



# Induction Manual for Supervisors

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The Royal College of Pathologists of Australasia

207 Albion Street  
Surry Hills NSW 2010

Phone: 61 2 8356 5858

Fax: 61 2 8356 5828

E-mail: [rcpa@rcpa.edu.au](mailto:rcpa@rcpa.edu.au)

Website: [www.rcpa.edu.au](http://www.rcpa.edu.au)

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## **Foreword**

Thank you for supervising the training of the next generation of pathologists. This is the most significant contribution a Fellow can make to the work of the College. Patients need good pathologists.

Supervisors also make a very personal contribution to the lives and careers of their Trainees. They are remembered and the debt they are owed is repaid when the cycle is complete and a one time registrar agrees to supervise his or her own Trainee.

Very best wishes for this important role.

Bev Rowbotham

*Past President*

The Royal College of Pathologists of Australasia

# 1 Introduction

Thank you for undertaking the important role of supervising Trainees of the Royal College of Pathologists of Australasia. Your role is valued and central to the education and training activities of the College. It is through your participation that the College maintains its standards of excellence and produces pathologists fit for safe practice and ongoing professional development.

As you reflect on your own experience as a Trainee, you will no doubt value the contributions of those who devoted time and effort to your training. Certainly you will appreciate the technical expertise that you gained at the microscope, the bench and the bedside. More than this, the professionalism of your supervisors, their voices of experience, their constructive feedback and words of reassurance will stay with you throughout your professional lives. Likewise your own professionalism and the feedback you offer will have a lasting impact on your Trainees.

This manual will guide you through the necessary processes to progress Trainees towards Fellowship. It will provide information to assist you to design and implement an effective training program and ensure that your Trainees have a rich training experience and benefit from your professional guidance.

Your feedback on the manual is welcome.

## 2 About the College

### *2.1 Key contacts*

Headed by the CEO, Dr Debra Graves, the Management Team is available to assist you. Please do not hesitate to contact them for information, advice, guidance or support.

**Chief Executive Officer, Dr Debra Graves:** [DebraG@rcpa.edu.au](mailto:DebraG@rcpa.edu.au)

**For all matters relating to education and training administration, e.g. trainee registration, examinations, supervisors' reports, laboratory accreditation and overseas trained specialists:** [boc@rcpa.edu.au](mailto:boc@rcpa.edu.au)

**For enquiries relating to the RCPA Continuing Professional Development Program:** [cpd@rcpa.edu.au](mailto:cpd@rcpa.edu.au)

