can submit a project proposal for this at any time after applying for the FRCPATH Part 1. Candidates in specialties with a written option will not be permitted to sit the practical and oral until they have submitted their project proposal. Proposals must be submitted before the closing deadline for the examination session in which the candidate wishes to sit. Candidates should consult the relevant [specialty regulations](#) for further information about the timing of the written component in relation to the practical and oral Part 2 examinations.

Candidates are normally only permitted four attempts at each of the FRCPATH Part 1, Certificate and Diploma examinations. Application for additional attempts will only be permitted under exceptional circumstances and with permission of Council in accordance with the College's Additional Attempts Guidance for Candidates and Supervisors. Candidates will not be permitted more than six (i.e. two additional) attempts at Part 1. More information about this policy is available on the [College website](#).

Candidates must sit the FRCPATH Part 2 examination in the same specialty in which they passed the FRCPATH Part 1.

There are three exceptions to this rule:

- i) Candidates who have passed the FRCPATH Part 1 examination in Histopathology may, after appropriate training, attempt the Part 2 examination in one of the following: Forensic Pathology, Neuropathology, Paediatric Pathology or Histopathology;
- ii) Candidates who sit the FRCPATH Part 1 examination in Infection or the FRCPATH Part 1 in Medical Microbiology and Virology may proceed to either the FRCPATH Part 2 in Medical Microbiology or Virology.
- iii) Where transitional arrangements may be in place following the introduction of a new specialty.

Candidates who pass the FRCPATH Part 1 examination in Haematology Clinical Science must attempt the corresponding FRCPATH Part 2 examination.

When an FRCPATH examination for a new specialty is established, specific transitional arrangements for candidates who have already passed the Part 1 examination in a related specialty are published.

Candidates may apply for the appropriate FRCPATH Part 2 examination if recommended to do so by a GMC Certificate of Eligibility for Specialist Registration (CESR) decision.

6.3 Ongoing currency of individual parts or modules of an FRCPATH examination

A pass at an individual part or module of an examination will normally remain current for up to seven years. After this time, applicants who wish to attempt a subsequent part or module, including the written project, must seek permission from the Clinical Director of Examinations, who will consider each such application on an individual basis along with the Chair of the Examiners' Panel in that specialty. Applicants must provide a comprehensive CV and should describe the reasons for the delay in progression. They will be expected to demonstrate ongoing training and/or continuing professional development within their specialty, and explain the reasons for any career breaks. A letter of support from their supervisor must be included in the application. Any changes in the curriculum and/or examination system since the pass at the previous part or module will also be taken into account.

Potential candidates must apply to the Examinations Department, providing the information described above, no earlier than July for the next Spring session and February for the next Autumn session. If permission is granted, the candidate must submit an application to enter that session in the usual way and may proceed to further attempts at the examination if necessary following the same procedure as for all other candidates. Where permission is not granted, grounds for this outcome will be given and the applicant is expected to retake the Part 1 examination. The decision of the Clinical Director of Examinations is final.

Further information is also available on the GMC website.

7 Guidance for candidates undertaking written projects as part of the FRCPATH Part 2 examination.

Regulations and guidance are contained in the separate document on the [College website](#) for candidates in specialties where a written project for the FRCPATH Part 2 examination is required. Candidates should carefully read the specific instructions in the relevant specialty section for guidance on which option is appropriate for their specialty.

Candidates who are HSST trainees undertaking the MAHSE DClinSci should refer to the Memorandum of Understanding for guidance on submitting a research project.

See Section 6 for the regulations concerning the sequencing of the Part 2 written and practical and oral examinations.

8 Guidance for candidates outside of the UK

The FRCPATH examinations are open to candidates from outside of the UK. Candidates are reminded that the examination is orientated towards UK practice and is structured around the relevant UK curriculum. Candidates are strongly recommended to study the curriculum and UK [training requirements](#) of their specialty, as well as the relevant NICE guidelines and other recognised national [guidelines](#), to ensure that they are appropriately prepared for the examination. In order to have a good chance of success in the examinations candidates should have access to appropriate training programmes, which must incorporate robust continuous assessment. Candidates from outside of the UK who do not prepare in this way are unlikely to be able to demonstrate that they have reached the appropriate standard to pass the examination.

9 Marking systems used in Fellowship examinations and Diploma examinations

9.1 Written papers examinations

The College operates a 'closed' or categorical marking system for essays and some other papers. Each question receives a notional 25 marks. Where essay papers incorporate questions broken into several parts, the marks are allocated to the overall response to the whole question, not broken down and allocated to individual parts. The marking scheme for the essay papers is given below.

