

# **The FASM Examination Process**

## **General**

The Fellowship of The Australian Society for Microbiology (FASM) is the highest award conferred by the Society. It is awarded to those who through examination and experience have demonstrated competence and distinction in the professional practice of microbiology. To be eligible, applicants must be able to demonstrate that they have been a practising microbiologist for at least 10 years and preferably have had professional membership of the society for this period. The National Examinations Board (NEB) is responsible to National Council for the administration and conduct of the fellowship examinations within the society.

## **Application for the fellowship**

An applicant must be a financial MASM member of ASM at the time of applying for the fellowship

Application for the fellowship is made on the prescribed form available from the ASM National Office or via the ASM website. This form lists the current requirements for application and is to be submitted to the National Office by mail or electronically.

The fees, as determined by the National Council, shall be payable by all candidates as detailed below.

- The total cost associated with FASM application is \$330
- An initial (non-refundable) deposit of \$55 is required at the time of initial application.
- The balance (\$275) is required to be paid after the Part III process is approved and prior to the final award of FASM.
- The total cost of \$330 is the same for all applicants, regardless of exemptions from parts I and / or II.

## **Examination procedures**

The award of FASM is subject to a transparent and consistent examination process. The process is divided into three parts (Parts I – III) which tests different aspects of microbiological expertise. Exemptions from Parts I and II (as outlined below) may be granted by the NEB on consideration of the applicants full curriculum vitae.

### ***Part I***

Part 1 consists of a general examination in microbiology, three hours in length and comprising both written and practical sections. The written section could include essays, short answer questions and multiple choice questions. The practical section requires interpretation of laboratory results.

The Part I examination is intended to act as a focus for those wishing to refresh their understanding of current microbiology and recognises that especially undergraduate microbiology is a dynamic science. Candidates for FASM may have studied microbiology more than 10 years prior to the examination. Since that time many important methodologies (e.g. microarray technology, real time PCR) have been implemented. It is expected that candidates would sit for Part 1 after studying the syllabus for at least six months and perhaps after attending some undergraduate lectures. Tutorials can be arranged where there is specific demand.

The time and place of the examination will be organised by the NEB.

A candidate is expected to pass both sections of the Part 1 examination. Candidates who do not reach an acceptable standard will be asked to re-sit parts of the examination at a time negotiated with the NEB.

### ***Exemptions from Part I***

Exemptions for Part 1 are usually granted for candidates with higher degrees in microbiology (MSc, MD, PhD) including coursework higher degrees.

## ***Part II***

Part II examines expertise in a specialist area of microbiology (e.g. medical virology) and assumes an understanding of at least one other related area of microbiology (e.g. immunology).

The exam comprises three essays, completed in a single supervised sitting. The exam covers;

- a) The nominated specialty area (nominated by the candidate)
- b) A related area (nominated by the NEB)
- c) Laboratory management

Nominated specialty areas may reflect Special Interest Groups of the ASM but are generally defined by negotiation between candidate and the NEB.

The time and place of the examination will be organised by the NEB.

Candidates who fail to meet the examination standards required will be further assessed.

## ***Exemptions from Part II***

Exemptions are usually granted to candidates holding research higher degrees in a subject area that is microbiological or closely allied with microbiology (e.g. immunology). The higher degree must comprise more than 18 months full time study. The research component of the higher degree examination should be more than 67% of the total mark.

### ***Part III***

Application for Part III examination for FASM should normally be made to the NEB within 12 months of successful completion of the Part II examination.

Part III demonstrates that an individual has a depth of understanding in a specialised area of microbiology. Part III is usually satisfied by a scholarly dissertation, which may take one of the following three forms:

- a) An in depth review of the candidate's selected topic area. The review could be an edited introduction to the candidate's PhD thesis. The standard of such a review should be such that it would be acceptable for publication in a high-impact, peer-reviewed journal. A typical FASM dissertation comprises 30 to 50 typed pages with between 50 to 150 references. Candidates are strongly encouraged to publish Part III dissertations.
- b) A collection of 5 to 10 papers published in high impact refereed scientific journals, focusing on specific aspects or a specific area. Such works should be prefaced by an in-depth introduction of 5 to 10 pages, and conclude with a critical discussion of 5 to 10 pages. Overall the submission needs to demonstrate the candidate's key contributions to the area selected. Candidates will be required to submit a "Statement of Co-Authorship" if it is not clear that they are the primary author (i.e. first or sole author) on the submitted works.
- c) A major review published within the past three years, for which the candidate is the first author or has made greater than 50% contribution. In the case of multiple authors, applications will be required to submit a "Statement of Co-Authorship".

Two (or three in the event of disagreement) expert examiners in the topic area are appointed by the NEB to assess Part III submissions.

The NEB recognises that the great majority of applicants for FASM have high standards or scientific integrity. However, in a rare instance of an examiner suspecting that part of the dissertation is not the original work of the candidate; the NEB reserves the right to submit the dissertation to a plagiarism detection program.

**Time to completion**

The NEB would expect candidates to complete Part I, Part II and Part III of the FASM within five years. Candidates granted an exemption from Part I should complete within 2 years. Candidates granted an exemption from Part II should complete within one year.

The NEB will consider an application for extension only in extenuating circumstances.

**Granting of fellowship**

Following successful completion of Part III, candidates are required to submit an electronic copy on a CD of their dissertation to the National Office.

The NEB will report all results of all examinations to Council with a recommendation.

Upon confirmation by Council, new fellows will be notified by the National Office of ASM of their success and their names entered in a Registrar of Fellows. Successful candidates will be presented with a testamur of fellowship at the Annual Scientific Meeting of ASM and their names will be published in Microbiology Australia.

*National Examinations Board  
 Statement of Co-Authorship of FASM Part III Dissertations*

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*Title of Article:*

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*Authors:*

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