

## Annual Review of Competence Progression Pathology Guidance

### 1 Introduction

The Annual Review of Competence Progression (ARCP) replaces the Record of In-Training Assessment (RITA) for Specialty Registrars appointed to a run-through programme, Fixed Term Specialty Training Appointment (FTSTA) or Locum Appointment for Training (LAT) after 1 August 2007.

Details of the ARCP process are outlined in [A Guide to Postgraduate Specialty Training in the UK](#) (commonly known as the Gold Guide) – see pages 70 to 100.

The ARCP is a deanery-led process that should take place broadly towards the end of each year of training (see 5b, 5c and 5d regarding flexible, academic and out of programme trainees for further guidance).

The aim of this guidance is not to repeat the ARCP guidance as outlined in the Gold Guide but to put it in the context of the requirements for the pathology specialties of chemical pathology, histopathology and medical microbiology and virology.

### 2 Pathology training framework

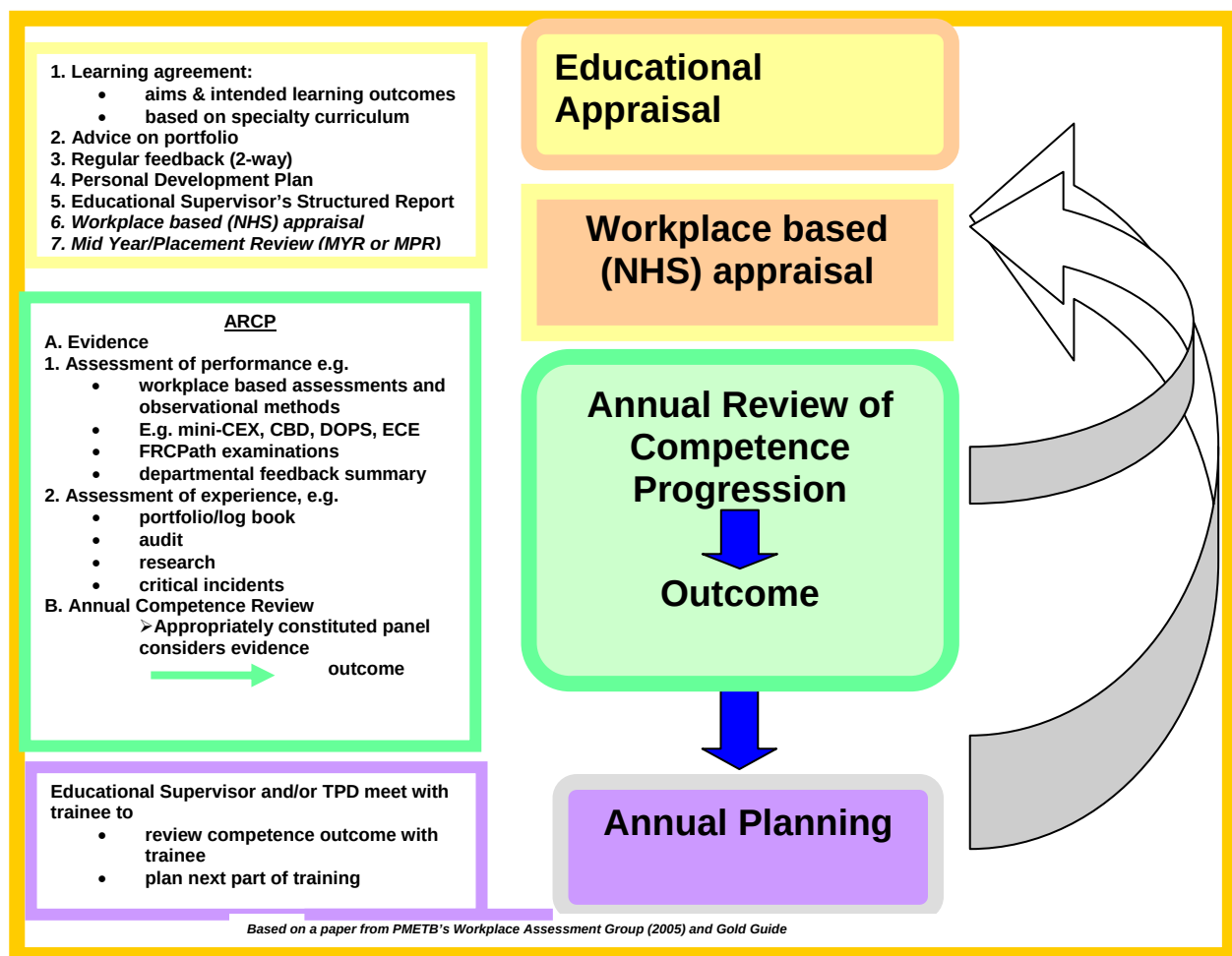
Trainees and Educational Supervisors must be familiar with:

- the requirements of the curriculum for their specialty (or specialties and any subspecialties) and the competences expected for satisfactory completion of training
- the required assessments and examinations for each year/stage of training.

This information is available on the Royal College of Pathologists website as follows:

|                                                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|-------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Curriculum                                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Chemical Pathology curriculum</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Histopathology curriculum</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Medical Microbiology and Virology curriculum</a></li> </ul>                                                                                                   |
| Year 1 Assessment                               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Chemical Pathology Year 1 Assessment</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Histopathology Year 1 Assessment</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Medical Microbiology and Virology Year 1 Assessment</a></li> </ul>                                                                              |
| Multi-Source Feedback                           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">All specialties</a></li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Workplace Based Assessment                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Chemical Pathology workplace-based assessment</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Histopathology workplace-based assessment</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Medical Microbiology workplace-based assessment</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Virology workplace-based assessment</a></li> </ul> |
| FRCPATH examinations regulations and guidelines | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">FRCPATH examinations regulations and guidelines</a></li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                              |

### 3 Educational appraisal, assessment and planning for pathology training (adapted for pathology from the Gold Guide)



### 4 Mid Year or Mid Placement Reviews (MYR/MPR)

Approximately halfway through the year of training, Educational Supervisors should undertake a Mid Year or Mid Placement Review with their trainee. The Gold Guide recommends that trainees should have an educational appraisal at least at the beginning, middle and end of each section/year of training and the MYR/MPR should be part of the 'middle' appraisal. The Gold Guide states that:

"The purpose of educational appraisal is to:

- help identify educational needs at an early stage by agreeing educational objectives which are SMART (**S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**chievable, **R**ealistic, **T**imebound)
- provide a mechanism to receive the report of the annual assessment outcome panel and to discuss these with the trainee
- provide a mechanism for reviewing progress at a time when remedial action can be taken quickly
- assist in the development in postgraduate trainees of the skills of self-reflection and self-appraisal that will be needed throughout a professional career
- enable learning opportunities to be identified in order to facilitate a trainee's access to these
- provide a mechanism for giving feedback on the quality of the training provided; and make training more efficient and effective for a trainee."

The MYR ensures that the trainee is on course to complete the curriculum and assessment requirements of the year. If a trainee is not on course, a remedial action plan should be agreed between the trainee and the Educational Supervisor.

## 5 Recording activities and progress

### a The trainee's learning portfolio

The trainee must ensure that they keep an up-to-date portfolio recording all of the evidence regarding their progress in training. The Royal College of Pathologists' definition of a learning portfolio is an up to date file of evidence summarising the trainee's activities and progress. A table is provided below indicating the type of evidence required and where the information can be recorded:

| Evidence                                                    |                                                        | CP | HP | MM&V |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|----|----|------|
| Previous ARCPs                                              | Portfolio                                              | ✓  | ✓  | ✓    |
| Current and previous placements in the programme            | Portfolio                                              | ✓  | ✓  | ✓    |
| ePATH-SPRAT (Multi-source feedback)                         | Portfolio                                              | ✓  | ✓  | ✓    |
| Direct Observation of Practical Skills (DOPS)               | Portfolio                                              | ✓  | ✓  | ✓    |
| Cased based Discussion (CbD)                                | Portfolio                                              | ✓  | ✓  | ✓    |
| Evaluation of Clinical Events (ECE)                         | Portfolio                                              | ✓  | ✓  |      |
| Mini- Clinical Evaluation Exercise (CEX)                    | Portfolio                                              | ✓  |    |      |
| Examination/assessment attempts/outcomes                    | Portfolio                                              | ✓  | ✓  | ✓    |
| Clinical activities (e.g. autopsies, clinics, case studies) | Training and learning record (separate from portfolio) | ✓  | ✓  | ✓    |
| Audit                                                       | Portfolio                                              | ✓  | ✓  | ✓    |
| Research projects                                           | Portfolio                                              | ✓  | ✓  | ✓    |
| Publications                                                | Portfolio                                              | ✓  | ✓  | ✓    |
| Teaching activities                                         | Portfolio                                              | ✓  | ✓  | ✓    |
| Management development                                      | Portfolio                                              | ✓  | ✓  | ✓    |
| Presentations                                               | Portfolio                                              | ✓  | ✓  | ✓    |
| Courses attended                                            | Portfolio                                              | ✓  | ✓  | ✓    |