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

The minimum pass mark is 50% overall. A total mark of 47.5% or less on one paper is a definite fail, but a total mark of between 48–49% on one paper may be compensated by a corresponding surplus of marks in the other paper if no egregious errors have been identified.

9.2 Single Best Answer question/extended matching question (SBA/EMQ) examinations

The Part 1 examination in some specialties consists of an SBA or combined SBA/EMQ examination, rather than a written examination (please refer to individual specialty sections). The examination is paper-based and computer-marked.

Marks are not deducted for incorrect answers and candidates are therefore advised to attempt all questions. There is only one correct answer for each question and, if more than one answer is entered, no marks will be awarded for that question.

The pass mark for SBA/EMQ papers is set for each individual paper by a standard setting procedure undertaken by members of the relevant Panel of Examiners to determine minimum acceptable competence. This is currently a modified Angoff method.

Please note that where an examination changes from a written to an SBA/EMQ examination, the format, mark scheme and standard setting methods change but the content (knowledge and understanding) will remain unchanged. However changes in content, knowledge and understanding may occur when a curriculum is reviewed and republished.

9.3 Short Answer Questions

The Part 1 examination in some specialties may comprise, at least in part, short answer questions.

The marks allocated to each individual part of each short answer question (SAQ) are indicated on the question paper. The pass mark for SAQ papers is set for each individual paper by a standard setting procedure undertaken by members of the relevant Panel of Examiners to determine minimum acceptable competence. This is currently a modified Angoff method.

Sample questions are available on the College website in the relevant [specialty section](#).

9.4 Practical and oral examinations

The pass mark for practical and oral examinations is determined by an appropriate standard setting procedure undertaken by members of the relevant Panel of Examiners.

Some specialties require candidates to obtain a pass mark in certain or all sections of the practical examination, and a lower mark in one section cannot then be compensated by a corresponding surplus of marks in another section. Please refer to the relevant [specialty section](#) for further information.

9.5 Egregious errors

An egregious error is an **extremely serious error** of a proposed action or actions (commission or omission) made in response to a question in the oral or written examination **that is dangerous and has a high likelihood of causing serious harm to the life or wellbeing of a patient or others**. A response suggesting unethical practice or lack of probity may also be regarded as an egregious error. The entire performance of the candidate in the examination is then considered by the senior examiners in that specialty to determine whether the error is sufficiently serious for that candidate to fail the examination irrespective of their other marks in the examination.

If this occurs during an oral examination, examiners will give candidates the opportunity to explain the rationale for their response if it is judged to be an egregious error. It must be clear that the candidate understood the scenario and was given the opportunity to review the error in order for the egregious error policy to be applied.

If one or more examiners believe that a candidate has made an egregious error during the examination an appropriate mark will be recorded and brought to the attention of the examiners at the debriefing meeting or to the moderating examiner in written examinations. If the majority of the examiners are in agreement, then the candidate will be placed in a borderline category for evaluation. As for other borderline candidates, the examiners must review the entire performance of the candidate in the examination.

The weight attached to an egregious error must take into account such factors as:

- the degree of potential danger to the patient
- whether the same error is repeated more than once during the examination
- whether the error is identified as part of a persistent or common pattern of inadequate performance.
- any relevant ethical or probity consideration

A decision to fail a candidate that involves an egregious error must be taken after discussion by all examiners involved in marking the relevant component or part of the examination. It requires a majority agreement of the examiners and the discussion and decisions are thoroughly documented by the lead examiner or Chair.

Specific requirements for entering and sitting Fellowship, Diploma and Certificate examinations.

10 Communication about Fellowship, Diploma and Certificate examinations

Candidates must direct all communications and enquiries about the College's examinations to the [Examinations Department](#). Candidates must not contact any member of the panel of examiners or the Clinical Director of Examinations unless specifically instructed to do so by the Examinations Department. To attempt to do so without such instruction will be regarded as possible candidate misconduct.

All communication from the Examinations Department to candidates will be by e-mail with the exception of the final result letter. Examination entries will be confirmed at the end of January for the Spring sitting and the end of July for the Autumn sitting with more specific instructions sent approximately 4-6 weeks before the examination. Candidates who do not receive expected e-mail communications must contact the [Examinations Department](#) as soon as possible. Candidates are advised to add RCPATH and TestReach to their safe senders lists to avoid e-mails going into junk or spam folders.

11 Timing and frequency of examinations

There are two examination sessions a year. An examination timetable for 2024 is outlined in Appendix 3.