**For general enquiries:** [rcpa@rcpa.edu.au](mailto:rcpa@rcpa.edu.au)

**Switchboard:** 02 8356 5858

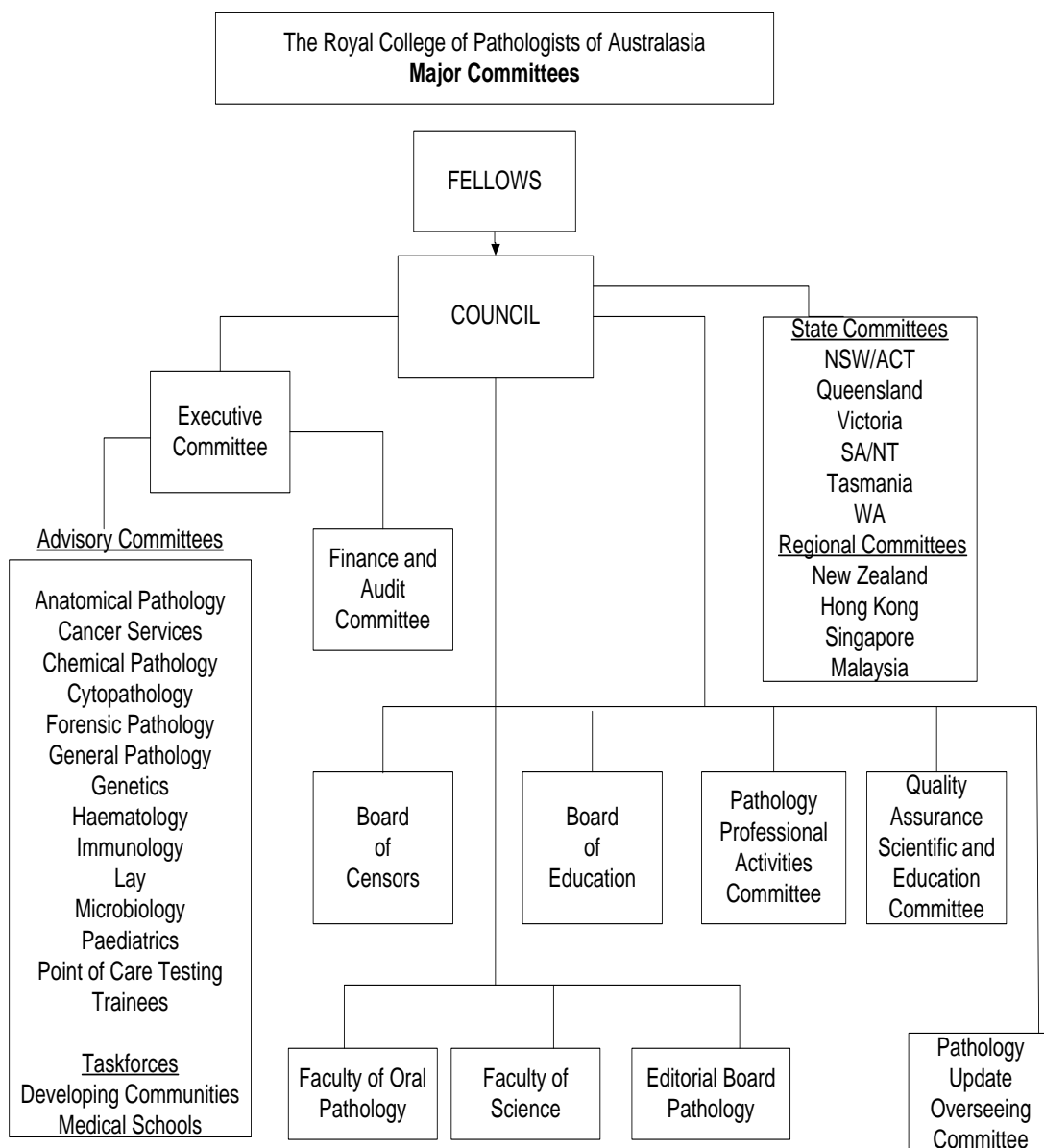
**Fax:** 02 8356 5828

## 2.2 College governance

References:

- Responsibilities of State and Regional Councillors
- Policy: Mentoring for Trainees

Council is the governing body of the College. Members are elected by the Fellowship or appointed by Council. Council is actively involved in setting strategic and policy directions for the College. Members of the Council include the President, two Vice Presidents, Honorary Secretary, Honorary Treasurer, State and regional councillors and chairs of the Board of Censors, Board of Education and the Faculty of Oral Pathology. A member of the Trainee Advisory Committee is invited to attend all meetings. The governance structure of the College is illustrated below:



The responsibilities of the State or Regional Councillor are many. In relation to training they include:

- Assisting, advising and informing prospective Trainees regarding training and assessment
- Advising about training requirements and options, career prospects, educational programs and laboratories approved for training
- Participating in, or appointing delegates to attend medical career expos, information days and other activities to encourage recruitment to training in pathology
- Arranging educational programs at the local level through the state/regional committee
- Assisting Trainees with problems relating to training and examination
- Assisting supervisors in fulfilling their role, particularly in cases in which problems arise
- Monitoring and advising the College of any concerns about the quality of training in the local area
- Counselling candidates after examination, where necessary, especially after failure, and discussing areas of weakness indicated by the examiners
- Investigating complaints from Trainees or supervisors in specific instances
- Establishing, as far as is reasonably possible, the suitability of Trainees for ultimate Fellowship of the College and to notify any problems to Council
- Encouraging active participation by Fellows in the training and examination system
- Mentoring for Trainees, to complement the role of supervisors and other trainers who have an ongoing relationship with Trainees. The mentor role involves providing advice and support when required and acting impartially if any situation of conflict arises. The Councillor may identify a suitable alternative mentor if they are unable to fulfil the role personally. Interactions between a Trainee and a mentor are in confidence, and a mentor would usually not provide information to a supervisor.

## ***2.3 Board of Censors***

References:

- Terms of Reference: Board of Censors
- Roles and Responsibilities: Chief Examiners and Associate/Assistant Chief Examiners
- Roles and Responsibilities: Registrar and Deputy Registrar

The Board of Censors is responsible for the training and assessment processes and requirements for Fellowship and other qualifications of the RCPA. The Board is also responsible for accreditation of laboratories for training. On behalf of the Australian Medical Council and Medical Council of New Zealand, the Board is responsible for the assessment process for overseas-trained specialists.

Members of the Board include the Chairman, who is a Fellow appointed by Council; Chief, Assistant Chief and Associate Chief examiners representing all disciplines; a New Zealand Representative; Registrar and Deputy Registrar. Ex-officio members include the Chairman of the Board of Education and a representative from the Faculty of Oral Pathology. A representative of the Trainee Advisory Committee is invited to attend all meetings.

**Chief examiners**, in conjunction with other members of the Board of Censors:

- Determine and maintain the standards required in examinations for eligibility for Fellowship or the granting of any other qualification of the College
- Participate in the development of College policies and procedures in relation to the responsibilities of the Board of Censors
- Make recommendations to the Board of Censors and Council for assessment of competencies, accreditation of training and certification in their discipline.
- Determine appropriate criteria in relation to retrospective accreditation of training undertaken under the auspices of other bodies
- Determine and maintain the requirements for all laboratories for accreditation for training, which may include inspection by site visits
- Are responsible to ensure requirements for training are fully known and understood by Trainees and supervisors
- Regularly review the guidelines for training in his/her discipline to ensure that content and delivery is current and relevant to the practice of Pathology. This should involve liaison with the relevant Discipline Advisory Committee
- Develop all written examination questions, practical exams, vivas and other forms of assessment, in consultation with other examiners
- Review casebooks or research papers undertaken by candidates as required
- Ensure candidates and supervisors are adequately informed about the form and requirements of the examination
- Ensure and oversee the probity of the examination process

