

Policy

Subject: Selection of Examiners for the College and Panels of Examiners
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Introduction

The Royal College of Pathologists of Australasia, as part of its principal object, is responsible for the training and examination of medical practitioners, dental practitioners, and senior scientists in Australasia who wish to become specialist Pathologists or Fellows of Faculties.

Part of this process involves the examination of Trainees to certify whether they are of an appropriate standard to practise Pathology as a specialist.

Assessment may include, but is not necessarily restricted to, formal summative examination.

In order to maintain and enhance the transparency and accountability of the RCPA examinations, the College has developed the following procedures and guidelines.

1. Criteria for Selection of Examiners

- Whenever possible, examiners should be Fellows and/or Fellows of Faculties of the Royal College of Pathologists of Australasia.
- Only in exceptional circumstances should a specialist who is not a Fellow of the College, be approached to participate in the examinations.
- Such circumstances might include withdrawal of College Fellows from the panel of examiners at short notice, and when no suitable replacement can be found among the College Fellowship.
- Ordinarily, examiners will have qualified for Fellowship of the College by examination in the relevant discipline. (For example, examiners in Anatomical Pathology will have completed their Fellowship in Anatomical Pathology or, in some instances, General Pathology). Founding Fellows of the Faculty of Science may be examiners as approved by the Chief Examiner.
- As a general rule, at least five years post-Fellowship status in the College will be required for selection as an examiner.
- Chief Examiners for medical Pathology Disciplines must be medically qualified and have attained Fellowship by Examination in the relevant discipline.
- Familiarity with the form and content of College examinations is essential.

- An examiner must participate in an appropriate program of continuing professional development.
- Prospective medically or dentally qualified examiners must hold medical or dental registration without condition with the appropriate registration body.
- Prospective examiners must not be subject to any performance or disciplinary activity.
- Where relevant applications must include endorsement from the Head of Department.
- Prospective examiners must demonstrate a commitment to fairness, impartiality, confidentiality and integrity of the examination process.

2. Orientation and Training for Examiners

Before carrying out the duties as a fully-fledged examiner, it is desirable that the individual has previous relevant experience. This could include participation in medical or allied health undergraduate examinations or examination of pathology as a basic science, as a prerequisite for medical specialities other than pathology. The College will, however, afford training for new examiners by:

- (a) Providing guidance in examination procedures for the College, by way of formulation of marking systems, and pairing inexperienced examiners with a more experienced examiner. In the case of oral examinations, prior to acting as an “independent” examiner prospective examiners will be offered observer status at examinations.
- (b) Providing a phased introduction to participation in the College examinations. This might include, for example, the following sequence/scenario:
 - i) involvement in trial examinations in the first instance
 - ii) marking of examinations initially, when the “new” examiner can be paired with a more experienced assessor so that the two can discuss and formulate common approaches to marking, including weightings assigned to information in the answers;
 - iii) involvement as a “supernumerary” examiner for practical examinations, in a similar role as outlined in ii) above
 - iv) at a later stage, an examiner with experience in the assessment of written papers may be asked to participate in the oral examinations, initially as an observer and then by pairing the “new” examiner with a more experienced colleague. (At the discretion of the Board of Education and Assessment (BEA) on the advice of the relevant Chief Examiner, some examiners may proceed directly to participation in the oral assessments.)
- (c) Examiners should familiarise themselves with the related documents listed at the end of this policy.

3. Panel of Examiners

- The BEA shall have the responsibility for the establishment of a panel of examiners and for monitoring their compliance with the above selection criteria.
- The names of those Fellows interested in being Examiners will be sent to the relevant Chief Examiner for assessment of their suitability for appointment as an examiner.

- The panel of examiners should represent a broad and representative cross-section of College Fellows involved in the everyday practice of Pathology in the relevant sub-discipline.
- With these general principles as a background, examiners in any one year will be recruited from among the following, subject to their availability:
 - Pathologists/senior scientists from a broad cross-section of Australian States, New Zealand, Hong Kong, Malaysia and Singapore actively involved in post-graduate professional training programs as preparation for the College examinations.
- In order to minimise bias in the assessment of a Trainee's performance at the oral examination, examiners and the Trainees they examine should not ordinarily have a close association.
- The names of the panel of Examiners will be published on the website.

4. Length of Appointment

All examiner appointments shall be for five (5) years in the first instance.

The BEA may, at its discretion, extend the period of time a Fellow may remain on the panel as required but only under exceptional circumstances and following a recommendation from the relevant Chief Examiner will this be extended beyond two consecutive terms.

5. Role of the Panel of Examiners

Each Chief Examiner will, from the Panel of Examiners selected, determine which examiners are to be involved in the examination process for each year.

The Examiners can be involved at two levels of the examinations:

- Participation in an Examiners Committee that oversees the content and quality of the of the examination process (at least four examiners will be involved in such a committee in any given year).

Specifically, the committee shall ensure:

- appropriate curriculum content is assessed in each component of the examination (using an assessment blueprint as required),
 - the development of suitable examination questions, cases and other practical components,
- and
- the development of minimal standards to obtain a pass in each component of an examination and the development/provision of standardised marking/answer sheets,

and/or

- Participation in the exam process as a marker, and/or examiner in orals and/or practicals.

All examiners on the panel should be prepared to be involved in one or more of these activities each year.

Please note some Chief Examiners may choose to use their discipline Advisory Committee as their Panel of Examiners.

Related documents

Policy 3/2005 Ownership, Confidentiality and Security of Examination Materials

Guideline 4/2015 Security of the Production and Handling of Examination Materials

Guideline 3/2015 Quality Framework for RCPA Examinations – Written, Practical and Oral

Roles and Responsibilities 1/1999 Chief Examiner, Associates, Assistant Chief Examiners,
Principal Examiners and Fellows Assisting in the Examination Process

Guideline 1/2019 Examiner and Observer Code of Conduct for Oral Examinations