

FELLOWSHIP BY THESIS

Guidance to candidates on thesis submission and assessment for the award of a Diploma of Higher Specialist Practice

Fellow is the highest class of Institute corporate membership. The primary route to Fellow is through the award of a Higher Specialist Diploma, which is available in the key biomedical science subjects of cellular pathology, clinical chemistry, cytopathology, haematology, histocompatibility and immunogenetics, immunology, laboratory leadership and management, medical microbiology, transfusion science and virology. For individuals who do not work in one of these disciplines or for whom the examination is not easily accessible or supported by their workplace, there is an alternative equivalent route to the class of Fellow. This is through submission to the Institute of an M-level thesis that meets the Institute's criteria and leads to the award of a Diploma of Higher Specialist Practice.

Each thesis submitted for the award of a Diploma of Higher Specialist Practice must be a report of original work performed by the candidate, in the field of biomedical science or laboratory management, which represents a definite contribution to knowledge of the subject. Research may be conducted legitimately as a group or team project, but work to be considered for submission as a thesis for Fellowship must be the candidate's own work. When the proposal forms part of a joint or group project, the candidate must indicate clearly the extent of his or her individual contribution and the extent to which work will be carried out in collaboration with others. The standard of this work should be comparable to the level of a Masters degree achieved by research and should be 20,000 words ($\pm 10\%$).

A candidate may not submit material previously entered for examination by any other body or for any of the Institute's prizes, unless substantial further work covering a new feature or a wider field of investigation is incorporated.

Eligibility criteria

Individuals wishing to submit a thesis proposal for the award of a Diploma of Higher Specialist Practice as a route to Fellowship should be a Biomedical Scientist who is performing a highly complex role within a defined field, or is mainly involved in research and development, and is continuously developing clinical, scientific or technical practice. Candidates must be an Institute member in the class of Member (MIBMS). Candidates must also maintain continuous membership of the Institute from the date of acceptance of the title and synopsis to the submission and assessment of the thesis.

Submission of a thesis proposal

Each candidate must first complete a thesis proposal form, which is available on the website, and return it to the Head of Examinations, accompanied by a 500-word synopsis of the proposed area of study and the rationale for the research.

Applications will be reviewed by a chief examiner and a deputy or an Institute appointed expert in the subject area of the proposed research project. Candidates will be notified in writing about whether or not their proposal has been accepted. Where a proposal is considered to be unacceptable, or requires modification, advice will be given to assist the candidate in the preparation of a resubmission, should they wish to re-apply.

Thesis supervisor

If the title and synopsis are approved, the candidate will be advised to seek a supervisor whom the candidate should consult for advice and guidance on the research.

The role of a supervisor is not that of a teacher, as the candidate must exhibit originality and initiative if the thesis is to represent their own research. **It cannot be stressed too strongly that a candidate should not seek to present work originated by others, or performed as part of a team project, as though it represents entirely their own original research.** It is the supervisor's duty to prevent this and of the examiners to verify this during the viva. Guidance on avoiding plagiarism can be found on the Institute's website.

If the work begins to develop in a different direction from than intended in the original proposal, the supervisor must advise the candidate to submit a revised title to the Institute for agreement by the chief examiner.

Submission of a thesis for assessment

The thesis must be submitted within three years of the date of approval of the title and synopsis. In exceptional circumstances an application may be made for this period to be extended. Any such request should be submitted in writing to the Head of Examinations, stating reasons, for consideration by the chief examiner. The maximum permitted extension time is three years.

Two copies of the thesis must be submitted to the Institute, together with the examination fee for the year of submission. All theses must be presented according to the Institute's requirements given in *Appendix A* of this document. The thesis will be sent to the chief examiner and the deputy or the Institute's appointed expert in the area of research, who were responsible for approving the initial project proposal and to examine the work independently of each other. After this, the candidate will be required to attend the Institute office for a *viva voce* examination conducted by both assessors on the work presented in the thesis.

