

SAS Doctors in education

Preliminary update into work towards commitment 8

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Background

In February 2019 Health Education England and NHS Improvement published *Maximising the Potential: essential measures to support SAS doctors*.

The guidance set out clear actions that all contributing partners have committed to deliver. It was developed in response to the challenges articulated in both the draft workforce strategy for England published in December 2017, and the *Enhancing training and the support for learners* report. It has been led by Health Education England (HEE), working in partnership with:

- NHS Improvement
- Academy of Medical Royal Colleges
- NHS Employers
- British Medical Association (BMA)
- Provider organisations.

The guidance described what the NHS should be doing now to support staff grade, associate specialist, and specialty (SAS) doctors. It stated that all staff need effective induction and appraisal. They need support to develop their careers and use their skills in ways that realise their full potential. However, evidence shows this is not always the case for SAS doctors.

The guidance outlined eleven shared commitments to support SAS doctors. The Academy is committed to facilitating the Colleges to work towards SAS doctors being more involved in the education process, and this paper begins to address commitment 8.

Commitment 8. The Academy and HEE will explore how SAS doctors can be involved more effectively by Colleges as a part of the education process, specifically as educational and clinical supervisors for doctors in training

To begin to address this commitment, the Academy SAS Committee asked four questions to the following Medical Royal Colleges to audit the current state of play:

- Royal College of Physicians (London)

- Royal College of Surgeons of England
- Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh
- Royal College of Emergency Medicine
- Royal College of Psychiatrists
- Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health
- Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists
- Faculty of Sexual and Reproductive Health
- Royal College of Pathologists
- Royal College of Radiologists

The responses to the four questions below are collated in [Table 1](#).

1. Does the College allow SAS doctors to be educational supervisors and clinical supervisors?
2. Are SAS doctors given the opportunity for training to be educational and clinical supervisors by the College, similar to consultants?
3. Does the College allow SAS doctors to be examiners for postgraduate exams?
4. Does College involve SAS doctors in the exams in any other way? E.g. question setting, exam courses etc?

Summary of responses

The responses collated in Table 1 show variation across the Medical Royal Colleges in terms of the current involvement of SAS doctors in education. Some Colleges have very good engagement and opportunities for SAS doctors, such as RCP (London), FSRH, RCPCH, RCOG and RCoA, while there is scope for improvement in others. This may be due to a lack of opportunity, lack of knowledge or lack of engagement.

The collated responses were discussed at the Academy SAS committee in September 2019 where the following next steps were decided.

Next steps

1. SAS representatives to reflect on data and liaise with individual colleges to work towards creating more opportunities in education for SAS doctors. This should include identifying any gaps and obstacles in the current processes and work towards streamlining them. SAS representatives to push for better engagement between SAS groups and their Colleges. This will need College support.

2. To use Colleges who have successfully involved SAS doctors in the education process as role models to bench mark against.
3. Share collated responses with the Academy Council (November 2019) to then be shared with Health Education England.
4. SAS representatives to review and feedback on progress made with their individual Colleges at the Academy SAS committee meeting in March 2020.

Table 1. Summary of responses

College	Clinical supervision	Educational supervision	Educational supervision training opportunity	SAS doctors as examiners	Miscellaneous SAS involvement in examinations
RCPsych	Yes	No Only for foundation doctors.	No	No	No
RCoA	Yes	Yes	No Training is provided in local deaneries or postgrad centres not by College.	Yes If SAS doctors have done the exam. So far none have applied despite advertisement.	Yes SAS doctors have representation on all relevant committees including examination, curriculum etc.
RCPL	Yes 2018 survey showed 19% of SAS doctors are clinical supervisors.	Yes 2018 survey showed 11% of SAS doctors are educational supervisors. 6% of SAS doctors hold formal academic positions such as clinical lecturers or clinical senior lecturer.	Yes The College runs Educational Supervisor Workshop. Of the 303 attendees in 2018, 10 (3%) were SAS doctors. The College offers the MSc in Medical Education, a part-time programme delivered jointly along with University College London. This course is attended by consultants, trainees and SAS doctors. The College promotes GMC guidance which states that recognised or approved trainers may be GPs, consultants or SAS doctors	Yes SAS doctors who are fellows of the College and have the MRCP diploma can be examiners for the MRCP exam. There are currently very few SAS doctors who fulfil these criteria but some of them have expressed an interest and the College hopes by end of next year it will have SAS doctors as examiners.	Yes

			https://www.rcplondon.ac.uk/education-practice/advice/specialty-associate-specialist-and-staff-grade-sas-doctors).		
RCSEd	Yes The RCSEd has set up a Faculty of Surgical Trainers which SAS Grades are welcome to join as Associates. SAS can apply for full membership or fellowship if they meet the criteria set by the Faculty. Being an SAS grade does not preclude application.	Yes SAS are encouraged by the RCSEd to train and take up the role of educational supervisors.	Yes SAS have the same opportunities to attend Train the Trainers courses run by the College as Consultants do.	N/A	Yes SAS Grades are eligible to apply for question writing for the MRCS exam.
FSRH	Yes	Yes Currently there are 2 SAS educational supervisors.	Yes Regular courses are available.	Yes SAS doctors could become examiners for the MFSRH, as long as they have passed the exam themselves, or signed an agreement to never take the exam. This is the same criteria for anyone getting	Yes SAS doctors are on exams committee and involved in organising exams and question writing. SAS doctors can be mentors or mentees in the BASHH/BHIVA/FSRH mentor scheme.

