



# **Examination Report**

## **Part 1 Fellowship Exam**

### **Royal College of Ophthalmologists (FRCOphth)**

**January 2026**

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Psychometric Solutions Group

## OVERVIEW

The Part 1 Fellowship of the Royal College of Ophthalmologists (FRCOphth) examination is a written, multiple-choice question (MCQ) assessment, which assesses candidate's understanding of patient investigations and knowledge of basic and clinical sciences relevant to ophthalmology. It is made up of two MCQ papers of 90 questions each.

For more information on the structure and content of the exam see the College website.

## DATA REPORTING

All information presented in this report is based on data provided to the Psychometric Solutions Group by the College after standards have been set, results have been processed and outcomes have been published.

Pass marks, candidate scores and resulting pass rates were calculated after items had been reviewed and any item which was deemed necessary to remove had been excluded from the data.

## SUMMARY

The assessment took place in January 2026. A total of 187 candidates sat and completed the examination without issue.

The assessment showed high level of reliability, with an alpha of  $\alpha=0.94$ , and Standard Error of measurement of 5.86 (3.3%).

One item was excluded from this assessment, resulting in a total of 179 items.

The Ebel method of standard setting was used in this assessment, which determined the pass mark to be 115 out of a maximum of 179 (64.2%).

A total of 77 candidates fulfilled the criteria required to pass the examination overall, thus giving a pass rate for this assessment of 41.2%.

## ASSESSMENT CONTENT

The table below provides details on the assessment contents by subject area, compared over time

Table 1: Breakdown of question content by category

	Anatomy & Embryology	Optics	Pathology	Pharmacology & Genetics	Physiology	Investigations	Miscellaneous	Total
Jan-26	27	45	34	13	18	14	28	179
Oct-25	28	44	34	14	19	13	28	180
Apr-25	28	44	34	14	17	14	29	180
Jan-25	28	42	36	13	18	14	28	179*
Oct-24	27	44	33	15	17	14	28	178*
Apr-24	27	41	35	17	17	14	26	177*
Jan-24	28	44	35	15	16	11	30	179*
Oct-23	24	48	32	13	17	20	22	176*
Apr-23	26	48	14	14	13	24	40	179*
Jan-23	26	48	32	14	17	16	27	180
Oct-22	27	32	28	26	22	24	19	178*
Apr-22	27	32	27	26	22	21	19	174*
Jan-22	25	31	28	26	23	24	19	176*
Apr-21	26	32	27	26	23	24	20	178*
Jan-21	27	32	27	17	22	20	24	177*
Oct-20	24	24	23	18	23		8	120
Jan-20	24	24	23	18	23		8	120
Oct-19	24	23	23	18	23		8	119*
Apr-19	24	24	22	18	23		8	119*
Jan-19	22	24	23	18	22		8	117*
Oct-18	24	24	23	18	23		8	120
May-18	24	24	23	18	23		8	120
May-17	24	24	23	18	23		7	119*
Jan-17	24	24	22	18	23		8	119*
Oct-16	24	24	23	18	23		8	120
May-16	24	24	22	18	23		8	119*
Jan-16	24	23	23	18	23		8	119*

\* = questions removed post assessment delivery

Table 2: Topics by question category

Presented category	Topic of question
Anatomy & Embryology	Anatomy, Embryology
Optics	Optics
Pathology	Immunology, Microbiology, Pathology
Pharmacology & Genetics	Pharmacology, Pharmacology and Genetics, Genetics
Physiology	Biochemistry, Cell Biology, Physiology
Investigations	Investigations
Miscellaneous	Statistics, Epidemiology, Unspecified

## STANDARD SETTING

The pass mark for the Part 1 FRCOphth assessment is derived using the Ebel method of standard setting.

The number of items per Ebel category for the current assessment are presented in the tables below.

