Annual Assessment and Training Reviews for SpRs in Paediatrics

Generic Information

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1. Introduction

1.1 There appears to be some confusion concerning the various responsibilities of the College, its Specialist Advisory Committees, the Deaneries and the Specialist Training Authority (STA) in reviewing the training and progress of specialist registrars. The purpose of this document is to clarify those roles and responsibilities for College committees and members.

1.2 There is significant variation between Deaneries in the organisation of the processes and the documentation required.

1.3 In due course the Postgraduate Medical Education and Training Board will replace the STA. For convenience this document still refers to the STA.

1.4 With some simplification the responsibilities may be summarised as:

RCPCH: Proposes the curriculum for training and the standards to be met
Inspects training posts
Its members undertake the assessments

Deaneries: Manage the training programmes
Undertake the annual review of training
Record the result of the annual review as a RITA

STA: Is legally responsible for the standards of postgraduate specialist medical education
Approves College syllabuses, etc, and ensures they comply with relevant legislation
Approve applications for the award of a CCST and for entry on the Specialist Register, ensuring that the prescribed syllabus has been covered and completed satisfactorily

GMC: Maintains the Specialist Register.

1.5 One potential cause of confusion has been the tendency to use the terms annual assessment, annual review and RITA rather loosely and sometimes synonymously. The RITA is not an assessment, it is merely the record of the assessment result.

2. Appraisal

2.1 The appraisal process should have an agreed output, although the content remains confidential.

2.2 That output should feed into the assessment process.
3. Assessment

3.1 The essential components of the assessment strategy are described in chapter 11 of the orange book, A Guide to Specialist Registrar Training.

3.2 Colleges are responsible for publishing the curriculum for the speciality training programme and determining the arrangements for progress to be assessed.

3.3 Assessment in paediatrics is primarily workplace based. Some other specialties employ case books, examinations or other assessment. The assessor must be thoroughly familiar with the quality of the SpR’s work and their achievement of training objectives.

3.4 Currently such assessments are often subjective. The RCPCH is about to launch a competency framework for the core components of higher specialist training which will enable objective assessments to be made. Work is in progress to develop competencies to define satisfactory completion of training.

4. Annual Review and RITA

4.1 The essential components of the annual review process are included in chapters 11 and 12 of the orange book. The Record of In-Training Assessment provides a record of the annual review.

4.2 The Postgraduate Dean is responsible for the operation of the annual review.

4.3 Although the College cannot stipulate how the annual review will be organised it is responsible for determining the nature of the assessments which inform the review.

4.4 Whilst some Deaneries arrange an annual review interview between, for example, the Chair of the STC, the Programme Director and the Regional Adviser this is not universal. In the London and associated Deaneries, for example, the panel reviews the submitted assessment documentation and only interviews trainees if the assessment indicates that progress may not have been satisfactory.

4.5 The College and its committees should not, therefore, assume that the annual review will involve an interview nor try to integrate any training or other reviews within the RITA process.

5. Penultimate Year Assessments

5.1 In a policy statement in January 2001 the STA made a number of recommendations including:

ix. All specialties should have one in-depth formal assessment (which will be either an exit examination or an in-depth review). This Penultimate Year Assessment ideally should take place 18 months before the expected CCST date, but must be at least 12 months before, to allow for further training if required or adjustment of the contents of the final year of training to ensure that all the core CCST curricula requirements have been met.

x. There must be external specialty involvement from outside the Deanery for the Penultimate Year Assessment to help to ensure consistency within the specialty across all Deaneries. Different Colleges may have different methods of doing this but it would seem that the best method is probably for the Colleges, Joint Training Committees or SACs to have liaison members for each Postgraduate Deanery based outside that Deanery.

5.2 Whilst some Deaneries have adopted these recommendations (at least in some specialties) this has not been universal. There is currently no mechanism to enable all SpRs to have an external review of their training.
6. Sub-specialty Training

6.1 Some CSACs wish to undertake their own regular review of trainees within their specialty. These reviews would need to be additional to the Deanery annual review and RITA.

6.2 If such reviews can be incorporated into the workplace assessment the outcome can inform the annual review process.

6.3 Training programmes are (currently) time limited. It is important to remember that Deans may only be willing to extend the training period if progress has been unsatisfactory. Good communication is necessary between the CSAC, training institution and Programme Director to ensure that the SpR’s training objectives are deliverable and appropriate.

References

1 A Guide to Specialist Registrar Training, Department of Health February 1998

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