



The Society of Apothecaries of London

Diploma in Forensic Medical Sciences (DipFMS)

Dissertation Titles 2025

Candidates choose from one of four dissertation topics below:

1) Title: Physician participation in human rights abuses

Guidance statement:

Candidates are expected to discuss how physicians intentionally or otherwise collaborate with governments/ factions in participating in human rights abuses. This would include approval or actual participation in different types of torture, including the use of psychoactive and other drugs, forced treatments such as FGM, homosexual re-education and chemical treatment, production of fraudulent statements etc. In addition, the extent of participation of physicians in executions should also be critically discussed.

2) Title: “What might be the effect of recent cases in which expert witnesses have been criticised (and, in some cases, punished) for lack of care and/or objectivity?”

Guidance statement:

For many years, no action lay against an expert witness for negligence or for the consequences of his or her opinion or evidence, given the primacy of an expert's duty to the court. In recent years, the law has developed to abandon that immunity.

Further, the courts have for many years been critical of experts who disregard or pay insufficient attention to the duties imposed upon them by the law, including in the Civil and Criminal Procedure Rules. Some experts have been criticised publicly by the senior courts, including in criminal appeals and trials of civil actions (such as for personal and psychological injury). In an extreme case an expert was found in contempt of court for signing a declaration at the end of his report without an honest belief in its truth.

Consider recent developments in this area and analyse how they might affect the willingness and ability of expert witnesses to give evidence in future. How might prosecutions which rely on forensic evidence be affected? Your review and arguments should focus on developments from the last 5 to 10 years, though you are permitted to refer to the wider history to set your conclusions in context.

Starting points (only) for the historic case law: *Jones v. Kaney* [2011] UKSC 13; *Arthur JS Hall & Co. v. Simons* [2002] 1 A.C. 615; *Dawkins v. Lord Rokeby* (1873) L.R. 8 Q.B. 255. This is not an exhaustive or complete list.

Starting points (only) for recent case law: *Wilson v. Ministry of Justice* [2024] EWHC 2389 (KB); *Davies-Gilbert v. Goacher* [2022] EWHC 969 (Ch); *R. v. Byrne* [2021] EWCA Crim 107; *Liverpool Victoria Ins. Co. Ltd v. Zafar* [2019] EWCA Civ 392; *R. v. Pabon* [2018] EWCA Crim 420. This is not an exhaustive or complete list.

3) Title: “The Unlawful Possession and use of Firearms in the United Kingdom”.

Guidance statement:

Crime involving firearms has increased in the United Kingdom over recent years, whether in single shootings or in multiple homicides and assaults. No longer do forensic pathologists, for example, need to go overseas to acquire experience of firearm crime because of its rarity in the United Kingdom. The dissertation should review the types of firearm most commonly involved in crime in the United Kingdom and the legislation which has developed to control access to them. It should review how incidents involving firearms are managed by the police and thereafter how they are investigated at the scene and in the laboratory, as well as covering the use of firearms in assaults and, in general terms, the injuries which they cause. A detailed account of the pathology findings in firearm injuries is not required. Finally, the dissertation should consider if a case can be made for relaxation of the legal controls or, indeed, for even more stringent controls.

4) Title: “Consider and contrast the different drink and drug driving legislation in England and Scotland.”

Guidance statement:

Ten years ago, in 2014, the Scottish Government reduced the maximum limit of alcohol permitted in drivers, such that the limits became different in England and Scotland. (The limits can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/drink-drive-limit>.)

In the same year in England and Wales, the UK Government introduced legal limits on drugs in drivers for the first time, but they were not brought in in Scotland until 2019.

Looking back at the rationales offered for these changes, and public comment and discussion in the intervening years, what has been the effect on road users and the wider public? Has it led to better outcomes and what may be the reasons for the results?

Discuss and analyse the legal, forensic and wider public safety issues involved. You may also wish to make recommendations for future reform.