Regional Specialty Adviser Handbook

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1 Introduction

This document aims to give you the basic information you will need to carry out the role. It is not comprehensive and cannot take into account the many local variations that occur so it is recommended that all new Regional Specialty Advisers try to arrange a comprehensive handover from their predecessor to ensure they are fully informed.

If you come across something in the role that is not mentioned, and that you feel would be of use to include, please let us know.

2 Extent of the role

Regional Specialty Advisers (RSAs) are the regional representatives of the College and are accountable to the Medical Director, Education and Training. They perform a vital role in ensuring, on behalf of the College, that national standards for training, curriculum delivery and assessment are maintained and provide an external perspective to the LETBs/Deaneries on the quality assurance processes of their training programmes.

Full terms of reference for the role are available from the RCR website and some of the detail is expanded on later in this document.

It is advised that the minimum time commitment for the role should be 1 SPA per week.

3 Lines of responsibility

RSAs are the regional representatives of the RCR with respect to education and training. They are responsible to the Medical Director, Education & Training and the Executive Director Specialty Training at the College, ensuring that the RCR policies regarding postgraduate education are adopted in their region. Training Programme Directors are responsible for overseeing the day to day operation of the specialty's training programme and are answerable to the Local Education Training Board (LETB) or Deanery. Detailed definitions of all training roles can be found on the RCR website. It is recognised however, that there will be local variations so it is suggested that new RSAs arrange to meet with their local TPD(s), College tutors and, where applicable, their Head of School, at an early stage to delineate lines of responsibility clearly and how best they can work together to avoid duplication of effort or oversight of tasks.

RSAs usually arrange meetings with educational and clinical supervisors to discuss how they can support each other.

4 Hand-over

As a newly appointed RSA you should try to arrange a hand-over with your predecessor. Any hand-over should cover all information of local relevance.

5 Meetings with College Personnel

Early in your term of office we will aim to arrange a meeting with the Medical Director, the Executive Director, Specialty Training and the training team at the College. If possible we will try to arrange this when you attend your first meeting at the College.
6 Meetings and other fixed commitments

RSAs are expected to attend a number of local, regional and national meetings. As attendance required will vary between regions new RSAs should obtain a list from their predecessor. The meetings involved, however, are likely to include some or all of the following.

6.1 National Meetings

- **Regional Specialty Adviser Meetings.** Twice yearly meetings at the College for all RSAs, usually held in Spring and Autumn. Attendance at these is an expected requirement for all.

- **UK College Standing Committees.** RSAs in Northern Ireland & Wales are expected to attend meetings of their respective College standing committees. The Northern Ireland Committee meets in Belfast in January, May and October. The Welsh Committee meets in either Cardiff or Swansea in April, September and December. One or two of the RSAs in Scotland may also be co-opted on to the Scottish Standing Committee which meets in January, May and September, usually in either Edinburgh or Glasgow.

6.2 Local Meetings

Local variation will occur and all RSAs should check locally to determine what they are expected to attend. They are likely to include some or all of the following:

- Local Specialty Training Committee
- School Board and/or training committee
- Local academic committee

6.3 Other fixed commitments

RSAs are also expected to be involved in a number of other activities through the year. Again, this will vary somewhat depending on local arrangements but is likely to include the following:

- Local ARCPs
- External ARCPs: *Usually one per year at a LETB/Deanery other than your own, further details below.*

- National recruitment interviews: *Interviews for NTNs take place in London in April and October. Interviewers can be any consultant but should be those involved in training and are usually RSAs and TPDs. If not interviewing yourself, you will be asked to help identify colleagues who can.*

- Meetings with junior staff in the training programmes: *You may be asked to meet with junior staff members in the training programmes, both trainees and new consultants, to talk to them about training in your region.*

7 Specifics of the role

The terms of reference detail all the responsibilities of the RSA and can be found on the RCR website. How these responsibilities are enacted will vary somewhat between regions but there is a degree of commonality and some of the specific tasks in the terms of reference are expanded upon below.

7.1 Annual Specialty Reports

The College submits an Annual Specialty Report (ASR) to the GMC every year. It is a concise summary of the education and training in a particular specialty, from the perspective of the College. The ASR focuses on the College role in improving the quality of training for doctors and concerns identified through this activity.
The RSA has a key role in developing and communicating key ‘shared evidence’ which the College Joint Quality Assurance of Training committee uses in the preparation of the report. Specifically, the RSA will provide feedback from the external ARCP they are allocated by the RCR to attend, which is collated on the ARCP External Advisor Form (see Annexe 1). The ARCP feedback provides an objective assessment of the ARCPs visited as part of the Externality role of the RSA (see 7.2). This form is sent to the Quality Assurance of Training section at the College.

Training Programme Directors are expected to submit to the College a copy of the annual report that they provide to their LETB/Deanery.

From time-to-time other QA of training evidence may be requested by the College Joint QA of Training Committee.

