



College Specialty Advisory Committee (CSAC) Handbook

2025-2026

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**You have been provided with this guide
because you are a member of the CSAC group.**

**The guide will have been sent on by the Chair
of the CSAC or the college staff.**

**The aim of this document is to clarify
expectations of the CSAC responsibilities to
enable the CSAC to increase its efficiency of
working and productivity.**

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Introduction

The College Specialty Advisory Committees (CSACs) supervise the development and delivery of subspecialty training and the assessment standards. CSACs are sub-committees of our Training & Quality Board, which helps the College set these standards within a training programme that is recognised by the General Medical Council (GMC).

The CSACs are responsible for monitoring training within the sub-specialty and advising the College on related issues. The core committee structure for each CSAC consists of; a Chair, an Assessment Advisor, 1 or 2 Training Advisors, a Quality Advisor, and a Trainee Representative, who form the voting members of the CSAC. Some CSACs may choose to appoint to these positions on a role-share basis.

As set out in the CSAC Term of Reference, all appointments run for 3 years in the first instance with an extension possible, subject to satisfactory performance and confirmation from the Chair, for a further 2 years. Chairs of the CSAC wishing to extend for a further two years must have agreement from the Training & Quality Board. The full permitted time on a CSAC is 5 years, unless extended by being appointed Chair for a maximum of 10 years. Once a Chair stands down, they will stand down from the CSAC fully. CSACs meet via three structures:

CSAC Chairs Forum

- **Meeting Function:** To discuss high-level policy and process around sub-specialty training and operational planning
- A meeting of all CSAC Chairs which takes place twice a year (spring and autumn) with the Officers and senior staff of the Division to discuss overall operational planning. The purpose of these meetings is to;
 - Ensure an effective alignment between subspecialty processes
 - Work proactively with the Training & Quality Board leads across training matters, including change management.
 - Develop the agendas for the CSAC Assemblies to ensure the right updates and workshops are held

CSAC Assembly

- **Meeting Function:** A space to broadcast information and provide consistent messaging. Presentations on areas of relevance to subspecialties and paediatric training are given by their respective clinical and staff lead. This agenda is informed by the CSAC Chairs Forum and its members.
- A group online meeting of all CSACs which takes place twice a year (spring and autumn) with the Officers and senior staff (meetings are 2hrs in length).

Individual CSAC meetings

- **Meeting Function:** Discussion of issues only relevant to the individual CSAC
- Up to 3 individual CSAC meetings of no more than 2 hours in length are scheduled across the year. One meeting each year can be held face-to-face at the College to facilitate strategic planning. Other meetings will be held on MS Teams. These meetings will discuss issues of relevance to the specific subspecialty (i.e. training post issues).

Roles and responsibilities of CSAC members

CSAC Chair

The primary roles of the CSAC Chair will be to:

- Work with key stakeholders to improve and monitor standards of training and assessment for sub-specialty training
- Adhere to the RCPCH curriculum principles around length, context, and course programme.
- Advise Postgraduate Doctors in training (PGDiT) on aspects of their training and how they may work towards acquiring the necessary competences, ensuring that sub-specialty PGDiT have satisfied the training requirements for CCT.
- Ensure that the database of sub-specialty PGDiT is kept up to date in terms of PGDiT progress – work with the Assessment Advisor on this.
- Act as the main representative and spokesperson for the CSAC when required to do so.
- Represent CSAC at other internal or external meetings of the College or at events held by the College e.g., Policy Conference, Careers Fairs, CSAC Assemblies etc.
- Oversee the development/updating of the subspecialty assessed competency frameworks and Special Interest (SPIN) Modules in the specialty (if applicable)
- Ensure training documents and learning outcomes for the specialty are regularly updated. This will include review of the Curriculum in line with GMC requirements.
- Review job descriptions for Consultants in the Specialty.
- Evaluate Portfolio Pathway (previously CESR - Certificate of Eligibility to the Specialist Register) applications in a non-CCT specialty for entry to the Specialist Register (if the applicant is applying in the CSAC sub-specialty). Each application must be assessed independently by two assessors, one of which must be the CSAC Chair or named deputy.
- Assess sub-specialty recognition applications (Article 13.5) for applicants already on the Specialist Register for paediatrics, but who wish to add sub-specialty.

