



# The Society of Apothecaries of London

## Guide to The Diploma in HIV Medicine (Dip HIV Med) Incorporating the Regulations & Curriculum

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### **Notice of future amendments to the Guide (incorporating the Regulations and Curriculum) and revisions following publication of this version.**

The Dip HIV Med Examination will continue to change to reflect developments in medicine. While every attempt has been made to ensure that this version of the Dip HIV Med Examination Regulations and Curriculum is accurate, further changes to the Dip HIV Med examination, the Regulations and closing dates may be implemented during this time. Candidates should refer to the Society of Apothecaries website ([www.apothecaries.org](http://www.apothecaries.org)) for the most up-to-date information, and 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.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

**The Court of the Society instituted, in 2002, an examination and the award of a Diploma in HIV Medicine, which is open to registered medical practitioners who have significant experience of treating patients with HIV disease.**

## **DATE AND PLACE OF THE EXAMINATION**

The Dip HIV examination is currently held twice a year. From June 2025, it will comprise a written paper only, using single best answer (Best of Five – Bo5) format. The Bo5 examination is conducted online via a specialist platform with live remote invigilation.

## **EXAMINATION TIMETABLE AND FEES**

Please refer to the [Administrative Guidance for Candidates](#) (available online at [www.apothecaries.org](http://www.apothecaries.org)).

## REGULATIONS FOR ADMISSION TO THE EXAMINATION

1. The examination is exclusive to medical graduates, who must be registered with the General Medical Council of the United Kingdom and have held a qualification for **at least five years** to practise Medicine, Surgery and Obstetrics & Gynaecology.
2. Medical graduates who have qualified as follows may be admitted to the examination with the approval of the AQSC if they have complied with all the other requirements of the Regulations:
  - a. Within the United Kingdom (UK), who are no longer registered with the General Medical Council in the UK but who are registered with an equivalent national medical council;

**Or**

  - b. Outside the UK, who are not registered with the General Medical Council in the UK but who are registered with an equivalent national medical council.
3. Candidates must produce satisfactory evidence that, after qualification and by the time of the examination, they have had substantial, regular and continued clinical experience with HIV medicine over at least a 2-year period (or part-time equivalent) at Specialty Trainee level or equivalent. This should include practice within the last 5 years to ensure currency of knowledge, incorporating experience of both inpatient and outpatient care.
4. Precision in communication is essential. The examination is conducted in English. Candidates must have demonstrable skills in English that enable effective communication in clinical practice with patients and colleagues, as set out in Domain 3 of the GMC's *Good Medical Practice (2024)*.
5. Applications and the fee must have been received by the closing date published in the [Administrative Guidance for Candidates](#) (available online at [www.apothecaries.org](http://www.apothecaries.org)). In order for applications to be processed, we request details of a medical practitioner (for example, an educational supervisor) who is able to confirm that the candidate meets the entry criteria.
6. If applicable, Form Q (Application for Special Examination Arrangements) must have been received by no later than 4 weeks before the application deadline for the examination, published in the [Administrative Guidance for Candidates](#).

## THE EXAMINATION

The examination will consist of a written paper, which is held online, lasts 3 hours and contains 120 Best of Five (BO5) questions only

7. The exam will be standard set at the level of an ST5/6.
8. Successful candidates are entitled to use the letters Dip HIV Med after their names.

9. The examination fee will be determined by the AQSC and published in the [Administrative Guidance for Candidates](#). Candidates who withdraw from the examination after the closing date will forfeit a proportion of the fee.
10. Candidates will be issued with an admission document once a place for the examination has been confirmed. This must be produced on the examination day, along with an official form of photographic identification. Candidates will be contacted directly by TestReach with full details and instructions to sit the Bo5 examination.
13. The 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.
14. On the days of the examination, candidates are forbidden to bring books, papers, calculators, mobile phones or any other electronic aid into the online examination room environment. It is strictly forbidden for candidates to talk to, or to attempt in any other way to communicate with anyone whilst a written examination is in progress.
15. Candidates who present themselves for written examinations after the start time stated, 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.
16. The Academic Quality and Standards Committee reserves the right to refuse to admit to the examination, or to proceed with the examination, any candidate who infringes a regulation or who refuses to comply with the reasonable request of an officer of the Society and the fee may be forfeited.

## REVIEW AND APPEAL PROCEDURES

17. 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.
18. 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.
19. **Feedback.** The feedback process operates through the Head of the Academic Department. Feedback on examination performance will be provided automatically to all candidates.
20. 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.
21. 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, which had been agreed at the time of the examination. The HOAD's role is to distribute the prepared information but not to interpret it.

22. There is no charge to the candidate for this service.
23. 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 result and feedback. There is a fee of £175 for a review.
24. **Appeal (optional)**. An appeal to the 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. It is not necessary to seek a review before appealing. There is a fee of £250 for an appeal.
25. If the appellant is dissatisfied with the report of the AQSC Appeal Tribunal and wishes to make an appeal to the Court of Assistants, this should be communicated to the HOAD within 28 days of the date of the notification informing the candidate of the decision of the Appeal Tribunal.

#### **THE WRITTEN PAPER (Bo5)**

26. The paper will consist of 120 Best of Five (Bo5) questions only. The 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.
27. Example questions are given in the [Administrative Guidance for Candidates](http://www.apothecaries.org) (www.apothecaries.org) to show the style and format of questions.

#### **MARKING SYSTEM**

28. The Dip HIV Med examination is criterion referenced to the current nationally acceptable standard as determined by the examiners.
29. Before the examination, the Dip HIV Med Examination Panel assesses the difficulty of the questions against the level of knowledge expected of candidates using a standard procedure such as the modified Angoff method.
30. All judgements by the standard setters are then analysed and a criterion-referenced pass mark is 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.
31. The Examination may include pre-test questions (trial questions that are used for research purposes only). A small number of pre-test questions may appear in any paper. Responses to them do not count towards a candidate's final score.

## **GUIDELINES**

32. The examination will include questions that relate to relevant UK guidelines (e.g. British HIV Association ([www.bhiva.org](http://www.bhiva.org)), British Association of Sexual Health and HIV ([www.bashh.org](http://www.bashh.org))) and European AIDS Clinical Society (EACS)). The most current, completed (i.e. final) guidelines, position statements and standards that are available (either on-line or published) at the time of closing date for applications to the examination will be the guideline version referred to. Questions relating to important, well- publicised studies and presented to major HIV academic conferences prior to the closing date for applications to the exam may also be included.

## **CURRICULUM**

33. The examination is mapped to the GUM, HIV and Epidemiology & Public Health competencies of the Specialty Training Curriculum for Genitourinary Medicine 2022 which was approved by the General Medical Council on 9th April, 2022 with an implementation date of 1st August 2022, issued by The Joint Royal College of Physicians Training Board (JRCPTB) [www.jrcptb.org.uk](http://www.jrcptb.org.uk)