



2025

The Society of Apothecaries of London

Guide to

The Diploma in Forensic Medical Sciences

(DipFMS)

Incorporating the Regulations

Centre for Health Studies
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Notice of future amendments to the Guide (incorporating the Regulations and Syllabus) and revisions following publication of this version.

The DipFMS Examination will continue to change to reflect developments in medicine. While every attempt has been made to ensure that this version of the DipFMS Examination Regulations and Syllabus is accurate, further changes to the DipFMS examination, the Regulations and closing dates may be implemented during this time. Candidates should refer to the Society of Apothecaries website (www.apothecaries.org) for the most up-to-date information, where any such changes will be detailed. In order that candidates are fully briefed about the status of any proposed changes, they are advised to check the Society website regularly.

INTRODUCTION

The Diploma in Forensic Medical Sciences was instituted by the Society of Apothecaries of London in 1998. It is intended to demonstrate knowledge of forensic medical sciences for those who are involved with or interested in medico-legal work. It is open to all who have completed a course in forensic medical sciences run either by the **Academy of Forensic Medical Sciences** *[formerly at Barts and the London, QMU]* in London or the **University of Strathclyde** in Glasgow.

COURSE CONTACT DETAILS

For details of the courses please contact:

London	Glasgow
Professor Peter Vanezis Academy of Forensic Medical Sciences Miller House 3 Devonshire Drive London SE10 8LP +44 (0)20 7882 3401 info@afms.org.uk	Dr Penny Haddrill Centre for Forensic Science University of Strathclyde Royal College, 204 George Street Glasgow G1 1XW +44 (0) 141 548 4377 https://sway.cloud.microsoft/UinFlc7UzQ6VlaBi

EXAMINATION TIMETABLE AND FEES

Please refer to the **Administrative Guidance for Candidates** (available online at www.apothecaries.org).

REGULATIONS FOR ADMISSION TO THE EXAMINATION

1. Candidates must have satisfactorily completed the part-time course of lectures in forensic medical sciences which is offered by either the Academy of Forensic Medical Sciences in London or the University of Strathclyde in Glasgow, and must have been issued with a Certificate of Attendance.
2. Applications and fees must have been received by the closing date published in the **Administrative Guidance for Candidates**. Evidence of satisfactory completion of the course, formally recorded as a Certificate of Attendance, will be provided to the Society by the Course organisers. For further information please refer to www.apothecaries.org. If applicable, Form Q (Application for Special Examination Arrangements) must have been received no later than 4 weeks before the application deadline for the examination, published in the **Administrative Guidance for Candidates**.

THE EXAMINATION

4. The examination will be conducted in English throughout, and will consist of:
 - a. A dissertation on a given topic chosen from four titles, completed and submitted electronically by the date specified in the **Administrative Guidance**. Candidates must write on their chosen topic and on no other, must include a written declaration that the dissertation is their own work (plagiarism is never acceptable), and must allocate joint copyright of the work to the Society.
 - b. The One 3-hour Written Paper is now conducted fully on-line. Candidates sit the examination using their own computer equipment and access the examination remotely via a specialist platform. Live remote invigilation is provided using a webcam and strict guidelines are followed, replicating the situation that would normally have occurred had candidates been present in the examination room. Candidates will be contacted directly by TestReach with full details and instructions.
 - c. The written consist usually of 10 compulsory questions covering the syllabus.
5. Both parts of the examination must be taken at first entry. Entry and re-entry to the examination must be made within three years of completing the course, i.e. being awarded a Certificate of Attendance. Candidates must pass both the written paper and the dissertation in order to pass the examination. If only one component is passed then it is permissible to carry that result forward to the next chosen sitting, provided that this is within the time limits set out above.
6. The examination fee will be determined annually. Candidates who withdraw from the examination after the closing date will forfeit a proportion of the fee. For further details refer to the **Administrative Guidance for Candidates** (www.apothecaries.org).
7. Candidates will be issued with an admission document once a place on the examination has been confirmed. This must be produced on the day of examination, along with some form of photographic identification. Candidates are forbidden to bring books, papers, mobile telephones, calculators or any other electronic aid into the online exam room, and it is strictly forbidden for candidates to talk to, or to attempt in any other way to communicate with, each other whilst a written examination is in progress. Candidates who present themselves for the examination after the start time stated in the admission document will be admitted if they arrive within 15 minutes of this time, but may not be admitted if they arrive thereafter. In any case, candidates will forfeit the time lost. In exceptional circumstances, where all candidates are affected by delays, the examination timings may be amended.
8. The Court of Assistants reserves the right to refuse to admit to the examination, or to proceed with the examination of, any candidate who infringes a regulation or who refuses to comply with the reasonable request of an officer of the Society. Candidates' completed examination scripts become the property of, and will be retained by, the Society. Under no circumstances will they be available for study.
9. Candidates who are successful at the examination are entitled to use the abbreviation **DipFMS** after their names.

