

## 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 SPRING 2025

The Examining Board has prepared the following report on the SPRING 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 – SPRING 2025

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

|                               | All Candidates |         | UK-trained<br>Candidates |       | UK 1 <sup>st</sup> attempt Candidates |       |
|-------------------------------|----------------|---------|--------------------------|-------|---------------------------------------|-------|
| Cancer Biology & Radiobiology | 63%            | 104/166 | 70%                      | 33/47 | 79%                                   | 23/29 |
| Clinical Pharmacology         | 51%            | 92/179  | 58%                      | 31/53 | 56%                                   | 19/34 |
| Medical Statistics            | 62%            | 108/174 | 68%                      | 36/53 | 70%                                   | 23/33 |
| Physics                       | 49%            | 80/163  | 54%                      | 30/56 | 57%                                   | 16/28 |

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 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**

Overall, candidates performed in line with previous sittings, with non-UK candidates performing markedly better compared with previous sittings. One question needed to be removed because wrong answer option was indicated as being correct. Candidates have solid knowledge on cancer and radiation biology, especially with respect to textbook knowledge related questions.

Candidates did less well in following areas and are recommended to do further reading in:

- Cell death related pathways
- Basics of tumour immunology
- DNA damage pathways and relationship with dose, dose rate etc
- Concepts of fractionated irradiation
- Radiation and immunology

### Clinical Pharmacology

The examiners were encouraged by the breadth of knowledge shown by candidates.

Areas where additional attention would be beneficial include:

- Knowledge of the need for renal and hepatic dose adaptations.
- Understanding of the mechanism of action and mode of delivery of supportive medication.
- Understanding endocrine therapy and interactions.
- Understanding Monoclonal antibodies and Cell cycle check point inhibitors.
- Not forgetting to revise traditional chemotherapy agents.

### **Medical Statistics**

The examiners were generally pleased with candidates' knowledge of the Medical Statistics elements of the syllabus.

Candidates appeared to score particularly well on questions regarding screening tests

We would encourage future candidates to be clear with respect to their knowledge on sampling theory particularly the relationships and differences between samples and populations. We would also encourage candidates to revise decisions around choosing statistical tests with both categorical and continuous outcomes, and survival analysis, particularly the principles and interpretation of Kaplan-Meier analyses.

### Physics

Candidates performed particularly well on questions relating to electron and photon beam characteristics, and calculations using photon and electron depth doses.

Candidates would benefit from an improved understanding of fundamental characteristics such as exponential attenuation of photons; discrete energy emissions from electrons moving between orbits; proton range; and calculations using brachytherapy dose rates.