12 Application forms

Entry to any College examination is usually only permitted by online submission of the application form to the Examinations Department and other appropriate documentation, no later than the relevant closing date specified in the timetable on the College website. The examinations online application form can be found on the College website.

Applicants must be sponsored by a Fellow of the College recently involved in their training. In the UK, this is expected to be an educational supervisor. When this is impracticable, the head of the department in which the candidate is working can be the sponsor.

Candidates must review their application and ensure that all details are correct – including spelling of names and examination applied for – before submitting the application as these are the details that will be used by the College.

Candidates must pay the correct examination fees through the [College website](#) at the same time as submitting an online application. It will not be possible to complete the online application form without making a payment.

Before starting their application, candidates must ensure that they have the following documents or information to hand:

- passport style photo (face only, must not be edited, filtered or altered in any way) when making a first examination application
- sponsor form signed by the candidate's Educational Supervisor or equivalent
- qualifications from first degree to present date (certificates are not required)
- employment history
- credit or debit card for payment

A copy of the form to be signed off by the candidate's sponsor will be available to the candidate on the website for completion by their sponsor. This form **must** be submitted with the application before the closing deadline.

Incomplete or late applications will not be accepted. Candidates who experience difficulties meeting the deadline or with the online application/payment process must contact the Examinations Department for advice before the deadline passes.

Once an application has been completed candidates will receive an e-mail receipt of payment and a second e-mail containing a copy of their application form. Candidates who do not receive one or both of these e-mails must contact the Examinations Department as soon as possible.

Candidates will be able to amend their contact details in the [My RCPath](#) section of the College website. Candidates will not be able to make amendments to their name in this section but must contact the [Membership Department](#) if this is required.

13 Examination centres outside of the UK

It may be possible to arrange to sit the FRCPATH Part 2 in Histopathology in Irbid (Jordan), Dubai (UAE) or Cairo (Egypt) if there are sufficient applicants but all other FRCPATH Part 2 examinations are only available to be taken in the UK. Availability of FRCPATH Part 2 examination centres outside of the UK will be indicated on the website and candidates should contact the Examinations Department to express their interest in taking the examination in the available centre.

The FRCPATH Part 2 Histopathology examination will be offered every session in a centre in Ireland or Northern Ireland with priority given to resident candidates.

14 Fees

Fees for the Part 1, Part 2, Diploma and Certificate examinations are set by the College's Trustee Board. The current fees are listed on the [College website](#).

15 Disability and special situations

15.1 Disability and Reasonable Adjustments

The College is committed to ensuring that no candidates are disadvantaged in their examinations. Subject to sufficient advance notice, the College is willing to make reasonable adjustments for candidates who have a disability or impairment in line with the Equality Act 2010. Under GMC guidelines, 'Colleges are required to consider providing reasonable adjustments to people with disabilities'.

The College is willing to discuss any reasonable requests that we are capable of accommodating and will also consider temporary conditions (for example pregnancy, musculo-skeletal injuries, and so forth) subject to appropriate documentary evidence.

Candidates with dyslexia must submit a post-16 assessment report from a chartered or practitioner psychologist or a specialist teacher holding a current assessment practicing certificate and a letter of support from their educational supervisor or training programme director (or an individual of equivalent standing if applying from outside of the UK).

Candidates who are pregnant and anticipate that they may need particular consideration (i.e. facilities to enable them to sit down during practical examinations) must contact the Examinations Department as soon as this need becomes apparent. Although examiners will do their best to give candidates full consideration on the day, examinations are conducted with the local facilities that are available and it may not be possible to meet candidates' requirements if their needs are not known in advance.

Candidates who wish to request a reasonable adjustment should fill in the form (Appendix 2) in this document, providing full details of their condition along with supporting evidence. Upon completion, please send the form to exams@rcpath.org. Please note that if you have already made a request for a reasonable adjustment on a previous occasion, **you must still make a new request for every examination taken with the College**. Hard copies sent by post will not be accepted.

Please ensure that you contact the College no later than two weeks after the closing deadline for your examination session to discuss your needs. Although examiners will do their best to give candidates full consideration on the day, examinations are conducted with the local facilities that are available and it may not be possible to meet candidates' requirements if their needs are not known in advance.

Adverse circumstances known to the candidate in advance of the examination will not normally be accepted as mitigating factors in their performance in the examination if they could have withdrawn. In such circumstances, the candidate's papers will be marked and their result issued as normal.