- Ensure adequate information is provided to Trainees and supervisors about unsuccessful performances
- Determine the minimum training requirements of applicants for examination.
- Determine that training of an applicant is complete for the purpose of eligibility to apply for admission for Fellowship of the College
- Recruit suitably qualified and experienced examiners

**The Registrar of the Board of Censors** is a Fellow of the College working in an honorary capacity and may be assisted by a Deputy Registrar. The Registrar is responsible for ensuring all actions in respect of training and certification of Trainees comply with the Articles of Association and By-laws of the College, the Terms of Reference of the Board of Censors and the Policies and Decisions of the Board and Information in the Trainees' Handbook. With the assistance of the Management Team, the Registrar:

- Responds to enquiries from Trainees, potential Trainees, supervisors and State and Regional Councillors in respect to activities of the Board of Censors
- Oversees Trainee registrations and records of their training and examination performance. This includes detailed review of training programs and Supervisors' Reports.
- Oversees applications for assessment of overseas trained specialists
- Presents to the Board of Censors all applications for training and examination
- Liaises with Chief Examiners with regard to coordination of the examination process
- Ensures that all laboratories involved in the training of candidates in pathology are accredited in accordance with the policies and decisions of the Board of Censors and the College Council

## ***2.4 Board of Education***

Reference:

- Terms of Reference: Board of Education

The Board of Education is responsible for providing advice on education issues, promoting research in pathology and raising public awareness of pathology.

The Board of Education develops, coordinates and supports continuing education activities such as update courses, oversees the scientific programme of the annual Pathology Update Program and coordinates the development and publication of educational materials for internal and external distribution. The Board provides a continuing overview of educational programs and activities organised under the auspices of the Advisory Committees training workshops/modules for supervisors of training.

Membership includes the Chairman who is a Fellow appointed by Council, and sufficient Fellows to represent each disciplines and the regions, New Zealand and each state of Australia. It also includes a recently admitted Fellow and a Trainee representative, and may include Fellows with expertise in continuing professional development and the editor of "Pathology". Ex officio members include the

Chairman of the Board of Censors, the editor of the “Manual of Use and Interpretation of Pathology” and the editor of “Common Sense Pathology”.

## ***2.5 Advisory Committees***

References:

- Terms of Reference: Advisory Committees
- Terms of Reference: Trainees’ Advisory Committee

The purpose of Advisory Committees is to present to Council the concerns of Fellows regarding specific disciplines or areas of interest, and to provide expert advice to Council, the Executive Committee, and key Boards and Committees of the College in relation to these disciplines or area of interest. The Advisory Committees represent a key pathway of communication between Fellows and the Council, the Executive Committee, and other key Boards and Committees of the College. Responsibilities include advising about training, accreditation, credentialing, and continuing education of Fellows. There are Discipline Advisory Committees representing the eight disciplines, and a Trainee Advisory Committee.

The Trainees’ Committee is responsible to Council and provides a channel for registered Trainees to provide input to the training, educational and professional activities of the College. The Chair or an appointed representative attends meetings of Council and a representative attends meetings of the Board of Censors and Board of Education. This committee addresses such issues relating to any gaps in educational provision, the quality of training, the curriculum and assessment process, the registrar workforce, opportunities for research and collaboration on projects and for the provision of College services and activities to enhance collegiality.

### 3 Roles and responsibilities of supervisors

References:

- Policy: Supervision of Training
- Policy: Continuing Professional Development Program

The primary role of a supervisor is to provide feedback on performance. To do this they should meet regularly with Trainees; observe their laboratory performance and interaction with scientists, peers and clinicians, and review result reporting. For this reason, the College recommends that any one supervisor be responsible for no more than two Trainees.

If a supervisor finds that he or she cannot continue to perform these duties, he or she must advise the Board of Censors and discuss the nomination of a new supervisor with the Trainee.

For Trainees working towards higher academic qualifications as part of their RCPA training, the supervisor of the research project will not necessarily be suitable for the role of supervisor in the training program, as the latter must be familiar with the objectives of RCPA training. In such situations it may be necessary to nominate a supervisor who has no involvement in the research project but who is able to fulfil the other responsibilities to both the Trainee and the Board of Censors.

Currently, supervisors are nominated by the individual Trainee, not by the College. The supervisor must sign the Trainee's annual registration form thereby giving a commitment to assume the responsibilities detailed below.

