The Royal College of Radiologists

The Faculty of Clinical Oncology

TO: TRAINING PROGRAMME DIRECTORS

REGIONAL POST-GRADUATE EDUCATION ADVISERS
COLLEGE TUTORS
EXAMINATION CANDIDATES

FIRST EXAMINATION FOR THE FELLOWSHIP IN CLINICAL ONCOLOGY

AUTUMN 2025

The Examining Board has prepared the following report on the AUTUMN 2025 sitting of the First Examination for the Fellowship in Clinical Oncology. It is the intention of the Specialty Training Board that the information contained in this report should benefit candidates at future sittings of the examinations and help those who train them. This information should be made available as widely as possible.

Dr Louise Hanna
Medical Director, Education and Training

FIRST EXAMINATION FOR THE FELLOWSHIP IN CLINICAL ONCOLOGY EXAMINERS' REPORT – AUTUMN 2025

The pass rates achieved at the AUTUMN 2025 sitting of the First Examination for the Fellowship in Clinical Oncology are summarised below.

	All Candidates		UK-trained Candidates		UK 1st attempt Candidates	
Cancer Biology & Radiobiology	74%	144/195	78%	65/83	81%	57/70
Clinical Pharmacology	68%	139/203	85%	71/84	90%	61/68
Medical Statistics	53%	109/204	68%	62/91	77%	57/74
Physics	62%	128/205	69%	68/99	73%	53/73

This examiners' report does not provide an in-depth breakdown of performance on individual questions but is intended to guide trainers and candidates by highlighting particular areas of concern. Candidates are reminded

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that it is recommended that all modules are attempted at the first sitting, to maximise chances of success over the total of six permitted attempts.

Cancer Biology and Radiobiology

The examiners were very pleased to note the overall high level of achievement demonstrated across candidate groups in both Cancer Biology and Radiation Biology. Those sitting the examination for the first time achieved strong results, reflecting thorough preparation and a solid grasp of key concepts.

In Cancer Biology, some questions relating to the *role of the immune system (1.5)* and *genetics of normal and malignant cells (1.2)* proved most challenging. For future candidates, placing additional emphasis on these specific areas during revision will help to safeguard overall performance.

Although a different cohort will be sitting the examination next time, these insights highlight topics that have previously required closer attention. Candidates are also encouraged to read each question carefully to ensure their responses address all parts of the question.

Clinical Pharmacology

Overall candidates performed well. Examiners remind candidates that a solid understanding of the pharmacology of supportive medication is required. Candidates need to have an awareness of opiate pharmacokinetics, conversion and toxicity reversal. Candidates should understand differential toxicities when drugs are used in combination regimens. It is important to have a good understanding of contraindications, drug interactions and routes of excretion and metabolism of common cytotoxic agents.

Medical Statistics

The examiners acknowledge that the Medical Statistics module has been historically challenging. Candidates in general have tested well in statistical inferences.

We encourage candidates to have a better understanding of Statistical tests used for survival analysis, interpret graphs to identify the nature of variables, sampling and source population, tests used to compare groups.

Physics

Candidates performed particularly well on questions relating to principles of basic physics relevant to radiotherapy e.g. electrons shells/atomic structure, electro-magnetic radiation and beam characteristics.

Candidates would benefit from better understanding of proton beam interactions, calculations related to inverse square law/kerma rates, radioactivity related to different radioisotopes.

We would like to remind candidates to ensure they remain up to date and familiar with guidance/legislation from relevant ICRU reports and IRR/IR(ME)R regulations.