Any variation of the examination regulations or procedures will be at the discretion of the Clinical Director of Examinations and may consist, for example, of allowing additional time for written papers or the waiving of re-sit charges. Additional marks will not be awarded under any circumstances.

15.2 Illegible Scripts

The College will make every effort to mark a script where the handwriting is not clearly legible. If an examiner deems a script to be illegible, the script will be sent to the appropriate Panel Chair to determine its legibility. If the Panel Chair also deems the script to be illegible, the College will request that the script is dictated by the candidate for transcribing in the presence of an invigilator.

Candidates should note that examinations scripts often have to be marked to tight timescales, so it may be possible to offer candidates only a very limited period during which transcription can be performed. Transcription will normally take place at the College although it may sometimes be possible to arrange an alternative venue.

Please note that the sole purpose of this visit would be for the transcription of examination material and any alteration, addition, or omission of text is forbidden. Following transcription, the candidate will sign a declaration to confirm that the transcript is a true copy of the original. All costs associated with transcription will be borne by the candidate.

If a candidate is offered the opportunity for transcription and does not accept, then no marks will be awarded to the parts of the script that are deemed to be illegible.

16 Prioritisation of applications

The College's ability to admit all applicants may be determined by the total number of applicants and the availability of suitable premises. While all reasonable steps will be taken to ensure there is the capacity to examine all applicants the College will prioritise applications in the very unlikely situation that it is necessary.

FRCPATH Part 1 written examinations

There is no limit to the number of candidates for any of the FRCPATH Part 1 written examinations.

Practical and oral examinations

Subject to their being eligible, priority will be given to applicants who are:

- in a GMC-approved or HSST training programme
- undertaking training in the UK via the College's sponsorship or MTI schemes
- directed by the GMC to undergo an assessment by FRCPATH examination to support a Certificate of Eligibility for Specialist Registration (CESR).

If it is impossible to examine all other applicants who have applied for that session, applications will be accepted in the following order:

1. currently in UK employment in a relevant post. For those specialties that include a Part 2 written component, first priority will be given to candidates who have already completed and submitted it and second priority to those who have already submitted a proposal, by the closing date for applications;
2. formerly in a GMC-approved or HSST training programme
3. other applicants.

Candidates in the above categories will be told as soon as possible after the published closing date for applications whether or not their application has been accepted. If an application cannot be accepted candidates will be given the option of a full refund of fees, joining a waiting list or transferring to the next session.

17 Withdrawal from the examination

Notification of withdrawal from the examination must be given to the Examinations Department in writing. This must be done by [email](#).

Candidates who withdraw from the examination up to two weeks after the relevant closing date may have their fee refunded. **Candidates who withdraw later than two weeks after the relevant closing date will forfeit the entire fee.** Forfeiture of the fee will be waived only in exceptional circumstances and with appropriate supporting evidence.

Candidates from outside of the UK should note that failure to obtain a visa would not normally be considered an exceptional circumstance.

Whilst candidates may withdraw up until the day before the examination, candidates in smaller specialties should make every effort to provide as much notice as possible if they are unable to attend an examination.

Candidates who present themselves for the examination are deemed to be prepared for and capable of taking it. **Candidates who are aware, in advance of the examination, of exceptional adverse personal circumstances, such as bereavement or temporary or permanent illness or injury, which they feel may affect their performance in the examination, are advised not to present themselves for examination.** In such instances, a withdrawal without loss of fee on receipt of appropriate supporting evidence will be allowed.

Candidates who become ill immediately before or during the examination itself and who wish this to be taken into consideration must inform the Examinations Department in writing as soon as possible after the examination, and before the results are issued, with appropriate documentary evidence. Candidates must provide independent corroboration of their situation, such as a certificate or letter from their general practitioner, consultant or clinical psychologist. Please note, additional marks will not be awarded under any circumstances.

18 Requirements at examination centres

18.1 Security at examination centres

Candidates must bring official identification with a photograph (i.e. passport, driving licence, national identity card or military warrant card) to all College examinations. **NHS and university identity cards are not accepted.** This identification should be visible on the candidate's desk at all times during written examinations, and must be produced when requested at practical, oral and autopsy examination centres. Where necessary visual identity checks will be carried out discreetly and with appropriate cultural sensitivity. Candidates without appropriate identification will not be admitted to the examination. Candidates whose official identification is in a different name to that used on the application form (e.g. following a change in marital status) must notify the Examinations Department prior to sitting the examination. Please note that communications about forthcoming examinations such as the provision of a candidate number and the time and location of an examination will only be made with the candidate him/herself.