Supervisors are expected to:

- Provide a prospective training program for the year. This should be devised in collaboration with the Trainee and submitted with the Trainee's Annual Registration Form
- Monitor the Trainee's progress by personal observation, feedback and discussion, with delegation of these responsibilities to other trainers where appropriate, eg. on secondment to another laboratory for a short segment of training
- Maintain contact with the State or New Zealand Education Committee, the State or Regional Councillor or the Board of Censors Representative for New Zealand, and with the Board of Censors regarding the training, availability of education programs, and any problems emerging from these
- Teach the Trainee and assist him or her to learn from the experience, including that of other Trainees in the laboratory
- Ensure that the Trainee has completed the requirements specified in the Trainee Handbook before presenting for examination
- Discuss the Trainee's performance in detail with the Chief Examiner if requested
- Help the Trainee to interpret and act on examiners' comments, particularly in cases of failure
- Notify the State or Regional Councillor or the Board of Censors representative for New Zealand of any problems which may be relevant in consideration of a Trainee's suitability for admission to Fellowship
- Arrange appropriate alternative supervision during absences of more than two months' duration

- Notify the Board of Censors of any change in the proposed approved training program
- Provide at the appointed time, a Supervisor's Report confidential to the Board of Censors, giving details of the Trainee's progress
- Familiarise themselves with:
  - The contents of this manual
  - The requirements for training in their discipline as set out in the current version of the RCPA Trainee Handbook (to be found on the RCPA website)
  - Key policies, by-laws and guidelines relating to training, most of which are cited in this manual. They may all be downloaded from the members' area of the website.
- Undertake a supervisors' workshop/module once in every five years.

Participation in the RCPA Continuing Professional Development Program or an approved alternative was made mandatory for all Fellows in January 2006. **Those who do not participate in a suitable program will not be permitted to act as supervisors or examiners, or serve on major committees of the College.**

## 4 Overview of training

### 4.1 Supervision of training

Reference:

- Policy: Supervision of Training

All training must be supervised. Trainees may nominate their own supervisor and are required to record the supervisor's name on the initial and annual registration forms.

Normally, only one supervisor is nominated. In some circumstances shared supervision may be necessary, but there must be a nominated primary supervisor.

The training of pathologists is undertaken in laboratories accredited by the College for training and under the supervision of a qualified pathologist. In some instances, a specialist pathologist may also be required to work under supervision, eg while retraining or awaiting specialist recognition.

A supervisor will ordinarily be nominated by:

- Trainees, including those who have completed their training time but not their examinations
- Overseas trained specialists undergoing a period of assessment
- Fellows retraining in another discipline
- Fellows undergoing performance assessment.

The supervisor must be a Fellow of the College or approved by the Board of Censors on presentation of a CV. For Trainees of the Faculty of Oral Pathology, the supervisor will normally be a Fellow of the Faculty. Where the nominated supervisor is not a pathologist, supervision must be overseen by a pathologist. Supervision should not be delegated largely to a non-pathologist.

The supervisor must ensure that adequate supervision is arranged in their absence.

### 4.2 Disciplines

The College allows training and Fellowship examination in the following pathology disciplines:

- Anatomical Pathology
- Chemical Pathology
- Forensic Pathology
- General Pathology
- Clinical Pathology
- Genetics
- Haematology
- Immunology
- Microbiology
- Oral Pathology (for Fellowship of the Faculty of Oral Pathology).

In addition the College offers post- Fellowship diplomas in Cytopathology and Forensic Pathology.

The curricula for all disciplines may be found in the Trainee Handbook. The Handbook is updated annually and is available on the College website.

The College also operates joint specialist training programs as outlined in section 4.5.

### ***4.3 Selection of Trainees***

Reference:

- Guideline: Selection of Trainees

Note that this guideline refers to those who are being selected to be registered Trainees with the College. Overseas trained specialists (OTS) who require 2 years or less training to bring them to a standard comparable to Australian trained pathologists are eligible for conditional medical registration in Australia under the Specialist Pathway and for registration with the College as described in the guideline. Overseas trained applicants who are not permanent residents and who are ineligible for the Specialist Pathway will first need to satisfy the assessment requirements of the Australian Medical Council for medical registration in Australia before they can register for training with the College. Occupational Trainees may be employed in pathology training positions but must leave Australia after receiving suitable training and experience. They will generally be qualified pathologists or senior pathology Trainees who require short-term specialised training that is unavailable in their own country.

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, be fair and objective and give applicants the best possible assessment of their suitability within the constraints of time and resources. Applicants must have recourse to an appropriate appeals process.

To be eligible to apply for selection the candidate must meet the following requirements (Not applicable to Occupational Trainees):

- Australian citizenship or Australian permanent residence visa (or equivalent criteria for Trainees in New Zealand, Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia and Saudi Arabia)
- Medical degree recognised for registration purposes in Australia, New Zealand, or appropriate registration where rotation is to occur; OR  
Satisfactorily completed requirements of the Australian Medical Council or the New Zealand Medical Council
- Registrable as a Medical Practitioner in the state or country of proposed work
- 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
- Overseas Trained Specialists having been assessed by the College as requiring up to 2 years additional assessment

## ***4.4 Training requirements***

All pathology training, be it full or part-time, must be approved by the Board of Censors early in the first and each subsequent year of training. To gain approval, applicants must send a prospective training program with their initial and annual training registration forms.

A minimum of five full-time equivalent years of certified training in laboratories accredited by the Board of Censors must be completed before admission to Fellowship.