				involved.	
RCPCH	Yes	Yes	Yes SAS doctors are eligible to attend the Effective Educational Supervision (EES) course.	<p>Yes The College accepts applications from SAS doctors to become DCH Clinical Examiners and has put one or two through (current DCH Scenario Lead is a SAS doctor).</p> <p>The College is open to applications from SAS doctors applying to become MRCPCH Clinical examiners as follows:</p> <p>SAS doctors must evidence that they meet the other minimum standards for examiners as referenced in 'Duties and Responsibilities of RCPCH Examiners' document.</p> <p>SAS doctors must be holders of the MRCPCH having successfully passed all of the elements of the examination.</p> <p>SAS doctors must have CCT (or equivalent) and must have</p>	<p>Yes All members who have passed the membership exam are eligible to attend question writing meetings, so potentially includes SAS doctors.</p> <p>Opportunities in Education: College Tutors: Currently the official College role profile and guidance doesn't allow SAS doctors to be College Tutors. Unofficially there may be some. The College is looking at changing that policy and will discuss with Senior College Tutor and bring a paper to autumn E&T Quality Committee proposing that change to the guidance.</p> <p>Teaching Faculty: There are SAS doctors on the teaching faculty courses.</p> <p>Careers Advisor: SAS doctors are eligible for these roles.</p> <p>Mentor roles: SAS doctors are eligible.</p>

				<p>completed three years in a substantive role post CCT.</p> <p>SAS doctors must hold full registration with the GMC and without limitation on their practice (for GPs, must be registered with performers list with no limitations on their practice). They must also be in good standing with their College.</p>	
RCOphth	Yes	<p>No</p> <p>The RCOphth does not determine who is suitable to take the role of educational supervisor. Consultants who want/are asked to become educational supervisors need to attend training courses organised by their Trusts and are only allowed to undertake the role once they get the relevant certificates, etc.</p>	<p>No</p> <p>The College does not train consultants to be supervisors and therefore there are no special provisions for SAS doctors.</p>	<p>Yes</p> <p>SAS doctors can examine at the Refraction Certificate examinations and mark the Part 1 FRCOphth CRQ marksheets.</p> <p>SAS doctors cannot be examiners for the final viva unless they hold FRCOphth. Examiner must be a consultant or hold FRCOphth.</p> <p>Some members can be elected to be the Fellows of RCOphth but SAS doctors cannot be elected as fellows even after holding MRCOphth and having good experience and references. This point will be raised in the education meeting.</p>	<p>Yes</p> <p>College has SAS examiners who can contribute to writing exam questions.</p>

		There may be some educational supervisors who are SAS doctors but the College could not identify them from their e portfolio.			
RCR	Yes	No Educational supervisors are appointed by training programmes. The RCR has never tried to define criteria for who can be a supervisor. The GMC has requirements for supervisors to be "recognised trainers" but these requirements do not limit the positions to any job roles. The Gold Guide defines UK-wide arrangements for postgraduate	Yes SAS doctors can attend supervisors skills workshop organised by RCR.	Yes SAS doctors can be FRCR examiners if they are fellows of the College.	Yes For one exam RCR accepts draft questions from local question-writing panels. These could include radiologists in any role. There are currently no exam preparation courses. The current RCR SAS rep has contributed to Single Best Answer questions for FRCR-2 4b module and has attended RCR course on Single Best Answer question setting.

		training and defines supervisor roles.			
RCPSG	No	No	No	No The examiners need to be fellows/members. Currently it is limited to consultants only.	No
RCOG	Yes	Yes	Yes SAS doctors have equal opportunity to attend RCOG organised 'Train the trainer' events.	Yes	Yes RCOG have a SAS/LED national lead who is a voting member of Council and chair of a SAS/LED Advisory Group who College supports and whose members sit on many other Council Committees/Boards, including Education Board and Professional Development Committee.
RCSEng	Yes	Yes If fulfil appropriate criteria for training programme and appointed by the TPD.	Yes SAS surgeons have access to all training courses provided by RCSEng.	Partly Yes SAS surgeons are allowed to be question setters for MRCS Part 1. They are not allowed to be examiners for MRCS Part 2, but this option is being explored.	Yes SAS Surgeons are allowed to be surgical tutors. SAS Surgeons are also allowed to be Regional Directors for RCSEng.
RCEM	Yes	Yes Not to trainees. Only to SAS and foundation doctors.	N/A Deanery based training is available.	Yes Senior Associate specialists on old contract are examiners.	N/A
RCPath	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes

		RCPATH supports SAS doctors in these supervision roles according to the experience and competence, in the same way as consultants - this is down to local education providers to make use of SAS doctors where applicable.	Local education providers are responsible for providing this.	According to the level of experience and qualification, SAS doctors who are fellows are eligible to be examiners and senior examiners. The job descriptions for examiners are being updated to make this explicit.	SAS doctors who have passed FRCPATH part 1 are eligible to be exam item writers.
RCPEd	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A