RCPCHStart - guidance for trainees by trainees

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This guide has been written by trainees and the RCPCHStart team to provide an informal insight into the RCPCHStart process (Specialty Trainee Assessment of Readiness for Tenure) give an informal insight into this assessment. They aim to help trainees in level 3 training understand its format and make the most of the learning opportunities.

Introduction

RCPCHStart is not an exam and should not be seen as one. It is an assessment tool used to highlight areas requiring focus for the last leg of your specialist training. It is an opportunity to practice scenarios and questions which you could face as a new consultant. RCPCHStart is not a pass or fail assessment. It simply provides you, as an individual clinician, with robust feedback to help you develop.

The College has guidance about RCPCHStart, including eligibility criteria, costs, dates and feedback information.

This guide is written by trainees and the RCPCHStart team to provide an informal insight into the RCPCHStart process. The aim is to help trainees understand the format of the assessment and enable them to make the most of the learning opportunities it presents.
We focus on these main areas:

1. The application process
2. Structure and tips for success
3. Key areas to focus on
4. Your feedback after RCPCHStart

1. The application process

RCPCHStart usually runs two times a year. Specific sub-specialties are run on set dates - so be aware of which date you are applying to.

You can apply for RCPCHStart from ST6, but it is expected that most trainees will complete RCPCHStart during their ST7 year. This allows enough training time to address any highlighted learning requirements.

Priority is given to applicants nearer the end of training (ST8>ST7>ST6) The cost of the RCPCHStart assessment will be advised on the RCPCH website at the time. You will receive email confirmation 5-10 working days after closure of the application period and a letter confirming any documentation that you are required to bring on the day itself.

Applications are run through the RCPCH website. To apply you will need to:

- Log in to 'My account'
- Find the RCPCHStart panel and select 'Apply for RCPCHStart'

2. Structure and tips for success

Process

You will be told to arrive 45 minutes beforehand and will be briefed with information on what to expect.

- Remember that we are all paediatricians and the RCPCHStart team is there to help. They will remind you that this is an assessment, not an examination, and that the feedback provided is to support your professional development.
- They will inform you of any other professionals who may be present during your assessment. These are most commonly supporting assessors and external observers.
- RCPCHStart is still a relatively new form of professional assessment and as such is continually training new assessors and being observed by other Royal Colleges who want to learn about the process.

Assessment structure

The assessment currently consists of 12 scenarios which you will move through in groups of four.

- Half (six) of the scenarios will be general paediatrics and the other half will be in your sub-specialty.
If you are a general paediatric trainee, all 12 will be relating to general paediatrics.
Scenario sheets are provided under the chairs outside each room. You pick a coloured sheet if you a sub-specialty trainee and a white sheet if a general paediatric trainee.
You will be given a unique circuit map telling you your order of circuits – everyone in a circuit will have a different order.

**Topics to be assessed include:**
- Scenario based discussion
  - acute disease
  - chronic problems
  - behaviour difficulties
  - neonatal care
- Ward round and handover
- Logistics and organisation
- Safeguarding children
- Critical review of literature
- Safe prescribing
- Ethics, consent, law
- Conflict and risk management
- Teaching

RCPCHStart is currently held at the Royal College of General Practice assessment centre which is specifically designed for this kind of professional assessment. It is easy to see where you are going and there will be numerous people present to help you find your way around scenarios.
• You are given four minutes to read each scenario before entering the room.
• You can make notes on the sheet and bring it in with you to refer to in the scenario.
• Ensure you always read the question/scenario carefully.
• You are then given eight minutes with the assessor to discuss the scenario.
• The only scenario currently where you are not supposed to engage solely with the assessor is the teaching scenario in which you should engage directly with the student(s).
• At two minutes left there will be a knock on the door to remind you to begin concluding the scenario.
• There is another knock or buzz when the eight minutes is up at which point you should leave and find your next scenario. Please do not try to continue after the time is up, it is much better to move on and use your time to prepare for the next scenario.

Some scenarios may feel like an eight-minute monologue and others like a conversation with a colleague. This will vary based on the scenario, the assessor, and your style of communication. Neither format is intrinsically right or wrong.

