

Notice of Changes to Diploma Examination Format from 2024: Introduction of Two-Phase Examination

Dear Resident and Supervisor,

The Examination Committee wishes to inform you of impending changes to the Diploma Examination. There will be opportunities to discuss any queries and concerns during the summer school this June, and at the ECVCP AGM at the ESVCP/ECVCP congress in Lisbon this year. Meanwhile, please do not hesitate to direct any questions by email to Niki Skeldon and Cathy Trumel, via the College's Secretariat (secretariat@ecvcp.org). The intention is that the new system will come as a welcome change to residents, and to make the transition process as smooth and stress-free for residents as possible. Please be assured that we will do our utmost to be approachable and flexible regarding the new rules.

Note that the Examination section of the ECVCP Information Brochure has not yet been updated to encompass these changes. Residents should refer to the information in this letter until official documentation is posted on the website later in the year.

Yours faithfully,

Niki Skeldon and Cathy Trumel

Co-chairs of the ECVCP Examination Committee

Changes to the ECVCP Examination, effective from 2024:

- 1) The General Clinical Pathology (GCP) examination will consist of 100 MCQs (2 hours) from 2024 onwards. Short answer questions will no longer be included. This will apply for both the 'old style' and new two-phase examination.
- 2) The examination will transition to a two-phase examination:
 - Phase 1: General Clinical Pathology. Once a year in March** (provisional date 8th March 2024). Open to any resident who has completed 12 months or more of residency training by 1st March in the year of examination.
 - Phase 2: Cytology, Haematology and Biochemistry. Once a year in Sept/Oct**
Open to any resident who satisfies the current criteria for examination eligibility*.

*See ECVCP Information Brochure Section 5.2.

The reasons for the introduction of the two-phase examination are as follows:

- To encourage residents to gain a thorough grounding in general clinical pathology early in their training
- To facilitate the whole examination process for candidates
- To spread the revision load for candidates
- To spread the study-leave burden for institutions training multiple residents
- To implement an examination process which we believe is pedagogically superior to the current examination.

For the transition year of 2024, candidates who are eligible to sit the final examination will be offered a choice of the 'old style' final examination (all four parts taken together in Sept/Oct) **OR** the new, two-phase examination. Candidates who have completed their residency must stipulate on application which type of examination they wish to take.

Candidates cannot 'mix and match' between the old and new style examinations in 2024.

Practicalities

Location:

Phase 1 will take place online, via Exemplify. The candidate or supervisor must nominate a suitable proctor at time of application. The proctor must physically accompany the candidate during the examination, and must be either an ECVCP or ACVP board certified clinical pathologist, or an EBVS specialist of another discipline.

Phase 2 will take place in person in a location in the northern hemisphere (currently Toulouse veterinary school), using a combination of Exemplify, PowerPoint projected images and glass slides. For 2024, Phase 2 will be held contemporaneously with the 'old style' examination.

Fee:

Phase 1: 100 euro (first attempt and re-take fee)

Phase 2 and 'old style' examination: 500 euro (first attempt); 250 euro (re-take)

Examination fees will remain fixed until 2025. They will be reviewed and are expected to increase in 2026.

Application deadline:

Candidates wishing to sit Phase 1 in March 2024 must complete the new examination application form (not yet available on the website) by 1st January 2024.

Candidates wishing to sit Phase 2 OR the 'old style' examination in Sept/Oct 2024 must submit their application by 1st March 2024.

Questions:

1. Will the subject matter of Phase 1 be the same as General Clinical Pathology (GCP) in the 'old style' exam?

Yes. The subject matter will be the same. The only exception is that toxicologic pathology is no longer tested *in detail* in GCP. Instead, it will be focused on in the Phase 2 Biochemistry section. (Occasional MCQs related to Quality Assurance *may* involve toxicologic pathology if relevant articles arise in the *Veterinary Clinical Pathology* journal.)

The 2024 Phase 1 examination will be based on the current GCP 2023 reading list (with cut-off dates for journal publications updated to 1st January 2024). The reading list will be fully updated in 2024 for the 2025 examinations, but these changes will not affect any of the 2024 examinations.

2. I am a first/second year resident. Can I sit Phase 1 in March 2024?

Yes, so long as you have completed at least 12 months of residency training by 1st March 2024. This applies to both Standard and Alternative training programmes.

3. I am a final year resident (or end of penultimate year resident) who had been planning to sit examinations in 2024. What are my options?

You must choose whether you wish to sit:

Phase 1 in March 2024, followed by Phase 2 in autumn 2024

OR

All four parts together (current 'old style') in autumn 2024.

If you fail Phase 1 (i.e., General Clinical Pathology [GCP]) in March 2024, you cannot re-sit the GCP examination in autumn 2024, but you can still sit haematology, cytology and clinical biochemistry in autumn 2024.

4. I am a final year resident expecting to sit 'old style' examinations in autumn 2023. What if I fail one or more parts?

i) If you fail three or four sections of the examination, you will have to re-sit the whole examination.

If you elect to re-sit the examination in 2024, you can choose to be examined with the new two-phase or the 'old style' system (please see Q3).

If you elect to re-sit the examination after 2024, you will be examined with the new two-phase system.

ii) If you fail the GCP section only and elect to re-sit the examination in 2024, you can choose to re-sit GCP in either March (Phase 1) OR in the autumn ('old style'), but not both (please see Q3).

If you elect to re-sit the examination after 2024, you will re-sit GCP as the March Phase 1 examination.

iii) If you fail GCP and another section and elect to re-sit the examination in 2024, you can choose to be examined with the new two-phase system: GCP in March (Phase 1) and other section in autumn (Phase 2), OR both sections in the current 'old style' examination in the autumn.

If you elect to re-sit the examination after 2024, you will be examined with the new two-phase system: GCP in March (Phase 1); other section in autumn (Phase 2).

iv) If you fail two non-GCP sections (passed the GCP and one other section), you will be eligible to re-sit the remaining two sections in the autumn (Phase 2).

5. Does it matter which order I sit Phase 1 and Phase 2 examinations?

It is recommended, but not mandatory, that candidates take and pass Phase 1 before proceeding to Phase 2. It is expected that most candidates will attempt Phase 1 before they are eligible to take Phase 2. Candidates may elect to take both Phases in the same year, provided the criteria for both examinations are met.

6. What are the rules regarding re-taking the two-phase examination?

Phase 1

A candidate can re-take Phase 1 once per year. A candidate who fails Phase 1 in the transition year of 2024 cannot retake GCP in autumn 2024 'old style' examination.

Phase 2

A candidate can re-take Phase 2 once per year. If a candidate passes **one** section of Phase 2, they do not have to re-sit this section if they have already passed Phase 1 and achieved more than 30% in all failed sections.

If a candidate passes **two or three** sections of Phase 2, they do not have to re-sit those sections if they have achieved more than 30% in all failed sections.

7. How many attempts can I make at each phase?

For each phase, four attempts are allowed, and both Phase 1 and Phase 2 must be completed and passed within 96 months after the completion of the residency training programme.

Please do not hesitate to contact the Examination Committee via the College's Secretariat (secretariat@ecvcp.org) if you have any questions.