Table 3: Items per Ebel Category

	Difficult	Moderate	Easy	Total
Essential	8	35	88	131
Important	6	17	16	39
Supplementary	2	5	2	9
<i>Total</i>	<b>16</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>179</b>

The examinations subcommittee considered the success of a minimally competent candidate in each category as below:

Table 4: Ebel Categories - Expert Decision

	Difficult	Moderate	Easy
Essential	0.55	0.65	0.75
Important	0.45	0.5	0.55
Supplementary	0.25	0.25	0.25

The final table presents the resulting proportion of items by each of the Ebel ratings

Table 5: Standard setting - Ebel ratings x item prevalence

	Difficult	Moderate	Easy	Total
Essential	4.4	22.75	66	93.15
Important	2.7	8.5	8.8	20
Supplementary	0.5	1.25	0.5	2.25
<i>Total</i>	<b>7.6</b>	<b>32.5</b>	<b>75.3</b>	<b>115.4</b>

**The final rounded pass mark for this assessment was 115/179 (64.2%)**

## ITEM ANALYSIS

Item analysis is used to determine key metrics such as item facility, a measure of how easy or difficult a test item is for a group of test-takers, and item discrimination, a measure of how well a test item distinguishes between high-performing and low-performing test-takers.

In an assessment like this one, the majority of questions should be of 'moderate' difficulty and offer 'good' discrimination.

The tables below break down the items in the current assessment by facility groups and by discrimination groups.

Table 6: Items by facility groupings

		Number	%
Difficult	<10%	1	0.6
	11-35%	17	9.5
Moderate	36-75%	129	72.1
	76-90%	28	15.6
Easy	>90%	4	2.2

Table 7: Items by discrimination groupings

		Number	%
Negative	<0.00	4	2.2
Weak	0.00 - <0.20	41	22.9
Acceptable	0.20- <0.30	52	29.1
Good	>=0.30	82	45.8

## RESULTS

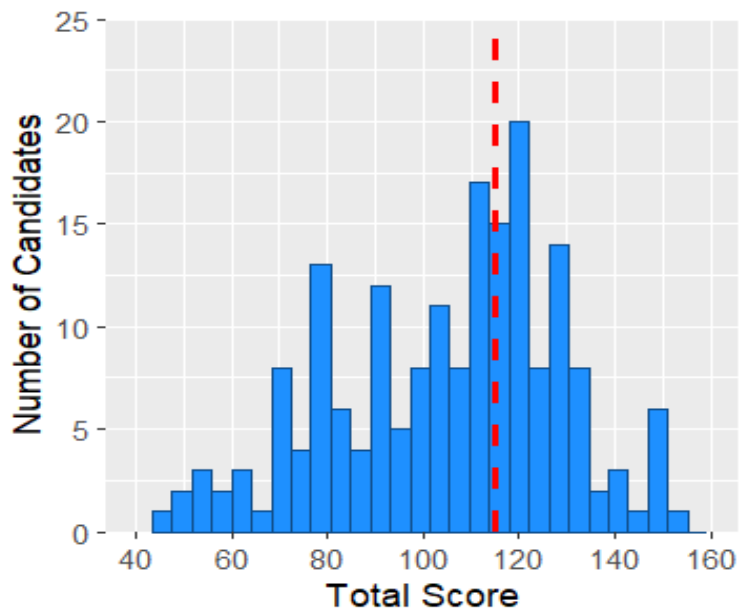
The table below presents a summary of the examination results, including examination reliability metrics (Cronbach's Alpha and Standard Error of Measurement), the pass mark (based on the established standard setting method), candidate performance statistics and the final pass rate for this cohort.

Table 8: Summary of Results

	Value	Percentage
Reliability: Cronbach's Alpha	0.94	-
Standard error of measurement (SEm)	5.86	3.3
Final Pass mark	115	64.2
Number of candidates	187	-
Mean candidate mark	105.3	58.9
Median candidate mark	110.0	61.5
Lowest candidate mark	45.0	25.1
Highest candidate mark	164	91.6
Standard deviation	23.9	13.4
Pass rate	77/187	41.2

The histogram below presents the distribution of total scores for this assessment

Figure 1: Distribution of scores



The vertical red dotted line denotes the point in the score distribution where the pass mark lies.

## BREAKDOWN OF RESULTS

Performance by Deanery for this assessment is presented in the table below.