**Preparation time**

You will have 44 minutes preparation time preceding the block of four scenarios that includes critical appraisal and prescribing.

• You will have a shared space with your group of four.
• The preparation time is not broken up for you. This allows you to spend as much or as little time on each area as you require. Make sure you cover all areas and don’t spend too long on one at the expense of the other.
**Prescribing** is the scenario that most commonly raises concerns during RCPCHStart, especially as the medications and the drug chart may be unfamiliar to you. There is a blank example prescription chart on the RCPCH website for you to familiarise yourself if you wish. Take your time and use the resources provided. This should reflect your daily practice at its best.

- Remember to sign, print your name clearly and use your GMC number. If you have a stamp, bring it with you. If you have handwriting that is difficult to read, it is worth putting the extra time and effort in here.
- Be familiar with the latest version of the BNFc as common drugs are often moved around. This may save you time and stress on the day. Know where the index, body surface area chart, and interactions tables are.
- The paper drug chart used is designed specifically for RCPCHStart and has a page for fluid prescription.
- Remember to write additional information such as dose per kg, and when levels are required.
- Don't be thrown off if “as per local protocol” is different from your regular practice.
- Try to think of what you will be asked based on what you have prescribed. For example, side effects, drug peak and trough levels, interactions, monitoring and mechanism of action. Remember that this is not an examination and this is to identify learning points for you.

For **critical appraisal**, have a clear structure.

- A highlighter or two can be helpful for this scenario, they are not provided, bring them with you.
- You are provided with additional paper to make notes. Use this liberally; however, it is often a good idea to make a short summary of bullet points for your own quick reference in the scenario.
- You can bring the paper and notes with you to the scenario.
- Make sure you relate it to the clinical scenario - don't just critically appraise the paper. Think “how does this piece of literature effect how I treat the patient in front of me?”
- Your preparation time may not immediately precede the prescribing or critical appraisal scenarios; don’t let that put you off.
- You get the four minutes preparation time prior to the actual scenario to remind yourself of your notes. You won’t have access to the BNFc and calculator at this point so don’t leave the prescribing until this point.
- If anything is unclear from the scenario, clarify this with the assessor and try not to fall in the trap of making assumptions.

### 3. Key areas to focus on

It is not necessary to prepare for RCPCHStart. Some trainees choose to approach the assessment with their “normal” daily practice. Other trainees feel more comfortable having done some preparation. Keep in mind that a small amount of revision and preparation can help you avoid simple mistakes. This will ensure your feedback focuses on the most useful areas for development. We have identified several key areas that may be useful to focus on if you choose to prepare in advance.
• Critical appraisal: Practice critically appraising papers and presenting in journal clubs. Ask for feedback and don’t forget to use these as Case Based Discussions.
• Handover: Read the paper by Klaber et al from ADC (2009) entitled *Maximising learning opportunities in handover.*
• Consider using a Handover Assessment Tool (HAT) both as an assessment for you and for you to assess a peer or junior.
• Prescribing:
  o Familiarise yourself with the latest BNFc.
  o Prescribing modules are available on the RCPCH compass website.
  o Consider performing a local audit reviewing drug charts with your pharmacist to help embed best practice habits before the day.
• Ethics: Try to attend local ethics meetings/debates. If these are not available locally, the Ethics and Law forum runs a meeting each year at the RCPCH conference.
• Online modules are available again on RCPCH Compass learning management system, including:
  o Healthy child programme (module 2: record keeping).
  o Adolescent health programme (module 3: legal framework, confidentiality, consent, ethics).
  o Some face to face courses may also be useful
• Safeguarding:
  o Attend a level 3 safeguarding course. You may wish to find a face to face course. Online models are available via the RCPCH compass website.
  o Get involved in strategy meetings, CAF/team around the child meetings, and report writing.
  o Perform safeguarding CBD with your local safeguarding lead.
• Teaching and training:
  o Consider local teaching courses such as Teaching the Teachers to Teach. Your postgraduate centre will have a list of available courses in your area.
  o Be involved in local departmental teaching.
  o The MiniCEX assessment can be used to seek formal feedback on your clinical teaching.

