



HISTOPATHOLOGY SCIENTIST TRAINING

Jo Horne and **Chris Fisher** give a nuts-and-bolts guide to the new Histopathology Scientist Training Programme.

Traditional scientific training in histopathology leads to roles such as general management, quality management and training. Changes began in the early 21st century, with the formal development of simple and complex specimen dissection training roles, as well as the more recent introduction of national histopathology reporting programmes, lead to consultant roles for scientists in histopathology. As part of wider healthcare science training, the National School of Healthcare Science (NSHCS) oversee a variety of qualifications for healthcare scientists across 52 specialties, including the Scientist Training Programme (STP).

What is the histopathology STP?
The histopathology STP is a fully funded

three-year programme of workplace and academic study, including a Masters degree in cellular science from Manchester Metropolitan University.

The STP histopathology curriculum has been updated for the next decade, to reflect the rapid changes in histopathology, including the expansion of molecular testing and digital innovations. The aim of the new curriculum is to develop healthcare scientists with knowledge and skills in a range of areas, to then act as a platform into more senior roles, dependent on professional interest and local service need.

Specialty training

The first year of the programme includes rotation modules introducing histopathology, diagnostic cytopathology and cancer genomics. A new digital, data



and technology module has been included, introducing the trainee to principles around the digital innovations that are increasingly important in histopathology.

The remainder of the programme comprises the specialty histopathology modules and a project, as well as the opportunity for the trainee to explore a personal development goal.

Specimen dissection

The non-malignant specimen dissection module covers five high-volume, low-complexity specialisms encountered in most histopathology departments (skin, gastrointestinal, gynae, urology and breast). This module focuses on gaining experience in basic dissection, with practical competencies signed off locally. The module content mirrors the themes in the IBMS Diploma of Expert Practice in

Histological Dissection (DEPHD) qualification, although not to the same level of depth. The prior learning and documentation gathered during the STP can be used to form part of the DEPHD portfolio after programme completion.

The malignant dissection module introduces dissection of malignant specimens. Again, it focuses on dissection of skin, gastrointestinal, gynaecology, urology and breast specimens, which should be seen in most histopathology departments. It is an introduction to complex specimen dissection, with any practical competencies signed off locally.

Career options

The revised curriculum places a greater focus on specialised immunohistochemical and molecular testing pathways. This provides STP graduates with the transferable skills to move into senior scientist roles within these areas, providing scientists in histopathology with opportunities to expand their careers outside of dissection and reporting. There is also greater focus on developing some of the more strategic and business skills relating to service management, required of all senior scientists working within histopathology.



“This provides graduates with transferable skills to move into senior scientist roles”

After completing the STP, graduates may wish to register as a clinical scientist with the HCPC, however there is no requirement to do so if they hold existing registration as a biomedical scientist.

Benefit your department

STP trainees are supernumerary and fully funded. It is a good way to increase staff and plan a robust multi-skilled histopathology workforce. We know we will require many more scientists to undertake ever-expanding specimen dissection, histopathology reporting and molecular pathology testing and interpretation, alongside our medical histopathologist colleagues.

The STP provides transferable skills and knowledge that can be applied across histopathology. To further a career in dissection and reporting, scientists will be able to undertake the IBMS/RCPATH DEPHD qualification in the year following completion, which is a nationally recognised, transferable dissection qualification within the UK. Trainees can also undertake complex dissection and histopathology reporting qualifications, with the possibility of a more modular approach in the future as these qualifications continue to develop alongside service and workforce need.

The histopathology STP will give a good grounding in molecular pathology and cancer genomics, so scientists may wish to then develop in this area, undertaking other qualifications in cancer genomics.

Scientists with an interest in digital technologies may wish to develop roles

here, accessing further qualifications in these fields. Scientists may also wish to develop additional management and leadership skills and can follow this more traditional career pathway in cellular pathology into management, or use them to support their professional development as a senior scientist in a more clinical or scientific role.


Host an STP trainee

Over the next few months managers and clinical leads of cellular pathology departments across England will need to express interest in hosting an STP trainee.

There are two routes to host a trainee, firstly, in-service, where the prospective trainee is already employed by the department which wishes to support their entry to the programme. Secondly, direct entry, where a trainee is recruited to post via a national recruitment scheme. In-service entry is a great option for biomedical scientists, looking to further their skills, knowledge and career options. Expressions of interest will be open until October 2021. If you would like to host a trainee contact your local HEE office. More information is available on the NSHCS website (bit.ly/3fA3Spo). The NSHCS will also be hosting drop-in sessions to support you through this process (bit.ly/370Cea6).

How can you apply?

The histopathology STP is accessible by anybody who holds a life science degree (class 2:1 or above). You do not need prior registration with the HCPC to apply.

If you are currently working in histopathology, speak to your department about in-service application. Applications for direct entry posts for September 2022 open in early 2022, with interviews taking place in early summer (bit.ly/3Cp95ji). 

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