



Statement from the START Board September 2013

START and ARCP

Why is this statement necessary?

We have noticed that following the first 2 diets of the START assessment, there seems to be a heavy reliance on START in decisions about progression or outcome at ARCP. This statement sets out the position of the START Board regarding how the assessment should be used to inform the penultimate ARCP. All this information has been set out in previously published material available on the RCPCH START web pages.

A reminder of what START is and what it is not.

START is NOT a high stakes examination and it is not designed to gate-keep progression through training. START should not be the sole determinant of ARCP outcome. START is an assessment of Consultant readiness consisting of 12 unseen scenarios covering domains mapping to the GMC's Good Medical Practice. It is one part of the RCPCH's assessment strategy, and a requirement for trainees at level 3 (ST6-ST8).

What is the GMC's view of START?

We recognise that Heads of School need to be accountable to the GMC and the public. The GMC has ratified the START assessment as a formative assessment in the penultimate training year. START is now embedded in the College's assessment strategy. It is not a high-stakes, summative hurdle, but another formative piece of evidence a trainee has in their portfolio on competences acquired through training, and which are appropriate at CCT. The GMC requires an external element to assessments and START provides that in the form of an out-of-workplace assessment with external Assessors on unseen scenarios.

How should the START feedback be used?

START should be used as a source of information relating to trainee performance which the ARCP panel should consider. It should be triangulated with in-service assessment (including workplace based assessments) and the ePortfolio (including Trainers' reports). We are aware that some Deaneries may be using the feedback from START as the sole determinant of whether a trainee should progress. This is not appropriate, particularly if there is alternative evidence within a trainee's portfolio of adequate performance within domains that were assessed in the START assessment as requiring further development.

Areas identified from the START assessment as requiring development, or which are rated as areas of significant concern must be addressed. These issues should be discussed by the trainee with their educational supervisor. Specific objectives should be agreed and recorded in their Personal Development Plan (PDP) to be actioned during their final stages of training. The ARCP panel should be satisfied that areas of significant concern or those requiring development have been addressed. If there is no evidence of personal development planning having taken place following identification of concerns by START, the ARCP panel should take this into account when determining progress and direct the need for any further training, work, or assessment towards the areas of weakness identified within START before CCT/CESR(CP).

Should trainees re-take START?

No, except in specific circumstances. Usually trainees should not have to retake START. Instead the trainee and their educational supervisor should focus on how to develop any areas for further development flagged by START. It may be that a trainee has skills in those areas that have been demonstrated by other evidence in their portfolio. This should be referenced in any PDP. START scenarios will be fairly specific. Re-taking the assessment is unlikely to show performance benchmarked against described standards which will be directly comparable to performance in a previous diet. The START Board will need to consider individual requests from Deaneries on a case by case basis.

The logistics of running START across the 17 sub-specialties may make it difficult to accommodate re-take trainees within a specific diet. In any event this gives the impression the assessment is something which needs to be 'passed', and since it is not a summative assessment we do not envisage many trainees will benefit from re-taking START. We are also aware that some Deaneries have been summing feedback to judge progression according to the number of scenarios within which a trainee has achieved a certain competency rating (for example requiring 8 from 12 scenarios meeting 'at' or 'above' competency ratings). This use of a formative assessment in a summative way is also inappropriate. The value to training will be in the developmental conversation between the trainee and their educational supervisor. The outcomes of the personal development plan within the trainee's portfolio, along with other information, for example from workplace based assessments/supervised learning events, should inform ARCP rather than solely relying on specific performance at START.

We are happy to discuss issues which arise from START. All the feedback generated following the assessment is reviewed and ratified by the START Board. We are constantly reviewing START performance and quality assuring the scenarios, assessors and sign-off procedures.

We hope to develop some more specific information for educational supervisors and Heads of Schools to support them in best use of START for trainees moving towards their CCT. Please do not hesitate to contact any of the START team for further guidance.

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