- Liaise with the CSAC Assessment Advisor in the co-ordination of scenario writing for the START Assessment and the process of quality assurance of scenarios.
- Assist the Quality and Training Projects team in producing the Annual Report by providing relevant information from the subspecialty and submitting the pro-forma as required for this purpose.
- Assist the Sub-Specialty Recruitment Co-ordinator in running the annual recruitment to subspecialty training by providing information on programmes and numbers of posts available and attending the interviews as a member of the panel.
- Chair meetings of the CSAC, ensuring that agenda and dates are planned and agreed as far in advance as possible.
- Devise and deliver a work plan for the CSAC that links in with the aims and objectives set out by the RCPCH Corporate Plan.
- Provide formal written reports to the Training Quality Board, in line with the Committee reporting structure.
- Attend centrally organised induction/training organised by the RCPCH.
- Act as External Representative on behalf of the college at ARCP events.

The post holder will be a consultant in the given sub-specialty with a commitment to modernising training in line with College Strategy. You will have wide experience in the subspecialty and a demonstrated expertise and experience in training.

Essential

- [Member of the College in Good Standing with RCPCH](#)
- Has attended [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion training](#) within the last 3 years.
- Works in a consultant post
- Demonstrates experience as a clinical and/or educational supervisor.
- Have detailed, up-to-date knowledge of the requirements of postgraduate paediatric training, understanding in detail the objectives of RCPCH Progress+ Curriculum, the regulations involved and the examinations, assessments, and appraisals that PGDiT are required to undertake
- Excellent communication skills and ability to work well in a team.
- Work with the Training Advisor, Assessment Advisor, Quality Advisor and Trainee Representative to ensure robust working practices in their areas of work
- Demonstrates an active involvement in education and training issues and have an appropriate and current working knowledge of educational requirements.
- Demonstrable leadership and decision-making skills

Desirable

- Has held a CSAC post for minimum 1 year.

- Evidence of professional development in education e.g., Postgraduate Certificate in Education or equivalent.
- Able to demonstrate an active involvement in education and training issues and have an appropriate and current working knowledge of educational requirements.
- Contribution to developments in organisation/delivery of education.
- Knowledge of committee work.
- Awareness of RCPCH structure and function.

Training Advisor

The primary roles of the Training Advisor will be to:

- Work with key stakeholders to improve and monitor standards of training and assessment for the given sub-specialty.
- Lead on monitoring and development of the sub-specialty curriculum.
- Adhere to the RCPCH curriculum principles around length, context, and course programme.
- Works with the Chair to arrange CSAC progression meetings, advise PGDiT on aspects of their training and how they may work towards acquiring the necessary competences, ensuring that sub-specialty PGDiT have satisfied the training requirements for CCT.
- Assist the Chair and Assessment Advisor in ensuring that the database of sub-specialty PGDiT is kept up to date in terms of PGDiT progress.
- Ensure that PGDiT have satisfied the RCPCH curriculum requirements for satisfactory ARCP outcomes, taking steps to support remediation where identified using the RCPCH ePortfolio.
- Lead on SPIN related matters or work with the relevant lead for SPIN.
- Attend meetings and devote sufficient time to the role to meet the demands of the job.
- Represent the Committee at other internal or external meetings of the College or at events held by the College e.g., Careers Fairs.

The post holder will be a consultant in the required sub-specialty with a commitment to improving standards in training in line with College Strategy. They will have wide experience in sub-specialty and demonstrate expertise and experience in training.

Essential

- [Member of the College in Good Standing with RCPCH](#)
- Has attended [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion training](#) within the last 3 years.
- Works in a consultant post.
- Able to demonstrate experience as a clinical and/or educational supervisor.
- Have detailed, up-to-date knowledge of the requirements of postgraduate paediatric training, understanding in detail the objectives of RCPCH

Progress+ Curriculum, the regulations involved and the examinations, assessments, and appraisals that PGDiT are required to undertake.

- Excellent communication skills and ability to work well in a team.
- Demonstrates an active involvement in education and training issues and have an appropriate and current working knowledge of educational requirements.