7.2 Externality Role
The RSA has an ‘externality’ role. This is the process of active external scrutiny in the quality management process. In practical terms this involves two tasks

- attendance at the ARCP of an allocated LETB/Deanery
- attendance upon request by the College as an external specialty representative on a LETB/Deanery or GMC led visit, outside the LETB/Deanery in which they work.

In both circumstances the RSA provides an independent but specialty specific view. The ARCP externality role would be for one day per year to a LETB/Deanery allocated by the College. Reasonable expenses are payable by the host LETB/Deanery. The College has produced a form (Annexe 1) that enables a structured objective assessment of the process to be made. Detailed guidance notes are attached to the form.

The College is occasionally asked to provide an external specialty representative on a LETB/Deanery or GMC led visit and the College would usually ask an external RSA to provide this input. Guidance on the GMC ‘Response to Concerns’ process is to be found at: http://www.gmc-uk.org/education/process.asp.

7.3 Role in local ARCPs
Your role in local ARCP is essentially the same as that of an external RSA at another LETB/Deanery. You should take an independent view of the process, partly from the quality assurance perspective but also to provide a specialty specific advisory role, assisting the panel, where relevant, of matters pertaining to the College’s curriculum and assessment methods. You will be there as the senior College representative, whereas all others are there as part of the generic LETB/Deanery/GMC process.

7.4 Consultant Job Plan Review Process
In England, Wales and Northern Ireland RSAs will be asked to review and comment on job plans for consultant posts. This is a requirement for NHS trusts, but Foundation trusts are not required to get College review of job plans. Many Foundation trusts still seek this review and the College is keen to support all trusts in this process. Requests for job description reviews will be sent to you by the Professional Services Team at the College. If you receive a job description directly from a trust, please forward it to the Professional Services Administrator so that the College is kept informed. Trusts should be encouraged to send job descriptions to the College in the first instance.

Once you are happy with your review you should complete the Review Form and forward it to: aac@rcr.ac.uk. If you have any concerns regarding the content of the job description you should contact the Professional Services Team who will forward the concerns to the Trust on your behalf.

7.4.1 Your role in the process
According to the NHS Appointments of Consultants Regulations the RSA should be consulted at an early stage in the job planning process and well before a job description is finalised. “In
discussing the job description with the RA, employers should set out clearly the purpose of the post, the balance of work to be carried out, how this fits with the roles of other consultants in the team and the facilities available to enable the consultant to carry out his or her duties. This will enable the RA to comment constructively and quickly."

In commenting on the job description your principle concern should be to determine that it contains the correct balance of clinical, academic, research and management activities, and that the support systems are in place to ensure that these activities can be performed effectively. The job plan should also clearly state the DCC/SPA ratio for the post. The College supports the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges’ position that all job plans should ideally contain a 7.5/2.5 split but accepts an 8/2 ratio.

7.4.2 DCC/SPA Ratio and what to do if it does not meet College guidance

If the DCC/SPA ratio does not meet the College guidance this should be discussed with the Trust and all efforts made to try to resolve it. If the Trust is unwilling to alter the job description appropriately the RSA can raise their concerns with the College.

The NHS Regulations advise that “Trusts should seek to respond positively to comments from RSAs but it is for them to decide whether or not to amend a job description in the light of the Adviser’s comments. Where a RSA is concerned that an employer has chosen not to accept their advice they may wish to raise the issue with the College President. This will not, however, prevent an employer advertising the post.”

7.4.3 Additional useful information on job planning

Clinical Oncology (http://www.rcr.ac.uk/publications.aspx?PageID=149&PublicationID=370)

7.5 Approval of New Training Posts and Locations

(Please note: This process is currently suspended by the GMC pending a review. The College will send out an update once a new process has been agreed and reinstated)

The approval of new training posts and locations is ultimately given by the GMC on the basis of applications made by the relevant deanery using the forms available on the GMC’s website. However, in considering these, the GMC requires formal confirmation that the College is supportive of the application. In order to achieve this, a new training post form (see Annexes 3 & 4) needs to be completed and returned to the College. This does not have to be undertaken by the RSA but it should be discussed with the RSA and ideally the RSA should sign the form.

7.6 Training Programme Evaluation Forum Guidance

Each year the RCR is required to submit an Annual Specialty Report (ASR) to the GMC. This covers a number of aspects of training whilst also addressing any areas of concern or best practice, including those identified in the annual GMC trainee survey. As a result we are unable to use the GMC survey as a source of evidence and must rely on information gathered from elsewhere.

The College has always been able to rely on the RSAs to look into, report back on and often help to resolve problems. We now also hold a register of concerns raised as we are required by the GMC to report on those brought to the College’s attention, how they have been resolved or what plans have been put in place. Serious concerns may be escalated directly to the GMC. This mechanism, whilst addressing patient safety concerns, is inherently somewhat ad hoc, and from the perspective of completing the ASR as accurately as possible there may be gaps in the information we have available to us.

