



Higher Specialist Diploma (HSD) Factsheet

Aim

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, which is required for senior roles.

Learning Outcomes

The award of the HSD shows that the candidate has demonstrated:

- A comprehensive understanding of a specific field of biomedical science
- The ability to analyse and interpret information critically in order to address practice-based situations
- Skills in leadership and communication within the healthcare environment
- Critical reflection of personal professional practice
- Knowledge and understanding of current issues and developments within healthcare and how they impact on professional practice

Eligibility Criteria

In order to undertake the HSD applicants must be Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) registered and have paid Institute membership at Member (MIBMS) or Fellow (FIBMS) grade. This must be maintained for the duration of this qualification.

Portfolio Requirements

Candidates must pass the portfolio stage of the HSD before they can proceed to the exams. For those submitting their portfolio from 2021 the requirements will be as follows:

Personal Professional Profile
500 words ($\pm 10\%$) - A description of relevant professional experience, current job role and responsibilities.

CPD Activities

Candidates will be expected to undertake CPD activities as part of their work in completing the portfolio and preparation for the exam but there is no requirement to provide a specific list of activities or supporting evidence. CPD however must be apparent in the reflective statement.

Essays

Two essays (each of 3000 words ($\pm 10\%$)) based on titles published on the HSD section of the Institute website. The essay can come from any of those titles available.

Cases; One Clinical Case Study and one Managerial Report

As those undertaking the HSD are aiming for roles where they will have managerial responsibilities candidates' in all disciplines will be required to do one Clinical Case Study and One Managerial Report.

Each Case Study/Managerial Report must be **1,500 words ($\pm 10\%$)**. It must be clear the level of personal involvement the candidate has had and they should be typical of the candidates' workload, not exceptional. There must be reflection that includes a description of how it will (or did) inform future changes to practice.

Clinical Case Studies - There is an increased emphasis on differential diagnosis.

Managerial Report - The report could cover the introduction of new equipment/tests, the implementation of audit outcomes, responding to inspection findings, re-training of staff and reconfiguration/ amalgamation of services.

Whether clinical or management, the work submitted must demonstrate a systematic approach and show:

- insight and wider understanding of the issue/condition
- current knowledge
- relevance to the current environment and scope of practice

Presentation

Evidence of an oral presentation in the form of the slides presented and the accompanying notes. It **must not** be on the case study or managerial report submitted but can be either a scientific/clinical or on a management subject. There must be evidence of feedback from two senior colleagues, one of who must be their line manager, and reflection by the candidate on the success (or otherwise) of the presentation.

Reflective Learning Statement

One reflective learning statement of 2,000 words ($\pm 10\%$). It should be informed by the CPD activities undertaken, the preparation/research done for completing the essays and any other relevant work; the Case Studies and Oral Presentation can be referenced but should not form a significant part of this reflection as they have already been included in those aspects of the portfolio.

Candidates should articulate how they have identified gaps in their knowledge, what action they took action to address these and the rationale behind their choice of action(s). It should also 'critique' what they could have done better, the advantages/disadvantages of their approach and what they would have done differently or advise others to do based on their experience. It should show how their preparation for the HSD has contributed to your professional practice.

Referencing

Referencing for the case Studies and essays can be completed in either the Harvard or Vancouver style but must be consistent within the case Study or essay.

Exam

From 2020 the four exam papers that form the second part of the assessment of the HSD will be structured as follows:

Discipline Specific Short Answer Questions

60 Minutes - Questions that focus on problem solving / operational scenarios/ analysis of results or quality control issues in their chosen specialty. Candidates will be expected to answer four questions in an hour.

Generic Essay Questions

120 Minutes - This paper is common to all HSD candidates no matter the discipline that they are undertaking the HSD in. There is one pre-released mandatory question. Candidates are then expected to answer two further questions from a choice of four.

Discipline Specific Essay Questions

120 minutes - Candidates will be expected to answer two from five questions in their chosen specialty.

Discipline Specific Case Studies

120 minutes - Candidates are expected to answer three mandatory case studies, one pre-seen and two unseen in their chosen specialty.

Marking and Banking of Results

The overall pass mark for the qualification and the individual papers remains unchanged however from the 2019 exam series candidates who are unsuccessful will be able to 'bank' papers.

Marking Structure

All four papers to carry equal weight. Overall pass mark 50% with no paper scoring below 40%. Candidates can pass with papers that score than between 40-50% provided they meet the required overall average.

Banking of Results of Papers

Candidates that fail to reach the overall pass mark will automatically 'bank' the papers in which they scored >50%. They will have to re-sit any papers where they score <50%. For the re-sit the marks that the candidate achieves on the re-sit papers will be the marks that count towards the overall qualification.

This does not dispute the fact that 40-49% is a pass mark for the paper but rather it is stating that a pass mark in that range is not acceptable for banking.

Portfolio is valid for two attempts at the exam so banked marks will only be available for one re-sit. If the 50% overall mark is not achieved at this point (i.e. after two attempts at the exam) the candidate must submit a new portfolio and re-sit the entire examination.

Frequently Asked Questions

Why are you changing the HSD?

As part of ensuring that the Institute's qualifications remain fit for purpose and meet the needs of both its members and the wider profession, the Education and Professional Standards Committee (E&PSC) periodically undertakes a review to consider past performance and to identify how its qualifications can be improved. The review of the HSD forms part of the Institute's 2020 Strategy.

The work of Higher Specialist Diploma (HSD) Review Group was led by the IBMS Deputy Chief Executive and included the IBMS Executive Head of Education, the IBMS Head of Examinations, representatives from each of the HSD disciplines and a representative of the E&PSC. The recommendations made by the group were discussed and agreed by the E&PSC in July 2019 and the changes will be implemented gradually over the next 12 to 18 months.

I am intending to submit my portfolio in 2020. What do I have to include?

Candidates submitting in 2020 can either follow the requirements stated in the current version of the HSD Study Guide (Version 2.8 January 2018) or the requirements stated above.

You should note that for the cases studies with the current 1,000 ($\pm 10\%$) word limit two common problems that have been identified with the portfolios that are submitted are that the level of personal involvement the candidate has had with the case is not clear and/or the candidates has struggled to fully explore the case within the word limit. This is why the word limit has been increased to 1,500 words ($\pm 10\%$) from 2021 as it will allow candidates to provide a fuller discussion and to better illustrate their involvement in the chosen case.

Candidates who are submitting in 2020 must ensure that their case studies address these points and therefore they may wish to work with the new word limit even though their portfolio has been compiled under the 'old' requirements.

Are there any example questions or papers available?

Past papers for the generic essay paper and the discipline specific essay and case studies papers can be found on the Institute website: <https://www.ibms.org/resources/ibms-qualifications/past-papers/>

As outlined above the discipline specific short answer question paper changes in 2020 from ten questions in an hour to four questions in the same time period. Examples of the type of questions that will be asked in this exam will be made available on the Institute website shortly.

What is the fee for the HSD?

The fee for the HSD from the 1 January 2020 will be **£350**. Candidates who are unsuccessful in their exams in 2019 and who choose to re-sit in 2020 will pay a fee of **£75 per paper**.

What will be covered in the exams?

The scientific advisory panels are reviewing the syllabus that is stated in the current version of the guide. The range of subjects and issues in the syllabus remains unchanged but to provide greater clarity there will be a greater amount of detail to better help candidates to structure their revision and preparation for the exams.

How much detail is needed in the feedback on the presentation?

A pro-forma will be developed by the Institute which should be used by candidates to gather feedback from the stated individuals.