Trainees may be accredited for a year of their training in one or more branches of pathology other than their chosen discipline.

Time spent in research or project work is encouraged and up to one year in relevant work is readily approved. Applications for accreditation of time should be prospectively approved. For joint training with the RACP, one year is retrospectively accredited for physician training.

### **4.4.1 Training limitation**

Reference:

- Policy: Training Limitation

Training limitation is enforced to ensure that Trainees are exposed to more than one style and philosophy of pathology practice.

Candidates for RCPA qualifications will not be accredited with more than 4 years training in any one laboratory. Where the same members of a pathology service/practice supervise geographically separate laboratories this may be viewed as training undertaken in a single laboratory and may not fulfil the requirements for a laboratory rotation unless significant differences in practice and supervision can be demonstrated. Training undertaken in a different discipline within that service/practice may be acceptable.

RCPA Trainees who are also registered with the Royal Australasian College of Physicians in a joint specialist training program may not complete both their clinical and laboratory training entirely within one service of an institution. Rotation may occur either in the laboratory or the clinical component of JSAC training. Change of supervisor to another member of an integrated clinical/laboratory service will not qualify as rotation; nor will change to a different geographical site of an integrated service.

Any short term rotation undertaken must be for a minimum of 2 months. This does not include secondment to another institution for training in a specific technique or method.

As applications for retrospective waiving of this requirement are unlikely to be granted, any Trainee for whom this ruling is likely to be problematic should contact the Registrar of the Board of Censors as early as possible in his/her training.

Ordinarily, at least two years of the training program must be spent in public laboratories or other public facilities.

## **4.4.2 Interrupted and part-time training**

Reference:

- Policy: Interrupted and Part-time Training

The Royal College of Pathologists of Australasia does not limit the duration of training and acknowledges that training may be interrupted or undertaken on a part-time basis for a number of reasons, including ill-health, research, and parenting.

Any period of part-time training must entail at least 20% of a full-time clinical load, i.e. eight hours per week. Trainees proposing to undertake part-time training must provide the Board of Censors with a prospective training program agreed to by the supervisor so that this may be taken into account in calculating the duration of training. Training time will be accredited on a pro-rata basis.

Trainees must notify the Board of Censors, prospectively wherever possible, of interruptions to training and anticipated duration thereof.

Trainees on leave from the program are strongly advised to maintain communication with the College, which provides access to the website and mailings. This can be achieved by payment of a deferment fee.

Where training has been interrupted for more than five years, additional training may be required at the discretion of the Board of Censors.

## **4.4.3 Retrospective accreditation of training**

Some training may be approved retrospectively. Retrospective accreditation must be sought from the Board of Censors on initial registration as a Trainee. Retrospective accreditation is considered on an individual basis; however training undertaken in an undergraduate program would not generally be recognised.

## ***4.5 Joint Specialist Training***

Reference:

- Guideline: Joint Training Programs with the Royal Australasian College of Physicians

Joint training schemes between the RCPA and the Royal Australasian College of Physicians (RACP) are available in Haematology, Immunology, Chemical Pathology/Endocrinology and Microbiology/Infectious Diseases. These programs lead to the granting of Fellowships of both Colleges and aim to equip Trainees with the knowledge and skills to specialise in both laboratory and clinical practice.

Training is under the management of the relevant Joint Specialist Advisory Committee (JSAC) comprising representatives of the RCPA and RACP. For Haematology and Immunology there are separate JSACs for Australia and New Zealand. For Chemical Pathology/Endocrinology and Microbiology/Infectious Diseases there is a Joint Subcommittee of the relevant Specialist Advisory Committee of the RACP.

Full entry into joint training occurs only after completion of all requirements for Basic Physician Training and success in the RACP Fellowship (FRACP) examination. Trainees will not normally be enrolled in the joint program until both of these requirements have been fulfilled.

Subsequent RCPA examinations at Part I and Part II level are solely under the control of the RCPA Board of Censors.

In Microbiology/Infectious Diseases, Trainees must complete 3 years of laboratory training plus two clinical years. Other Joint training programs involve a minimum of four years of accredited training in laboratory and clinical practice, with one year's retrospective accreditation.

The JSAC/Joint Subcommittee will accredit sites for clinical training. The laboratory component of training must be undertaken in an RCPA accredited laboratory.

The laboratory component of training should ordinarily be under the supervision of a pathologist.

Joint Trainees must meet the rotation requirement of the RCPA. Training overseas may be approved as part fulfilment of the requirements. Note that Trainees may not complete both their clinical and laboratory training entirely within one service of an institution.

Fellowship of both Colleges is awarded simultaneously when the Trainee has fulfilled the requirements of both Colleges.

#### ***4.6 Accreditation of laboratories for training***

Reference:

- Policy: Laboratory Accreditation for Training Programs

Training must be undertaken in a laboratory accredited for training by the Board of Censors. A current list of laboratories accredited for training is available on the RCPA website.

Laboratories are accredited for all of the major pathology disciplines and laboratories with a unified structure under a single overall director may submit a single application with appropriate attached sheets on each of the disciplines. Single discipline laboratories with individual directors may submit separate applications for each discipline.

