



Institute of
Biomedical
Science

**DIPLOMAS of
EXPERT AND ADVANCED PRACTICE**

Generic Guidance to Candidates

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Overview

Please read the following document in its entirety, as each section contains information that needs to be understood before considering preparing for, and entering an Institute examination.

The common requirements for all expert and advanced specialist diplomas are included within this guidance.

The specific requirements for each expert or advanced diploma are included in the relevant specific guidance to candidates which includes any requirements over and above these common requirements. The specific guidance will also include details of the indicative reading list, the assessment processes and the expert or advanced role.

Introduction

Following registration with the Health Professions Council, biomedical scientists are encouraged to undertake discipline specific training as described in the specialist portfolio leading to the IBMS Specialist Diploma. Subsequent to registration many biomedical scientists progress their careers in a wide variety of ways including traditional laboratory areas, research, teaching or management of their profession. Recent initiatives have opened greater possibilities for career progression in scientific or clinical job roles. To support its members the Institute has developed a framework of qualifications that recognise the professional knowledge and skills of its members.

INSTITUTE'S EXAMINATION STRUCTURE



At the point of registration biomedical scientists have a core basis of generic knowledge and skills. The acquisition and development of specialist knowledge builds upon registration and is recognised through the award of a Specialist Diploma. Following the award of a Specialist Diploma, biomedical scientists have the option to undertake the Higher Specialist Diploma that gives recognition to higher levels of professional knowledge, skills and competence. The Advanced Specialist Diplomas consolidate the highest levels of knowledge and expertise and are available to Fellows of the Institute. Diplomas of Expert Practice serve to evidence discrete areas of knowledge and skills complementary to the main biomedical science subject areas.

General Information

Aims

To recognise the acquisition of professional knowledge, skills and competence of candidates beyond the level of a Higher Specialist Diploma.

To enable successful candidates to demonstrate that they have the necessary professional knowledge, skills and competencies which contribute to the provision of services and the care of patients at the highest level.

Eligibility

The detailed eligibility criteria for each of these qualifications are available in the relevant specific guidance to candidates.

Learning Strategy

Candidates are expected to undertake the following activities to prepare for assessment:

- Continuing professional development (CPD)
- Reading and critical review on scientific and technical papers
- Self-structured reading
- Attendance at seminars/lectures both as speaker and audience member
- Undertake training programmes related to the diagnosis, treatment and monitoring of patients appropriate to the diploma being undertaken
- Use other forums to engage in discussion with experts appropriate to the diploma being undertaken (e.g. e-mail, discussion groups, multidisciplinary team meetings)

Supervisor (Trainer or Mentor)

Candidates must have an appropriate named supervisor (trainer or mentor) qualified to guide or advise on self-directed learning. In many instances this likely to be a consultant pathologist, but may be a clinical or biomedical scientist.

The minimum requirements of a supervisor (trainer or mentor) are detailed in the relevant specific guidance to candidates.

A supervisor (trainer or mentor) may devolve some areas of a candidate's training to an appropriately qualified clinical or scientific person to reduce the individual training burden and to help balance candidate's training.

Regulations

Candidates must be successful in the complete assessment process in order to be awarded a diploma.

Part one consists of the construction, submission and assessment of a portfolio of professional experience – the examination portfolio. This must be successfully passed before entry into part two.

Part two consists of a multi component assessment that is detailed in the discipline specific guidance to candidates.

Candidates are only able to make a maximum of 4 attempts at any specific diploma.

Part One - Examination Portfolio

The construction of an examination portfolio is an integral part of the preparation for candidates wishing to undertake one of the Institute's expert or advanced specialist diplomas. The examination portfolio is a finite document specific to the diploma being undertaken, although appropriate elements may be reused by candidates undertaking more than one diploma and requiring multiple examination portfolios.

Portfolio requirements

The examination portfolio provides a mechanism for the organisation of both the nature and scope of training, within the framework of an indicative curriculum and a defined role.

The discipline specific elements of the examination portfolio are detailed in the guidance to candidates, but each examination portfolio must meet the following minimum requirements:

- The portfolio must be presented as a hard copy file to include: copies and/or typed transcripts of presentations, notes/minutes of meetings, illustrations or images.
- The portfolio must have a contents page or index.
- All evidence must be from the current training period.
- All evidence must be appropriately cross-referenced when it supports more than one activity.

- All evidence must be accompanied by a written commentary that indicates the relevance of the evidence to the aims and learning outcomes as detailed in the relevant student study guides.
- All evidence relating to patients or colleagues must be anonymised unless prior permission has been sought and included in the evidence. Failure to comply with this requirement may result in an automatic deferral until the following year.
- As a minimum the portfolio must contain:
 - **Case log:** This is a record of the range of cases encountered during the training period. It need not be an exhaustive list of every case seen, but the log must reflect a variety of activities in order to assess candidates' scope of professional practice.
 - **Case reviews:** This is a record, based on selected cases from the case log and of the content and conclusions of the reviews undertaken by candidates and the trainer or an appropriate clinical/scientific supervisor.
 - **Case studies:** This is a record of cases that place laboratory tests within a clinical context. Each study must include details of initial clinical presentation, previous medical history, tests performed, differential diagnoses, appropriate ancillary tests, management, treatment and follow-up. The evidence must demonstrate understanding of how laboratory tests impact on diagnosis, treatment, monitoring and prognosis of patients. Inclusion of illustrations, images and references is encouraged. They must be summarised under the following headings:

Pre-analysis

Details of presenting symptoms and any additional relevant clinical history should be used to introduce the case, including previous results. The clinical symptoms may be expanded upon and further tests and clinical options should be critically discussed.