It is the trainee's responsibility to provide an up-to-date learning portfolio in sufficient time to support the completion of the Educational Supervisor's Structured Report.

Trainees should use the Royal College of Pathologists [online training portfolio](#) (log in required) to record their activities and progress. Trainees must be logged in to the Fellows area of the website to access their training portfolio.

### b Flexible trainees

Flexible trainees must undertake an ARCP at the same frequency of full-time trainees, i.e. once per calendar year. Progress should be appropriate to the amount of whole time equivalent training undertaken by the trainee in the calendar year being considered.

### **c Academic trainees**

A separate academic structured report is provided for academic trainees (either those who hold an NTN[A] or those taking time out of training to undertake research). Academic trainees must have both an Educational Supervisor's structured report and an Academic Supervisor's structured report completed for their ARCP.

#### [Academic Supervisor's structured report](#)

### **d Trainees taking time out of training**

Trainees who are taking time out of training, either to do research (OOPR) or clinical training (OOP) that has been prospectively agreed by the Training and Educational Standards Department of the College and approved by the Postgraduate Medical Education and Training Board (PMETB) must also undertake an ARCP.

Trainees undertaking OOPR must submit an Academic Supervisor's structured report as well as an Educational Supervisor's structured report.

Trainees undertaking clinical training that has not been prospectively approved by PMETB or a planned career break will not undertake an ARCP but will be required to submit OOP documentation to the deanery annually.

### **e Locum Appointment for Training (LATs) and Fixed Term Specialty Training Appointments (FTSTAs)**

Trainees not appointed to a run-through training programme but to LATs or FTSTAs must participate in the ARCP process. Such trainees should undertake workplace-based assessment in accordance with the guidance for their specialty and any other assessments or examinations (e.g. Year 1 Assessment, MSF, FRCPath Part 1) as appropriate during their period of training. Should a trainee undertaking a LAT or FTSTA subsequently be appointed to a training programme with the award of an NTN, they may have their previous LAT or FTSTA counted towards their completion of training. Evidence of satisfactory progress in the ARCP for the LAT or FTSTA will be required as part of the evidence.

## **6 The Educational Supervisor's Structured Report**

Prior to the ARCP process, the trainee's Educational Supervisor must complete a structured report.

The Royal College of Pathologists has produced specialty specific versions of the Educational Supervisor Structured Reports which map to the relevant assessments. They are available on the College website:

[Chemical Pathology Educational Supervisors Structured Report](#)  
[Histopathology Educational Supervisors Structured Report](#)  
[Medical Microbiology Educational Supervisors Structured Report](#)  
[Medical Virology Educational Supervisors Structured Report](#)

Academic StRs must also have an [Academic Supervisor's structured report](#) completed for their ARCP.

The Educational Supervisor's Structured Report is a summary of the trainee's learning portfolio and confirms their workplace based assessments, examination/assessment attempts, experience and additional activities undertaken in the previous year. It is not intended to be a personal report of the Educational Supervisor's view of the trainee's progress, but is designed to record the evidence, validate it and allow the evidence to speak for itself.

There are nine sections in the form. These are:

- 1 Educational Supervisor's details
- 2 Trainee's details
- 3 Previous ARCPs
- 4 Previous placements in programme
- 5 Gaps in training
- 6 Workplace-based assessments undertaken during placement
- 7 Examinations and assessments
- 8 Experiential outcomes
- 9 Other comments/issues

Where an Educational Supervisor identifies other comments or issues that do not fit in sections 1 to 8, these should be raised in the 'other comments/issues' box at the end of the report. Such comments or issues may be in relation to either outstanding/excellent achievement or concerns about performance and should be supported by appropriate evidence. A summary of the triangulated views of trainers in the department (or perhaps from other educational supervisors from placements during the year – see below) are examples of the types of comments or issues that can be included within this section.