Candidates must **not** bring books or other printed materials, mobile telephones, tablets or any other electronic equipment (including those with internet or mobile network connectivity such as smartwatches and smartglasses) into any examination room. The only exception is for practical examinations where candidates have been given **specific instructions** about the equipment they may bring. Candidates must **not** enter or leave any examination room until permitted to do so by the local examiner or invigilator. Candidates must bring any stationery required for their examination in a clear plastic pencil case or bag. Candidates must **not** remove any item from the examination room which does not belong to them.

Candidates may only use calculators where specifically indicated in the regulations and guidelines for that specialty but must not use programmable calculators or devices with internet or mobile network connectivity. Calculators will not be provided by examination centres.

18.2 Security for online examinations

Candidates sitting examinations in an online format must also adhere to the security measures outlined above. Environment checks will be undertaken before commencing the examination to ensure that the immediate area surrounding the candidate is clear – all items should be removed from desks and mobile phones and other devices must be switched off and removed from the room. All examinations will be fully live proctored and any behaviour which is viewed as an infringement will be reported to the College for investigation under the Examination Candidate Misconduct Policy (see Appendix 1).

18.3 Dress code at examination centres

Candidates presenting themselves for examination should dress as they would for day-to-day clinical practice or equivalent. For practical examinations, clothing should conform to health and safety requirements. Candidates are requested not to wear forms of dress that cover the face while undertaking oral examinations in order to ensure effective communication.

For oral examinations taken remotely, candidates should give due consideration to their location in order to present themselves as professionally as possible.

18.4 Microscopes for examinations

For examinations where an individual microscope is required (Part 2 examinations in Haematology, Haematology Clinical Science, Histopathology, Neuropathology, Oral Pathology, Paediatric Pathology and the Diploma in Dermatopathology practical examination) candidates must provide their own.

19 Confidentiality of examination materials

Question papers and other question matter such as images must not be removed from the examination centre, and questions must not be copied or memorised and thereafter reconstructed or distributed, including via any form of social media or instant messaging services. To attempt to do so will be regarded as possible misconduct and may be dealt with under the Examination Candidate Misconduct Policy (see Appendix 1). Possible penalties include the candidate's attempt at that examination being declared void or part void and referral of the incident to the candidate's Senior Responsible Officer (in the UK), or similar if working overseas for potential consideration by the Professional Regulator.

The questions in College examination papers are covered by copyright law. It is a breach of copyright to reproduce and/or distribute any examination materials, other than past papers and sample questions that are made available on the College website in the relevant specialty section or on other agreed hosting platforms with permission from the College (such as the Virtual Pathology at the University of [Leeds](#) website for Histopathology Part 2 Surgical Histology cases) in order for candidates to familiarise themselves with the format and type of questions.

All examination papers, materials and candidate scripts remain the property of the College.

20 Candidate misconduct

It is a condition of entry to any of its examinations that candidates must familiarise themselves with, and observe, all the regulations relating to the confidentiality and proper conduct of that examination. They must abide by the terms of the College's Examination Candidate Misconduct Policy (see Appendix 1). Any breach of this policy will be considered as possible academic dishonesty, penalties for which include the results of an examination being declared void or part void and barring from applying for examinations in the future. Academic dishonesty is a form of improbity. The College reserves the right to notify the candidate's Responsible Officer or educational supervisor and could lead to notification of the relevant regulatory body.

21 Notification of results

Results will be published on the College website by midday on the specified results day. Formal letters will be sent to candidates by first class or airmail post on the same day; these letters will be sent to the address provided by the candidate on the day of their examination.

The College sends personal data for all GMC registered candidates, including data about examination results, to the GMC for quality assurance and research purposes and to facilitate the awarding of CCTs. For candidates who are Higher Specialist Scientific Training Programme (HSST) trainees, the College sends personal data, including data about examination results to Manchester Academy for Healthcare Scientist Education and the National School of Healthcare Science.

22 Feedback

Candidates should note that exams are a summative test of whether they meet the set standards and that detailed feedback should not be expected. Feedback will provide a summary of performance at the particular sitting concerned. It is not intended to offer direct guidance on what steps would be required to pass. Candidates should not use it as the sole basis of preparing for future attempts. It should be used in conjunction with evidence about their overall progress in the specialty but should not, on its own, be the only piece of evidence used to determine a plan for remediation.

The College encourages unsuccessful examination candidates to seek guidance from specialty advisers and educational supervisors. To support this, the College will provide specialty advisers and educational supervisors with further relevant information upon request.

For MCQ/EMQ examinations, candidates' result notification will include at minimum their score and the pass score.

