

Guideline

Subject: **Selection of Trainees**
Approval Date: March 2005, Revised May 2010, March 2011, July 2011
Review Date: March 2014
Review Committee: Board of Censors
Number: 2/2005

Preamble

The following are guidelines for the selection and appointment of Pathology Trainees, developed in accordance with the principles set out in the Report of the Medical Training Review Panel, *Trainee Selection in Australian Medical Colleges, 1998* (the “Brennan Report”).

These Guidelines are not a formal rotation or training program, but are designed to facilitate and simplify the process of the appointment of Pathology Registrars at a State or Regional level. It must be noted that the RCPA is not the employer of any Registrar appointed in a rotation. The purpose of these Guidelines is to alert State and Regional Committees to act as a facilitator for employers in coordinating the training positions of various health services so that the specific needs of the organisations and the individual Trainees are optimally met. The Health Service or private laboratory to which the Registrar is allocated will be the employer. All participating institutions must be equal opportunity employers.

Of note, the College is supportive of any arrangements that provide leave from rotation for maternity leave and for part time training.

Definitions

“**Appointments Working Party**” means a Working Party brought together for the appointment of registrars.

“**Scheme**” refers to the centrally coordinated appointment system of Pathology Registrars.

Principles of selection

- The RCPA believes that excellence in the practice of pathology is multifaceted and includes, amongst other attributes: an enquiring mind; the commitment to lifelong learning; academic achievement; a depth of clinical understanding; and the ability to effectively communicate the interpretation and significance of pathological findings to the treating clinician in the context of the individual patient or health care system. The selection of Trainees therefore must take such attributes into account.
- The selection process must comply with the legislative requirements of the jurisdiction within which it operates, in particular equal opportunity of employment and anti-discrimination legislation. The process must adhere to the principles of natural justice.

- The selection process must be fair and objective, giving applicants the best possible assessment of their suitability within the constraints of time and resources
- Providing the Trainee is progressing appropriately in training it is an expectation that Trainees should be offered continuing posts for the duration of training prior to the appointment of new Trainees to the program
- Applicants must have recourse to an appropriate appeals process.

When there is a College endorsed 'Central Matching Process' training time for the position will only be accredited by the College if the employer participates in the process. If the appointment to the training program is outside the routine matching process the employer must liaise with the Co-ordinator of the Central Matching process prior to the appointment.

A College endorsed Central Matching Process is one which receives administrative support directly from the College or via government funding managed by the College.

Eligibility for application

To be eligible to apply for selection the candidate must meet the following requirements:

1. Australian citizenship or Australian permanent residence visa (or relevant criteria in New Zealand, Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia, Saudi Arabia).
2. Medical degree recognised for registration purposes in Australia, New Zealand, or appropriate registration where rotation is to occur OR
3. Satisfactorily completed requirements of the Australian Medical Council or the New Zealand Medical Council.
4. Registrable as a Medical Practitioner in the country of domicile.
5. At least one year's clinical experience post primary medical degree. While the College will accept Trainees with one year's experience post primary medical degree, applicants are encouraged to have completed at least two years if possible, to demonstrate a good clinical background.
6. Overseas Trained Specialists having been assessed by the College as requiring 1-2 years additional assessment.

Advertising

- Advertising for applicants is placed in major state/regional newspapers. Such advertising may be facilitated by the State or regional Committee.
- The number of available positions should be specified in the advertisement.
- Eligibility and selection criteria should be made known to the applicants.
- The advertisement should contain reference to the College website for relevant information.

Application process

- Applications should be submitted on a standard proforma. The Working Party may specify if it wishes to receive all applications electronically.

- The proforma should include a list of available positions, for which they should allocate their preferences.
- The applicant should provide the contact details of at least two referees, who should be sent a standardised proforma for completion. Sample forms are available from the College.
- Applicants should be notified of the receipt of their application, the date of interviews and the anticipated date of advice of the result.

