

Externality Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for Annual Review of Competence Progresses (ARCP)

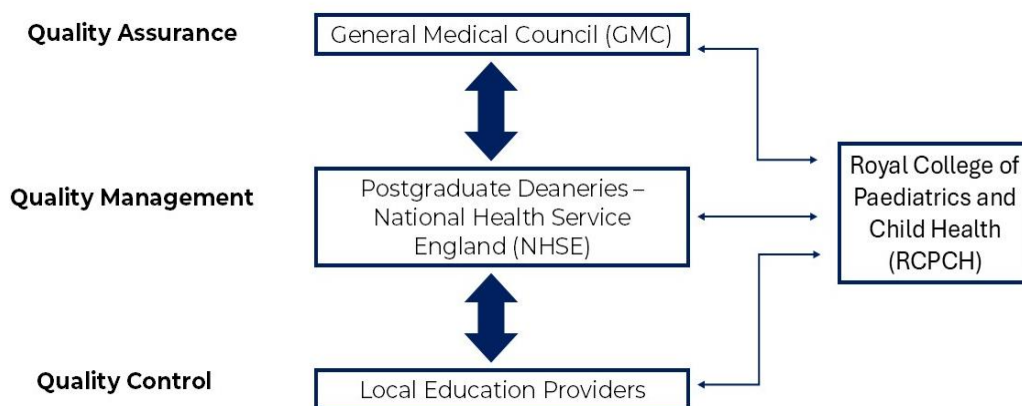
This document outlines the Standard Operating Procedure to support the management of externality conducted by the Royal College of Paediatric and Child Health (RCPCH) External Advisers (EAs) when reviewing the progression of speciality training (ST) 1 – 7, trainee doctors.

This SOP is aligned to the principles as set out by the General Medical Council (GMC) and in the 'A Reference Guide for Postgraduate Speciality Training in the UK' (The Gold Guide).

Why is Externality Important?

The use of external experts is recognised to be a beneficial method of providing objectivity in some of the processes undertaken by deaneries to manage the quality of education and training. This is also a formal requirement of the GMC's Quality Assurance Framework (QAF)¹ for all specialities. Although the onus is on deaneries to engage active external scrutiny for these processes (assessing a trainee's progress through the Annual Review of Competency Progression (ARCP), quality visits and recruitment), the GMC and the medical royal colleges collectively agree that there should be a clearer understanding of what that engagement means.

The overarching principles for externality are derived from the GMC's standards and the Gold Guide (from point 4.60).



Quality Assurance: is the responsibility of the regulator, GMC. This includes policies, standards, systems, and processes to maintain the quality of medical education.

Quality Management: is how deaneries ensure that postgraduate medical and training programmes provided by the local education providers meet the standards set out by the GMC in partnership with medical royal colleges. The deaneries must ensure that there is active external scrutiny of the established quality management processes. EAs, as RCPCH

¹ <https://www.gmc-uk.org/education/how-we-quality-assure>

representatives, should provide specialist advice on the processes of assessment and evaluation of speciality training delivery and must have appropriate expertise. EAs should be independent of the deanery and have no conflicts of interest.

Quality Control: is how local hospitals ensure that training meets required standards.

The administrative support at the RCPCH for externality is located in the Education and Training Directorate - Quality and Training Projects team (QTP) - with the objective to gain an overview of education and training, ensuring a standardised approach to quality assurance / improvement across all paediatric training. The aim is to streamline and simplify processes for the management of externality, whilst maintaining the rigour of reliable outcomes.

The QTP team will

- Maintain a record of current External Advisers (EA).
- Maintain a calendar of ARCP dates for the academic year.
- Ensure EAs are up to date with relevant training relating to externality.
- Appoint suitable individuals to act as EAs on its behalf.
- Provide relevant guidance and report templates for the EAs to complete following their representation.
- By focusing on the experience and achievements of trainees and trainer, verify that trainees are attaining appropriate standards.
- Seek to confirm that assessment processes are sound and operated fairly.
- Collect, record, and disseminate good practice identified, to promote comparability of the trainee and trainer experience between deaneries.
- Seek to confirm that the curriculum is being effectively delivered.
- Contribute to the deaneries; effective management of educational quality, including the development of trainers or educational supervisors.
- Provide standards for EAs in order for them to undertake their responsibilities in a consistent manner and in accordance with the RCPCH's education policy.
- Provide EAs with feedback following receipt of their report.
- EAs to adhere to extremely high standards of probity, in particular to declare any conflicts of interest, whether professional, personal, or geographical.
- Recognise the professional contribution of EAs by awarding a thank you letter at the end of the academic year, where actively involved by attending at least one ARCP, appeal panel or triggered visit.
- Collate, summarise, and report findings at relevant RCPCH committees, as well as further disseminate to the Officer for Training, College Speciality Advisory Committee (CSAC) and Head of School (HoS).

What is the Annual Review of Competency Progression (ARCP)?