Desirable

- Evidence of professional development in education e.g. Postgraduate Certificate in Education or equivalent.
- Able to demonstrate an active involvement in education and training issues and have an appropriate and current working knowledge of educational requirements.
- Contribution to developments in organisation/delivery of education.
- Knowledge of committee work.
- Awareness of RCPCH structure and function.

Assessment Advisor

The primary roles of the Assessment Advisor will be to:

- Work with key stakeholders to improve and monitor standards of training and assessment for the given subspecialty.
- Adhere to the RCPCH Progress+ curriculum principles around length, context, and course programme.
- Act as CSAC lead to co-ordinate, write and quality assure scenarios for the START assessment and submit to the College. Keeping the question bank updated and contemporary.
- Contribute to the development/updating of the subspecialty assessed competency frameworks and Special Interest (SPIN) Modules in areas related to the sub-specialty
- Lead on assessment monitoring and development.
- Oversee PGDiT assessment within the sub-specialty.
- Assist, when required, the Theory and Standards team by providing specialist knowledge for question generation activities for MRCPCH examination papers.
- Attend three meetings per year and devote sufficient time to the role to meet the demands of the job.
- Represent CSAC at other internal or external meetings of the College or at events held by the College e.g., Policy Conference, Careers Fairs etc as requested by the Chair.
- Attend centrally organised induction/training organised by the RCPCH as required.

The post holder will be a consultant in the required sub-specialty with a commitment to improving standards in training in line with College Strategy. They

will have wide experience in sub-specialty and a demonstrate expertise and experience in training.

Essential

- [Member of the College in Good Standing with RCPCH](#)
- Has attended [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion training](#) within the last 3 years.
- Works in a consultant post
- Able to demonstrate experience as a clinical and/or educational supervisor.
- Have detailed, up-to-date knowledge of the requirements of postgraduate paediatric training, understanding in detail the objectives of RCPCH Progress+ Curriculum, the regulations involved and the examinations, assessments, and appraisals that PGDiT are required to undertake
- Excellent communication skills and ability to work well in a team.
- Demonstrates an active involvement in education and training issues and have an appropriate and current working knowledge of educational requirements.

Desirable

- Evidence of professional development in education e.g., Postgraduate Certificate in Education or equivalent.
- Able to demonstrate an active involvement in education and training issues and have an appropriate and current working knowledge of educational requirements.
- Contribution to developments in organisation/delivery of education.
- Knowledge of committee work.
- Awareness of RCPCH structure and function.

Quality Advisor

The post holder will be required to

- Work with key stakeholders to improve and monitor standards of training and assessment for the sub-specialty.
- Adhere to the RCPCH Progress+ curriculum principles around length, context, and course programme.
- Ensure training documents for the sub-specialty are regularly updated and quality assured by the Training and Quality team. This will include review of the Curriculum in line with GMC requirements.
- Work with CSAC Chair, Postgraduate Deaneries and Local Education Providers in the post and programme approvals process. To act as a representative, when invited, to GMC visits (Deanery wide or triggered) or RCPCH College visits, such as invited reviews.
- Contribute to the development/updating of the sub-specialty and Special Interest (SPIN) Modules in relevant to the sub-specialty.
- Contribute to the quality assurance of scenarios for the START Assessment.

- Assist the Chair of the CSAC and the Training and Quality team in producing the Annual and Mid-year Quality Review Report by providing relevant information from the sub-specialty and submitting the pro-forma as required for this purpose by the agreed deadlines.
- Maintaining and updating the CSAC Action Log, in collaboration with the other committee members.
- Act as a link representative with the RCPCH Academic Training Committee to oversee the provision and quality of research opportunities within the relevant sub-specialty training.
- Contribute to formal written reports to the Training Quality Board, in line with the Committee reporting structure
- Represent the Committee at other internal or external meetings of the College or at events held by the College e.g. Policy Conference, Careers Fairs.
- To attend centrally organised induction/training organised by the RCPCH.

The post holder will be a Consultant in the required sub- specialty with a commitment to improving standards in training in line with College Strategy. They will have wide experience in sub-specialty and demonstrate expertise and experience in training.