Table 9: Assessment outcomes by Deanery

Deanery	Failed	Passed	Total
East Midlands	0	1	1
East of England	2	2	4
East of Scotland	0	0	0
Kent, Surrey, Sussex	0	4	4
London	1	3	4
Mersey	1	1	2
North of Scotland	0	1	1
North Western	3	2	5
Northern	0	0	0
Northern Ireland	0	2	2
Oxford	0	0	0
Peninsula	2	0	2
Severn	0	1	1
South East of Scotland	0	0	0
Wales	0	1	1
Wessex	0	2	2
West Midlands	0	2	2
West of Scotland	2	0	2
Yorkshire	1	5	6
Eire	1	1	2
Europe and Overseas	1	3	4
Not applicable / Unknown	96	46	142
<b>Total</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>187</b>

## CUMULATIVE DATA

Table 10: Comparison to previous examinations

Year	Candidates	Reliability	SEM	Pass Mark		Mean score	Pass Rate	
				Value (Ebel)	%		Number Candidates	%
<b>Jan - 26</b>	<b>187</b>	<b>0.94</b>	<b>5.86</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>64.2</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>41.2</b>
Oct-25	352	0.94	5.76	117	65	113	182	51.7
Apr-25	312	0.92	5.91	113	62.8	105	119	38.1
Jan-25	187	0.93	5.82	113	63.1	109	93	49.7
Oct-24	327	0.92	5.67	108	60.7	114	232	70.9
Apr-24	269	0.89	5.69	113	63.8	104	87	32.3
Jan-24	178	0.89	5.83	109	60.9	101	69	38.8
Oct-23	300	0.89	5.87	110	62.5	100	99	33.0
Apr-23	224	0.91	5.74	114	63.7	107	90	40.2
Jan-23	169	0.87	5.88	111	62	103	60	35.5
Oct-22	340	0.91	5.67	115	65	111	163	47.9
Apr-22	253	0.9	5.76	112	64	102	84	33.2
Jan-22	160	0.89	5.73	111	63	102	56	35.0
Apr-21	227	0.89	5.73	112	63	107	95	41.9
Jan-21	149	0.89	5.63	116	66	107	51	34.2
Oct-20	365	0.87	4.56	73	61	77	240	65.8
Jan-20	130	0.97	4.54	73	61	60	45	34.6
Oct-19	186	0.84	4.67	72	61	68	81	43.5
Apr-19	119	0.89	4.7	73	61	72	64	53.8
Jan-19	96	0.82	4.68	70	60	65	39	40.6
Oct-18	214	0.86	4.84	72	60	70	103	48.1
May-18	119	0.83	4.73	72	60	70	59	49.6
May-17	136	0.8	4.8	75	63	69	45	33.1
Jan-17	101	0.8		71	60	64		

Candidates can sit the Part 1 FRCOphth assessment at 3 points across the year. The table below presents outcomes based on these seasonal opportunities.

Table 11: Comparisons over sittings

Sitting	Candidates	Number Passing	Pass rate (%)
January	1370	560	40.9
April/May	2015	824	40.9
October	2702	1346	49.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>6087</b>	<b>2730</b>	<b>44.8</b>

Performance by Deanery for all Part 1 assessments to date (where information is available) are presented below.

Table 12: Cumulative outcomes by Deanery

Location	Deanery	Total candidates passed	Total candidates sitting	Pass rate %
<b>UK</b>	East Midlands	67	155	43.2
	East of England	94	194	48.5
	East of Scotland	25	41	61.0
	Kent, Surrey and Sussex	88	162	54.3
	London	238	456	52.2
	Mersey	62	146	42.5
	North of Scotland	28	58	48.3
	North Western	76	145	52.4
	Northern	67	123	54.5
	Northern Ireland	45	100	45.0
	Oxford	43	74	58.1
	Peninsula (Southwest)	44	97	45.4
	Severn	28	58	48.3
	South East of Scotland	31	51	60.8
	Wales	67	145	46.2
	Wessex	68	152	44.7
	West Midlands	129	274	47.1
	West of Scotland	69	142	48.6
	Yorkshire & Humber	99	183	54.1
<b>Overseas</b>	Eire	21	77	27.3
	Europe and Overseas	115	254	45.3
<b>Other</b>	Not applicable / Unknown	723	1701	42.5
	<b>Total</b>	<b>2227</b>	<b>4788</b>	<b>46.5</b>