For written essay/SAQ examinations, candidates will be informed of their result and no feedback is provided directly to them. The result notification will advise unsuccessful candidates to contact their specialty adviser or educational supervisor to discuss their result. To inform that discussion, the specialty adviser or educational supervisors can obtain a summary of a candidate's performance for each question from the Examinations Department. Feedback must be requested within three weeks of the notification of the result.

For practical and oral examinations, feedback sent to unsuccessful candidates with their result notification is restricted to a list of the sections/components passed and, where provided, summary reasons for the failure. Candidates are advised to contact their specialty adviser or educational supervisor to discuss their result. For practical examinations, the specialty adviser or educational supervisor can obtain a numeric breakdown for each individual component, including any comments provided by the examiners, from the Examinations Department. Further feedback must be requested within three weeks of the notification of the result.

23 Complaints

There is a complaints procedure for all activities managed by the Examinations Department not directly linked to an outcome of an examination. The complaints procedure is available on the [College website](#).

24 Appeals

A candidate who has taken any College examination has the right of appeal if there is evidence of a procedural or administrative irregularity by the College or its contractors in the conduct or content of the examination that has adversely affected the candidate's result. Any such appeal must be made by the candidate him/herself, in writing to the Examinations Department (and not to any individual examiner) within two weeks of issue of either the examination result or within one week of issue of further feedback. The candidate must state summary grounds for the appeal. Candidates must be able to provide evidence that the decision against which they are appealing meets at least one of the following criteria:

- The decision was biased or discriminatory.
- There was a substantial procedural irregularity.

In no circumstances will papers be re-marked or be sent back to candidates. Only in exceptional circumstances, where it is clear that a paper has been overlooked or marks incorrectly totalled, may a fail mark be converted to a pass. Appeals submitted on the grounds that a candidate seeks to challenge the professional or academic judgement of the examiners will **not** be considered.

The appeals procedure is available on the [College website](#).

Appendix 1: Examination Candidate Misconduct Policy

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The College expects and requires a very high degree of professionalism from its candidates. It expects candidates to be honest. Any attempt by a candidate to gain an advantage over others will be treated most severely.
- 1.2 Any misconduct at any RCPATH examination will be investigated and dealt with according to this policy. Candidates are deemed to have understood and agreed to respect and abide by all regulations, including this Misconduct Policy, by virtue of entering to sit an examination.
- 1.3 This policy continues to apply to candidates even after the end of the session when they applied to sit an examination.
- 1.4 This policy does not apply to anyone employed by or acting in any official capacity on behalf of the College, including invigilators and members of College staff. Such staff should expect their conduct to be investigated under disciplinary procedures and/or the facts to be reported to their manager, supervisor or equivalent. Fellows acting as College examiners are subject to a separate policy (the Examiner Code of Practice).

2. Definition of misconduct

2.1 Misconduct includes, but is not limited to:

- 2.1.1 Any attempt to gain access to the content of an examination before it is held;
- 2.1.2 Falsely claiming a disability or right to a reasonable adjustment;
- 2.1.3 Failure to abide by the reasonable instructions of an examiner, invigilator or member of College staff;
- 2.1.4 The introduction and/or use of any materials or documents other than those specifically permitted for the examination, including but not limited to the use of recording or transmitting equipment;
- 2.1.5 Deliberately hiding materials from an online proctor in a remote examination which give the candidate an unfair advantage;
- 2.1.6 Any attempt to access the internet during an examination or when under examination conditions;
- 2.1.7 Any attempt to communicate with another candidate during the examination;
- 2.1.8 Any attempt to gain access to or read the work of another candidate;
- 2.1.9 Colluding with another candidate to gain material advantage in any way;

- 2.1.10 Unacceptable or disruptive behaviour during the examination, including failure to switch off an electronic device or alarm which causes a disturbance to other candidates during the examination;
- 2.1.11 The inclusion of inappropriate, offensive or obscene material in answers;
- 2.1.12 Continuing to write or give answers after the allotted time;
- 2.1.13 Removal of material or content from an examination, other than those documents specifically permitted;
- 2.1.14 The release of content from an examination to a third party without the express permission of an examiner, invigilator or member of College staff;
- 2.1.15 Uploading questions to the internet or distributing them by social media or written means;
- 2.1.16 Bribing or attempting to bribe an examiner, invigilator or member of College staff;
- 2.1.17 Fabrication or alteration of eligibility or identification documents;
- 2.1.18 Impersonation of a candidate or allowing oneself to be impersonated;
- 2.1.19 Any deliberate attempt to undermine the integrity of an examination;
- 2.1.20 Any other form of cheating, deception, fraud or conduct that is likely to give an unfair advantage to a candidate or candidates; and
- 2.1.21 Encouraging or assisting any of the above.

