



Guide to The Diploma in the History of Medicine (DHMSA) Incorporating the Regulations & Curriculum 2026

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

The DHMSA Examination will continue to change to reflect developments. Although every attempt has been made to ensure that this version of the DHMSA Examination Regulations is accurate, further changes to the DHMSA examination, the Regulations and closing dates may be made. Candidates should refer to the [Society of Apothecaries](https://www.societyofapothecaries.org) website for the most up-to-date information, where any such changes will be detailed.



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Introduction

The Diploma in the History of Medicine (DHMSA) was instituted by the Society of Apothecaries in 1970. The Diploma is intended to indicate familiarity with medical and healthcare practice from ancient to modern times and understanding of relevant methods of enquiry. It demonstrates the ability to identify, access, evaluate and share historic material; skills which are assessed through completing a Dissertation, an Open Book Written Paper and presenting a lecture to a specific audience.

Exam Contact Details

Ome Obodo, Academic Assessment Officer
Centre for Health Studies, Apothecaries' Hall
Black Friars Lane
London
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Course Contact Details

For further details on the course and bursary applications, please contact:

Matt Scudder, Academic Training Manager
Centre for Health Studies, Apothecaries' Hall
Black Friars Lane
London
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Tel: 020 7236 1189

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Date and Place of the Examination

The Examination is held annually. Please refer to the [Administrative Guidance for Candidates](#).

Examination Timetable and Fees

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



Regulations for Admission to the Examination

1. Candidates must complete either:
 - a. The History of Medicine Course organised by the Society's Faculty of the History and Philosophy of Medicine and Pharmacy **OR**
 - b. An appropriate course, assessed and approved at the discretion of the Convenor and Deputy Convenor/Examiners Committee Representative **OR**
 - c. Show evidence of competence (e.g. list of publications in the history of medicine) before admittance to the examination. This will be assessed and approved at the discretion of the Convenor and Deputy Convenor/Examiners' Committee Representative.
2. If applicable, Form Q (Application for Reasonable Examination Adjustments) 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

3. The examination will be conducted in English throughout, and will comprise parts:
 - An Open Book Written Paper, with one week for completion and submission.
 - A Dissertation on a topic chosen by the candidate and approved by the Examining Team.
 - A Test Lecture on a topic (different from the dissertation) chosen by the candidate and approved by the Examining Team.
4. All parts of the examination should be taken in the same year unless there are extenuating circumstances. Applications for deferrals are to be made to the Exams team, Centre for Health Studies and supporting evidence will be required.
5. Candidates who fail any part of the examination will initially be marked as failing the whole examination. In cases where the candidate has failed to satisfy the examiners in the dissertation or test lecture or open book written paper, or where the whole examination has been failed, the Exams team will notify the candidate whether or not the dissertation and test lecture may be revised and resubmitted/retaken.
6. Candidate should **note** that re-entry to the examination must be made within 3 years of the first attempt/sitting.
7. Successful candidates are entitled to use the letters DHMSA after their names.

The examination fee will be determined from time to time by the Academic Quality and Standards Committee (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 as specified in the Administrative Guidance.



8. Candidates will be issued with an admission document once a place for the examination has been confirmed.
9. Candidates' completed examination scripts are the property of, and will be retained by, the Society of Apothecaries. Candidates wishing to share or publish their dissertation may do so with the following preface:

"This Dissertation was submitted for the Diploma in the History of Medicine of the Society of Apothecaries (DHMSA) in 20XX. Copyright is shared jointly between the author and the Society, and the Society should be contacted prior to citation. For further information on the Society of Apothecaries of London and its courses and exams please visit www.apothecaries.org. "

10. We reserve the right to refuse 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.

Review and Appeal Procedure

11. The processes outlined below will be dealt with according to the Examination Review and Appeal Procedure. Candidates must not make representations directly to an examiner.
12. The stages of the review and appeal procedures are as follows:
 - a. Feedback – first, compulsory stage;
 - b. Review – second, optional stage;
 - c. Appeal – third, optional stage.
13. Feedback (compulsory). The feedback process operates through the Executive Director of the Centre for Health Studies. Feedback on examination performance may be available to unsuccessful candidates at their request. Requests must be made in writing and be received by the Executive Director within 28 days of receipt of the result letter.
14. 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 and the standard that is required to achieve a pass in the examination contained in this Guide.
15. 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 Examiners' Committee, which had been agreed at the time of the examination. The Executive Director's role is to distribute the prepared information but not to interpret it.
16. There is no charge to the candidate for the feedback service.
17. 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. A request for a review cannot be made without first going through the feedback stage. There is a fee of £180 for a review.



18. **Appeal (optional).** An appeal to the Society's AQSC is open to a candidate who is not satisfied with the original decision of the Examiners Committee, or the Feedback, or the Review. The candidate must state in writing the grounds upon which the appeal is being made. 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.
19. If the appellant is dissatisfied with the report of the AQSC and wishes to make a final appeal to the Society's 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 AQSC.

