

External Assessor Report for ARCP 2025

Introduction & Purpose

The Externality Report outlines the Good Practice and developmental concerns raised from the individual external assessors reporting for the ARCP panels of summer and winter 2025. The Gold Guide (General Medical Council) specifies for the College to contribute 10% of external representation of regional ARCP outcomes.

The Externality Report will be signed off as part of the Training and Quality Board (TQB) meeting held annually with the College.

There are also some considerations for TQB about the process going forward.

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1.1. This should set out clearly the recommendations that you would like the committee to consider.

- 1.1.1. *to note the content of the paper.*

- 1.1.2. *to consider how the college can extend the pool of external representatives.*

- 1.1.3. *to consider whether the criteria for external assessors is still valid:*

- <https://www.rcpch.ac.uk/education-careers/supporting-training/deaneries#about-the-externality-process>

ARCP Panel Trainee and Regional Statistics

External representatives were able to attend panels within all schools. The figures reported an increase in externality engagement compared to last year in 2024 since the pilot for implementing a webform to submit external availability.

School /Region	Trainees in school	Winter Total Trainee % reviewed by externality	Winter – 10% requirement reached	Summer Total Trainee % reviewed by externality	Summer – 10% requirement reached
Wessex	176	21	2 reports returned	45	3 reports returned
North East	200	No EA required		24	1 report returned
Thames Valley	181	22	1 report returned	19	1 report returned
Kent, Surrey, Sussex	189	No EA required		8	1 report returned
London	1121	54	2 reports returned	12	1 report returned
East of England	355	28	2 reports returned	41	1 report returned
Yorkshire and Humber	485	No EA required		20	1 report returned
North West	482	No EA required		38	1 report returned
East Midlands	354	41	1 report returned	40	1 report returned
Scotland	342	No EA required		34	2 reports returned
Wales	205	26	2 reports returned	12	1 report returned
Northern Ireland	153	6	1 report returned	47	1 report returned
South West	318	No EA required		19	2 reports returned
West Midlands	365	47	2 reports returned	12	2 reports returned
Total trainees	4659	245	13 reports returned	371	19 reports returned

Quality and Training Project Support

Since the implementation of the external assessor and deanery administrator webform, there has been an increase in participation and engagement from both cohorts to streamline the process of having external representatives as part of the GMC requirements.

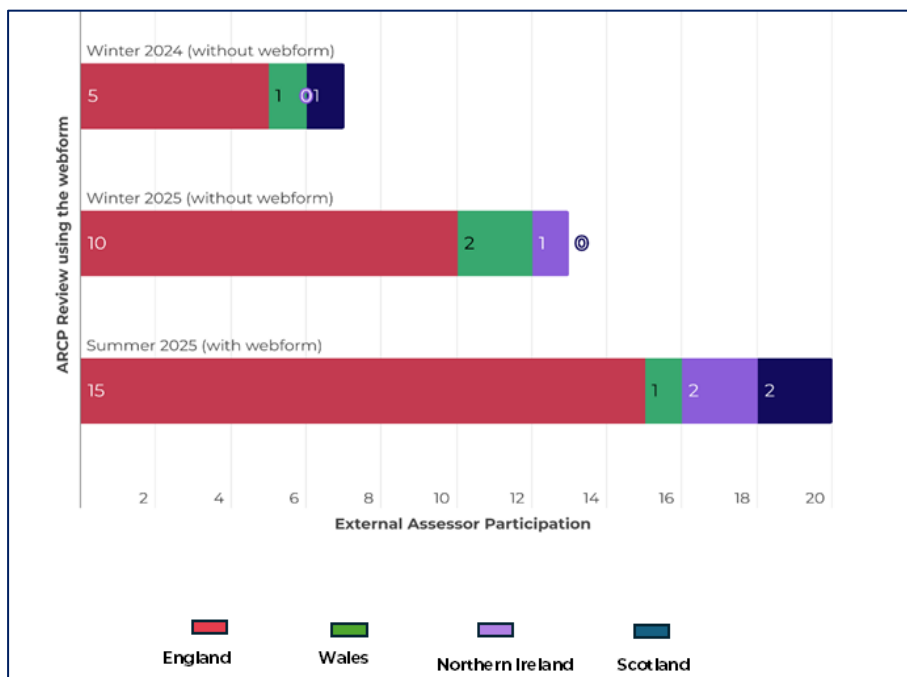


Table 1. External assessor availability from 2024-2025 ARCPs

The pilot for the webform was initiated in February 2025 which enhanced communication channels between the regions, allowing the College to have smooth administration of external availability and submitting reports based on their external assessor observations and evaluations.