3. Reporting misconduct

- 3.1 The College acknowledges the serious nature of allegations of misconduct and their adverse effect on a candidate's reputation and career. The process for dealing with alleged misconduct is therefore kept strictly confidential, although if proven the College is under duty to share findings with relevant others (such as Training Programme directors and Responsible Officers).

Under examination conditions

- 3.2 If misconduct is suspected under normal examination conditions, it should be reported to the College by an Incident Report Form. An Incident Report Form can be completed by anyone who becomes aware of any incident that may affect the running of the examination (including examiners, invigilators, College officers and examination candidates). Forms completed by examination candidates must be counter-signed by a witness.
- 3.3 Incident Report Forms must be completed as soon as possible and with as much detail as possible.

3.4 Any material that an examiner, invigilator or member of College staff reasonably believes is not permitted for the examination will be confiscated. Electronic devices will be returned at the end of the examination with details recorded in an Incident Report Form. The candidate concerned will be asked to acknowledge agreement of the confiscation of other materials on the Incident Report Form, which will be included as part of the report.

3.5 A candidate suspected of misconduct should be allowed to complete the examination, provided that no disturbance is caused to other candidates, in which case they should be removed and their examination terminated.

Outside examination conditions

3.6 If misconduct is suspected outside examination conditions, a written report should be submitted to the Clinical Director of Examinations, giving full details of the person suspected of misconduct, the nature of the alleged misconduct and the person submitting the report. Anonymous reports will not be used to initiate formal misconduct inquiries.

4. Review of alleged misconduct

4.1 Once an allegation of misconduct has been made, it will be investigated and assessed by the Clinical Director of Examinations.

4.2 If the Clinical Director of Examinations believes that no misconduct has occurred or that misconduct has occurred but it is minor or only a technical breach of the rules, then the matter will not be taken further. Where a minor breach of these rules has occurred, the Director might remind the candidate in writing of the standard of behaviour expected from candidates, but the case will not be recorded in a candidate's personal file.

4.3 If the Clinical Director of Examinations believes that there is a case to answer, they will write to the candidate setting out the allegations. The candidate has 14 calendar days from the date of the letter to accept the allegations or challenge them.

4.4 If the candidate admits the allegations in writing, the Clinical Director of Examinations, in discussion with senior members of the examinations team at the College, will determine an appropriate penalty. Where allegations are admitted, the candidate can submit a written statement with their response that may be considered by the Clinical Director of Examinations.

4.5 If a candidate denies all or part of the allegations of misconduct against them in writing, the matter will be determined by the Misconduct Inquiry Board.

5. The Misconduct Inquiry Board

5.1 The Misconduct Inquiry Board ("the MIB") comprises:

5.1.1 Two Examination Panel Chairs from a non-related specialty; and

5.1.2 A lay representative.

5.2 The MIB will investigate and determine the allegation of misconduct electronically. The standard of proof is the balance of probabilities. Should an allegation be proven, the MIB will agree a penalty. The MIB may convene a telephone conference, if necessary.

5.3 The Head of Examinations (or a member of College staff appointed by the Head of Examinations) will act as the MIB's secretary. The secretary will:

5.3.1 Co-ordinate and prepare documentation for all parties;

5.3.2 Advise parties on the deadline for submission of further evidence and the date the MIB will announce its decision;

5.3.3 Provide secretarial support as required;

5.3.4 Maintain communication with the candidate and provide advice as required; and

5.3.5 Produce and distribute the decision of the MIB to all parties.

5.4 The timetable for the MIB should run as follows:

5.4.1 The Clinical Director of Examinations submits the case against the candidate to the MIB and the candidate via the MIB's secretary.

5.4.2 The MIB's secretary will set a deadline by which the candidate may submit evidence for consideration in response. This deadline might vary depending on the nature and complexity of the allegations but should usually be within 7 calendar days. The candidate's response is sent to the MIB's secretary who will confirm receipt and then distribute it to the MIB.

5.4.3 The MIB's secretary will set the date for the MIB's decision. This should usually be no more than one month from the date the candidate denied misconduct in writing.

5.5 A candidate can reverse their answer to allegations up to 48 hours before the date of the MIB's decision. Where allegations are accepted, the candidate can submit a written statement to the MIB that may be taken into account by it.

5.6 Neither the MIB nor the candidate will be given any information about the candidate's result or performance at the examinations in question.