Essential

- [Member of the College in Good Standing with RCPCH](#)
- Has attended [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion training](#) within the last 3 years.
- Works in a consultant post.
- Able to demonstrate experience as a clinical and/ or educational supervisor.
- Have detailed, up-to-date knowledge of the requirements of postgraduate paediatric training, understanding in detail the objectives of RCPCH Progress+ Curriculum, the regulations involved and the examinations, assessments, and appraisals that PGDiT are required to undertake
- Excellent communication skills and ability to work well in a team.
- Demonstrates an active involvement in education and training issues and have an appropriate and current working knowledge of educational requirements.
- Understanding of quality processes and quality assurance and improvement including assisting the Chair with monitoring and updating the Quality Improvement plan

Desirable

- Evidence of professional development in education e.g. Postgraduate Certificate in Education or equivalent.

- Able to demonstrate an active involvement in education and training issues and have an appropriate and current working knowledge of educational requirements.
- Contribution to developments in organisation/delivery of education.
- Knowledge of committee work.
- Awareness of RCPCH structure and function.

Trainee Representative

The post holder will be required to

- Bring to the Committee the PGDiT perspective on training and assessment issues including monitoring quality and standards of training in sub-specialty training.
- Advocate for and represent the views of the sub-specialty PGDiT and ensure that they are brought to the Committee for consideration.
- Contact sub-specialty PGDiT to find out their views on current topics and issues for training prior to Committee meetings and relay relevant information back to PGDiT after the meeting.
- Work with the Regional Representatives on the Trainee Network to ensure that the views of subspecialty PGDiT are represented on a national level.
- Attend meetings and devote sufficient time to the role to meet the demands of the job.
- Assist with and contribute to the updating of documents that the Committee may deem useful for PGDiT in sub-specialty training
- Contribute to START scenario and MRCCH examination question setting and quality assurance (if appropriate).

The post holder will be a specialty level PGDiT in each given sub-specialty with a particular interest in assisting the RCPCH in the development of specialist training policy and the delivery of training to standards as set by the GMC and RCPCH, as well as wanting to act as an advocate and representative in the promotion of sub-specialty training.

SPIN Lead

All CSAC with SPINs are required to have a SPIN Lead who is responsible for signing off SPIN Completions. This can either be subsumed into one of the Advisor roles, or a specific person can be co-opted with approval from the Training and Quality Board. The SPIN Lead will be able to share SPIN completions with the rest of the CSAC where necessary.

START Representative

The Assessment Advisor in each CSAC will act as the START Representative who will lead in START assessing and attend boards to generate scenarios. Occasional attendance at START Committee meetings may be required.

Terms of Office, succession planning and handover

Terms of Office

The Terms of Office for CSAC Members are set out in the CSAC/ISAC Terms of Reference (ToR). On appointment, committee members will be issued with an appointment letter confirming their Term of Office (TOO). A record of TOO is also held centrally by the college team.

Succession planning & recruitment

As committee members approach the end of their term, their committee administrator will get in touch to confirm plans for potential extension (in line with the ToR) or succession planning and recruitment. If a committee member wishes to leave their role on the CSAC in advance of their TOO end date, we ask that you provide your administrator with as much notice as possible so we can support a smooth transition and avoid vacancies in the committee structure.

Recruitment onto the CSACs is managed centrally through our volunteering team who set a number of recruitment windows across the year. Proactive recruitment to roles is essential in supporting the smooth running of the CSACs. Where possible, committee administrators/ coordinators will look to recruit with sufficient time to support handover between committee members; up to 6-months' notice for Chair roles and up to 3-months' notice for other committee roles.

Handover

To support effective handover, committee coordinators will connect incoming and outgoing CSAC members via email so they can coordinate a handover meeting. Once appointed, incoming members will also be provided with access to the CSAC SharePoint site which is used for sharing paper, minutes, notes and files. In addition to a meeting (in person / Teams), it is recommended that the outgoing CSAC member provide any necessary written resources to support the incoming CSAC member. A suggested checklist is included below:

CSAC Handover Checklist

- Overview of current projects/ areas of responsibility within the CSAC
- Overview of current PGDiT
- Accurate location of all PGDiT
- Operational matters directly relevant to the specialty e.g. training capacity
- Relevant information or updates from recent meetings including CSAC Chairs Forum and CSAC Assemblies
- Information to convey to the Training and Quality Board (TQB)

- Any current, ongoing or anticipated issues brought to the attention of the CSAC

The following, as well as being included in the written handover, should be discussed within the handover meeting. This verbal handover is vital to highlight these issues:

- PGDiT with anticipated problems or those requiring additional support, to clarify management plans and ensure appropriate review
- Outstanding/ ongoing tasks, associated with the role included known timeframes and deadlines

CSAC Chairs recruitment: If requested by the Incoming Chair and with prior approval from TQB, the Outgoing Chair can be co-opted back onto the committee for a maximum of 6-months to support the Incoming Chair. The Outgoing Chair will be a supportive role with no voting rights.

