



OPTIONS AND CONSIDERATIONS FOR STAFF CHANGING DISCIPLINE OR RETRAINING

The Institute recognises that some of its members may be facing the difficult choices as a consequence of pathology services reconfiguration. In addition, the change from cytology screening to primary HPV testing in the cervical screening programme means that a significant number of staff currently employed in cytology will be forced to make decisions about their future employment options. This guidance is here to separate facts from fiction and to help members considering their options when faced with major change.

Important point:

Biomedical scientist generic registration allows registrants to retrain or develop a new scope of practice from the original discipline in which they trained.

1. Factors affecting decisions and options

Biomedical scientists are a highly skilled workforce with highly specific knowledge and skills and also a wealth of transferable skills that unfortunately are not always recognised – both by individuals themselves and those outside of their immediate field of experience. However, potential is very different from reality, which has to take in to account personal circumstances and preferences. This guidance document therefore seeks to establish the facts, present options while being sensitive to individual limitations.

Personal circumstances

When you have a combination of financial and family responsibilities it may be totally unrealistic to consider a major move to the other end of the country. For a number of people personal circumstances will always define the limits of options.

Opportunities

Opportunities can be totally random and are dependent on need. For a job seeker they require active searching: jobs boards, personal contacts, websites.

Experience and seniority

Experience can be a double edged sword; it can carry a higher grade and greater seniority but it can also limit options.

2. Transferable knowledge and skills

Important point:

Start to think about your transferable skills; focus on what you have rather than what you lack and what this knowledge and/skills could bring to a new and different role

Biomedical scientists are very aware of their highly specific knowledge and expertise and the qualifications that give formal recognition to this, but they frequently overlook the transferable skills attained through a combination of experience and qualification. A common concern is that vocational qualifications are not recognised outside the immediate sphere of pathology. It is correct that the specifics of a scientific discipline may not be of

relevance in other areas of pathology or beyond but from registration and beyond our profession accumulates a wealth of transferable knowledge and skills that include:

- Specific and general science
- UK healthcare systems and regulation
- Good laboratory/good clinical practice
- Research principles and methodologies
- Health and safety and quality systems
- Training and assessment methods
- Management principles and communication skills
- Accuracy, attention to detail. . . . to name but a few

Important point:

When updating your CV, rather than listing your duties and responsibilities from past roles, highlight your achievements with concrete evidence, such as facts and statistics. This proves what you're capable of and shows your potential

3. Change of laboratory discipline

HCPC regulation is not a barrier to a change of discipline; experience may be limited to a particular discipline but biomedical scientist registration is generic and scope of practice can be changed or expanded by training and assessment of competence. The Institute's Specialist Portfolio can be used as a retraining qualification or as an informal training template; essentially, an individual does not have to stay within the discipline in which they originally specialised.

4. Professional qualification options

To support our members in furthering their careers the Institute has developed a suite of post registration qualifications to enable individuals to train and qualify for advanced and consultant level roles.

Higher Specialist Diploma (HSD)

The HSD is a Master's level professional qualification that enables biomedical and clinical scientists to demonstrate depth of knowledge of a chosen specialism within the wider professional context that is required for senior roles. This is increasingly seen as a more appropriate and profession specific option for pathology than an MSc.

Diplomas of Expert Practice (DEPs): realistically it takes around two years of preparation in order to be ready to sit the examination. They are available in:

- Non-gynaecological cytology
- Immunohistochemistry
- Electron microscopy
- Histological dissection

- Routine haematology
- Haemostasis and thrombosis
- Red blood cell disorders

We also have Certificates of Expert Practice in Medical Microbiology (mycology, parasitology or infection control), Training for Trainers, Quality Management and Management and Leadership

Advanced Specialist Diplomas

These qualifications are currently only available in histopathology or cytopathology specialisms but we are working on an advanced qualification for all disciplines that we hope to launch in 2020.