The selection committee

- The Appointments Working Party should form an Interview Panel that will consist of Heads, or their nominees, of all participating Pathology Departments/Laboratories involved in the rotation, or an agreed subgroup of those Departments/Laboratories where the size of the panel would prove unworkable. In addition in accordance with AMC requirements there will be an RCPA representative on the Panel who will report back to the RCPA on the process and outcome of the interviews. If an RCPA nominee is not on the panel, training time will not be able to be approved.
- Where appropriate, jurisdictional representatives or other stakeholders, such as treating clinicians, may be included on the Panel.
- Members of the Panel should be made aware prior to the commencement of the process of the criteria for selection, the proposed format of the interview, and their responsibilities for documentation.
- All those who have participated in the deliberations of the committee and who partake in the selection of candidates will be required to abide by the decisions made by the Appointments Working Party.
- Members of the Panel should be made aware prior to the commencement of the process of the appeals mechanisms and their accountability for the decision of the Panel.

Selection criteria

The Working Party should develop a clear and objective set of selection criteria with an appropriate ranking scheme, e.g. allocation of points. Where necessary due to the number of applications, applicants should be short-listed using predetermined criteria. The criteria should cover a range of attributes and measures of suitability for Pathology, and may include some or all of the following:

For initial Trainees

- Evidence of satisfactory referees' reports for clinical rotations. Where conflicting reports have been received, the Selection Panel may choose to seek an additional reference, or allow the applicant to respond to any adverse comments made.
- Good communication skills. Both the application form and the interview should be structured in such a way as to allow reasonable assessment of communication skills.
- Experience in Pathology (such as an RCPA Medical Student Scholarship), or evident commitment to the discipline. Reasons should be sought for pursuing pathology as a specialty.

- Evidence of academic achievement and scientific enquiry at an undergraduate level, preferably with some experience in research or investigative projects.
- Evidence of presentations at either internal (hospital) or external (symposia) meetings, or publications in peer reviewed journals.
- Higher degree: MD, PhD, or MSc.
- Performance in interview.
- Success in the RCPA Pathological Sciences examination
- Success in postgraduate examinations in other clinical specialties (eg. Part 1 FACD, FRACP, FRACS etc.).
- Willingness to work in all areas on rotation, including outer metropolitan and regional areas.

For rotating Trainees

1. Evidence of satisfactory progress in Pathology (according to supervisor's report).
2. Evidence of presentations at either internal (hospital) or external (symposia) meetings, or publications in peer reviewed journals.
3. Success in post-graduate examinations in Pathology (single failures should not necessarily constitute grounds for non-continuance of training):
 - Pathological Sciences
 - Part 1 FRCPA

When there are several applicants for a position, the Working Group may also choose to take into consideration the following:

1. Multiple failures:
 - Pathological Sciences
 - Part 1 FRCPA
2. Evidence of unsatisfactory progress in routine Pathology (according to supervisor's report).

Conduct of the interview

- The format and duration of the interview should be the same for all applicants.
- A standard set of questions should be used.
- Members of the panel must act in accordance with anti-discrimination principles.
- Each applicant should have an equal opportunity to ask questions of the panel.

Selection

- Applicants must satisfy all qualifications, Medical Board registration and immigration requirements that are set out under Eligibility for Application, above.
- The appointment of a Trainee is based on merit, the nature of which is derived from a combination of the assessments of an interview and ranking criteria that are set out by the Working Party.

- Following the interviews, a list ranking all applicants should be made. There should be an eligibility list of appointable applicants and a list of applicants who are deemed unappointable based on the selection criteria and performance at the interview.
- All appointable applicants should be ranked and those who are ranked sufficiently high to match the number of available positions should be offered those positions.
- Any position not filled by the preferred applicant should be offered to the next highest ranked applicant. An applicant who is offered a position should be asked to notify the Coordinator/ Chair whether they wish to accept by a specified time and day after the offer is made. The latter is to allow the Coordinator/Chair to make the offer of a position to the next highest ranked applicant should the initial applicant decline the offer.
- The final decision on the offer of a position to a specific hospital, Health Service or private laboratory is based on the requirements of the organisation and the applicant's preference.
- Once an applicant is appointed to the Scheme, he or she can apply to transfer to any other participating Laboratory in the future, but this should be subjected to the "Guidelines for the transfer of a registrar previously appointed to the Scheme to another Anatomical Pathology Department" (see below).
- In the event that a position becomes vacant and a candidate in the College eligibility list fills it, then that candidate should be considered to be in the Scheme.
- If there is a need to appoint a Trainee outside the scheme, e.g. mid-year, the laboratory should liaise with the Chair of the Working Group.

