

Sent by email

19 March 2020

Dear colleague,

Contingency planning for ARCPs – COVID-19 outbreak

As the four UK Statutory Education Bodies (HEE, NES, NIMDTA and HEIW) respond with the health systems to the COVID-19 pandemic and the unprecedented demands placed on healthcare delivery, the Annual Review of Competence Progression (ARCP) assessments will be adapted to ensure patient care remains a primary focus.

The ARCP predominantly takes place each year between May and July. As the outbreak intensifies, the UK Statutory Education Bodies understand that, in these exceptional circumstances, the ability to undertake comprehensive ARCP assessments may be compromised. Furthermore, the ARCP process should not unnecessarily divert trainees or faculty from delivering front line services and supporting clinical teams.

To minimise the risk of this process contributing to the spread of infection, and recognising that both trainees and trainers are likely to be affected by the consequences of increasing pressure on the NHS through a) the need for all medical staff to be available for clinical duties in a highly pressured clinical situation and b) ill health or self-isolation amongst these groups, the Statutory Education Bodies have considered the minimum level of engagement that would be required to ensure that the ARCP process can proceed this year.

The rules which govern the ARCP process are contained in The Reference Guide for Postgraduate Foundation and Specialty Training in the UK (Gold Guide Eighth Edition – GG8 v 31 March 2020). To minimise the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak on the ARCP process, these guidelines should be followed:

- The ARCP process will proceed this year – priority being given to those trainees who need to revalidate, trainees at a critical progression point (e.g. trainees reaching CCT, completing core training, those who need to fully register with the GMC (FY1s) and trainees where a non-standard outcome might be anticipated (outcomes 3 & 4 GG8: 4.91)
- Penultimate year assessments (PYAs) will be suspended temporarily until the crisis is over
- The agreed timelines for notification of trainees of the ARCP process should be followed wherever possible
- The 'table top' part of the ARCP process will be conducted with the minimum number of assessors who can join the process remotely by videoconference, telephone or similar – the GG8:4.80 sets out the usual minimum requirements for ARCP panel membership which may be varied in exceptional circumstances (GG8: 1.12). This number may be reduced if necessary. A minimum requirement would be two that would include either a Head of School (HoS), Associate Postgraduate Dean or Training Programme Director (TPD) and an Educational Supervisor (ES) or equivalent (but not the trainee's ES if only 2 members)

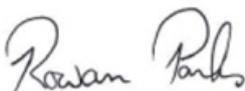
- We recommend that panel members should be supported by a member of the admin team
- The presence of a lay advisor will not be necessary this year
- A comprehensive educational supervisor's report is required to provide the ARCP panel with as much information as possible to inform a decision about the ARCP outcome especially if the number of assessors involved in the ARCP panel is reduced to the minimum (GG8: 4.52 - 4.58)
- Assessors will not be required to travel and virtual panels for the ARCP process using videoconferencing, telephone or similar will be utilised. It may also be necessary to provide panellists with Statutory Education Body IT equipment
- The 'face to face' part of the ARCP process involving trainees with a non-standard outcome (i.e. post ARCP feedback) will be undertaken using videoconferencing, telephone or similar
- The face to face part of the ARCP process for the 10% of trainees reviewed randomly will not proceed this year – consideration will be given to how quality management is carried out in due course
- Trainee progression (and revalidation) should not be adversely affected by any changes to the ARCP process suggested in this paper
- When arriving at an Outcome, ARCP panels will take into account the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. This will include:
 - A more flexible approach to the available evidence, including Work Place Based Assessments
 - A flexible approach to time-off due to illness or meeting isolation requirements
- The Gold Guide Reference Group will provide specific guidance for ARCPs during the pandemic period as to flexibility on using Outcomes 1 and 2 to accurately reflect satisfactory progress when competences are outstanding due to COVID-19. It would be expected that these competencies could be made up later in training without delaying progression to the next stage of training.



Professor Pushpinder Mangat
Medical Director
Health Education and Improvement Wales
(HEIW)



Professor Keith Gardiner
Chief Executive/Postgraduate Dean
Northern Ireland Medical & Dental
Training Agency



Professor Rowan Parks
Acting Medical Director
NHS Education for Scotland



Professor Sheona MacLeod, Deputy
Medical Director for Education Reform
Health Education England