The Annual Review of Competency Progression (ARCP) is the means by which trainee doctors / trainees in speciality training are reviewed each year (generally at the end of their ST year) to assess and evaluate their progression against standards set down in the curriculum. This is conducted by the relevant deanery and determines whether the trainee is meeting the training requirements. Following this, a decision is made as to

whether the trainee is ready to progress on to the next year of training or be awarded their Certificate of Completion of Training (CCT) or Certificate of Eligibility for Specialist Registration (CESR) / Certificate of Eligibility for GP Registration (CEGPR).

ARCP outcomes:

- **Outcome 0:** Trainee did not have an ARCP / review
- **Outcome 1:** Satisfactory Progress – *achieving progress and competences at the expected rate.*
- **Outcome 2:** Development of specific competences required – *additional training time not required.*
- **Outcome 3:** Inadequate progress by the trainee – *additional training time required.*
- **Outcome 4:** Released from training programme with or without specified competences.
- **Outcome 5:** Incomplete evidence presented – *additional training time may be required.*
- **Outcome 6:** Gained all required competences for the programme – *will be recommended as having completed the training programme and for award of a CCT.*
- **Outcome 7:** Fixed-term posts
 - 7.1: Satisfactory progress in or completion of the LAT placement
 - 7.2: Development of specific competencies required – additional training time not required
 - 7.3: Inadequate progress by trainee - additional training time
 - 7.4: Incomplete evidence presented – LAT placement
- **Outcome 8:** Out of programme (for those currently undertaking research or experience): OOPC/E/P/R/T
- **Outcome 9:** Top up training
- **Outcome 10.1:** Progress is satisfactory but the acquisition of capabilities by the trainee has been delayed by COVID-19 disruption. Trainee can progress.
- **Outcome 10.2:** Progress is satisfactory but the acquisition of capabilities by the trainee has been delayed by COVID-19 disruption. Trainee is at critical point and additional training time is required.

There are three objectives of the ARCP:

1. Review evidence of the competencies gained over the last year and progression to decide the 'outcome' of the ARCP.
2. Provide the trainee an opportunity to give feedback on the training over the preceding year.
3. Provide an opportunity for the ARCP panel to give the trainee career related advice.

The Gold Guide² requires that medical royal colleges to play a role in quality managing deanery ARCPs, by helping to ensure that deaneries make consistent decisions about trainees' progress. All unsatisfactory ARCP outcomes come under external scrutiny, as well as 10 per cent of satisfactory outcomes.

²<https://www.copmed.org.uk/images/docs/gold-guide-9th-edition/Gold-Guide-9th-Edition-August-2022.pdf> (para 4.102)

The ARCP panel usually comprises of the Programme Directors, Heads of School (HoS), Educational Supervisors (ES) and other relevant members of the educational faculty. A lay representative may also be present. An 'External Advisor' (EA) from outside the deanery or LETB will need to review a sample of ARCP outcomes to ensure objective consistency.

The ARCP panel members must not assess a trainee if they are the trainee's clinical or educational supervisor or if they have a conflict of interest (for example, Training Programme Director (TPD) providing additional support). The panel should review at least 10 per cent of the standard outcomes and all non-standard outcomes as well as evidence supporting these and any concerns over performance.

To progress satisfactorily in training, the trainee will need ARCP outcomes for each training grade, usually ST1 - ST7. This culminates in an ARCP outcome 6 for those completing their training, usually at ST8.

When is specialist external advice required?

The main activities that require specialist external advice are ARCPs, appeal panels as well as monitored / triggered visits.

ARCP

It is the Gold Guide requirement that an EA reviews at least 10 per cent of all ARCP outcomes and the evidence supporting these. This also includes recommendations from the panel about concerns over progress (ARCP outcomes 2, 3 and 4).

The role of the deanery:

As the Gold Guide specifies external representation at ARCPs, appeal panels and monitored / triggered visits, it is the responsibility of the deanery to ensure this happens.

The following is a list of expectations of the responsibility of the deanery:

- Inform the RCPCH of ARCP dates and/or venues as soon as possible.
- Ensure RCPCH has secured an EA prior an event/s to ensure the required sampling of 10% can be achieved. The deanery may therefore wish to focus the visits to ensure a range of ARCPs are represented. This may include regular ARCP, those where trainees are presenting with progression issues or difficulties, or where achievement is borderline.
- The Deanery should note that external representation is a requirement at any appeal panel.
- Provide the EA with any required documentation to support externality representation on the panel, remote activity, or visit.
- Post ARCP or triggered visit, respond to recommendations and / or actions within the external report.
- Develop an action / improvement plan if necessary and monitor its implementation.
- If applicable send copy of action / improvement plan to RCPCH Quality and Training Projects team - qualityandtrainingprojects@rcpch.ac.uk

The role of the External Assessor (EA)

The role of the EA is to provide expert impartial advice and scrutiny of all processes of delivery, assessment, and evaluation of speciality training according to the GMC Quality Assurance Framework (QAF).