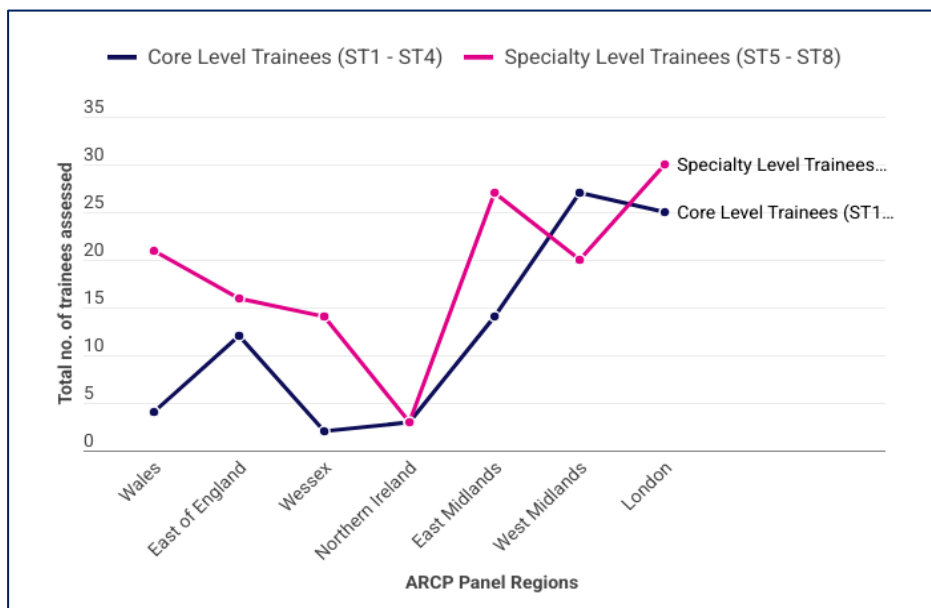


Table 1. Winter ARCP Panel Review of Trainees

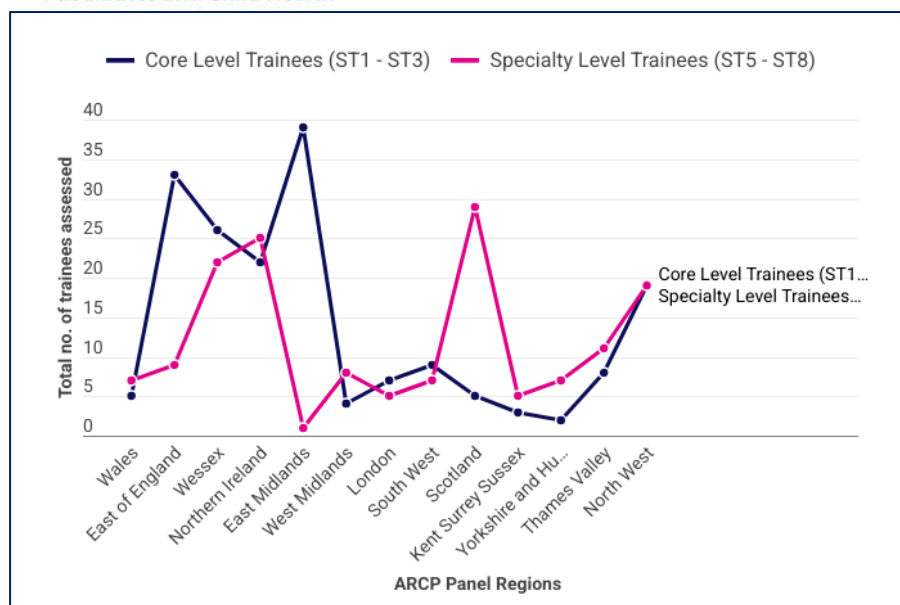


Table 2. Summer ARCP Panel Review of Trainees

The winter ARCP data shows a higher concentration of specialty trainees (ST5 – ST8), particularly in London and West Midlands, reflecting their established focus on specialty level training and/or progression to CCT, while regions like Wales, East of England, and Wessex had relatively few core level trainees. In contrast, the summer ARCPs assessed far more core level trainees (ST1 – ST3), especially in the East Midlands and East of England, while Scotland stood out for reviewing mostly specialty level trainees. London and Northern Ireland managed a more balanced mix across both panel reviews, while Wales consistently assessing more specialty trainees in winter than summer panel reviews.