Viva voce examination

The *viva voce* examination on the work presented in the thesis will take place at the Institute office and will be conducted by the chief examiner and a deputy or the Institute appointed expert in the area of research. The candidate's supervisor, with the candidate's permission, may be present at the *viva voce* examination but may not participate unless invited to do so by the examiners. Candidates will be required to respond to questions by the examiners for one hour during which the originality of the work will be investigated thoroughly. It is important that candidates show an understanding of how their research was conducted and the rationale behind the research. Examiners will also look for the ability to discover new methods of solving problems and to present in a conclusive manner the results of the practical work.

Theses are categorised as passed, failed or referred. If a thesis is not worthy of a pass but requires partial revision, it may be referred for amendment, in which case only a referred examination fee will be payable on re-examination. Any amendments required must be made before a final bound copy is submitted to the Institute.

The examiners are required to submit a written report to the Professional Examinations and Awards Committee.

Award of a Diploma of Higher Specialist Practice

Following the receipt of a bound thesis and ratification of the result by the Professional Examinations & Awards Committee successful candidates will be awarded a Diploma of Higher Specialist Practice, which entitles the recipient to apply for Fellowship of the Institute; however, all other relevant eligibility criteria must be met.

Instructions to candidates on the presentation of a thesis for the award of a Diploma of Higher Specialist Practice

1. All unbound theses submitted for assessment shall be presented in A4 format on good-quality white bond paper
2. The thesis shall be printed double-spaced on one side of the paper only, and the size and font of character used in the main text, including illustrated matter and notes, shall normally be Times New Roman 12 point.
3. Both the copies submitted for assessment and the final bound copy shall be presented in typescript or print of a permanent nature.
4. The margin at the left-hand binding edge of the page shall be not less than 40 mm; the other margins shall be not less than 20 mm.
5. Pages shall be numbered consecutively through the main text, with photographs and/or diagrams included as whole pages.
6. The reference list shall appear at the end of the thesis, with the entries listed numerically and in the same order that they have been cited in the text. The reference style should follow that published in the Uniform Requirements for Manuscripts Submitted to Biomedical Journals (*Ann Intern Med* 1997; **126**[1]: 36–47). The following is an example of this so-called ‘Vancouver style’, which has been adopted from the US National Library of Medicine, and has the advantage that it is less obtrusive and allows the main text to flow more easily:

“The author has discussed the implications of these proposals on the National Health Service in another paper¹. Other writers have commented on related issues, notably Lane^{2,3} and Lewis⁴.”

References are then listed in the references section in numerical order, as below. Please make note of the limited punctuation and the fact that the Journal names are abbreviated. Where there are more than six authors’ names, the first three should be included, followed by *et al.*

1. Annas GJ. New drugs for acute respiratory distress syndrome. *N Engl J Med* 1997; **337**: 435–9.
2. Lane K, Grinspoon L, Bakalar JB. *Marijuana: the forbidden medicine*. London: Yale University Press, 1993.
3. Lane K, Feinberg TE, Farah MJ eds. *Behavioural neurology and neuropsychology*. 2nd edn. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1997.
4. Lewis A, Collins B, Green J *et al.* Laboratory screening for drugs-of-abuse screening. *Lancet* 2000; **353**: 120–4.

References that are only cited in tables or in legends to figures should be numbered in sequence according to the first mention of that table or figure in the text.

Further information can be found on the following websites:

www.nlm.nih.gov/bsd/uniform_requirements.html

www.icmje.org/

7. The title page shall give the following information:
 - a. the full title of the thesis
 - b. the full name of the author
 - c. the award for which the thesis is submitted – Diploma of Higher Specialist Practice
 - d. the month and year of the submission.

8. The contents page shall include:
 - a. acknowledgements
 - b. abstract
 - c. introduction
 - d. methodology
 - e. results
 - f. conclusion
 - g. references

Where a thesis is on a management and leadership subject, the chief examiner will advise on an appropriate contents page at the time of acceptance.

9. The Institute's Library copy must be bound and presented as follows:
 - a. The binding must be of a fixed type so that pages cannot be removed or replaced and be in a dark colour, with the back and front covers of sufficient rigidity to support the weight of the work when upright.
 - b. The front cover must state the title of the thesis, the surname and initials of the candidate, the qualification (Diploma of Higher Specialist Practice) and the year of submission. The same information should be presented on the spine reading downwards.