

Final Examination for the Fellowship in Clinical Oncology (Part A)

Guidance Notes for Candidates

1 Examination Structure

The Final FRCR (Part A) examination comprises two papers of single best answer (SBA) questions. The examination is held twice a year: normally in February and August/September. Each paper comprises 120 questions and candidates are given three hours to answer each paper.

2 Venues

The examination is held at three UK venues (London, Edinburgh and Manchester) and three non-UK venues (Hong Kong, Singapore and India - Kolkata).

3 Content

Each of the two SBA papers comprises 120 questions on a wide range of areas of practice across the curriculum. The content of each paper is listed below.

Paper 1	Tumour type	Number of questions
	Respiratory	24
	Urology	24
	Head and Neck	24
	Skin	12
	CNS	12
	Gynaecology	24

Paper 2	Tumour type	Number of questions
	Breast	24
	Lower Gastrointestinal	24
	Upper Gastrointestinal	12
	Haematology	12
	Miscellaneous	38
	Image-based	10

For information, the miscellaneous section will contain questions on thyroid cancer, sarcoma, unknown primary, regulations, palliative care and a small number of questions that do not specifically fit into a defined site specific category.

Each SBA question comprises a stem (a question or a statement) and five items (answers) [labelled (a) to (e)]. Candidates are asked to decide which one of the five items represents the best answer to the question given in the stem.

4 Standard Setting

A 'modified' Angoff method is used to set the pass mark or standard for this exam. This involves a panel of subject matter experts (examiners) evaluating each question and providing an estimate as to how likely the just-passing candidate would know the answer. Each item is scored on the basis of the percentage of 'just passing' candidates who should know the correct answer. These scores are collated and presented at the standard setting meeting. After discussion, the standard setters again score the questions, the highest and lowest scorers are removed, and the mean of the remaining post-discussion scores is used to set the standard. The final pass mark is determined after the examination using the Hofstee compromise method. This takes account of candidate performance in the examination alongside judgements made by standard setters. The candidate cohort and pass rates will vary from sitting to sitting.

5 Marking

The examination is marked by computer. The marking system shown below is used:

For each item correctly answered	+1 mark
For each item incorrectly answered	0 marks

The examination is not negatively marked and therefore candidates are encouraged to offer an answer to all of the questions.

No mark is awarded if more than one answer is recorded to a question or the answer is not sufficiently clear. In these circumstances the College does not consider it appropriate to interpret a candidate's intentions.

6 Quality Assurance

After each sitting, and prior to results publication, a group of expert examiners conduct a statistical review of the question paper performance and quality control checks to make sure all the questions and answers are fair. This analysis allows the College to ensure that the examination is reaching optimal levels of reliability and fairness. Poorly performing questions are scrutinised and are removed if error or ambiguity is found. If any questions are removed from the examination then the pass mark is adjusted accordingly. Candidates will not be disadvantaged where this occurs. All examination results are checked by College staff before being published to candidates.

7 Equipment Required for the Examination

Candidates are required to bring a HB pencil, pencil sharpener and eraser. Calculators are not required.

Candidates are provided with a Candidate Reference Sheet for use during the examination. This gives information about the normal ranges for investigations, frequently used abbreviations and standard chemotherapy regimes.

8 Examination Results and Feedback

All candidates will receive details of scores achieved, the level of performance that was required to achieve success and details of their individual performance against that of the cohort as a whole. In addition, a further breakdown of percentage scores by site specific cancer topics will be supplied as feedback.

Successful candidates who have indicated their intention to attempt the Final FRCR Part B examination at the same sitting will have their applications processed in the week following Part A results publication. Examination schedules will be dispatched as soon as available.

9 Further Information

Queries arising from this document should be addressed to the College's Examinations Office, either by email to examinations@rcr.ac.uk or by telephone on 020 7406 5905.

Queries at the time of the examination should be raised with the invigilators or College staff present. Comments, feedback or complaints following the examination should be brought to the attention of the Examinations Manager, either by email to examinations@rcr.ac.uk or by telephone on 020 7406 5905.