ARCP Process and Structure

Areas of Good Practice

Across both winter and summer external assessor representation, the feedback suggested many regions demonstrating strong preparation, teamwork and trainee-centred practices:

- **Well organised and efficient panels** – in winter, Wessex panels were described as ‘very well led’, with roles divided between panel members to cover all parts of the trainee’s ePortfolio and to reduce bias. Wales also ran four panels with 14 assessors, described as ‘well organised’ with ‘considerate and thoughtful panel reviews.’ In summer, East Midlands achieved reviews through structured preparation and East of England

ensured 'good organisation' with timetables and guidance provided well in advance.

- **Inclusive trainee involvement** – in winter for Northern Ireland panel reviews, trainees gave short presentations on their progress which assessors found added real value. This practice continued in summer, with assessors noting that the presentations 'worked really well and made the process more uplifting'.
- **Collaborative decision making** – East Midlands panel (winter panels) showed 'significant open discussions' with all members contributing. In summer, Thames Valley panels were 'well organised and structured' with effective team discussions. North West also emphasised collaboration, ensuring that 'every effort was made to find evidence before giving a non-standard outcome'.
- **Strong preparation** – London winter panels provided early ePortfolio access and guidance, with panels described as 'thorough' and 'well-prepared'. Scotland reviews in summer gave panel members allocations in advance and specific preparation forms, allowing them to review trainees in detail before the meeting.
- **An appeal panel** was convened for the Wessex deanery, and the decision regarding the trainee's progression was upheld, supporting the overall circumstances and facilitating advancement to the next training level. Alongside this, several external assessors provided feedback that the Wessex panels demonstrated strong collaboration, with active involvement from all panel members and a transparent, fair decision-making approach. Panel members were supportive of trainees, suggesting engagement with PSWs when needed. Furthermore, a slideshow on the assessment criteria and scheduled Outcome 5 reviews were useful. Decision-making was fair and consistent, particularly for non-progressing trainees, with comprehensive documentation and prior discussions.

Areas for further consideration

- **ePortfolio completeness** – across both winter and summer panels, the most common reason for non-progression was missing evidence. In winter, Thames Valley panels reported outcome 5s due to incomplete ESTRs, and London noted exam failures as another cause. In summer, Yorkshire and Humber highlighted 'lack of administrative support' which limited checks on Form R and working patterns, and Southwest Peninsula noted outcome 5s for missing key documents. Therefore, to consider earlier support and clearer expectations before the panel.

- **Consistency in approaches** – assessors in London (winter panel reviews) pointed out variation in documenting required trainee actions. In summer, Scotland found that some ES reports lacked clinical supervisor input. Consistency in how trainee progress is recorded and reviewed would improve fairness.
- **Logistical and administrative issues** – in winter, West Midland panels had last-minute trainee list changes, while Thames Valley noted ‘dropouts in panel members’, highlighting the need for better planning and contingency arrangements. In summer, Northern Ireland assessors suggested using four or five consultants as panel members to review trainee eportfolio in depth as a consideration.
- **Trainee engagement** – Northern Ireland’s use of trainee presentations was well-received and could be more widely adopted to enhance engagement. While some regions (e.g., Wessex, London) demonstrated best practices in reviewing trainee progress, assessors recommended sharing these approaches more broadly.

Quality of panel reviews

Areas of good practice

- **Thorough ePortfolio reviews** – in winter, East of England panels carefully reviewed assessment and supervision forms for trainees. Northern Ireland trainee ePortfolio reviews were ‘well completed and thoroughly checked’. West Midlands demonstrated a detailed and structured approach to curriculum delivery, with panels reviewing curriculum tagging, START assessments, and PDPs to ensure completeness and quality. In summer, Scotland reviewed trainee reflections in detail (e.g., MSFs, SLEs), even checking when entries were made to confirm engagement throughout the year.
- **High-quality supervision reports** – Wessex panels was praised for ‘very good quality ES reports with helpful suggestions. Whereas East Midlands (summer) produced ‘consistently detailed’ ES and CS reports that reflected a strong partnership between supervisors and showed genuine care for trainee development.
- **Constructive trainee feedback** – in winter, Thames Valley panels produced ‘extensive, specific, and developmental written comments.’ In London, used briefing videos to standardise panel preparation and scheduled post-ARCP meetings to ensure developmental outcomes were communicated effectively. These practices contributed to a culture of continuous improvement and trainee-centred care. Additionally, the panel also showed

