

PARALLEL PATHWAY FOR MALAYSIAN TRAINEES IN OPHTHALMOLOGY



Dr Mohd Aziz Husni

Head of Department & Consultant Ophthalmologist
Department of Ophthalmology
Hospital Selayang

We had the opportunity to speak with Dr Mohd Aziz Husni in detail regarding the FRCOphth examination and the Parallel Pathway in Ophthalmology. Dr Mohd Aziz Husni is currently the Head of Ophthalmology in Hospital Selayang and the chairperson of Ophthalmology Post Graduate Education and Training Subcommittee for the Master's Programme and Parallel pathway for Ministry of Health candidates.

How many trainees are currently in the programme?

To date, there are currently 4 registered trainees in the parallel pathway programme while another 4 candidates are scheduled for interview in January 2019.

What are the criteria to enroll for the parallel pathway?

The prerequisites for candidates to register with KKM parallel pathway includes:

- Confirmation in service with a permanent post with the Ministry of Health
- Minimum of 85 marks in the Annual assessment 3 years consecutively
- Valid Basic Science Examination (BSE)
- Part I FRCOphth
- FRCOphth Refraction Certificate

Having fulfilled these criteria, the application form (Borang BPAR2019) should be submitted via their respective Heads of Departments and Hospital Director to the 'Bahagian Perkembangan Perubatan' in the Ministry of Health. The list of candidates will then be finalized between October and November with the interview being conducted between December and January.

How soon can a candidate attempt the FRCOphth exams?

The candidate is free to attempt the FRCOphth Part I and Refraction Certificate at any point of their career even as early as during their housemanship. However, one needs to bear in mind that there are other criteria as mentioned above to qualify for registration in the programme.

Is Ophthalmology experience required in order to sit for the Part I FRCOphth?

Minimum ophthalmology experience is not one of the criteria required, although having some experience will increase one's chance of passing the exams. For candidates who are not in an ophthalmology department at the point of passing the refraction certificate, the Ministry will facilitate a transfer to an Ophthalmology Department upon being given a training post in the programme.

What happens after registration into the programme?

A candidate will then spend 2 years in a Level 2 accredited training hospital to prepare for the part 2 FRCOphth exams.

What are the criteria to sit for the Part 2 FRCOphth exams?

It is currently a bit different when compared to the UK but this will eventually be streamlined in the years to come to reflect the UK system closely. In the UK, there is the Annual Review of Competence Progress (ARCP) and this serves as an annual evaluation of the candidate which will be one of the deciding factors whether the candidate is ready to progress to the part 2 exams. The plan is to emulate this in 2019 and if the ARCP is not satisfactory, the candidate will be advised not to proceed with the part 2 exam until their performance improves.

Must the candidate rotate hospitals during the 2 years of training?

During the 2 years in a Level II hospital, the candidate will not be required to rotate hospitals. Subspecialty rotation is dependent on the availability in the hospital they are posted in. Compulsory subspecialty rotation will take place after the candidate passes the part 2 exams. This would involve rotation to other hospitals that are able to offer exposure for the required subspecialty.

Will the ministry consider rotating the candidates to the university hospitals after completion of the Part 2 FRCOphth?

If training for a certain sub-specialty is only available in particular universities, and those universities are accredited Level II training centres, candidates may be placed there for their sub-specialty rotation. This may include a rotation in endocrine or neurology.

How long is the duration given to pass the FRCOphth?

A total of 7 years is given to the candidate to complete all 4 FRCOphth examinations and the number of attempts will be as stipulated by the Royal College of Ophthalmologists. The duration of the training will be for 7 years which is similar in the UK.

Why does a candidate need to register with the Ministry for this programme?

The candidate needs to be registered in the parallel pathway so that the Ministry can facilitate their subspecialty rotations.

What about posters, publications and thesis?

These will be stipulated in the ARCP and are required items for a candidate to achieve the Certificate of Completion of Training (CCT).

What happens after passing the Part 2 FRCOphth?

Upon passing Part 2, the candidate will start their 36 months subspecialty rotation which will also include an annual ARCP and supervisor's report. As for the CCT, the NSR is currently in discussion with the Director General to decide on the guidelines regarding this matter.

During the 36 months rotation, gazettement is obtained after 18 months pending the supervisor's report. At the end of the 36 months rotation, the candidate will be able to register for their NSR and obtain the CCT. It is interesting to note that the subspecialty rotations in various hospitals have been practiced in the last few years by the Master's students to great success. The feedback from candidates has been fantastic as they are getting the best training from the best hospitals in their respective sub-specialties.

When will the candidate be promoted as a Clinical Specialist with a corresponding salary increment?

The salary increment is usually time-based. Candidates will be promoted as a specialist when they are gazetted. Allowances for specialists may be backdated from the day they started their gazettement (depending on KKM and JPA policy).

When will the candidate be eligible to apply for sub-specialty training?

Candidates are eligible to apply for sub specialty training once they are registered with the NSR.

How will the ministry support the candidates?

The ministry will support the candidates in a few ways, for example by providing study leave (which is at the discretion of the Head of Departments) and non-recorded leave for the exams.

Will the ministry sponsor the exams?

As for subsidy of the exam fees by the ministry; this is still being discussed at the ministry level. Should this subsidy be made available, naturally there will also be a bond. This is similar to the “Hadiah Latihan Persekutuan (HLP)” for the Master’s programme.

What about preparatory courses for the exams?

In terms of exam preparations, the Ministry will be more than happy to include candidates in the didactic courses organized for the Master’s students in preparation for their exam. It has always been the Ministry’s intention to be inclusive for all post-graduate students in Ophthalmology.

Is there a secretariat for the programme?

As of 2nd January, 2019 all matters pertaining parallel Pathway will be managed by :

Unit Kepekaran dan Subkepekaran Perubatan
(Unit PGMSS),
Cawangan Pembangunan Profesion Perubatan,
Bahagian Perkembangan Perubatan,
Kementerian Kesihatan Malaysia.

Any advice for those considering Master’s and the FRCOphth?

There is a false perception that taking the FRCOphth exam will decrease their chances of getting a seat in the Master’s programme. As a matter of fact, I personally feel having the Part I FRCOphth and refraction certificate during the Master’s interview gives you an edge. My advice is to not hesitate in taking the FRCOphth exam as the ministry will support the candidate.



DR. WILSON WONG
Senior Registrar at THONEH