



### 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 AUTUMN 2022**

The Examining Board has prepared the following report on the AUTUMN 2022 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

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### **FIRST EXAMINATION FOR THE FELLOWSHIP IN CLINICAL ONCOLOGY EXAMINERS' REPORT – AUTUMN 2022**

The pass rates achieved at the AUTUMN 2022 sitting of the First Examination for the Fellowship in Clinical Oncology are summarised below.

	<b>All Candidates</b>		<b>UK-trained Candidates</b>	
<b>Cancer Biology &amp; Radiobiology</b>	98/139	71%	47/67	70%
<b>Clinical Pharmacology</b>	71/138	51%	45/63	71%
<b>Medical Statistics</b>	100/147	68%	49/63	78%
<b>Physics</b>	91/153	60%	39/69	57%

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**

The examiners noted a high attainment exam across candidate groups, for both Cancer Biology and Radiation Biology. Candidates are encouraged to read questions carefully: check the labelling of graph axes prior to attempting to answer.

Cancer Biology: Questions related to angiogenesis and stem cell biology and DNA repair, including TP53 function and mechanism of mutation were less well answered.

Radiobiology: The normal tissue radiobiology content needs to be studied in more depth by prospective candidates. Questions testing this knowledge were consistently poorly answered.

## **Clinical Pharmacology**

Candidates generally performed well in questions on cytotoxic anticancer treatments, in particular toxicity and mode of action.

Candidates are recommended to focus on familiarising with the newer generations of protein kinase inhibitors, including cautions of their use. Candidates are encouraged to consider the application of knowledge in clinical settings.

As with previous sittings, candidates should be competent in the pharmacology and dose conversion of steroids and opioids, as well as other supportive medications. The Summaries of Product Characteristics (SmPC) of specific drugs and the BNF links below are good resources to refer to.

Opioid conversion table: <https://bnf.nice.org.uk/medicines-guidance/prescribing-in-palliative-care/>

Steroid conversion table: <https://bnf.nice.org.uk/treatment-summaries/gluocorticoid-therapy/>

## **Medical Statistics**

Overall candidates performed well. Candidates had a good knowledge of screening tests and survival analysis. Candidates did less well in design and analysis of clinical trials in particular, early phase clinical trials and mandatory reporting of serious adverse events.

## **Physics**

In continually striving to ensure both fairness and academic robustness, the examiners note that the pass rate this year was lower than recent sittings. However, this is in line with acceptable variation. A small number of questions seemed to cause candidates some difficulty, particularly those regarding the basic physics of proton interactions and radioactivity. On re-assessing these questions, the examiners feel that they were fairly stated, and would encourage providers of teaching courses to ensure that these issues are addressed appropriately, especially considering the increasing interest in, and availability of, proton therapy.