It can be difficult to prepare for the clinical scenarios due to the wide variety and breadth of general paediatrics. The best planning for these is to do your job, seize every opportunity to discuss your practice with colleagues, and observe others. Meeting with friends, peers, and senior colleagues who have completed RCPCHStart can be useful. Many regions now run RCPCHStart preparation courses and you should talk to your Training Programme Director about what is available in your region. Keep in mind that most people complete RCPCHStart without having done any “formal” preparation and that is a reasonable approach too.

Three hours will go quickly but is in fact a long time. Make sure you use the toilet before the circuit starts as you will not want to lose your four minutes preparation time to a bathroom break.

There is water on request, but you can also bring your own.

You can download benchmarking standards used in assessing and an example of the assessor feedback form at the bottom of this page.
4. Your feedback after the assessment

Feedback is given about six weeks after completing your RCPCHStart to ensure the feedback is as useful as possible. It is available to view on your RCPCH ePortfolio.

You are presented with a table that looks like this:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Station</th>
<th>Consultant Skills Domains</th>
<th>Performance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Decision making and prioritising</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Knowledge</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Management of complexity</td>
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<td>Professional Approach</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Safety and Risk Management</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Communication</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Critical Appraisal</td>
<td>✔ ✔ ✔ ✔</td>
<td>Meets competence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Safe Prescribing</td>
<td>✔ ✔ ✔ ✔</td>
<td>Above competence</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>✔ ✔ ✔ ✔</td>
<td>Above competence</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>✔ ✔ ✔ ✔</td>
<td>Development needed to achieve competence</td>
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<td>5.</td>
<td>✔ ✔ ✔ ✔</td>
<td>Meets competence</td>
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<td>6.</td>
<td>✔ ✔ ✔ ✔</td>
<td>Above competence</td>
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<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>✔ ✔ ✔ ✔</td>
<td>Development needed to achieve competence</td>
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<td>8.</td>
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<td>9.</td>
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<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>✔ ✔ ✔ ✔</td>
<td>Meets competence</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Legend

✔ Well above expected standard
✔ ✔ ✔ ✔ Performed at expected standard
● Requires further development

It is not uncommon to become disheartened by the black circles (even if only a small proportion). Remember, the standard being assessed is a “day-one consultant” so all feedback is intended to be constructive advice for your personal development. This can be used as evidence to agree development plans with your educational supervisor or training programme director to enhance your training placement. For example, if a clinic-based scenario highlights an area for development, this can empower you to ask for protected clinic time in your Trust, or for a stint in a DGH known to provide trainees with supported outpatient experience. The same applies to your reflections, which could be tailored to support requests for your final rotations based on the clinical experience you feel you still need to gain.

This is followed by comments on each individual scenario and a “consultant skills rating” which shows your performance in comparison to your peers.

Your Educational Supervisor can view your feedback. Plans to address highlighted issues should be discussed within four weeks. Escalation to Training Programme Directors and Heads of School may be needed if broader training needs cannot be provided at the current placement. The aim of the assessment is to provide constructive feedback on areas of focus not as a list of things you did wrong. Supervisors are provided with written guidance on how
to manage issues highlighted from RCPCHStart. If you feel these have not been appropriately addressed, you should discuss with your College Tutor.

Much of this is mentioned in our preparation advice for educational supervisors. You can download this guide to RCPCHStart assessment feedback and targeted development for educational supervisors below.

**More FAQs and contacts**

You can read the College's guidance, including frequently asked questions.

If you have any questions relating to RCPCHStart, please contact training.services@rcpch.ac.uk.

If you have feedback about this guide including clarifications, additional details, or comments to assist other trainees relating to RCPCHStart, please contact the RCPCHStart Trainee Representative Nick Schindler, nicholas.schindler@doctors.org.uk / @DrNickTwit on Twitter.

Good luck!

Downloads
Benchmarking standards, or anchor statements (2015).pdf 275.32 KB
Assessor feedback form.pdf 136.81 KB