REVIEW AND APPEAL PROCEDURES

10. The processes outlined below will be dealt with according to the Examination Review and Appeal Procedure, which is available on the website. In no circumstances should a candidate make representations directly to an examiner.
11. The stages of the review and appeal procedures (which are on the examination area of the website) are as follows:
 - a. Feedback – first, compulsory stage
 - b. Review – second, optional stage
 - c. Appeal – third, optional stage
12. **Feedback (compulsory).** The feedback process operates through the Head of the Academic Department (HOAD). Feedback on examination performance may be available to unsuccessful candidates at their request, but such requests must be made in writing and be received by the HOAD within 28 days of the date of the result letter. The HOAD has authority to pass to the candidate a breakdown of the results of each section of the examination where this is not provided with the result letter. This information should be read in conjunction with the explanation of the marking scheme and the standard that is required to achieve a pass in the examination contained in this Guide. The HOAD can also relay a transcript of additional general advice directly to the candidate, if such advice is available. This is advice generated by the Examination Panel, agreed at the time of the examination. The Head of the Academic Department's role is to distribute the prepared information but not to interpret it. There is no charge to the candidate for this initial feedback.
13. **Review (optional).** A request by a candidate for a review of a paper must be received in writing within 28 days of the date of the notification informing the candidate of the feedback, but a review request cannot be made without first going through the initial feedback stage. There is a fee of £175 for a review.
14. **Appeal (optional).** An appeal to the Society's Academic Quality and Standards Committee (AQSC) is open to a candidate who is not satisfied with the decision of the Examination Panel, feedback or the Review Panel. In accordance with the Society's Examination Review and Appeal Procedures, available to download, the detailed grounds on which the appeal is made must be stated. The appeal must be received in writing within 28 days of the date of the notification informing the candidate of the examination result or the review, but it is not necessary to seek a review before appealing. There is a fee of £250 for an appeal.
15. If the appellant is dissatisfied with the report of the AQSC's Appeal Tribunal and wishes to make an appeal to the Court of Assistants, this should be communicated to the Head of the Academic Department within 28 days of the date of the notification informing the candidate of the decision of the Appeal Tribunal.

THE DISSERTATION

16. The dissertation topic for the ensuing year is usually published in the autumn in the **Administrative Guidance for Candidates** (www.apothecaries.org). Academic Policies for Candidates relating to conduct and anti-plagiarism can be found at <https://www.apothecaries.org/diploma-in-forensic-medical-sciences/>. Candidates are encouraged to carry out literature searches, to reference the work and to include original comment, diagrams and photographs. The dissertation must not be plagiarised nor be a paraphrase from standard textbooks (and see paragraphs below). The Society may routinely utilise anti-plagiarism software as one of its tools to ensure academic integrity; if used, candidates will be so advised.
17. Plagiarism is the presentation of another person's thoughts or words as if they were the writer's own. If another person's work is quoted, it must be acknowledged fully by means of a reference in the text (source to be given in the reference list) and putting the quotation in quotation marks, i.e. "...". This also applies to verbatim short sections from a source. Paraphrasing statements/text of factual knowledge or ideas from published works, lectures or web sources is not plagiarism if the original source is referenced and the paraphrasing is not extensive.
18. Any diagrams, tables, graphs etc which have been taken directly from a source or modified from a source must include appropriate details of the author and source, as well as being acknowledged e.g. from Bloggs et al 1998 or adapted from Bloggs et al 1998. Simple reproduction of complete articles in appendices is not permitted. **Any candidate who is found to have plagiarised material in the dissertation will be referred to the AQSC, and the work of any candidate who is found to have plagiarized material will be rejected.**
19. The text of the dissertation must be typed and capable of electronic transfer. Dissertations should be between 8,000 and 10,000 words in length excluding references; dissertations which are significantly above or below those limits may have that fact reflected in the marking. Dissertations should be page numbered.

20. Dissertations should demonstrate evidence of review of the relevant literature with a demonstration of understanding and appropriate critical interpretation in the discussion. There should be use of theory to support arguments, and evidence of the development of the student's own thoughts, based on critical evaluation of the information gathered.
21. Dissertations benefit from having a clearly identifiable structure, which assists readers and examiners alike. The following sections must have:

Title page:	Indicating title of dissertation, candidate number, course title and date (month and year).
Declaration of originality form:	See required layout below
Acknowledgements:	If relevant
Table of contents:	Indicating section and sub-section titles and page numbers
Abstract:	Approximately ½-1 page summary of the content of the dissertation, additionally stating word count (excluding references).
List of figures:	If relevant
List of tables:	If relevant
List of abbreviations:	if relevant
Introduction:	Indicating the scope of the dissertation and the aims and objectives if relevant
Main text:	Subdivided into sections dealing with separate topics
Conclusions	Providing concluding remarks from the text and recommendations if relevant
References:	See below for required format
Appendices:	If relevant

Each section should be identified by an appropriate heading, using a numbering system if desired. This could also apply to sub-sections, for example:

1. Introduction
 - 1.1 Topic 1
 - 1.2 Topic 2

The following check list may assist final proof reading. Consider:

- Clarity of objectives
- Relevant literature review undertaken
- Evaluation of evidence with development of original thoughts
- Conclusions relevant and sound with a summary of any recommendations
- Acceptable standard of grammar and spelling
- Report coherent and arguments sequenced logically
- References included where needed and clear distinction between author's opinion and published evidence/opinion
- Dissertation in the correct format including the numbered endnote referencing style, and with page numbers.

