

# **HKCPsych PART III EXAMINATION**

## **GENERAL GUIDANCE TO CANDIDATES**

The Part III examination shall consist of a dissertation and an oral examination about the dissertation. The dissertation reflects the candidates' significant area of work in the six years of supervised psychiatric training.

### **PROCEDURE FOR SUBMISSION OF THE DISSERTATION**

- 1) Eighteen months before the examination, the candidate shall fill in the application form for project approval and submit the protocol of his/her dissertation to the Board of Examiners for approval. The applicant should see that his/her dissertation to be submitted has not been barred by the Board of Examiners previously for further attempts in the Part III examination.
- 2) This should be accompanied by evidence that he/she:
  - a. Has been formally appointed as a senior trainee, the evidence of which is in the form of a certified (by trainer, tutor or solicitor) true copy of the appointment letter.
  - b. Has obtained support from a qualified supervisor and from the Hospital Chief Executive or Chief of Service of the hospital where the project is to be conducted, attesting that the appropriate facilities are available.
- 3) Within 30 working days the Chairman of the Board of Examiners or his delegate shall communicate the decision to the candidates. The candidate still has to apply to sit for the Part III examination in the year the dissertation is submitted.
- 4) A candidate must make sure that the title and the outline of his/her research proposal has already been submitted to and approved by the Board of Examiners. A copy of the approval has to be inserted following the title page of the submission.
- 5) On or before the deadline for submission of dissertations (which will usually be about two to three months before the oral examination), four typewritten hard copies of the report or dissertation should be submitted by registered mail or in person to the Chief Examiner or his delegate. Late submissions will be rejected or examined only in the following year. The date of submission by mail will be the date of the Post Office chop.
- 6) Candidates are strictly forbidden to send any additional materials to any examiners (local or external) before, during or after the oral examination, except with the permission from the Board of Examiners and then can only be via the Board of Examiners.

# THE DISSERTATION

## Nature of the Dissertation

It could be one of the following types:

### **A) Research Dissertation**

It is a report of an original piece of research with the following format:

1. Introduction and literature review
2. Materials and methods
3. Results
4. Discussion and conclusion
5. References

In submitting the research protocol, the candidate must provide evidence that approval has been obtained from the Ethics Committee serving his/her place of work.

### **B) Clinical Dissertation**

This must have a unifying theme illustrated by case vignettes and in the context of current knowledge in that particular field. The candidate is expected to demonstrate his/her ability to collect and synthesize clinical materials, formulate, apply and evaluate management plans (if any), relate the facts of these materials to the relevant literature and communicate this in writing. Examples of possible clinical materials are clinical cases(s) or clinical data gathered from psychiatric ward(s), clinic(s), service(s) or laboratories.

### **C) Literature Review (until 2011)**

The review should be comprehensive and critical. The candidates need to identify methodological shortcomings and knowledge gaps. To further demonstrate his/her grasp of the literature the candidate should conclude the dissertation by a discussion on the further direction of research in the relevant field.

### **D) Service Development and Evaluation**

This applies to both old and new services. The dissertation should include a literature review and a critical analysis of the service. The evaluation should be supported by relevant data.

### **E) Systematic Review (from 2012)**

This is an overview of primary studies which contains a statement of objectives, materials and methods. It is conducted according to explicit, transparent and reproducible method:

- a. State the objectives of the review and outline eligibility criteria;

- b. Search for primary studies that seem to meet eligibility criteria;
- c. Tabulate characteristics of each trial identified and its methodological quality;
- d. Apply eligibility criteria and justify exclusion;
- e. Assemble the most complete dataset possible;
- f. Analyze the results of the eligible studies by using appropriate statistical synthesis of the data; and
- g. State the results and conclusions clearly.

The Center for Reviews and Dissemination Guidance for undertaking reviews in health care published by the University of York, January 2009 can give more details.

### **Length of the Dissertation**

Dissertation should not be shorter than 6,000 words and not more than 10,000 words (excluding bibliography). The number of words should be stated.

### **Format for submission**

Three hard copies of the dissertation should be submitted. They should be properly bound. Only typewritten dissertation will be accepted. The typeface should be clearly readable and one-inch margins should be allowed on each side. Due attention must be given to the use of correct grammar and spelling. The documentation style of the whole dissertation should comply with that of the Publication Manual of the American Psychology Association (APA).

### **Supervision**

The candidate should arrange for proper supervision for his/her dissertation. The name of the supervisor(s) should be stated in the submission of the protocol and the dissertation.

### **Publication**

Candidates are allowed to use their previous publications for Part III Examination, the time lapse from publication date to the time of examination must not be longer than five calendar years.

Candidates can publish original works derived from the data collected during their Part III project in local or international journals. The publication(s) should contain a reference to the effect that the work was part of the dissertation for completing the HKCPsych Part III Examination. There is no restriction on the timing of publication.