Key dates across the CSAC year

CSAC Calendar of Events - Each year a calendar of events is added to the CSAC Resources webpage. This provides an overview of the activities taking place across the calendar year that require input from committee members. For more information, please refer to the [CSAC Resources webpage](#).

CSAC Chair Forum & CSAC Assemblies – As noted in the introduction, these meetings take place twice a year (spring & autumn), all meeting dates are shared in advance and included in the CSAC Calendar of events.

Individual CSAC Meeting – As noted in the introduction up to 3 individual CSAC meetings are arranged each year. Meeting dates are coordinated between the CSAC members and their assigned College administrator/coordinator.

Mid-Year Quality Review - Mid-Year Activity and Feedback Forms are issued to all CSACs in January and responses in relation to the first half of the training year (Sep – Feb) are required by the end of February each year (exact dates will be shared on the [CSAC Resources webpage](#)).

Annual Quality Review - Annual Activity and Feedback Forms are issued to all CSACs in July and responses in relation to the training year in full (Sep – Aug) are required in August each year (exact dates will be shared on the [CSAC Resources webpage](#)).

START Assessment – Usually March and October. Each diet consists of three full days of assessments. We invite consultants from all paediatric sub-specialities and

senior PGDiT post-START to join our START scenario generation groups, currently run online. It's a great opportunity for your own continuing professional development and helps support the next generation of consultant paediatricians. Contact training.services@rcpch.ac.uk to get involved!

Recruitment into sub-specialty training

- **June- September:** Workforce planning, programme submission and job description approving from deaneries
- **November:** Interview question-writing and benchmarking sessions with College team
- **November-December:** Shortlisting, including calibration between shortlisting teams and wash-up meetings with College team
- **January:** Shortlisting Appeals (CSAC Chairs only) and further shortlisting feedback
- **January-February:** Sub-specialty recruitment interviews, followed by appointments
- **January-March:** Further shortlisting and interview feedback to applicants when requested
- **March:** Confirmation of new appointments and feedback surveys for assessors

Key tasks

Agendas for Individual CSAC Meetings - Chair

A call for agenda items will be sent out by the CSAC's administrator/ coordinator one month prior to the meeting and collated into a draft agenda. The agenda will be sent to the Chair for approval and final edits, before circulating with the wider group at least one week before the meeting.

CSAC Progression Forms – Training Advisor(s)

CSAC progression forms are located on the ePortfolio and are initiated by the PGDiT. Each CSAC will need to arrange a date for the CSAC panel to review their PGDiT progress, either in person or online. Please ensure your PGDiT are aware which member of the CSAC they should direct their CSAC Progression form to.

ePortfolio

CSAC members who need to approve SPIN modules in their subspecialty or review sub-specialty PGDiT will need the appropriate role permissions and curriculum access on RISR. These will be assigned to you on your appointment to the CSAC, but do occasionally expire, so please contact the Training Services Team if you are unable to view the correct PGDiT.

Externality Reporting - Chair

The purpose of the externality process is to source a sample of representatives that consists of Heads of School, College Tutors, Training Programme Directors, College Officers and **CSAC Chairs** as a lay representative for ARCP panel reviews.

According to the GMC Gold Guide, the College must provide 10% external representation to oversee ARCP outcome reviews, triggered or monitored visits, or appeal panels. College Monitoring activity includes Quality Assurance of the ARCP Process, ensuring that the Gold Guide regulations are followed, and external scrutiny is present. Monitoring of the quality of Educational Supervisors reports and ARCP panel outcomes. Further information of the externality process can be accessed via [Deaneries - externality process and ePortfolio guidance](#)

The Quality and Training Projects Team contacts external assessors in advance to submit their availability using an online webform with upcoming panel dates from each region. Please contact qualityandtrainingprojects@rcpch.ac.uk if you're eligible to attend.