Laboratory accreditation for training is based on the range and quantity of work performed, space, equipment, hospital affiliations, level of staffing, library facilities, laboratory equipment, experience available, and the adequacy of supervision. Further details may be found in the policy cited above. Application forms are available in the document repository of the RCPA website

Accreditation may be granted to provide a maximum of 4 years of training for an individual candidate. Laboratories which offer limited or very specialised experience may only be accredited to provide a shorter duration of training.

Training in other laboratories such as overseas or research laboratories is considered on its merits. If approval is required for a period in an overseas laboratory, full details of the laboratory and supervisor must be sent to the Board of Censors with the initial or annual registration form prior to commencement of the training period. A maximum of 2 years training may be accredited in a laboratory outside the College's sphere of activity.

As part of the laboratory accreditation process, site visits of laboratories will be undertaken periodically by representatives of the Board of Censors. The visit will include consultation with Trainees, and a review of training facilities and adequacy of supervision.

The accreditation lasts for five years, as long as there are no substantial changes in laboratory activities, supervision or management. However, laboratories which fail to meet a satisfactory

standard in providing training may have this approval revoked. In addition, an annual report to notify the College of any changes will be required. A proforma will be distributed in June each year.

Accreditation status will remain valid only while the supervisor nominated on the application form and the function of the laboratory remain essentially unchanged. A change of either of the above MUST be notified immediately to the Registrar.

The laboratory must notify the Registrar of the name and curriculum vitae of the new supervisor. If, in the absence of a supervisor, the Trainee can be provided with acceptable supervision, no further action is required. If not, the laboratory cannot accept new Trainees, and its accreditation is temporarily suspended. Under these circumstances Trainees are not penalised and they may complete their current period of training providing it does not exceed one calendar year. Training time will not be accepted in these circumstances beyond one year.

## 5 Overview of assessment

### 5.1 Fellowship requirements

Reference:

- By-Law: Admission to Fellowship

Fellowship of the Royal College of Pathologists of Australasia (RCPA) requires:

- a recognised medical degree, or dental degree in the Faculty of Oral Pathology
- an application approved by the Board of Censors
- five years of supervised accredited training
- success in the assessments determined by the Board of Censors
- payment of fees and
- acceptance by the Council that the applicant is suitable for Fellowship

### 5.2 Assessment requirements

#### 5.2.1 Examinations

There are three parts to the examination process:

1. Basic Pathological Sciences examination: The examination may be taken before commencement of training or during training, normally in the first year. The examination is open to any intern, medical or dental student in their final year as well as registered Trainees. A pass or exemption must be achieved before proceeding to Fellowship.
2. Discipline specialty Part I: This is usually taken in the third year of training.
3. Discipline specialty Part II: This is usually taken in the fifth or final year of training.

Part I and Part II examinations require Trainees to have sufficient knowledge of the work of other branches of pathology to be able to use and interpret their basic services intelligently. Examinations may comprise written, practical and oral components.

For General Pathology, examinations are taken in Pathological Sciences, Clinical Pathology and Morphological Pathology. The clinical and morphological examinations are generally taken in years 4 and 5. There are also practical assessments in each discipline.

#### 5.2.2 Number of exam attempts and length of time passes remain valid

Reference:

- Policy: Limitation on the Number of Examinations

The College does not restrict the number of attempts a candidate may have to pass examinations.

A pass or exemption in Part I is valid for 5 years. If the Part II examination is not completed within 5 years of passing or being granted exemption from Part I, the candidate will need to either pass Part I again or gain exemption from it.

In General Pathology, a pass in or exemption from a practical assessment is valid for 5 years. If the relevant examination (Clinical or Morphology) is not completed within 5 years of passing a practical assessment, it will be necessary to either again pass, or obtain exemption from that assessment.

A pass or exemption in Pathological Sciences stands indefinitely.

Exemption from a component of an examination is only granted for the following examination cycle. In subsequent cycles, the exemption must be requested at the time of application for examination, and may or may not be granted at the discretion of the Chief Examiner.

### **5.2.3 Feedback on examinations**

Feedback on the performance of Trainees who have failed will be sent to the candidate's nominated supervisor following completion of the examination cycle. Reports for Part II candidates will generally be provided following the August examinations. Those for Part I candidates may not be available until after the November examinations. Trainees and supervisors are strongly advised to discuss this feedback with a view to remediation of any deficiencies and to seek further advice where necessary from their State or Regional Councillor.

### **5.2.4 Communication between candidates and Chief Examiners**

In the interests of fairness and integrity of the examination process, Trainees are not to contact Chief Examiners directly during the examination cycle that is between the June and August examinations or during the course of the November examinations. Lobbying, whether by Trainees, supervisors or other persons, to try to influence examination outcomes may result in disqualification of the Trainee.