The options currently available are:

- Histological dissection (lower G.I or breast)
- Non-gynaecological cytology (respiratory, urines and effusions)
- Ophthalmic pathology
- Histopathology reporting (G.I, gynaecological pathology or dermatopathology)

Advanced Specialist Diplomas require several years' experience before they can be tackled and potential candidates should expect to allow between 3-5 years preparation for the final examination – it is very much dependent on prior experience and departmental training support.

5. Options in Molecular Pathology

In recognition of the expanding repertoire of molecular pathology tests becoming integrated into mainstream pathology, coupled with the relatively limited experience of this relatively new science among the less recently qualified workforce, the Institute has introduced two new molecular pathology options:

- i. **Certificate of Expert Practice in Molecular Pathology**
This is a 14 week distance learning course hosted by the University of Ulster and delivered in six 2-week modules plus two study weeks. It offers a broad introductory approach to the subject and is suitable for individuals from all biomedical science disciplines.
- ii. **Specialist Diploma molecular pathology module**

This module is a supplement to the Cellular Pathology Specialist Portfolio but it is available to individuals training in cytology and also as a 'stand alone' module to those already qualified to Specialist Diploma level or above. As molecular pathology is not undertaken in all laboratories it may require a period of secondment in a specialist centre.

Details of all Institute qualification and eligibility criteria are on the Institute's website www.ibms.org

6. Scientist Training Programme

This is a commissioned training programme that leads to a Master's degree and registration as a clinical scientist. Applicants can be admitted either by direct entry or via in-service entry. Full details on how to apply are on the Academy for Healthcare Science website www.ahcs.ac.uk and successful applicants are enrolled on a three year integrated degree programme. Programme options are in:

- Life sciences – blood sciences, infection sciences and genetics. A biomedical science degree is an ideal entry qualification
- Genomic counselling – a degree with some genetic content is required and previous caring role experience
- Physiological sciences – biology, human biology or biomedical science(s) degree

Applicants must have at least a 2:1 degree although a 2:2 may be considered with relevant work experience.

7. Total career change

- A biomedical science qualification and experience is a very strong platform for a total career change. Many biomedical scientists have branched out from their original roles and diverged in to:
 - Diagnostics industry – sales, technical evaluation, development, user support
 - Teaching – the teacher shortage in the sciences means that a training bursary may be available
 - Academia – higher or further education institutions
 - Emerging professions – Physicians associate, physicians assistant. These are both graduate entry and a biomedical science degree is often the entry qualification of choice

Where to begin

Important point:

This may turn out to be the incentive you need to take the plunge and do something VERY different

Once you have ruled out the things that you definitely do not want to do or are not an option for you, start to plan. This will help you to identify what you *could* and *would like* to do. As a starting point:

- Keep an open mind
- Start to plan your CPD strategically – this will help shape your updated CV
- Refresh your knowledge of other disciplines – visit the laboratories, ask for some refresher reading material, ask to spend some time there if possible. Find out what retraining support is being made available by your employer – and take it!
- If you're interested in possibly moving in to academia contact the biomedical science course leader at your local university and ask for an informal chat – they may well be a biomedical scientist themselves.
- If you think a new career as a physician's associate may be an option, read about the role (there is plenty of material available and more than 10 universities offer a diploma or Master's course. Is this a new role your employer is considering in one of their departments?
- If the diagnostics industry sounds interesting then have a conversation with the representatives from your reagent/equipment suppliers and ask about job opportunities – they also may well have been be a biomedical scientist.
- You may have to take a step down in order to take a step up

Important point:

The Institute is here to help. We have a website that has information on a range of issues and also a jobs board; our social media channels give you access to hundreds of people who may have the answer you're looking for; there is a team of experienced people in the office who can advise you on our qualifications and we have access to over one hundred scientific advisors and council members who are experts in their own specific field of biomedical science. We are all here to help.

About this document

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Produced by: Education and Professional Standards Committee

Contact: Education Department

T: + 44 (0)20 7713 0214, **E:** education@ibms.org

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