



# Higher Specialist Diploma in Cellular Pathology: My Experience

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# Presentation Contents

- ▶ Introduction to the Higher Specialist diploma (HSD)
- ▶ Reality of undertaking the HSD – my experience
- ▶ Advice for candidates

# What is the HSD?

- “The IBMS Higher Specialist Diploma is for biomedical scientists with five years post registration experience, who are looking to progress to a more advanced role. It will enable you to demonstrate high levels of knowledge, skill and competence within your chosen discipline” <https://www.ibms.org/education/higher-and-expert-qualifications/highest-specialist-diploma/>
- It is a self driven Masters level qualification and includes:
  - Portfolio of Experiential Learning
  - Written examinations

Certificate of  
Competence

Specialist Diploma

Higher Specialist  
Diploma

Advanced  
Specialist Diploma



# Requirements

- The following requirements *MUST* be met by candidates *BEFORE* applications can be accepted:
  - Current Institute membership in the class of *Member* or *Fellow*
  - HCPC registration
- A minimum of five years whole-time equivalent post registration experience is recommended.



# The Portfolio

- ▶ To be able to sit the HSD examinations you must first pass the portfolio stage
- ▶ The portfolio assesses whether you are working at the correct level to sit the exams and helps provide some structure to your learning.
- ▶ Consists of:
  - ▶ Personal professional profile (500 words)
  - ▶ CPD list/evidence
  - ▶ 2x Case studies (1000 words each)
  - ▶ 2x Essays (set titles each year, 3000 words each)
  - ▶ Oral presentation
  - ▶ 3x Reflective Summaries (1000 words each) supported by all of the above.
  - ▶ See the HSD study guide found on the IBMS website for in depth information.
- ▶ A pass allows the candidate up to two attempts at the written examinations stage.



# Key dates

## 2019

- Closing date for applications for 2019 examinations - Friday 3 May
- Portfolio submission deadline - Friday 24 May
- Examination Dates - Monday 2 and Tuesday 3 September (Venues - TBC)

### Portfolio submission 2019

Candidates will be required to submit an electronic, as well as a hard copy of their portfolio of experiential learning to the Head of Examinations at the Institute offices. The submission deadline is Friday 24 May 2019. Hard copies should be sent to 12 Coldbath Square, London, EC1R 5HL. Electronic copies should be emailed to [examinations@ibms.org](mailto:examinations@ibms.org)



# Exams

- ▶ The written examinations are made up of 4 papers:
  - ▶ Paper 1 – short answer question (1 hour)
    - ▶ 10 questions – all to be completed
  - ▶ Paper 2 – Generic questions (2 hours)
    - ▶ 3 sections: leadership and management, quality and training
    - ▶ 1 section will be the pre-released question
    - ▶ The other 2 sections each have a choice of 2 questions of which you must answer 1
  - ▶ Paper 3 – Discipline specific questions (2 hours)
    - ▶ Answer 3 from 6 questions.
  - ▶ Paper 4 – 3 Case Studies (2 hours)
    - ▶ 1 pre-seen and 2 unseen.
- ▶ All papers hold equal weighting and you must get at least 40% in each paper with an overall score of 50%.