strong curriculum oversight, with comprehensive coverage of subspecialties and detailed review of curriculum completion for trainees nearing sign-off. In summer, Yorkshire and Humber provided clear goals even for outcome 1 trainees, while Wales checked trainee reflections on incidents for further insight, alongside panels in North West and KSS panels used the opportunity to highlight developmental goals for the coming year, especially for final-year trainees.

- **Supportive culture** – West Midlands' winter panel reviews set time aside to personally call trainees with outcome 6 or developmental outcomes, which assessors described as 'commendable'. In summer, Northern Ireland congratulated trainees finishing training and gave a small gift which created an encouraging and positive atmosphere 'for those residents finishing training.'
- **Innovation and consistency** – East of England winter panel reviews introduced feedback forms for Educational Supervisors and proposed e-portfolio champions to support trainees unfamiliar with digital systems. Wessex was highlighted for offering a supportive learning environment and providing opportunities for Tier 1 trainees to engage in specialised rotations such as PICU, reflecting a strong commitment to broad and inclusive training. In Summer, Southwest Peninsula emailed structured feedback directly to supervisors, which assessors said would also support supervisor appraisal. They also followed up with a thank-you email and constructive feedback to the supervisors, reinforcing good practice and providing material useful for the supervisor's appraisal. A standardised form was used for this feedback, which helped promote consistency across the board.
- **Curriculum delivery** – in the West Midlands, London, and Northern Ireland winter panels paid specific attention to how well the curriculum was covered and whether the quality of evidence matched expectations - especially for trainees nearing key training transitions. Scotland and Thames Valley also demonstrated good practice, with panels checking curriculum mapping closely and flagging any gaps for trainees to address in the next year. Whereas in summer, Wessex panels adjusted training time or allowed for acceleration based on progress. East Midlands and West Midlands panels gave clear, defensible outcomes, with the latter offering SMART objectives for improvement.

Areas for further consideration

- **Supervisor engagement** - in winter assessors found gaps in ES reports and noted that London panels did not routinely provide structured feedback to

supervisors. Recommendations included standardising supervisor feedback forms and pairing struggling trainees with experienced supervisors, backed by focused supervisor training. In summer, Scotland pointed out that ES reports often lacked clinical supervisor input, while Thames Valley and London again noted that feedback to supervisors was often informal or missing. Strengthening feedback systems would not only help supervisors improve but also better support trainees.

- **Technical and admin barriers** - in Winter, assessors highlighted problems with late access to portfolios, last-minute changes to panel membership, and time pressures in regions such as Wessex and Northern Ireland. In summer, the North West faced IT restrictions that blocked access to review forms, these technical barriers slowed panels unnecessarily. Further considerations to strengthen logistical planning and ensuring consistent admin presence could help the smooth running of panels.
- **Documentation and Trainee Involvement** - both summer and winter reviews found variation in how trainee action points were recorded. London in particular showed differences between panels in how thoroughly they documented required next steps, which could affect fairness. Involving trainees directly was highlighted as good practice in Northern Ireland (where presentations were used) and East of England (where CCT trainees gave feedback), but these examples were not widely adopted. Expanding such involvement could make ARCPs more transparent and useful for career development.
- **Curriculum and Outcomes** - in Winter, West Midlands panels showed uncertainty when dealing with complex cases, underlining the need for clearer escalation pathways and better Chair training. In summer, Yorkshire and Humber reported tagging inconsistencies using Progress+ curriculum which required extra manual checks. Thames Valley also highlighted gaps in neonatal outpatient opportunities. Clearer national processes and communication would help reduce workload and ensure consistent expectations.

Conclusion

The summer and winter review external assessor feedback highlighted good practice of reviewing trainee progression through fairness, teamwork and fostering meaningful relationships. For example, use of trainee presentations, structured supervisor feedback, and efficient organisation encouraged open discussion, reflection, and transparency. Assessors suggested considerations to stronger admin and technical support, clearer documentation of trainee actions, and knowledge sharing to deliver consistent and efficient future ARCP reviews.