### **5.2.5 Special circumstances and complaints**

References:

- Policy: Examination Candidates in Need of Consideration for Illness, Accident, Disability or Compassionate Grounds
- Policy: Complaints in Relation to Examinations

Special circumstances such as illness or other issues concerning a Trainee's ability to sit for exams should be communicated as soon as possible to the State/Regional Councillor, Registrar of the Board of Censors or the Operations Manager, Education and Training. Correspondence must not be sent directly to the Chief Examiner.

Complaints in relation to the process of examination, or the results of examinations, must be lodged with the College within 2 months of the date of notification of the results of the examination.

### **5.2.6 Workplace-based assessment**

Assessment requirements are currently being reviewed, and workplace-based assessments will be introduced for all disciplines over the next few years. These assessments will be designed to draw upon and formalise processes that should already form part of Trainees' learning experience. In most cases, Trainees will be required to maintain portfolios containing a variety of items, for example, records of assessments such as Case-based Discussions and Directly Observed Practical Skills; publications and presentations; and documented participation in learning activities.

## 6 Forms and submissions

Completing forms may seem onerous, but it is essential in order to ensure that correct processes are followed in progression towards Fellowship and for ensuring that all training time is properly supervised and accredited.

A detailed table of dates for submission of forms is published in the Trainee Handbook each year and it is the responsibility of the Trainee to ensure that all forms are submitted on time.

All forms are available in the document library of the RCPA website.

### ***6.1 Initial and annual registration***

An Initial Registration form must be submitted by the Trainee at the commencement of training, and thereafter the Annual Registration form must be submitted each year. These forms must be accompanied by a proposed training program that will be examined by the Registrar before approval. The supervisor must sign a declaration of willingness to undertake the supervision. The forms are available in the document library.

New joint Trainees are required to complete the Initial Registration form for the RCPA in addition to the JSAC Application to Commence or Continue Advanced Training (copy to the RCPA). In subsequent years, only the JSAC form need be completed, with a copy to the RCPA.

The forms for joint training are available from the Royal Australasian College of Physicians. Note that the RACP has different forms for Australia and New Zealand.

### ***6.2 Prospective training program***

The prospective training program should be devised by the supervisor in conjunction with the Trainee, setting out specific objectives for the year. Supervisors should refer to the curricula in the Trainee Handbook and be aware of any components which may need to be provided by another laboratory.

In order to gain a full understanding of the intended outcomes of the training program and a commitment to the process, it is vital that the supervisor and the Trainee spend some time together in developing the program. A new supervisor should be certain to elicit from the Trainee any previous difficulties with specific skill areas, examination failures (and perceived reasons), and omissions or deficiencies in training experience.

The prospective training program must include the following elements as indicated in the application form:

1. Brief overview of the laboratory and its networks
2. Planned exposure to relevant experience: *Including major aspects of the discipline, or test groups, to be covered in the ensuing year; any standard rotations to other laboratories within a group. If previous difficulties, what specific outcomes or achievements have been determined, eg goals for the development of a specific skill set.*
3. Specific responsibilities relevant to level of skill and experience: *Eg: checking laboratory reports; liaising with clinicians; quality control of assays; trialling of new methods.*

4. Additional external experiences: *Eg: arrangements to receive specific experience in services which are not provided by the laboratory.*
5. Intended participation in projects or research
6. Educational program: *List regular activities, eg weekly journal club, departmental administrative or patient care meetings, as well as planned attendance at conferences or seminars.*
7. Teaching and presentation activities: *Responsibilities for, eg. tutorials to medical students, conference papers and departmental presentations.*

The Prospective Training Program submitted to the College need only be 2-3 pages. It must relate to the specific learning outcomes set out in the curriculum for the relevant discipline, and be appropriate to the stage of training.

A time line for the achievement of specific skills will allow more comprehensive monitoring of progress and enable both Trainee and supervisor to determine whether the Trainee is encountering difficulties. A weekly or monthly timetable of activities will provide structure for the Trainee and evidence to the College that appropriate activities are scheduled for the Trainee.

The supervisor should meet with the Trainee at least every 3 months, to provide structured feedback on their performance and review progress of the training program.

### ***6.3 Supervisor's Report***

The Supervisor's Report must be submitted at least annually at the time required by the specific discipline. Reports must be submitted mid-year, using the RCPA form, for Trainees taking a Part 1 or Part 2 examination. For Trainees who participate in rotational programs, one report should be completed for each period of rotation at a different institution.

The Supervisor's Report is an extremely important document and is a form of summative assessment. It documents observed performance on the job, which an examination cannot do. Reports may be reviewed by examiners, and in borderline cases they may determine a pass or fail in an examination. Without satisfactory reports covering the complete training period, time will not be accredited and Fellowship cannot be granted. Therefore it is vital that these reports are completed with care.

Completing the Supervisor's Report also provides a valuable opportunity for structured feedback to the Trainee.

It is desirable that all specialists who supervise Trainees participate in the evaluation process and completion of the form.

Supervisors are asked to rank the performance in each area of activity even if the time spent in it is small. If there has been no exposure to a particular activity please write "*Not Applicable*" across the space allocated for ranking.

Performance for skills in each area of training listed in the form should be assessed on a scale of 1 to 5 as indicated below.