When the Educational Supervisor has completed the structured report, based on the evidence provided, they must discuss it with the trainee. This is particularly important if the evidence indicates that the trainee may not achieve a satisfactory progress outcome as determined by the ARCP panel.

#### **a Multiple Educational Supervisors since the last ARCP**

It may be that within a year of training a trainee has more than one Educational Supervisor. In such cases, only the current Educational Supervisor should complete a structured report for the upcoming ARCP. They have the responsibility for reviewing and summarising the content of the trainee's portfolio. The Educational Supervisor may wish to take the views of the trainee's previous Educational Supervisors since their last ARCP and feed their comments into the 'other comments/issues' box in the structured report. It is important that any comments included in the structured report are supported by appropriate evidence.

Where a trainee has had multiple Educational Supervisors because they are a joint medical microbiology/virology and infectious diseases trainee and have worked in both specialties since their last ARCP, an Educational Supervisor's report should be completed both by their medical microbiology or virology Educational Supervisor and their infectious diseases Educational Supervisor.

#### **b Guidelines for completing the Educational Supervisor's structured report**

- The specialty specific structured reports should be completed either electronically or by hand and signed and dated by the Educational Supervisor and trainee, after appropriate discussion.
- Notes for completion of the electronic form:  
*Most of the fields in the form are free text. Once a field is complete, simply press tab to move to the next box.*  
*Some fields have drop down boxes and the appropriate option should be selected from those presented.*
- If there is no information to complete for certain fields, these can be left blank.

For practical reasons, it may be preferable for the Educational Supervisor(s) and trainee to complete the structured report together, or for the trainee to complete a draft of the form summarising the contents of the Portfolio prior to it being discussed with their Educational Supervisor. However, the Educational Supervisor must be absolutely clear that they are accountable and responsible for finalising the structured report and ensuring that it accurately reflects the evidence in the Portfolio.

## 7 Timing of the ARCP

In general, the College recommends that the ARCP is undertaken towards the end of the trainee's year of training (e.g. if a trainee starts their post in August, their ARCP should be in the following June or July). However, there may be logistical or other reasons why the ARCP cannot take place at this time and the following guidance is intended to provide a pragmatic approach to recording satisfactory progress and completion of the years and stages of training.

### a ARCPs undertaken in phase with the year of training

Where the ARCP is taking place near the end of the trainee's year of training and the trainee has achieved progress and competences at the expected rate, it should be recorded on the appropriate ARCP outcome document.

### b ARCPs undertaken out of phase with the year of training

Where the ARCP is taking place out of phase but the trainee **is achieving progress and competences** at the expected rate, the provisional date for completion of the year and stage of training should be recorded on the ARCP Outcomes form and confirmed at the next ARCP. It is likely that this approach will also be used for flexible and academic trainees who are unlikely to routinely undertake ARCPs in phase with their training.

Where the ARCP is taking place out of phase and the trainee has presented **unsatisfactory or insufficient evidence**, neither the satisfactory completion of the stage/year of training or a provisional completion date for the stage or year of training should be completed. Where additional training time is required however, the length of extension should be stated and the provisional CCT date amended on the form.

## 8 Organising the ARCP

Deaneries will need to ensure that they have a local mechanism in place to ensure that there is sufficient time for the paperwork to be completed for the ARCP. The Gold Guide recommends six weeks.

In cases where concerns have been raised about the trainee, deaneries should ensure that the trainee is given adequate notice that their attendance will be required at the ARCP.

It should be noted that the outcome form for an ARCP that culminates in a recommendation for remediation should be signed by a dean or representative.

## 9 During the ARCP

The Royal College of Pathologists has produced a pathology version of the ARCP document and accompanying guidance which have been agreed by the Joint Committee on Pathology Training (JCPT) and the Lead Dean for Chemical Pathology and Histopathology.