Documentation of the process

- The Working Party should determine the form in which to keep a record of proceedings and who is to be responsible for its safekeeping.
- Documentation should be kept for as long as required under relevant organisational employment policies.
- Documentation must be sufficient to enable the conduct of a fair and equitable appeal in the absence of all members of the original interview panel, should the necessity arise.
- Where feasible, the Working Party should develop a process to evaluate the selection process by following the progress of Trainees in the state/region.
- The RCPA nominee will report back the outcome to RCPA

Feedback

- Unappointable applicants should be notified as soon as possible following the interviews. The Coordinator/Chair should be available to provide feedback on their failure to meet the criteria if requested.

Appeals

Unsuccessful applicants have the right to have employment decisions reviewed and the Working Group should establish a formal appeals process. This should include the availability of a review mechanism external to the original Panel.

When developing the appeals mechanism, the Working Group should take into account the following principles:

- Seeking review of the process should not disadvantage the applicant in any future decisions.
- If review by the Working Group proves insufficient, the applicant should have recourse to an external appeals process.
- Applicants should be advised in advance of any costs associated with the process. Where the review is successful, the Working Group should have arrangements in place to bear the cost. If unsuccessful, the applicant should bear the costs.

Guidelines for the transfer of a Trainee previously appointed to the Scheme to another Pathology Department

1. A Trainee who wishes to transfer to another hospital or private laboratory is required to submit an application on a standardised proforma (an example is available from the College).
2. The Trainee should be required to provide a ranking list of the Departments that he or she wishes to transfer to.
3. All departments should be given a list of all Trainees who wished to transfer. The Heads of all participating Pathology Departments or their nominees should provide a list to the Coordinator/Chair, who will allocate the positions according to the rankings of both individual registrar and department.
4. The allocation of positions to Trainees who are already in the Scheme and are progressing satisfactorily should take precedence to that of applicants who are new to the Scheme.
5. A Trainee who has not performed satisfactorily during the course of his or her training should not necessarily be offered a position in the Scheme. The definition of unsatisfactory performance is noted below.

Guidelines for applications from Pathology Trainees who are not in the Scheme

1. Applicants who fall into this category would include Pathology Trainees from interstate, or Trainees who had been appointed external to the Scheme. The latter usually applies to Trainees who are appointed to a department outside of the time frame for the appointments process of the Scheme, often due to a vacancy that has arisen from a resignation of a Trainee in one of the positions in the Scheme. A practitioner who accepts a position external to the Scheme should be made aware that he/she has not been formally appointed to a position in the Scheme.
2. The applicant should satisfy all qualifications, Medical Board registration and immigration requirements set out in eligibility for application, above
3. The applicant should be assessed according to the same procedures as per **new applicants**, and will be based on the same interview and ranking criteria.

Definition of Unsatisfactory Performance of a Pathology Trainee Occupying a Position in the Scheme

1. A Trainee who has failed his or her examinations in either the Pathological Sciences, Parts 1 or 2 on 2 or more occasions (the latest time that a candidate is allowed to sit the part 1 examination will be the 4th year of training, allowing for extended leave or part-time training), **plus** criterion 2 below
2. Unsatisfactory Supervisor's report. To obtain an adequate assessment of a Trainee, reports from all other specialists in the same department in which the Trainee works should be sought if an unsatisfactory supervisor's report is received by the Appointments Working Party, plus poor examination performance noted in point 1 above. Please also refer to the Policy 15/2001 "Training Limitation."

Associated Documentation

Sample application forms for new and rotating Trainees.

