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# SPECIALIST PORTFOLIO UPDATE

Following a review to update the various Specialist Portfolios, Version 4 will be available from July, writes **Alan Wainwright**, IBMS Executive Head of Education.

**A**s this was an interim currency review, there are no significant changes to the structure or content of the portfolios and consultations around the future of the Specialist Portfolios in their current form will continue as part of the strategic review of qualifications.

In response to feedback, the Diploma of Biomedical Sciences has been re-named the Specialist Diploma in Blood Sciences, and there is an optional Molecular Pathology module for Cellular Pathology. This will be available as a standalone module for those who have already completed their Specialist Portfolio, and in time will be developed and offered as an optional module for other disciplines.

We are often asked to clarify the entry criteria. Applicants must be in a corporate class of IBMS membership, working in a laboratory with Institute approval for post-registration training and must retain IBMS membership throughout study of the Specialist Portfolio. The portfolio is not available to Associate members of the Institute or individuals undertaking pre-registration training and should be completed in the spirit in which it has been developed, as an artefact of a period

of immersion in their laboratory rather than a workbook where evidence is created merely to “tick each box”.

Where a particular analysis is not performed in the candidate’s laboratory, knowledge of the principles and practice must still be demonstrated. We are reliant on the professional integrity of the training staff and management to assess whether they are able to facilitate the opportunities that Specialist Portfolio candidates need to be able to complete a meaningful portfolio of evidence. If a laboratory can only provide a small range of tests and is reliant on other specialist facilities to provide opportunities, then we expect to see this evidenced in the laboratory approval documentation.

If the laboratory cannot provide the majority of tests expected and cannot meet this expectation, they must consider if they are in a position to fully support the candidate.

Completion time may vary, but it is expected to take about 24 months. Whilst there is currently no time limit for completion of the portfolio, there is a requirement for evidence to be current and within three years of the external examination. In line with our other

portfolios, the introduction of Version 4 will trigger an expiry limit of three years on any superseded version of a portfolio, from the date a new version is introduced.

Following completion of the portfolio and successful examination of the knowledge, the candidate will be eligible for the award of a discipline-specific Specialist Diploma. In order to be awarded an Institute Specialist Diploma, the individual must be a current member of the Institute and have held corporate membership for at least one year.

The end-point examination for the optional Molecular Pathology module will take place in an external location, not the candidate’s employing laboratory. This will usually be the Institute’s London office, but may be an alternative location that is more convenient to both candidate and examiners.

This applies irrespective of whether the module has been completed as part of the Cellular Pathology Specialist Portfolio or as a standalone module. Where the module has been completed as part of the Cellular Pathology Specialist Portfolio, the Molecular Pathology module will be examined in a second, separate assessment. 

