

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 2026

The Examining Board has prepared the following report on the AUTUMN 2026 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 2026**

The pass rates achieved at the AUTUMN 2026 sitting of the First Examination for the Fellowship in Clinical Oncology are summarised below.

	All Candidates		UK-trained Candidates		UK 1 st attempt Candidates	
Cancer Biology & Radiobiology	71%	130/183	83%	71/86	83%	64/77
Clinical Pharmacology	67%	135/202	78%	69/89	78%	57/73
Medical Statistics	56%	115/204	72%	61/85	79%	50/63
Physics	52%	108/209	66%	61/93	70%	50/71

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

The examiners are pleased to report a high overall standard of achievement across candidate groups in Cancer Biology and Radiation Biology. This included strong performance among candidates undertaking the examination for the first time, indicating thorough preparation and a sound understanding of the core concepts.

Within Cancer Biology, certain areas were found to be more challenging. These included questions relating to the concepts of 1) paracrine and endocrine signalling, 2) the consequential effects of radiation on normal tissue including cancer stem cells, 3) the effects of radiation on chromosomal structure, and 4) how dose rate interact with biological effectiveness. Future candidates are advised to place additional emphasis on these topics during their revision to support optimal performance.

These observations serve to highlight areas that require closer attention. Candidates are also reminded of the importance of reading each question carefully, as this can help to avoid unnecessary loss of marks.

Clinical Pharmacology

Examiners were encouraged by the performance of candidates in the Autumn 2026 exam. Candidates showed a good breadth of knowledge across the pharmacology curriculum. Further attention is required in the understanding of supportive medication, particularly analgesics and antiemetics, including pharmacokinetics and relevant drug interactions. Candidates are reminded that cytotoxic agents remain relevant, and an understanding is required of the mechanisms of action, synergy with other drugs and resistance mechanisms.

Medical Statistics

The overall outcome of this module has remained in the expected range compared to previous sittings. Candidates have consistently performed well in survival analysis, specificity and sensitivity. However, the examiners have noted that candidates perform poorly in concepts of source population, early phase and adaptive trial designs. The board notes that these trial designs are being increasingly employed more and should form part of core understanding of every oncologist.

We note that candidates make mistakes regarding questions around source population often confusing it with eligible population.

We would recommend candidates to brush up on their understanding of various tests, including the different applications for fisher exact and chi square test.



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 also performed well on calculations relating to superficial HVLs, and basic applied MV field dosimetry.

Candidates would benefit from a better understanding of the differing radiation protection requirements/principles for a range of radioactive sources, including both sealed and unsealed.

We would also like to encourage candidates to familiarise themselves with SAUE guidance and IRMER notification criteria for radiotherapy. Specifically, candidates should be aware of the factors which determine incident external reportability.