Before a candidate can be nominated to become a Fellow of the Hong Kong College of Psychiatrists, he/she has to transfer the copyright of his/her successful dissertation to the College and donate a touched up soft copy of it to the College.

### **Retaining of Raw Data after Examination**

Candidates have to retain the raw data of their research projects for at least three calendar years after the examination for possible inspection. Raw data include soft or digital data, hard copy of data, questionnaires and consent forms if applicable.

# GUIDELINES ON WRITING THE DISSERTATION

## Introduction

The Part III examination is the exit part of the HKCPsych examination. Passing the examination will mean that the person has the experience, attributes and capability to work independently as a consultant psychiatrist, or a senior member of an academic department or in private practice, and to work efficiently in a subspecialty of one's interest if one so desires. The examination is therefore not an examination on basic skills or knowledge in psychiatry, but an evaluation that the candidate has the required experience, attributes, capability and efficiency.

## Aspects to examine:

The dissertation or during the oral examination:

### **1. In the practice of psychiatry:**

- 1.1. An awareness of the relative benefits, costs and risks of different procedures and treatments;
- 1.2. Openness to change in one's practice and beliefs in the light of demonstrated advances in knowledge;
- 1.3. Striving to contribute to the knowledge base of psychiatry by scientific endeavours and considered reflection on the nature of practice
- 1.4. Demonstrate experience and competence for independent practice.

### **2. In research in psychiatry:**

- 2.1. Adherence to the relevant ethical principles when involved in clinical research;
- 2.2. Conformity to general accepted scientific principles, should the research be based on a thorough knowledge of the scientific literature, or be planned and executed according to established standards;

### **3. In the professional role of being a psychiatrist:**

- 3.1. Recognizing the obligation to maintain appropriate ethical standards in one's professional practice, and in those aspects of one's personal life, which may reflect upon the integrity of the medical profession;
- 3.2. Recognizing that one's own physical and mental health is necessary to enable one to undertake one's professional responsibilities competently, willingness to seek appropriate assistance in the event of difficulties, or one's ill health.

### **4. In relation to colleagues and other professionals:**

- 4.1. Seeking to develop constructive and cooperative working relationship with colleagues and other mental health professionals involved in the provision of care to patients;
- 4.2. Expressing viewpoints with candor and respect in the event of differences of opinion;

**5. In the role of the psychiatrist in society:**

- 5.1. Readiness to promote the just allocation of services and contribute to the education of society regarding mental health;
- 5.2. Readiness to advise those responsible for the provision of health services, to act as advocates on behalf of psychiatric patients, to work with advisory, statutory and voluntary bodies that have a role in the provision of psychiatric services;
- 5.3. Readiness to properly interpret and disseminate relevant scientific information in relation to public debate on psychosocial issues and, in doing so, differentiating one's role as an educator based on professional knowledge as distinct from one's personal views.

**Expected Standard of the dissertation:**

It can be seen from the above that the dissertation in the Part III examination, as well as the oral, is a vehicle for the candidate to demonstrate that he/she has the required qualities. The examination has a standard and requirement of its own and should not be compared to the standard for other qualifications, such as Masters or Doctorate degrees. Generally speaking, this examination is more focused on and relevant to professional psychiatric practice than just theoretical work. Examination for academic degrees usually places deeper and broader emphasis on research attributes and less on the others.

**How to write a good dissertation:**

It is impossible here to give a detailed account of the how. Candidates are advised to read books on this topic available in the market.

The following is a checklist for preparing a dissertation (modified from G. Bordage 1989) and may serve as a good reminder for all candidates:

**Title**

1. The title correctly represents the content and breadth of the study reported.
2. The title is clear and concise and gives importance to the study.

**Author**

3. The title, diploma, affiliation, and address of the author(s) are clearly indicated.

**Abstract**

4. The abstract covers each and every component of the study, namely:

Problem statement  
Research question  
Materials and methods  
Results  
Discussion, conclusion, implications

5. The abstract contains precise information.
6. The implications and benefits reported are commensurate with the results obtained.
7. Key words are listed and cover all aspects of the study.

### **Introduction and review of the literature**

8. The goal or purpose of the study is clearly stated.
9. Key references are reported, and there is a clear relationship between the problem and the study.
10. The literature review provides a theoretical and methodological framework to the problem under study.
11. References to previous findings are accompanied by proper literature citations.
12. Important concepts and variables are defined clearly.
13. The pertinence of the study is presented.
14. A general overview of the study is presented.

### **Materials and methods**

15. The variables selected for the study are described clearly and are appropriate, given the nature of the question asked.
16. The research/review design is described in detail.
17. The research/review design is appropriate and does not contain particular weakness.
18. The measurement instrument, including its psychometric qualities, is described clearly.
19. The population of interest and the sampling procedure are defined clearly.
20. The data collection procedure is clearly described.
21. The setting in which the study took place is described.
22. The data analysis procedures are stated in precise terms.
23. The data analysis procedures are appropriate.