EAs are drawn from a range of educational roles across the paediatric specialty, for example Head of School, Regional Leads, CSAC Chairs, College Tutors, Training Programme Directors, and College Officers. To be considered for this role, the following criteria identified within the person specification must be met:

- Be a Fellow, Member or Affiliate Member of the RCPCH and a local Consultant in paediatrics or one of the paediatric sub-specialties.
- Ability to demonstrate experience as a clinical and educational supervisor.
- Experience in being an ARCP panel member and be familiar with the RCPCH Progress+ curriculum.
- Have genuine enthusiasm for education and relevant, up-to-date training in teaching methods by having attended Paediatric Educators Programme / Training the Trainers or equivalent.
- Have detailed, up-to-date knowledge of the 'Gold Guide' requirements of postgraduate training, the regulations involved and the examinations, assessments, and appraisals that trainees are required to undertake.
- Able to demonstrate an active involvement in education and training issues and have an appropriate and current working knowledge of educational requirements.
- Understand the principles of appraisal and assessment and have had appropriate training.
- Awareness of the issues around handling trainees in difficulty.
- Contribute to the Deanery School of Paediatrics.
- Excellent communication, skills – a readiness to listen and empathise.
- Problem solving abilities and a flexible, practical approach.
- Demonstrate evidence of ongoing professional development.

The primary function of the EA role is to function as a critical friend ensuring that processes are fair and reliable. The expectation will be that EAs will attend (or participate remotely) on a minimum of one ARCP panel per year, and / or attend one externality / GMC triggered visit per year. This will ensure ongoing development of competence.

The following is a list of expectations of an EA:

- Monitor and sample ARCP outcomes and evidence to support these outcomes, paying special attention to the Deanery's processes for providing comment and feedback on the quality of Educational Supervisors' Reports.
- To follow up improvements action from previous report.
- Provide a written report to RCPCH in a timely manner, which includes prompt, accurate and constructive feedback.
- Undertake training / update sessions prior to commencing the role and every subsequent 3 years.
- Provide support and advice to deaneries / LETBs on outcomes and quality assurance queries.

- Support deaneries / LETBs with training and development, identifying best practice and advising on continuous development.
- Help deaneries / LETBs develop ARCP processes which are fair, reliable, and non-discriminatory.
- Notify the Quality and Training Projects team at the RCPCH if you no longer wish to undertake this role.

It is seen as best practice that EAs function as critical friends for a particular deanery/LETB for no longer than 3 years in succession. This enhances objectivity and independent critical review.

What are the benefits of being an EA?

- Enhances career development
- Contributes to learning
- Encourages exchange of best practice
- Broaden horizons

External Assessor and the ARCP Process

1. The EAs should participate in the ARCP process. It may be possible to undertake some of the outcome reviews remotely however, this should be combined with sufficient direct contact and support from the Deanery / LETB to enable the EA to comment authoritatively on the processes of delivery, assessment, and evaluation of the speciality training.
2. The EA should ensure that the ARCP process is appropriate, consistent, and fair for the speciality.
3. The EA may provide advice to the ARCP panel on decision outcomes when unsatisfactory outcomes are discussed and contribute to the advice given to the individual trainees.
4. EAs are not expected to report on individual trainees, although following their discussions with trainees they may report back on specific issues relevant to the programme.
5. Where an area of concern has been identified, this should be defined as high, medium, or low level. When developing an improvement plan, use.

SMART:

- ❖ **Specific**
- ❖ **Measurable**
- ❖ **Achievable**
- ❖ **Relevant**
- ❖ **Timely**

External Assessor Reporting

The EA will be provided with a template of a report and are requested to produce a short report on the ARCP process within two weeks of attending an ARCP panel. Ideally, the EA should have discussed any concerns to be raised within the report with the Head of School and / or Training Programme Director at the time of attendance.

The EA should send the completed report to the Quality and Training Projects team via: qualityandtrainingprojects@rcpch.ac.uk and the relevant Head of School.

At the end of the academic year, the QTP administrator will collate the data and statistics from the ARCP panels across the country as well as reports provided by the EAs following their visit. This will be collated and summarised in order to be reported at the Training and Quality Board as well as form part of the Annual Speciality Report (ASR) to the GMC.

Top tips for getting the most from this activity:

1. Provide a report that is honest and fair. Improvements will not be possible if your report disguises any issues that you have identified.
2. Use the RCPCH designated template. This helps those monitoring and collating information at RCPCH to provide a more standardised view.
3. Do not only report on the activities of the day but also communication and administration before the event to
4. Do not just describe events. Try to consider the impact of the process and therefore provide a report that is more evaluative than descriptive.
5. Have fun, enjoy the activity, and learn from the process. It is always a good way of finding good practice to share across your regions.
6. Remember to log as CPD activity.

Externality Assessor (EA) Process for ARCP reviews