TURNITIN

You will be required to submit your completed dissertation on the Society's BrightSpace learning platform, and it will be put through the incorporated Turnitin TM anti plagiarism software on the platform, to check if any text in a submission is similar to one of the Turnitin sources. These matches will then be flag up for review if over 25 – 49%.

The dissertation must include a title page with the following information:

Diploma in Forensic Medical Sciences
Dissertation title
Candidate number
Date (<i>e.g. 10 July 2025</i>)
Word count excluding references (<i>e.g. 9,796</i>)

In addition, candidates should sign a declaration such as the one given below. It should be submitted at the same time as the dissertation but **NOT** incorporated into the work and remain a separate document.

Declaration of Originality

Signature & candidate number:

I certify that this dissertation is entirely my own work and free from plagiarism.

I allocate joint copyright to the Society of Apothecaries.

Signed Date

References

22. The text of the dissertation must be supported by references taken from the relevant published literature. Usually these will be from books or refereed journals. References to Internet sources must include all the information required for a full and complete reference plus full details of the website (the URL of the site) and the date on which it was accessed, as the content of sites may change with time. References to newspaper articles containing details of fact, such as case reports, may exceptionally be made, but candidates should recognise that these are not considered authoritative and are not subject to peer review before publication. Additional footnotes must **not** be used unless they are absolutely essential.
23. Medical and scientific references must be numbered consecutively in the order that they are first mentioned in the text and placed in superscript each time the author is cited. The full list of references must be arranged at the end of the dissertation in numerical order. Format of references must follow the Vancouver style, i.e.

For Journals:

Authors' Names & Initials, The Title of the Article, *The full Title of the Journal*, the Year, the Volume, and the first and last Page Numbers referred to.

e.g. Jude E, Boulton A J M. End stage complications of diabetic neuropathy. *Diabetes Rev* 1999;7:395-410.

For Books:

Authors' Names & Initials, The Title of the Book, The place of Publication, the Publisher, the Year.

e.g. Corbetta, P. Social research: theory, methods and techniques. London. Sage. 2003.

[if there are more than six authors list the first three followed by *et al*]

Legal references must be cited in the form used in reports issued by the Incorporated Council of Law Reporting:

e.g. DPP v Smith [1990] 2 AC 783. Guidance on legal references can be found in Raistrick, D. Index to Legal Citations and abbreviations. London. Sweet & Maxwell. 2008.

Full details of the styles of referencing, which must be followed meticulously, can be found at:

<https://subjects.library.manchester.ac.uk/referencing-new/vancouver>.

Production of dissertations

24. Dissertations must be produced in accordance with the guidelines set out in this Guide and it is important that they are strictly adhered to. Dissertations not in this format may be rejected. Your name and the dissertation title must appear in the document header from page 2 onwards, and the page and total number of pages, given as "Page x of y", must appear in the footer.
Each dissertation must be presented as a single file, with file names created as: Your name DFMS Dissertation title Date (YYMMDD). For example: **candidate number DFMS Terrorism Investigation 250710.doc**
25. The **dissertation**, in the form of **two electronic copies**, must be submitted to the Academic Department of the Society of Apothecaries by the specified closing date using the electronic protocol specified in the Admission Document provided to each candidate no later than the deadline published in the **Administrative Guidance for Candidates**. You will be required to submit your completed dissertation on the Society's BrightSpace learning platform. On submission, Turnitin TM will automatically scan your dissertation for matching text from Turnitin sources. Should Turnitin indicate a match above 49%, this will be flagged up for review by the examining team.

MARKING SCHEMES

26. **The Dissertation.** The dissertation will be assessed by two examiners, consideration being given to relevance of content and style, quality of English and grammar, use of appropriate references and adherence to production requirements.
27. **The Written Paper.** The written paper is marked against bullet points previously prepared for each question. The Panel assesses the level of knowledge expected of candidates using a standard setting procedure such as the modified Angoff method, with all judgements analyzed and a criterion-referenced pass mark established. As a result of the standard setting, the pass mark and pass rate can vary from one examination to the next, although the standard required remains the same. Each script is double marked, with the marks averaged unless the discrepancy is significant, in which case the figures are examined in detail by the Panel and a mark agreed.

The Academic Department
2024-2025