



Guide to The Diploma in Forensic Medical Sciences (DipFMS) Incorporating the Regulations & Curriculum 2026

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Future Amendments to the Regulations and Syllabus

The DipFMS 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 need to be implemented. Candidates should refer to the [Administrative Guidance for Candidates](#) for the most up-to-date information.



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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/iB41NWHCIAsHA6no

The Examination Structure

This exam consists of 2 components; a Written Paper and a Dissertation.

- The **Written Paper** consists of 10 compulsory questions and lasts for 3 hours. This paper is taken online with live remote invigilation.
- The **Dissertation** is open-book and based on a given topic selected from four titles. It must be completed and submitted electronically by the date specified in the [Administrative Guidance](#).

Examination Timetable and Fees

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



Date and Place of Examinations

Please refer to the [Administrative Guidance for Candidates](#).

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. 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.
3. Applications and fees must have been received by the closing date published in the [Administrative Guidance for Candidates](#).
4. Candidates can **now** sit **either** the dissertation or written paper or both at first entry.
5. 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.
6. If applicable, Form Q (Application for Reasonable Examination Adjustments) 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

Available entry options:

- Written paper & dissertation First time entry
 - Dissertation first time entry
 - Written paper first time entry
 - Written paper & dissertation re-entry
 - Dissertation re-entry
 - Written paper re-entry
7. The examination will be conducted in English throughout, and will consist of:

The Dissertation

8. 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 submit a separate written declaration that the dissertation is their own work (plagiarism is never acceptable), and must allocate joint copyright of the work to the Society.

The Written Paper

9. The Written Paper will last 3 hours and comprise usually of 10 compulsory questions covering the syllabus. The Written Paper will be taken online prior to the Dissertation, with live remote invigilation.



10. 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 the online platform provider, TestReach with full details and instructions.
11. **Late arrivals for the Written Paper:** Candidates who present themselves for the written paper 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. Candidates will forfeit the time lost. In exceptional circumstances, where all candidates are affected by delays, the examination timings may be amended.
12. The examination has two elements, the written paper and the dissertation. Both the written paper and the dissertation must be passed in order to complete the examination.
13. If only one component is passed then it is permissible to carry that result forward; the failed element will need to be re-taken, and a re-sit fee paid. The whole examination must be completed within 3 years.
14. The examination fee will be determined annually by the Academic Quality & Standards Committee (AQSC) and published in the
15. [Administrative Guidance for Candidates](#). Candidates who withdraw from the examination after the closing date will pay the forfeit fee specified in the Administrative Guidance for Candidates.
16. This diploma is not re-certifiable. Evidence of updating is necessary within the clinician's regular appraisal or professional revalidation processes.
17. On the days of the written examination candidates are forbidden to bring books, papers, calculators, mobile telephones or any other electronic devices into the online examination environment.
18. It is strictly forbidden for candidates to attempt to communicate with each other in any way while an examination is in progress.
19. Candidates must present photographic evidence of their identity to the online invigilator for the written paper.
20. The AQSC 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 a reasonable request of an officer of the Society.
21. Candidates who are successful at the examination are entitled to use the abbreviation **DipFMS** after their names.



Review and Appeal Procedure

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.

22. 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
23. Feedback. The feedback process operates through the Executive Director of Centre for Health Studies. 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 Executive Director within 28 days of the date of the result letter.
24. The Executive Director 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 (**where applicable**) and the standard that is required to achieve a pass in the examination contained in this Guide.
25. The Executive Director 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 Executive Director's role is to distribute the prepared information but not to interpret it.
26. There is no charge to the candidate for this initial feedback.
27. 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 their result. There is a fee of £180 for a review.
28. 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, 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 £275 for an appeal.
29. If the appellant is dissatisfied with the report of the Academic Quality and Standards Committee and wishes to make an appeal to the Court of Assistants, this should be communicated to the Executive Director within 28 days of the date of the notification informing the candidate of the decision of the Academic Quality and Standards Committee.



The Dissertation

30. The dissertation topic for the ensuing year is usually published in the autumn in the [Administrative Guidance for Candidates](http://www.apothecaries.org) (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.
31. 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. The reproduction of long sections from a source, even if cited, would be considered poor academic practice, as it does not allow the examiners to assess the understanding or critical evaluation skills of the candidate.
- 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.
32. 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 plagiarised material will be rejected.**
33. 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; dissertations which are significantly above or below those limits may have that fact reflected in the marking. The maximum word count includes the introduction, the main text, the conclusions, any appendices and substantive footnotes to those sections. (Footnotes which purely recite references but do not include substantive content are not included in the word count.)
34. Dissertations should be page numbered. Dissertations should **NOT** include candidates' names: they are anonymised by candidate numbers, with candidates' identities held separately to ensure blind marking.
35. 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.
36. 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 integrated Turnitin™ anti plagiarism software, to check if any text in a submission is similar to one of the Turnitin sources. All Turnitin reports will be reviewed by the examiners.

You may **not** use generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) to write the dissertation. This means that you may not use any AI technologies including Grammarly, ChatGPT, CoPilot, QuillBot and others.



The dissertation must include a title page with the following information: **Please do not put your NAME on your dissertation.**

Diploma in Forensic Medical Sciences

Dissertation title

Candidate number

Date (e.g. 10 July 2025)

Word count excluding references (e.g.
9,796)

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

37. 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 facts, 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.
38. 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

39. 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 candidate number only 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 (xxxx) DFMS Terrorism Investigation 250710.doc**
40. The **dissertation**, in the form of **electronic copy**, must be submitted to the Centre for Health Studies 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.

Marking Schemes

41. 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.
42. **The Written Paper**. The written paper is marked against criteria previously prepared for each question. The Examination 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.