Therefore in 2012 the joint QA committee of the Specialty Training Board (STB) began to systematically collect information via the Training Programme Evaluation process.
Description of the process:

- The RSA for the region liaises with the JRF or ORF representative for the training scheme in question to arrange a meeting with as many of the trainees as possible.
- The RSA and JRF/ORF representative co-chair the meeting to address the questions set out on the Training Programme Evaluation form. Some LETBs/Deaneries may wish an additional chair to be present, such as a Deputy Dean or a non-oncologist or non-radiologist with educational expertise. This will depend on local resource and practice.
- During the meeting the thirteen points on the Training Programme Evaluation should be discussed and a consensus reached. The consensus discussion should then be recorded by the JRF/ORF representative. Where there is a significant difference of opinion between the trainees this should also be commented upon.
- If a patient safety concern becomes apparent the RSA should share this with the Training Manager at the RCR (QATraining@rcr.ac.uk) as well as the Training Programme Director and other individuals within the LETB/Deanery and relevant Trust in accordance with local arrangements.
- Once the Training Programme Evaluation form has been completed it should be forwarded to the Training Manager at the RCR and the relevant Training Programme Director.
- The Training Manager will ensure the report is copied to the relevant postgraduate dean.

It is acknowledged that some trainees may feel inhibited about discussing issues with the RSA from their own region. Using external RSAs to overcome this is not discouraged but may be difficult due to funding constraints and limitations on professional leave. As an alternative, any trainees who have concerns are asked to discuss them with their JRF/ORF representative so that they can be documented anonymously.

8 Who’s Who

8.1 Local

The LETB/Deanery should be able to provide details of relevant staff, educational and clinical supervisors and an up to date list of all trainees within the region. The College can be asked for a list of all relevant training personnel and College tutors in their region.

Please note that it is the responsibility of the RSA to inform the College when new College tutors are appointed within their region.

8.2 College

For most day-to-day RSA queries your first point of contact at the College is one of the Training Administrators (training@rcr.ac.uk). Other College personnel that you are most likely to need to contact are in the attached list with their specific responsibilities.
All training queries, in the first instance, should be sent to training@rcr.ac.uk
All exams queries, in the first instance, should be sent to exams@rcr.ac.uk
All job approval queries, in the first instance, should be sent to aac_@rcr.ac.uk

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Job Title</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Email Address</th>
<th>Phone:</th>
<th>Responsibilities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Executive Director, Specialty Training</td>
<td>Joe Booth</td>
<td><a href="mailto:joe_booth@rcr.ac.uk">joe_booth@rcr.ac.uk</a></td>
<td>5913</td>
<td>Training and Examination policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training Manager</td>
<td>Chris Murley</td>
<td><a href="mailto:chris_murley@rcr.ac.uk">chris_murley@rcr.ac.uk</a></td>
<td>5928</td>
<td>All training matters. External ARCPs; annual reports; meetings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Examinations Manager</td>
<td>Laura McGarry</td>
<td><a href="mailto:laura_mcgarry@rcr.ac.uk">laura_mcgarry@rcr.ac.uk</a></td>
<td>5947</td>
<td>Examination policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Training Administrator</td>
<td>Ruth Gibson</td>
<td><a href="mailto:ruth_gibson@rcr.ac.uk">ruth_gibson@rcr.ac.uk</a></td>
<td>5955</td>
<td>Equivalence queries; International sponsorship scheme; curriculum development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Examinations Administrator</td>
<td>Sharon Dinsdale</td>
<td><a href="mailto:sharon_dinsdale@rcr.ac.uk">sharon_dinsdale@rcr.ac.uk</a></td>
<td>5958</td>
<td>Examination queries; appeals; entrance criteria etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training Administrator</td>
<td>Beverley Maxey</td>
<td><a href="mailto:beverley_maxey@rcr.ac.uk">beverley_maxey@rcr.ac.uk</a></td>
<td>5925</td>
<td>All training matters such as CCT, ePortfolio, maternity leave, OOP etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training Administrator</td>
<td>Sarah Coulson</td>
<td><a href="mailto:sarah_coulson@rcr.ac.uk">sarah_coulson@rcr.ac.uk</a></td>
<td>5929</td>
<td>All training matters such as CCT, ePortfolio, maternity leave, OOP etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training Policy and Projects Officer</td>
<td>Anna Campbell</td>
<td><a href="mailto:anna_campbell@rcr.ac.uk">anna_campbell@rcr.ac.uk</a></td>
<td>5923</td>
<td>National recruitment; training policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Services Administrator</td>
<td>Amanda Jackson</td>
<td><a href="mailto:amanda_jackson@rcr.ac.uk">amanda_jackson@rcr.ac.uk</a></td>
<td>5922</td>
<td>AACs and job description approvals</td>
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9 Useful information and links
1. GMC role in Medical Education overview: http://www.gmc-uk.org/education/overview.asp
2. Quality Assurance in Medical Education at: http://www.gmc-uk.org/education/assuring_quality.asp