

The Royal College of Radiologists Strategic Plan 2008–2010

July 2008

Objects of the College

The objects of the College shall be to advance the science and practice of clinical radiology and clinical oncology.

...the College may exercise the following powers:

1. to further instruction and training in clinical radiology and clinical oncology, and to undertake regular audit of training and practice, where appropriate in association with other bodies;
2. to conduct examinations and award Certificates and Diplomas
3. to diffuse information on all matters affecting medical science and in particular clinical radiology and clinical oncology ...
4. to encourage the development of clinical radiology and clinical oncology and to further public education therein;
5. to maintain the highest possible standards of professional competence and practice in clinical radiology and clinical oncology, and to act as an authoritative body for the purpose of consultation in matters of public and professional interest concerning clinical radiology and clinical oncology;
6. to promote study and research work in clinical radiology, clinical oncology and related subjects...

Extract from the Royal Charter of The Royal College of Radiologists

(<http://www.rcr.ac.uk/index.asp?PageID=24>)

Introduction

This Strategic Plan has been produced in the knowledge that:

- Both the College's specialties of clinical radiology and clinical oncology are developing at an unprecedented pace in terms of technical innovation and in the demands being placed upon the disciplines
- The structure and demands of postgraduate medical education and training are developing and changing rapidly
- The NHS in all four UK countries is undergoing change primarily in response to healthcare policy development but also in response to wider social and economic trends
- The College needs to continue to build its influence in its specialties through interaction with the Government and other bodies
- The College needs to interact more fully and effectively with its Fellows and members to ensure it commands their confidence and support.

The roles of the College in delivering this strategy for its specialties are in:

- Setting and maintaining standards for patient diagnosis, care and management
- Proposing and influencing change and development for the benefit of patients
- Developing and shaping training, assessment and education
- Providing sound guidance, advice and support for those in practice.

The Royal College of Radiologists issued its Forward Plan in the summer of 2005 which contained aims for the College and its two Faculties for the following three years.¹ This was an ambitious set of proposals which encompassed the work of the College and its relationships with external organisations, the involvement of patients and the public, and the development of its resources and infrastructure.

Many of the aims outlined in the 2005 document have been realised and this has had a significant and positive impact on the work of the College and its specialties. However, much has also changed. In the interim period, there have been significant developments such as the review of medical education by the Tooke Inquiry and the definition, at a high level, of revalidation and its components re-licensure and recertification. Inevitably, some of the aims the College set itself in 2005 have not been achieved or have not been achieved in full. Other

proposals have in the event not demanded the attention or priority that was thought at the time. Nevertheless, the Plan has more than proved its worth and provided a strong foundation for all the College has done since 2005 and for this document.

Among the key achievements and developments since 2005 were:

- Creating a clear focus for recertification through a dedicated Council Committee and Faculty working parties and consulting the Fellowship on the methods and standards for recertification
- Continuing to produce timely and relevant documents that set standards and/or advise and guide Fellows and members in practice – one such example being *Making the best use of clinical radiology services*, sixth edition and delivering this online throughout the UK
- Enhancing the role and effectiveness of the College in influencing policy and taking part in consultations with national bodies, as well as co-ordinating and improving the methods for responding to consultation documents
- Taking a more active role in the media by preparing press statements and offering interviews and comment in a timely manner both on specialty-specific topics and on wider healthcare policy developments
- Developing channels of communication with Fellows and members with much greater reliance on electronic media, including web-based services and information, e-bulletins and electronic fora (notably the Site-Orientated e-Networks in clinical oncology)
- Improving the effectiveness of College decision-making structures by ensuring decisions are made at the appropriate level in a timely manner consistent with good governance
- Conducting and implementing a review of patient and public involvement in the work of the College
- Developing the capability and resources of the College to ensure that the limited time available to College Officers is supported by suitably skilled staff who can provide continuity and a 'corporate memory'.

This Strategic Plan, successor to the Forward Plan, builds on the 2005 Plan and sets out specific deliverables within the period 2008–10 for the College as a whole and for its two Faculties of Clinical Radiology and Clinical Oncology.

Setting and maintaining standards

The College's function in standard setting has continued to develop. The clear role indicated for medical Royal Colleges and Faculties in the White Paper *Trust, Assurance and Safety – the regulation of health professionals in the 21st Century* has set the framework for College involvement in recertification as part of the overall process of revalidation of doctors in its two specialties. The work of the Postgraduate Medical Education and Training Board (PMETB) has brought new perspectives to the arrangements for training and education for doctors. The College's own body of standards work has continued apace. In clinical oncology, collaboration with other institutions, notably in the field of patient safety for radiotherapy, has seen the RCR take a lead. We have also identified an untapped potential for the College overseas where the RCR is widely recognised as a leader in standards.

The publication of the Tooke Report in early 2008 demanded of British medicine a clear definition of the role of the doctor in the 21st century. The RCR has taken up the challenge set down by Tooke with vigour.