Examination Structure

20. **The Open Book Written Paper**

Open book written paper comprising an essay-style question. The first part of the question is designed to test the candidate's skill in interpreting given primary sources. The second part of the question is designed to test the candidate's ability to research and present a topic in a properly constructed academic essay, related to the context of the primary source image, text or object.

This will be a remote, open book written paper requiring an essay of maximum 3000 words, for parts one and two combined, to be submitted. Scripts will be typed in English with accurate spelling and appropriate grammar. This will be set over 7 days, typically Monday to Monday.

The open book written paper, in the form of **one electronic copy**, must be submitted on the Brightspace learning platform 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](#). On submission, Turnitin™ will automatically scan your open book written paper for matching text from Turnitin™ sources. Should Turnitin™ indicate a match above 25%, this will be flagged up for review by the examining team.

21. **The Dissertation**

Proposals should be submitted via the Brightspace learning platform by the due date given in the Administrative Guidance for Candidates using the form provided. It is recommended that candidates obtain feedback from the examiner before any detailed writing or other research work on the dissertation is undertaken.

The dissertation proposal should include:

- a. **Proposed title**
- b. **Primary source material:** The examiners strongly advise that you identify suitable primary sources at an early stage in planning your dissertation
- c. **Secondary source material:** What has already been written on this topic? Identify secondary sources relevant to your dissertation



- d. **Description of content:** In 500-800 words, please describe, what you intend to cover, how this relates to current thinking/scholarship, the thesis which you plan to propose
22. Feedback will be provided by two examiners via the Brightspace learning platform.

Advice on selecting an appropriate title:

23. The topic, to be chosen by the candidate, is to be in a field of personal and /or professional interest in the history of medicine. It must not be a paraphrase of textbooks or Internet material. The candidate must demonstrate original work with competence in accessing and using primary source material, which should be put into context with the relevant secondary literature. There should be a well-defined thesis, argument and conclusion to the dissertation.
24. Experience suggests that the most common mistake is to attempt to cover a subject stretching over an excessively long chronological span. A dissertation of this length seeking to survey centuries or even millennia of history is likely to lapse into a mere listing of personalities and achievements, for which no real credit can be given.
25. Candidates are also advised against choosing a topic where attention given to the current situation is likely to outweigh a concern with more distinctively historical issues. Although the dissertation allows the candidate to demonstrate specialist knowledge, it should be written with the non-specialist in mind.
26. We are unable to offer candidates formal tutorial assistance, but course tutors are usually willing to provide guidance.

References

27. 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 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.
28. 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.
29. The format of references in the dissertation should follow either the Harvard or Vancouver styles and should be consistent throughout.
30. References to Internet sources should 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.
31. Additional footnotes should not be used unless they are absolutely essential to the argument.

32. Sources should normally be in English. Foreign sources may be used when there is no generally accepted published translation.

Further requirements

33. The dissertation must include a word count and must not exceed **10,000** words including appendices, captions, references, footnotes and bibliography etc. It may be appropriately illustrated. It must be fully documented with references and bibliography.
34. An electronic copy must be submitted via the learning platform Brightspace by the published deadline. Late submissions will not be accepted.
35. Any evidence of plagiarism in a dissertation will result in that dissertation being rejected.
36. The dissertation should include a title page with the following:

<p style="text-align: center;">Diploma in the History of Medicine</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Dissertation title</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Candidate's number</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Date (e.g. 26 June 2024)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Word Count: (e.g.,10386)</p>
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37. Candidates should complete the checklist (Appendix 3) make and 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.

<p>Declaration</p> <p>Signature & candidate number.....</p> <p>I certify that this Dissertation is entirely my own work without plagiarism. I allocate joint copyright to the Society of Apothecaries.</p> <p>Signed _____ Date _____</p>

38. The marking schedule is given in Appendix 1 below.



Formatting

39. Dissertations should be formatted in a simple font (e.g. Arial, Calibri, Times New Roman), in 12-point, in black type, double-spaced, and formatted for A4 paper. Page number should appear in the footer.
40. Each dissertation should be uploaded in a single file given a name including: "Your **candidate number** DHMSA dissertation title Date (YYMMDD)". For example:

Candidate number xxxx DHMSA Ancient Chinese Medicine 180626

The **dissertation**, in the form of **one electronic copy**, must be submitted on to Brightspace 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™ 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.