Links with Trainee Committee – Trainee Representative

CSAC Trainee reps can feed into the Trainee Network via the Vice-Chair of the Network. The Vice-Chair will also relay back any important decisions or actions to the trainee reps that were discussed at Trainee Committee meetings.

Portfolio Pathway – Chairs and others

Portfolio Pathway (formerly known as CESR: Certificate of Eligibility for Specialist Registration) is a route to Specialist Registration in the UK for doctors who have not completed an approved specialty training programme. Portfolio Pathway can be in a specialty such as paediatrics, or a non-CCT specialty such as paediatric sub-specialties or other areas of paediatric consultant practice not covered by a training curriculum.

Portfolio Pathway is administered by the GMC, but the RCPCH is asked to give evaluations of evidence for applications in paediatrics. For non-CCT applications, we will approach the relevant CSAC/ISAC Chair to determine if they and/or other consultant members of the Committee are able to provide an assessment of submitted evidence in a timely manner. Assessors will review the submitted portfolio of evidence and meet online in a panel to agree on recommended outcomes.

The RCPCH Training Services team is the contact for Portfolio Pathway in the College. For detailed background on the process, please see the RCPCH Portfolio Pathway page. Please direct enquiries to training.services@rcpch.ac.uk

Quality Review (Mid-year and Annual Quality Review Report) - Quality Advisor

The Annual Quality Review process provides a framework for all quality assurance activity. It provides an opportunity to bring together quality aspects of paediatric training from both an internal and external perspectives, drawing on both qualitative and quantitative data.

Each year CSACs submit detailed mid-year and annual feedback using an online Activity and Feedback Form (AFF) including a roundup of positives, negatives, risks and opportunities impacting their sub-specialty. This has become an established part of the annual CSAC quality review cycle and helps us to establish what additional support and advocacy might be needed.

Similarly, Heads of School reporting allows the college to review more local feedback, but when brought together provides a national picture of training.

SPIN - SPIN Lead

The RCPCH SPIN Lead, usually a member of the relevant College Specialty Advisory Committee (CSAC), is responsible for reviewing completed portfolios and confirming if the SPIN is to be awarded. The SPIN lead will also be responsible for leading on developing the SPIN curricula which is required to be renewed every 3 years.

START Scenarios and Assessing – Assessment Advisor

START (Specialty Training Assessment of Readiness for Tenure) is an assessment which all UK PGDiT must do in Specialty Level training. The assessment lead will be expected to attend assessor training, and:

- collating suitable assessment material for use as START scenarios
- helping to produce scenarios by attending or convening scenario generation sessions, which may be held regionally or at specialist groups set up by the Education and Training Division
- participating in START - a minimum two days every three years.

Support provided by the college

The [CSACs – guides and resources for committee members](#) webpage is regularly updated with guidance, resources and meeting date information. We recommend all CSAC members check this webpage regularly to ensure that they are accessing the most up-to-date information which will support them in their roles. In addition to this, CSACs can also contact the Training and Quality Team Administrator who will forward queries as required.

The College will provide appropriate support and encourages the use of video and teleconferencing for meetings (where applicable).

As stated in the CSAC Terms of Reference (TOR), the RCPCH will be responsible for the cost of hosting **one** face to face meeting per training year and for reimbursing travel expenses for core committee members. Each CSAC will be provided with a CSAC fund which will be for the sole purpose of funding the attendance (of core CSAC members) to face meetings travel and/ or accommodation - funds permitting. Once the fund has been spent the CSAC will then need to wait until funds are replenished the following calendar year. Unused funding cannot be moved to the following calendar year. Claims, including itemised receipts, must be submitted via Continia within 6-months and in alignment with the College's expenses policy; [Claiming expenses on College business | RCPCH](#)

For queries the following email addresses are in place:

training.services@rcpch.ac.uk – for eportfolio and training queries

qualityandtrainingprojects@rcpch.ac.uk – for curriculum queries, externality and quality review processes

subspecialty@rcpch.ac.uk - for sub-specialty recruitment and interview queries