

### **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/or 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 & Qualifications Board (NEQB) 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 website. This form lists the current requirements for application and is to be submitted to the National Office electronically. Note that there are no fees associated with a FASM application and the annual membership fee for a FASM is the same as that of an Associate or MASM.

### **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 test different aspects of microbiological expertise. Exemptions from Parts I and II (as outlined below) may be granted by the NEQB on consideration of the applicants *curriculum vitae*. For experienced microbiologists with a demonstrable track record of high level achievement there is also a simplified Part III assessment process.

### **Part I**

Part I 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 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. MALDI-TOF technology, real time PCR) have been implemented. It is expected that candidates would sit for Part 1 after studying for at least six months and perhaps after attending some undergraduate lectures. The time and place of the examination will be organised by the NEQB.

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

### **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) as well as the management of a microbiology laboratory.

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

- The nominated specialty area (nominated by the candidate)
- A related area (nominated by the NEQB)
- Laboratory management

Nominated specialty areas are generally defined by negotiation between the candidate and the NEQB.

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

Candidates who fail to meet the required standard may be given the option to re-sit the examination at a time negotiated with the NEQB.

### **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**

Part III demonstrates that an individual has a depth of understanding in a specialised area of microbiology. There are two pathways by which the Part III requirements may be satisfied.

**Option 1:** A scholarly dissertation. The dissertation may take one of 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, in the form of a "Statement of Co-Authorship".
- (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 expert examiners in the topic area will be appointed by the NEQB to assess Part III submissions.

**Option 2:** There is an alternative Part III pathway for the following applicants.

- (a) Senior microbiologists who have published 50 or more papers in the broad field of microbiology or who have been awarded senior NHMRC or ARC fellowships, or their equivalent, to conduct research in the broad field of microbiology.
- (b) Senior microbiologists who have demonstrated academic excellence in the teaching of microbiology; for example, by being promoted to Associate Professor as a teaching-focussed or teaching-only academic.
- (c) Senior professional microbiologists who can demonstrate that they are already responsible for managing a major microbiology laboratory.

Such applicants will simply submit their *curriculum vitae*, which must include a list of refereed publications and other relevant information, for subsequent NEQB approval of the award of FASM.

#### **Time to completion**

The NEQB 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 two years. Candidates granted an exemption from Part II should complete within one year. The NEQB will consider an application for an extension only in extenuating circumstances.

The NEQB will report all results of all FASM examinations to Council. 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* and will be listed on the ASM website.