Analysis

The way the specimen is handled when it arrives in the laboratory should be discussed. Previous results should be reviewed and discussed.

Post Analysis

The possible or probable outcomes for the patient should be discussed to include options for follow-up treatment. Discussion should include what could have happened if an error in diagnosis had been made.

- **Formative assessments:** This is a record of the systematic and periodic review of the candidate's performance by the named supervisor, trainer or mentor throughout the training period. The evidence may be wide ranging, but must include details of how candidates practice has evolved over the course of the training period, and must detail any assessments of competence made during this time.
- **Audit:** This is a record of relevant audits, i.e. service and clinical, within which candidates have participated and must include evidence of critical evaluation of the outcomes and where appropriate there should be evidence that this has influenced future practice.
- **Tutorials and training sessions:** This is a record of training programmes, short courses, tutorials and in-house training sessions attended or delivered by

candidates. The record should be accompanied by evidence of reflection on the learning outcomes.

- **Reflective practice:** Throughout the portfolio there should be evidence of reflective practice that demonstrates learning from errors and the application of best practice.

Submission of portfolios

Examination portfolios must be submitted to the Institute by the appropriate published deadline.

Assessment of portfolios

In addition to the portfolio requirements the examiners will ensure that the evidence includes the following:

- a) knowledge and reasoned argument in sufficient detail and clarity
- b) evidence presented in an original but professional manner
- c) adequate and appropriate references to key sources of information
- d) recognition of contribution of advice from others, including supervising pathologists
- e) no evidence of plagiarism*
- f) case studies to be within the agreed word limit.

* Plagiarism will result in an automatic failure and ban from future assessments, pending the outcome of the appeals procedure if invoked. Guidance on avoiding plagiarism can be found on the website

Examination portfolios are awarded a 'pass' or marked 'refer'.

After assessment, examination portfolios that are deemed to have met the minimum and specific requirements of a diploma are awarded a pass. The number of attempts at part two that a passed portfolio is valid for is detailed in the relevant specific guidance.

Examination portfolios that are deemed not to have met the minimum and specific requirements of a diploma are referred. Candidates wishing to resubmit their portfolio for assessment will be required to address the deficiencies identified by the assessors and submit the portfolio the following year by the appropriate deadline, accompanied by the portfolio re-assessment fee. Candidates deferring a portfolio resubmission to subsequent years should ensure that the evidence presented is current and reflect their continuing training and preparation for the examination.

After reassessment, examination portfolios that are still deemed not to have met the minimum and specific requirements of a diploma will again be referred. These examination portfolios are not valid for a further resubmission and candidates must construct and submit a new examination portfolio for assessment.

The first attempt at part two must be made within two years of passing an examination portfolio.

Return of examination portfolios

All examination portfolios will be returned to candidates.

Part Two – Endpoint Assessment

The exact method of assessment will be detailed in the relevant specific guidance to candidates, but part two may be assessed by any suitable combination of the following:

- Oral defence of a portfolio
- Written examination
- Practical examination
- Candidate presentation
- *Viva voce*

Application Process

Application forms

Application forms are available from the Institute's Office using the contact details below and may be requested by telephone or e-mail, or they may be downloaded from the Institute's web site.

The completed application together with the correct fee must be returned to the Institute.

Incomplete, illegible or applications without fees will be returned for correction and resubmission before acceptance.

Confirmation of application

Once accepted, candidates will be sent a confirmation of candidacy and a reminder of the submission deadline for examination portfolios.

Fees

For information about examination fees, please refer to our website or contact the Head of Examinations using the contact details below.

Deferrals and withdrawals

Candidates who wish to **defer** entry to an examination must contact the Institute a minimum of six weeks prior to the examination date and will be entitled to a full transfer of their fees to the next examination. Any deferrals made after this deadline will only be entitled to a 50% fee transfer unless proven mitigating circumstances exist. A maximum of two deferrals is permitted.

Candidates wishing to **withdraw** from an examination at any time will not be entitled to any reimbursement of the examination fee unless proven mitigating circumstances exist.

Candidates who are required to submit a portfolio for reassessment following a referral would be required to pay a reassessment fee.

Special needs

Candidates with special needs or special dietary requirements must inform the Institute in writing of these at the time of application. The Institute will work with such candidates to try and ensure these needs are met, but will be unable to guarantee any individual's preferences.

Mitigating circumstances

Any mitigating circumstances, which may affect examination performance or attendance, must be put in writing to the Institute, with the inclusion of any supporting evidence, e.g. doctor's certificate. Once written evidence is received the matter will be brought to the attention of the relevant examination board for consideration. Candidates who are unable to attend the examination for a reason deemed acceptable by the examination board may defer entry to the following year without financial penalty.

Notification of results

Candidates will be informed of their results in writing subsequent to ratification of the examination board.

Feedback to candidates

The Institute will provide a summary report from the assessment team. No further correspondence will be entered into on results.

Appeals

Any candidates wishing to appeal against the outcome of the examination must contact the Head of Examinations to request an appeals form. This must be completed and returned to the Chief Executive within a maximum period of 40 days following publication of the results.

Further attempts/Re-sits

Candidates who do not pass the part two assessments at the first attempt are not eligible to enter part two again for at least **six** months following that attempt. Candidates who do not pass the diploma at the second attempt are not eligible to enter part two again for at least **six** months following that attempt. Candidates who do not pass the diploma at the third attempt are not eligible to enter part two again for at least **twelve** months following that attempt. Candidates applying for a resit must complete a new application form enclosing the correct fees.

Enquiries

All enquiries relating to the diplomas, the application process, study guides and conditions must be addressed to:

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