Our aims

Recertification

- We will develop standards and a range of tools which are appropriate and effective for our two specialties and which align with national standards and methodologies being developed for recertification.
- We will ensure methods and tools for recertification are suitably tested.
- We will review the effectiveness and methods of demonstration of continuing professional development (CPD) within both our specialties as a key element of the evidence required for recertification.
- We will aim within the framework eventually adopted nationally to introduce structures and methods of recertification that minimise risk to the College and offer support to our Fellows and members.

Training, assessment and education

- We will respond to the challenge laid down by the Tooke report on defining the role of the doctor with measured and practical proposals for the College's two specialties.
- We will introduce continuing review of our curricula for core and special interest training.
- We will seek to introduce electronic methods for appropriate elements of our Fellowship examinations.
- We will develop comprehensive methods of integrated assessment for training in our two specialties focusing initially

on workplace-based assessment and the review of the fitness for purpose of our Fellowship examinations.

- We will ensure that the existing e-learning programme for training in clinical radiology – the Radiology Integrated Training Initiative – is updated, maintained and developed not only for its current but also for related purposes such as CPD.
- We will develop an e-learning programme for training in oncology to underpin a new core common curriculum for training, covering the non-surgical oncology specialties and also specifically to support training in clinical oncology.
- We will develop the necessary training and curricular standards for interventional radiology which will seek a commonality of training across some surgical specialties and interventional radiology.
- We will develop a new curriculum for training in interventional oncology drawing on the work of the College's two Faculties.

Standards and quality in practice

- In conjunction with the Society and College of Radiographers, we will complete the Radiology Accreditation Programme project and evaluate the most appropriate and effective methods of delivery for an accreditation scheme in the UK.
- We will continue our work on radiotherapy safety with other bodies such as the Society and College of Radiographers, the Institute of Physics and Engineering in Medicine, the National Patient Safety Agency, the Healthcare Commission and the Health Protection Agency.
- We will continue to press for improvements in radiotherapy services as highlighted in the report of the National Radiotherapy Advisory Group and the Cancer Reform Strategy on a consistent basis across the UK.
- We will develop the standards and methods for delivery of advanced radiotherapy techniques including intensity-modulated radiotherapy and image-guided radiotherapy which will draw on such developments outside the UK.

Research and development

In the period since 2005, the College has launched successful joint research fellowship schemes with Cancer Research UK and with the Medical Research Council. We have also worked with Medical Futures on the Cancer Innovation Awards. We are supporting the work of the Health Innovation Council in England. In parallel with this, we have explored the way in which our fundraising efforts might support more sustainable research fellowships either as an individual activity by the College or in conjunction with other bodies so that we can expand the opportunities for trainees in both our specialties. With a range of developments in train, it is timely to

stand back and review how best the College can marshal its resources to best effect to support research activities.

Our aims

We will undertake a review of College activity in research and development which will, among other things, consider:

- How we provide Fellows and members with guidance in planning research projects, securing funding and conducting and publishing research
- Ways to support Fellows and members with practical help with research grant applications
- How we can ensure that as postgraduate medical training structures are reviewed and developed, opportunities for academic research as part of those training programmes are wherever possible enhanced and improved
- Our existing research funding approaches with other funding bodies and the contribution our own fundraising efforts can make towards this
- Our work with NHS research bodies to develop evidence to support clinical practice in selected areas of our specialities.

Influencing policy

The period from 2005 has seen the College become much more influential in policy development at national and regional levels. Through sustained and continuing efforts to build relationships at government level and with health services throughout the UK, the College is now much more widely recognised for its work. For example, the Radiology Accreditation Programme has led the thinking on accreditation schemes at a ministerial level in the UK. All this work will be continued and the efforts will be unremitting as individuals change and new Ministers and senior officials take up post. As the delivery of healthcare in the UK changes and develops, the College needs to promote its value and understanding of how services can best be developed and delivered. It is also important for the College to ensure that the outcome of its work has the expected impact by targeting messages and following up on initial publication.

Our aims

- We will continue to forge influential and effective relationships across the four countries of the UK with senior officials and ministers at Officer level.
- We will develop productive relationships with the delivery arms of the NHS such as the Strategic Health Authorities (SHAs) in England and through our UK Standing Committees with the appropriate bodies in the devolved UK countries.

- We will specifically offer our advice and proposals as regards service delivery such as the 'care closer to the patient' initiative in England and the proposals for multiple providers of radiotherapy services.
- We will explore how to introduce mechanisms that ensure our messages, publications and statements are taken on board by the target groups.
- We will develop the work of the College internationally including an evaluation of the prospects for offering our examinations at overseas centres, working together with other bodies and building on the strong international reputation of the RCR.