A copy of the ARCP outcome form is available on the [College website](#).

The pathology ARCP form mirrors the form in the Gold Guide but adds two additional features:

### a End of Stage Review (ESR)

All of the pathology curricula outline four stages of training (A – D). The College monitors the trainee's progress through both the year and stage of training.

When the evidence is provided for an ARCP and the trainee is achieving progress and competences at the expected rate, the outcome panel must also consider whether the trainee has completed the requirements for the **stage** of training and record this on the form as appropriate, as well as the year.

Alternatively, if the ARCP is out of phase with the year of training, the provisional date for completion of the stage of training should be completed on the ARCP outcome form (see section 7). Where a provisional date for completion of a year or stage is agreed at the ARCP, the trainee's Educational Supervisor and training programme director should have a brief discussion at the appropriate time to allow the trainee to progress to the next stage of training immediately. This discussion should be documented and recorded at the next ARCP.

It is not expected that the trainee will automatically progress through each stage of the curriculum in consecutive years. It may be that the trainee is recommended an outcome 1 (satisfactory progress) but that they have not yet completed the requirements of the stage, in which case the ARCP form should record that they will remain in the appropriate stage even though they have progressed to the next year of training.

The stages of training are outlined in each of the curricula but a broad summary is provided below:

[Link to illustrative example of pathology training](#)

[Link to illustrative timetable of pathology training](#)

### **Stage A**

Stage A of training is broadly the first 12 months whole-time equivalent. In order to satisfactorily complete stage A of training, trainees must have:

- satisfactorily completed stage A of the curriculum and a minimum training period of 12 months (whole-time equivalent);
- performed satisfactorily in The Royal College of Pathologists' Year 1 Assessment;
- obtained a satisfactory outcome (1) in the ARCP.

### **Stage B**

Stage B of training is broadly between month 13 and month 36 of whole-time equivalent training. In order to complete stage B of training, trainees must have:

- satisfactorily completed a total of at least 24 months of training (whole-time equivalent);
- passed the FRCPath Part 1 examination;
- obtained one or more satisfactory outcomes (1) in the ARCP.

### **Stage C**

Stage C of training is broadly between month 25 and month 48 whole-time equivalent training. In order to complete stage C of training, trainees must have:

- satisfactorily completed a total of at least 42 months of training (whole-time equivalent);
- passed the FRCPath Part 2;
- obtained one or more satisfactory outcomes (1) in the ARCP.

### **Stage D**

Stage D of training is broadly between month 43 and month 60 whole-time equivalent training. In order to complete stage D of training, trainees must have:

- satisfactorily completed a total of at least 60 months of training (whole-time equivalent);
- satisfactorily completed all areas of the curriculum;
- obtained outcome 6 in the final ARCP.

### **b Provisional CCT date**

The outcome panel should ensure that a provisional CCT date is provided on each ARCP form. This will allow the College and the deanery to ensure that they are in agreement about the proposed completion date for a trainee.

Where a trainee requires additional training time, the length of extension of training should be stated and the provisional CCT date amended on the form.

If there is a discrepancy between the date on the ARCP form and the records held at the College, a member of the Training and Educational Standards Department will contact the relevant deanery to resolve the matter.

## **10 After the ARCP**

A fully completed copy of the ARCP form, signed and dated by the Chair of the Panel and the trainee must be sent by the deanery to:

Training and Educational Standards Department  
The Royal College of Pathologists  
2 Carlton House Terrace  
London  
SW1Y 5AF  
[training@rcpath.org](mailto:training@rcpath.org)

These can either be sent electronically or in hard copy, according to preferred deanery arrangements.

## **11 Reviewing the ARCP guidance**

This guidance has been produced following consultation with the College Advisory Training Teams (CATTs) and Year 1 Assessment Panels and has had the significant input of the Director of Examinations and Assessment and the Director of Training and Educational Standards.

Nevertheless, it is recognised that the ARCP process is new and that the guidance and forms will need to be reviewed in the light of use and experience. We will therefore formally review the guidance in one year and will consult formally through the CATTs as part of this process. However, we are happy to receive informal comments and feedback at any time and these can be emailed to [Joanne Brinklow](#), Training and Educational Standards Manager.

**Training and Educational Standards Department**  
**9 April 2008**