



### 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 2023**

The Examining Board has prepared the following report on the AUTUMN 2023 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.

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Medical Director, Education and Training

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### **FIRST EXAMINATION FOR THE FELLOWSHIP IN CLINICAL ONCOLOGY EXAMINERS' REPORT – AUTUMN 2023**

The pass rates achieved at the AUTUMN 2023 sitting of the First Examination for the Fellowship in Clinical Oncology are summarised below.

	<b>All Candidates</b>		<b>UK-trained Candidates</b>		<b>UK 1<sup>st</sup> attempt Candidates</b>	
<b>Cancer Biology &amp; Radiobiology</b>	124/209	59%	52/84	62%	46/69	67%
<b>Clinical Pharmacology</b>	118/212	56%	59/79	75%	53/69	77%
<b>Medical Statistics</b>	119/201	59%	58/78	74%	50/65	77%
<b>Physics</b>	86/207	42%	54/89	61%	44/66	67%

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**

There were 20/50 new questions, spanning general knowledge very well. Questions on FSU and hypoxia were answered above average. Areas to focus on for future exams are:

1. Normal tissue radiobiology should be studied more in depth.
2. Fractionated radiotherapy, specifically the related calculations, should be given more attention

## **Clinical Pharmacology**

Candidates performed generally well. Some candidates struggled with questions considering mechanisms of action such as DNA binding of systemic anticancer therapies, side effects/toxicities and drug-drug interactions. We would encourage candidates to take care with terminology such as inter / intra- and homo / hetero- particularly when describing mechanisms of action. Candidates should also be aware of differences between deferral and permanent discontinuation criterion based on presenting toxicities.

The overall performance is consistent with the previous sittings of the exam.

## **Medical Statistics**

Examiners were encouraged to see consistency in results over several years. Trainees performed well in interpreting data, and identifying the correct statistical test. Attention is drawn to study design, trial reporting methods and survival analysis methods. Trainees are reminded of the importance of critical appraisal of literature in enabling them to interpret studies.

## **Physics**

Although many sections were answered well, we highlight some observations for candidates to note:

1. Important to understand the mechanics and functional components of the linear accelerator
2. Pay attention to external beam characteristics such as depth dose and output factors
3. Understand the impact of set-up and planning errors on dose-distribution
4. Understand the fundamentals of motion management
5. Poor understanding on brachytherapy, radioactive sources and protons
6. Need to be familiar with concepts of UK radiation protection legislation.