



THE FACULTY OF CLINICAL ONCOLOGY

**TO: TRAINING PROGRAMME DIRECTORS
REGIONAL POST-GRADUATE EDUCATION ADVISERS**

COLLEGE TUTORS

EXAMINATION CANDIDATES

FIRST EXAMINATION FOR THE FELLOWSHIP IN CLINICAL ONCOLOGY SPRING 2021

The Examining Board has prepared the following report on the SPRING 2021 sitting of the First Examination for the Fellowship in Clinical Oncology. It is the intention of the Specialty Training Board that the information contained in this report should benefit candidates at future sittings of the examinations and help those who train them. This information should be made available as widely as possible.

Dr Rachel Cooper
Medical Director, Education and Training

FIRST EXAMINATION FOR THE FELLOWSHIP IN CLINICAL ONCOLOGY EXAMINERS' REPORT – SPRING 2021

The pass rates achieved at the SPRING 2021 sitting of the First Examination for the Fellowship in Clinical Oncology are summarised below.

	All Candidates		UK-trained Candidates	
Cancer Biology & Radiobiology	99/129	77%	35/45	78%
Clinical Pharmacology	121/147	82%	51/54	94%
Medical Statistics	87/123	71%	31/38	82%
Physics	97/126	77%	38/50	76%

This examiners' report does not provide an in-depth breakdown of performance on individual questions but is intended to guide trainers and candidates by highlighting particular areas of concern. Candidates are reminded that it is recommended that all modules are attempted at the first sitting, to maximise chances of success over the total of six permitted attempts.

Cancer Biology and Radiobiology

Overall performance was high, with many questions having been answered correctly.

We would advise students to spend more time revising to increase their performance in the following areas:

1. Tumour hypoxia and angiogenesis
2. Cancer genetics/ causation of human tumours
3. Immuno-oncology – as this is a rapidly evolving area with increasing treatment options, we would advise students to focus some attention in this area.

Improvements in knowledge and understanding are required in the following areas: the cellular basis of normal tissue injury, application of the linear quadratic model, awareness of typical TCP and NTCP curves for a range of treatments, and the potential effects of IMRT on normal tissues.

Clinical Pharmacology

Candidates performed extremely well this sitting, especially with questions being more clinically relevant. Candidates have not performed as well on questions related to supportive therapies and analgesics as per previous sittings. The examiners strongly recommend revising in this area.

Candidates need to be aware of the most up to date SACT drug list before the exam as this will be regularly updated.

Medical Statistics

Overall, the candidates performed well and exhibited broad statistical knowledge.

Candidates are advised to pay careful attention to the question and improve knowledge on epidemiological study design e.g. Case-control and cohort studies, interpretation of graphs and understanding differences between absolute and relative changes.

Physics

The examiners were pleased to see consistently strong performances across all areas. There seems to be a good understanding of the clinical consequences of changes to photon beam parameters, and of the legislative framework of radiotherapy practice. However, some weaknesses are apparent in the understanding of fundamental physics, especially with regard to the interaction of photon beams with matter. Also noticeable is a deficiency in the knowledge of linac operation and architecture, particularly with respect to leakage. This has been noted on several recent sittings. This is perhaps an area of teaching which course organisers could ensure is covered adequately.