The roles of Council, the Boards and committees, public benefit and patient and lay involvement

Since 2005, work has been in development to ensure that Council, the Boards and committees operate more effectively. Wherever possible, this has devolved decisions on Faculty matters to the Faculty Boards and focused Council on its strategic governance role for the College. In parallel with this, the College has to demonstrate its public benefit as a charity and ensure that the particular sections of the public it serves – patients who use the services delivered by clinical radiologists and clinical oncologists and their carers – are suitably involved. In 2007, a review of patient and public involvement was concluded with a series of developmental recommendations which need to be implemented over the coming years. As part of this, the role of the lay representative on Council was widened to incorporate an overview of public benefit.

Our aims

- We will continue to fulfil our Charter obligations to improve care for patients by delivering standards of care, training and assessment.
- We will implement and build on the review of public and patient involvement in the work of the College.
- We will clearly identify and enunciate the public benefit which the work of the College delivers as a registered charity.
- We will ensure the work of the College in delivering public benefit is clearly demonstrated through channels such as the College website and the Annual Report.
- We will continue to develop the strategic role of Council by identifying key topics for extended discussion and minimising the function of 'formal noting' of papers.

Services for Fellows and members in practice

The College is a body of its Fellows and members. We have explored ways to develop support for Fellows and members in the period since 2005 with the advent of virtual discussion fora in clinical oncology and greater engagement with, and involvement of, the various special interest groups in clinical radiology. New opportunities arise with the advent of recertification: the College sees itself as a source of advice and guidance to those who need support with training or practice standards to secure recertification. At a service level, the Radiology Accreditation Programme has stated aims to help services develop, improve quality and to offer support. Plans to send some patients overseas for radiotherapy treatment not available in the UK present a further area where the College could offer support and guidance. We have also identified a clear need for the College to undertake a more active role in workforce planning for its two specialties and we will do this by commencing censuses of the whole UK-based workforce. This will improve our ability to influence when liaising with the workforce planning bodies in the four UK countries.

Our aims

- We will develop our approach to recertification such that it is a supportive and engaging mechanism and assists Fellows and members to achieve recertification.
- We will conclude the Radiology Accreditation Programme to provide a means to drive up standards in the delivery of radiology services in the UK.
- We will offer support to and assist Fellows who are training the next generation of doctors in our two specialties.
- We will look to offer support and guidance to Fellows and members in the delivery of new health service policies.
- We will continue to use and exploit the facilities of electronic networking such as in the Site-Orientated e-Networks in clinical oncology and through the special interest groups in clinical radiology.
- We will commence workforce censuses to provide reliable data and other information to assist Fellows and members and guide national workforce planning.

Engaging the membership

Since the publication of the Forward Plan in 2005, College membership across both Faculties has risen from 6,700 to over 7,600 members. Various methods of engagement have been successfully trialled in that period, including regional meetings, the introduction of

e-bulletins, opportunities for Fellows and members to feedback and involve themselves in the work of the College and more democratic and open methods for appointing Fellows and members to committees, boards and working groups. All of this will continue with particular emphasis on those channels of engagement which have proven most effective, such as online surveys.

Our aims

- We will consult Fellows and members on key issues such as recertification, using that feedback and engagement to develop our future policies.
- We will develop targeted electronic communications using the *Monthly News* e-bulletins even more effectively.
- We will ensure that the College mailpack in its revised form is a better communication tool concentrating on the work of the College and providing a structured set of contents.

Capacity and capability

The 2005 Plan set out an ambitious programme of work and signalled an expansion in the capability and capacity of College resources. This has been delivered in the areas of policy development, publications and communications. At the same time, we have endeavoured to reduce the burdens on individual Fellows and members who contribute by way of working parties, committees and boards and in developing documents and statements by circulating papers efficiently and using methods of email communication where possible. The number of Fellows and members engaged in the work of the College has been expanded through democratic processes seeking expressions of interest. Involvement has been widened by using methods such as audio-conferencing where possible for meetings. All this work will continue and be developed.

The expansion of the College's role has put considerable pressures on its infrastructure and the development of a premises strategy over a longer period to examine the most cost-effective options for housing the College's functions in future is now in progress.

Our aims

- We will continue to develop the infrastructure of the College so as to ensure that there is an appropriate balance between the work of clinicians and staff recognising the strengths that each can bring and the need for a 'corporate memory' to underpin the fixed periods that Officers serve.
- We will develop and deliver an approach to the future premises needs of the College.

Conclusion

The aims in this Plan are ambitious, although the College has made very good progress in the work flowing from its first Plan. However, the College has limited resources and it may prove necessary to prioritise some of the aims here. The College will draw on its strong reputation in the UK and overseas not least through its examinations and the growing strength of its external influence and engagement.

The Faculties and Officers will develop detailed annual work programmes to realise the aims set out in this Plan. Progress will be monitored regularly and reported on through each Annual Report.

Developing and implementing College strategy is a continuous process and all those who read this Plan are invited to comment on progress and identify areas where the College could become more effective.

Reference

1. The Royal College of Radiologists. *Fulfilling our Purpose and Functioning in the Future. The RCR Forward Plan August 2005*. London: The Royal College of Radiologists, 2005.

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