6. Penalties

6.1 Where a case against a candidate is proven, whether through the candidate's own admission or by the findings of the Misconduct Inquiry Board, the following issues will be considered before a penalty is agreed:

6.1.1 The need to preserve the integrity of the examination;

6.1.2 The severity of the misconduct;

6.1.3 Consistency with previous penalties; and

6.1.4 Evidence of remorse and an admission of understanding of the seriousness of the case.

6.2 The following penalties may be awarded following proven misconduct:

6.2.1 No further action;

6.2.2 A written warning;

6.2.3 The result of an examination to be declared void or part void;

6.2.4 The candidate to be barred from applying for an examination for a specified period;

6.2.5 Such other penalty that the MIB or Clinical Director of Examinations (as applicable) consider appropriate.

6.3 Should an allegation of misconduct be proven, the College reserves the right to send details of the case to the candidate's Responsible Officer/Educational Supervisor in the first instance and could lead to notification of the relevant regulatory body. In certain circumstances, it may be appropriate to inform the police.

6.4 Where theft of intellectual property is suspected, the College reserves the right to initiate civil proceedings, criminal prosecution or both.

6.5 Where a candidate's examination result is declared void, the attempt will be recorded against the candidate's examination history. Examination papers will not be processed.

APPENDIX 2: REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS REQUEST FORM

Name of candidate	
RCPATH Candidate Number (if known)	
Name of examination	
Date of examination (if known)	
Nature of disability/impairment	
<p>Please describe here the disability/impairment that you wish the College to take into account in deciding what reasonable adjustment would be appropriate for this examination. Candidates should explain how their ability to perform the examination is affected by their disability/impairment.</p> <p>Documentary evidence provided by a disability assessor/any other suitable professional should be submitted with this form. Candidates with a specific learning disability, such as dyslexia, should attach a report from a disability assessor/educational/chartered psychologist or specialist teacher with a practising certificate (PATOSS), reporting on an assessment undertaken in English after the age of 16.</p>	
Reasonable adjustments granted for previous examinations	
<p>Please outline any reasonable adjustments that have been granted for examinations you (the candidate) have taken in the past, including any previous attempts at the FRCPath examination. Candidates should include as much detail as possible, for example if they were granted additional time, how much</p>	

additional time was granted, when the adjustment/s were granted and for what type of examination etc.

Confidentiality

The information provided in this form, and any additional supporting information that you (the candidate) provide, will be held by the College's Examinations Department in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018. It will only be shared with members of a small advisory group if further discussion is required.

It is up to you (the candidate) if you would like the reason for the adjustment (i.e. the underlying disability/impairment) to be communicated to the host examiner, senior examiner, examiners and role players. Please indicate your (the candidate's) choices below.

- I (the candidate) **give / do not give** [delete as appropriate] my consent for the RCPATH to contact my [the candidate's] disability assessor/suitable professional for the purposes stated above.
- I (the candidate) **would like / would not like** [delete as appropriate] the relevant RCPATH Examinations Team/Board/Examiner/Panel Chair to be made aware of the underlying disability/impairment that has given rise to my request for reasonable adjustments.

Signed by candidate:

Date:

Appendix 3: FRCPATH Examination Timetable 2024

	Spring Monday 25 March – Friday 24 May	Autumn Monday 23 September – Friday 22 November
Part 1	Clinical Biochemistry Haematology Histopathology Immunology Infection Medical Microbiology and Virology Oral Pathology Toxicology Veterinary Clinical Pathology	Clinical Biochemistry Genetics Haematology Haematology Clinical Science Histopathology Histocompatibility and Immunogenetics Immunology Infection Medical Microbiology and Virology Molecular Pathology Oral Pathology Reproductive Science Transfusion Science Veterinary Pathology
Part 2	Clinical Biochemistry Forensic Pathology Genetics Haematology Haematology Clinical Science Histocompatibility and Immunogenetics Histopathology Immunology Medical Microbiology Neuropathology Oral Pathology Paediatric Pathology Toxicology Transfusion Science Veterinary Clinical Pathology Virology	Clinical Biochemistry Forensic Pathology Haematology Histopathology Immunology Medical Microbiology Molecular Pathology Neuropathology Oral Pathology Paediatric Pathology Reproductive Science Veterinary Pathology Virology

Diploma	Dermatopathology (written) Forensic Pathology	Dermatopathology (practical) Forensic Pathology
Certificate	Autopsy Combined Infection Medical Genetics	Autopsy Cervical Cytology Combined Infection