### **Results**

24. Specific data accompany the result statements.
25. Tables and figures are used efficiently.
26. The contents of the tables and figures are clear.
27. The Results section contains actual results only; it does not contain opinions.

### **Discussion and conclusion**

28. The discussion covers all the debatable aspects of the study.
29. The discussion is directly related to the study reported.

30. The current and past findings are brought together in the Discussion or the Conclusion section.
31. The conclusions and practical outcomes of the study are commensurate with the design used and the results obtained.

### **References**

32. The number of reference is reasonable.
33. The content of the paper clearly show that the references quoted were carefully read and well understood by the author.
34. The references are presented according to standard rules of publication (this examination asks for the APA standard).

### **General considerations**

35. The various sections of the paper are clearly identified and appropriate.
36. The sections are presented according to the directions in the most updated Guidelines for Candidates.
37. The terminology is uniform throughout the dissertation.
38. The tone of the paper denotes a rigorous approach on the part of the author.
39. The writing style is clear and pleasant; there are no spelling mistakes.
40. The acknowledgments are complete.

### **A last bit of useful advice:**

Before you finalize your dissertation, it is always a good idea to ask someone who does not know your work to read your dissertation and see what he/she cannot understand and why.

## **SPECIFIC GUIDANCE TO CANDIDATES**

- A) The Board of Examiners shall appoint three examiners for each candidate. The examiners must not be from the same institution in which the candidate is working at the time he/she carried out the research project. The Chief Examiner has the discretion to enlist a fourth examiner, who has scholarly expertise relevant to a candidate's dissertation topic in the Part III examination, as an additional member to the three-member panel of examiners for the respective candidate.
- B) The candidate shall be required to present himself/herself for an oral examination on the dissertation on the next nearest Part III examination date.
- C) The date for the oral examination, time and place will be announced by November. Each candidate will be examined for 45 minutes to one hour. Questions will be directed to all aspects relating to the dissertation and to the candidate's experience on the subspecialty as indicated in the dissertation.

- D) In the unlikely event of a candidate falling ill during the examination, the senior organizer should be notified.
- E) Candidates are responsible for keeping the Chief Examiner informed of any changes of address or telephone number after the application for examination is made.
- F) For the purpose of selecting candidate(s) for the President's Prize for the Best Part III Candidate in Part III Examination, candidates may be asked to present his/her dissertation to a specified panel for, say, 5 to 10 minutes at a specified time after the oral examination.
- G) The examination results will be announced to the candidates by mail as for Part I and Part II candidates. They will be one of the followings:
- i. Pass
  - ii. Fail: in which case the candidate will be asked to rework on the project or on another project so as to re-sit the examination. For failed dissertations, including those resulting from direct failure or failure from conditional pass, the Board of Examiners has the authority to bar the same protocol for further attempts in the Part III examination.
  - iii. Conditional Pass: in which case the candidate will be asked to rewrite or make amendments on the dissertation based on the examiners' comments, and resubmit it within two months in general. If the amended work is still unable to achieve a pass, the candidate will be considered to have failed and treated as in (ii) above.

## **RESULT ANNOUNCEMENT AND FEEDBACK**

Examination results will be announced within one month after the examination (except for reassessment results for conditional pass candidates in the Part III examination, which may take about two months). Candidates will be informed of the results individually by mail.

### **Feedback**

The Board of Examiners will automatically send feedback to the candidate who failed the examination. A copy will be sent to his/her trainer and tutor unless the candidate indicates that he/she does not agree to this in the examination application form.

### **Appeal**

Candidates who wish to appeal against their examination results may raise their concerns to the Review Committee of the College within three months after the announcement of results. The examination papers, answer books and copies of dissertations submitted to the Board of Examiners for the Fellowship Examinations of that year would be kept for another 36 months, after which they will be destroyed.



An appeal fee equivalent to the examination fee will be charged. The fee will be refunded if the appeal is substantiated.

### **PART III ASSESSMENT FOR PSYCHIATRISTS WITH PROMINENT ACADEMIC CREDENTIALS OR MAJOR CONTRIBUTIONS IN OTHER AREAS**

The eligibility of psychiatrists with prominent academic credentials or major contributions in the field of Psychiatry seeking the Fellowship of the Hong Kong College would be vetted by the Education Committee and approved by the College Council. Those who apply under special consideration should possess a recognized intermediate qualification and have undergone six years of supervised training in Psychiatry. In view of the level of academic achievement and contribution in the field of Psychiatry of the individual, the assessment would be in a different format. The assessment would be in the form of an oral examination by a panel of three Fellows to be appointed by the Board. The panel of the three examiners should not include Fellows who have been involved in the vetting process of eligibility concerned. Enquiries and application for eligibility assessment should be addressed to the Honorary Secretary of the Hong Kong College of Psychiatrists.