The Test Lecture

41. The lecture is a test of content, presentation and communication. The audience will consist of the examiners, other candidates and invited members of the Society of Apothecaries. The lecture should be based on a topic of interest to the candidate, and it must be completely different from the subject matter of the candidate's dissertation.
42. The candidate is required to give a complete and balanced lecture in the 15-minute slot allocated. The lecture should be appropriate for the intended audience and should have both a clear introduction and conclusion. The content should be presented systematically. There will be no time for questions afterwards.
43. The marking schedule is given in Appendix 4 below. Marks will be awarded for overall quality of presentation, engagement with the audience or use of remote communications, appropriate use of audio-visual aids and artefacts, and the treatment of source material. Marks will be deducted for poor time keeping.
44. The test lecture will be presented remotely via Zoom. Candidates are advised to ensure availability and compatibility of their equipment for the time of the test. Please refer to the [Administrative Guidance for Candidates](#) for the examination date.
45. The proposal for the test lecture should be submitted via the Brightspace learning platform using the form provided and include:

the lecture title,
an abstract of 100-200 words
an indication of the intended audience.

It must be submitted for approval no later than the deadline published in the [Administrative Guidance for Candidates](#).



Marking

46. Marks for the various parts of the Examination are distributed as follows:

Open Book Written Paper	30%
Dissertation	40%
Test Lecture	30%
Total	100%

47. The pass mark overall and the pass mark for each section is 60% of the available marks.

48. Candidates who fail to comply with the regulations will be marked down and may fail that section of the examination.



Appendix 1

DHMSA Dissertation Marking Sheet

Maximum marks: 100 Pass mark: 60 Dissertation comprises 40% of final Diploma mark	Confidential when completed
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Examiner:	Candidate:	Title:
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Assessment criteria	[Mark as Fail/Satisfactory/Good/Excellent below]
Content / originality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Does the Dissertation contain necessary, relevant and sufficient facts? – Is there a clear thesis, argument and conclusion? – Is the Dissertation of an adequate academic standard? – Does the Dissertation demonstrate original work?
Understanding	Does the candidate demonstrate an understanding of the facts and their significance in the context of this subject?
Relevance of material	Is the Dissertation supported by appropriate and relevant material, with adequate use and analysis of primary and secondary sources?
Presentation	Correct word count (10000 maximum); adequacy & style of referencing; use of language, spelling and grammar; relevance & quality of illustrations (if any)

Assessment criteria						
Title & abstract approved		Word count		Statement of originality		Assignment of copyright
Content and originality						
Understanding						
Relevance of material						
Presentation						

Total	/10
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General comments: (Reasons **must** be given when awarding a fail mark.)



Appendix 2

DHMSA - Dissertation Proposal

Candidate name:	
Proposed title:	

Primary source material.

The examiners strongly advise that you identify suitable primary sources at an early stage in planning your dissertation. Please indicate the main primary material you intend to use:

Secondary source material.

What has already been written on this topic? Identify secondary sources relevant to your dissertation:

Description of content. 500 – 800 words

Please include a description of

- what you intend to cover;
- how this relates to current thinking/scholarship;
- the thesis which you plan to propose.



Appendix 3

Checklist for DHMSA Dissertation

Tick here

Title page as required by the guide

Word count equal to/less than 10,000 words

12 point black type

Simple font (e.g. Arial, Calibri, Times New Roman)

Double spaced

A4 format

Page numbers in footer

Harvard or Vancouver referencing used consistently

Bibliography and references

Signed declaration included – **separate document**

Signed copy of this checklist included



Appendix 4

Test Lecture Marking Sheet

Maximum marks: 100 Pass mark: 60 Test Lecture comprises 30% of final Diploma mark	Confidential when completed
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Examiner:	Candidate:	Title:
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Category of assessment	Mark
1) <u>Overall quality of presentation</u> (30 marks total) a) Introduction, content, conclusion (20 marks) b) clarity and audibility (10 marks)/20/10
2) <u>Presentation to the audience</u> (20 marks) Including virtual eye contact, appropriate and effective use of humour, attitude, inflection and intonation, body language/20
3) <u>Appropriate use of audio-visual aids and images</u> (10 marks) Slides, other visual aids, handouts, steps taken to ensure equipment compatibility/10
4) <u>Treatment of source material</u> (20 marks)/20
5) <u>Suitability for audience</u> (10 marks) Is the lecture pitched at the target audience, would it keep the audience interested?/10
6) <u>Time keeping</u> (10 marks) a) 14mins to 16mins (10 marks) b) loss of two marks per minute under 14, and per minute over 16/10
<u>Total marks (out of an available 100)</u> <60 = fail, 60-69 = pass/satisfactory, 70-79 = good, 80 or more = excellent/100



Appendix 5

DHMSA – Test Lecture Title and Abstract Proposal

Candidate name:	
Proposed title:	

Intended audience:	
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Abstract of 100 – 200 words

DHMSA – Test Lecture Title and Abstract Proposal

(This page is for Examiner's use only)

Candidate name:	
Proposed title:	

Comments/Advice:	
Assessor 1.	
Assessor 2.	