The British Association of Gynaecological Pathologists

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ST6 Histopathology trainee based at Maidstone Hospital in Kent. I am currently in stage D of my training, and I have my final ARCP within the next month.



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Gynaecological Pathologists

Mock Exam

- Dr Charles Adewole
- Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust, Maidstone, Kent.

- 25 September 2024

Preparing for the FRCPath Part 2 examination

What is “the exam”?

- It is the last examination in the FRCPath qualification, designed to recognise pathologists close to the end of training, such that they demonstrate an appropriate approach to independent practice.
- Holds twice a year: Autumn (October) and Spring (April)
- Fees: For 2024, the part 2 exam costs £1487
- Location: Primarily in the UK, but if there are sufficient applicants, exams can be taken in Irbid (Jordan), Dubai (UAE) or Cairo (Egypt).

Structure of the exam

- A 2-day exam with 6 components:
- Day 1
  - Cytopathology
  - Frozen Sections
  - Long Cases
  - OSPE 1 (Management)
- Day 2
  - Surgical histology (Short cases)
  - Macroscopic Pathology
  - OSPE 2 (Written)

Surgical histology (Short cases)

- 20 cases provided in 10 pairs of haematoxylin and eosin (H&E) stained slides
- Each pair is allotted 20 minute slots, over a total of 3hrs 20 minutes.
- The cases are a mixture of neoplastic and non-neoplastic conditions, drawn from a wide range of organ systems.
- The case are of a range of difficulty from straightforward cases readily diagnosable on a single H&E section, more complex cases requiring more detailed description, differential diagnosis and special techniques, and cases not capable of diagnosis on a single H&E which should prompt an approach for further techniques, extra blocks and specialist opinions.
- Past slides can are available on the Leeds Virtual Pathology website (https://www.virtualpathology.leeds.ac.uk/frcpath/)

Cytopathology

- 8 non-gynaecological cytology cases will be provided in 4 pairs.
- Each pair is allotted 20 minute slots.
- Cases include fluids, aspirations and washings. They could be benign as well as malignant.

Macroscopic Pathology

- 4 cases will be provided in the form of photographs of gross pathology specimens.
- Clinical information is provided and candidates will be asked to prepare their responses to specific questions and to mark on the photographs where they would take blocks.
- Two 20 minute slots will be provided to view 2 cases per slot, followed by a 20 minute discussion with 2 examiners.
- While candidates are allowed to write down their thoughts and mark on the photographs, this section is designed to allow candidates to demonstrate their capabilities in discussing gross pathology and familiarity with block selection in the context of the RCPath Minimum Datasets.

OSPEs

- There are two 20 minute stations; one of which is conducted face-to-face with 2 examiners while the other is a written exercise only.
- Possible topics include management/clinical governance type and MDT type cases, general pathology and molecular pathology although this list is not exhaustive.

Long Cases

- These are 4 cases, each with 20 minute allotments.
- This section covers cases which cannot conventionally be covered by a single H&E stained section and require adjunct tests.
- Each question typically has an H&E stained slide with special stains and/or immunohistochemistry slides and/or electron microscopy images and/or immunofluorescence images
- This section typically has at least a medical renal case, a liver biopsy, a haematolymphoid case. This is not exhaustive and other types of cases may be used.

Frozen Sections

- 6 cases to be viewed in 2 x 20 minute stations (3 cases per station.
- This is followed by a viva with a pair of examiners in a 20 minute station.
- This section is not scored on the basis of what candidates write.
- Candidates should make notes and provide a ‘bottom line’ diagnosis only, to form the basis for discussion in face to face meetings.

PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

- Unfortunately, there is no one/standard way to prepare for the part 2 exam.
- Started preparation about 12 months before taking the exam with focus on studying texts, and viewing lots of slides from slide sets and EQA sets.
- Also used online study materials include the Leeds virtual pathology website, Johns Hopkins cases (https://sp.pathology.jhu.edu/search-cases/), YouTube, Twitter and Facebook pathology groups.
- For studying, texts I used were predominantly Rosai and Ackerman's Surgical Pathology, Gattuso's Differential Diagnosis in Surgical Pathology, WHO blue book subscription (€100 per annuum) and www.pathologyoutlines.com.

Clinical work

- Ensured day-to-day work did not suffer as this forms a significant portion of the exam cases.
- I joined a group discussion where we met for 1 hour every other day to discuss cases from online repertoire.
- I practiced writing my own reports to have an idea of how the exam could be.

Courses

- Attended a virtual course about 9 months before the exam to gauge my level of readiness.
- Attended a cytology course about 3 months before the exam to consolidate my knowledge.
- Attended a second face-to-face course a month before the exam for focused and intensive study.
- Some people get by with attending just one course but I found that doing the first course very early on prepared me for the challenge ahead and I could identify my knowledge gaps. This helped me plan my rotations at work to focus on what I needed to learn.
- I wrote two mocks, both before attending the second course. Some people did lots more but I found the two were sufficient for me and I could gear my time towards other personal preparation

The exam

- The exam is usually on a Tuesday and Wednesday
- I arrived on Monday morning and lodged at the venue of the exam (lucky it was a hotel).
- Microscope set up on Monday evening. A few people come with extra light bulbs, an extension cable, few slides to fine tune the focus and non-pathology books to prop up the microscope if required.
- Dress smart and comfortable on exam and I tried my best not to discuss cases after the first day to keep my sanity.
- I tried to get as much rest as possible before Day 2.

Important information

- It is mandatory to pass all aspects of the examination as failing in one aspect results in failing the exam.
- Therefore, getting familiar with the closed marking system is very important (especially with the short cases).
- I have included two videos detailing the experiences of two other trainees recently successful in the examination.
- https://www.youtube.com/embed/a1TVMVEd0yQ
- https://www.youtube.com/embed/kwSKpzusqHA

THANK YOU

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