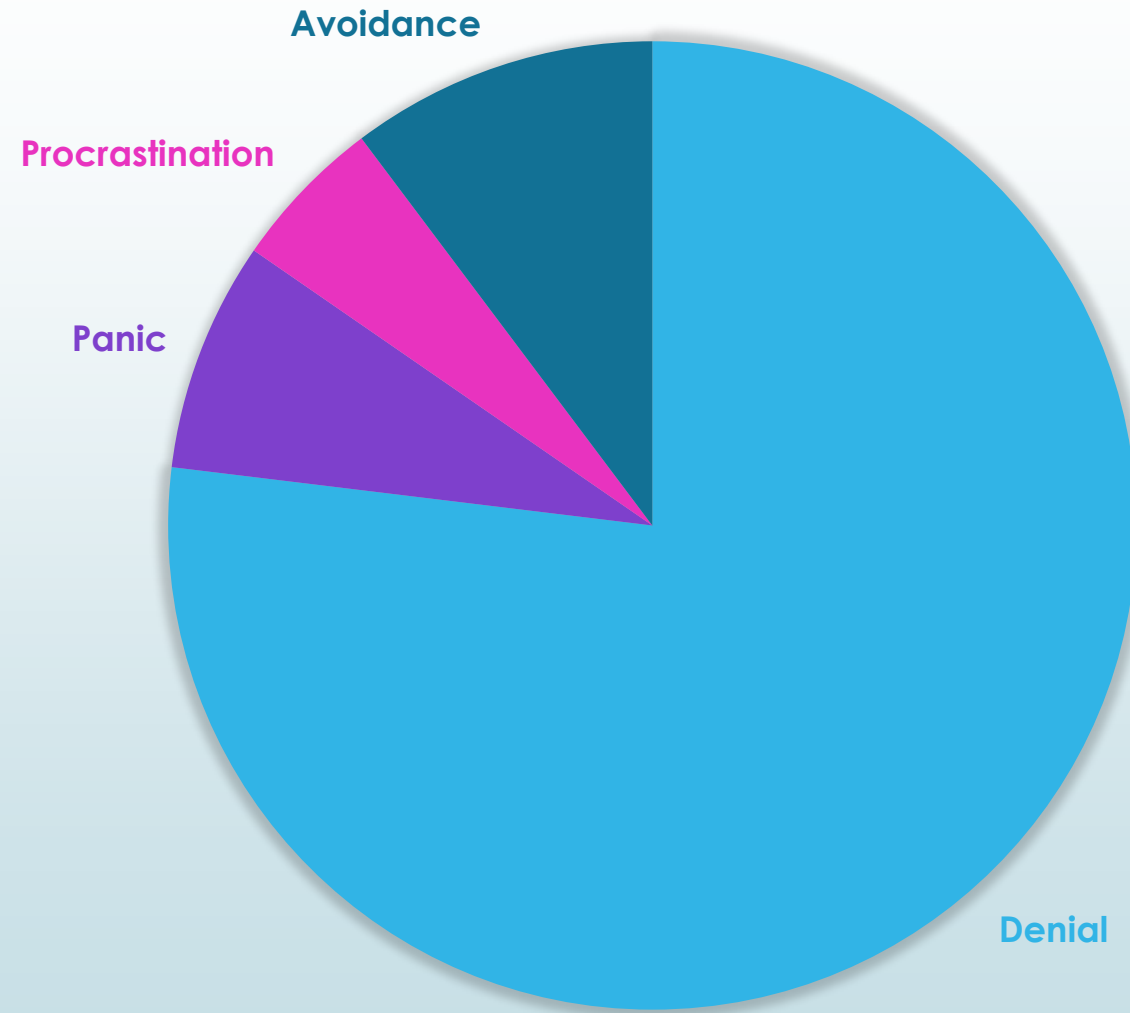
Reality



**WARNING  
HARD GRAFT  
AHEAD**



# INITIAL REACTION





# My Plan of Attack *(after a couple months of denial)*

- ▶ Timetable including deadlines/key dates - A3 poster on my wall.
  - ▶ Portfolio plan - when the portfolio was due and when I wanted to have the components completed by
  - ▶ Defined syllabus and refine into subsections
  - ▶ Set timelines for notes for each subsection
  - ▶ I picked the 'harder' sections first e.g. endocrine system
- ▶ Kept up to date with current events and utilise 'The Biomedical Scientist' – scrapbook style.
- ▶ Organised/attended CPD and carried out reflection
- ▶ Attended Preparation day(s) in London
- ▶ Past papers, past papers, past papers.



# Advice

- ▶ DON'T PANIC!
- ▶ Be super organised and keep motivated
- ▶ Put the time in, its not easy, but it is possible.
- ▶ Utilise all available help such as the IBMS website, other colleagues including pathologists, pathology books/journals.
- ▶ If you don't cover an area in the syllabus organise a training event in a different lab/hospital or undertake a training course e.g. ILM leadership course.
- ▶ Attend the preparation days – they were very reassuring and helpful.
- ▶ Exams – read the question carefully and pay attention to the key words
  - ▶ Pre-released questions – make the most of these and prepare your answers thoroughly then spend as little time as possible on them in the exam, and try and remember your references,
  - ▶ For the long answer questions make a quick <5 min plan for each so you don't forget anything and can answer the question succinctly with no waffle
  - ▶ Track your time and get something down for everything.



## Why do it?

Career progression – in some places HSD is the preferred basis for senior post

You want to be an IBMS Fellow

Greatly increased knowledge and understanding of your profession

## Was it worth it?

Absolutely, but you must be self-driven and incredibly motivated.



# Good Luck

Thank you for listening, any questions?

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