1 = UNSATISFACTORY Performance is unacceptable

2 = BORDERLINE Performance is below that expected for the level of training

3 = SATISFACTORY Performance is as expected for the level of training

4 = GOOD Performance is above that expected for the level of training and is clearly superior to that of his or her peers.

5 = OUTSTANDING Performance is exceptional. Very few Trainees will fall into this category.

In addition to providing ratings, supervisors are asked to provide free text responses. Well-considered comments are very helpful as feedback to the Trainee and also allow examiners to make rationale judgements when necessary. Please do not leave the boxes blank.

Both the Trainee and supervisor must sign the report. Trainees have the opportunity to write comments after the supervisor has signed. In this way the Trainee may confidentially communicate with the Board of Censors regarding difficulties with training. However, Trainees with serious concerns are strongly encouraged to discuss these openly with the supervisor in the first instance, or with the State or Regional Councillor when communication with the supervisor fails. An open and positive supervisor - Trainee relationship should ensure that no unexpected adverse comments are made on the Supervisor's Report.

All Supervisors' Reports are reviewed by the Registrar to the Board of Censors. They are carefully checked for accuracy of dates, as this determines the training time accredited. The forms will be returned if they are not signed by both the supervisor and Trainee. Ratings of 2 or less will be flagged for attention of the Chief Examiner unless the adverse rating is satisfactorily explained and is clearly being addressed.

#### ***6.4 Application for examination***

Forms are posted in November to all registered Trainees, along with the Annual Registration Form. The supervisor must confirm the Trainee's experience and readiness for examination.

Trainees who have failed their Part II examination and wish to resit will also be required to seek their supervisor's support for their decision.

#### ***6.5 Joint Trainees***

In order to complete the RCPA's requirement for documentation of qualifications and experience, the initial application for joint training must be made both on the RCPA *Application for Initial Registration* and on the RACP form, with a copy sent by the Trainee to the RCPA. Relevant RACP forms are:

*Application for Approval to Commence or Continue an Advanced Training Program* in Australia  
*Form AT3 Prospective Approval of an Advanced Training Programme* in New Zealand.

Application thereafter for annual registration is submitted on the RACP form only, with a copy to the RCPA.

On initial registration, joint Trainees must apply formally for one year's retrospective accreditation for physician training, except in the case of Microbiology/Infectious Diseases. They are not required to pay a retrospective training fee.

Joint Trainees must apply for and request exemption from the Pathological Sciences examination on the basis of their successful FRACP Part I examination.

## ***6.6 Admission to Fellowship***

This form will be distributed to Trainees following application for Part II Examination.

## ***6.7 Application for laboratory accreditation and annual returns***

The application form to be used by laboratories wishing to apply for accreditation for pathology training may be found on the College website. Laboratories which are currently accredited will be sent a form for reapplication six months before the date of expiry of their accreditation.

A proforma will be sent each July to document any changes in arrangements that may affect training.

## **7 Educational activities and resources**

### ***7.1 Providing a rich learning environment***

The best learning experiences generally occur in the workplace. Day to day supervised work at the bench or the microscope, in clinicopathological and multidisciplinary meetings and participating in the general work and community of practice of the laboratory will afford the Trainee a rich learning experience if the Trainee is allowed to be self-directed with support, helpful feedback and gradually increasing responsibility. This constitutes an 'expanded apprenticeship' model, where many individuals contribute to the Trainee's education, and the Trainee is offered a wide variety of internal and external resources from which to choose.

Although the supervisor has overall responsibility for teaching the Trainee, much can be delegated to others, thus relieving the burden on the supervisor as an individual and exposing the Trainee to many resources and approaches. Senior Trainees can also be very valuable trainers and informal mentors to junior Trainees, and the experience of being a teacher is of great benefit to the senior Trainee.

### ***7.2 Online resources***

An online education portal for Trainees will become available in the latter half of 2010. This will provide Trainees with ready access to a wide variety of learning resources including mock examinations and self-assessments, documents, videos, audio materials, digital images, interactive educational modules and web-links. Contributions of and suggestions for suitable resources to be added to the portal are welcome and should be sent to the Director, Education.

### ***7.3 Group activities and meetings***

The RCPA conducts and sponsors a wide variety of meetings, workshops and seminars in all disciplines. These are advertised in Pathology Today and on the College website. Notices of national and international meetings may also be found on the website. Information about local and regional meetings may also be available from the State or Regional Councillor.

The educational highlight of the year is the Pathology Update Program held in March each year. It includes components covering each discipline, and is relevant for both Trainees and Fellows. A special one-day cross-discipline program for Trainees is included, and each year there are sessions in which the Chief Examiners in each discipline discuss their approaches to the examination process and give feedback on previous examinations.

Trainees are invited to submit an abstract for the DS Nelson, Board of Education Poster or the RCPA QAP Trainee Prizes. Details of these awards will be in the registration brochure and on the Pathology Update website.

An induction day for new Trainees is also held in conjunction with the Pathology Update Program. The Trainees are given helpful information about the College and its programs, career options and some fundamental training in laboratory safety, communication skills and risk management. They also have an opportunity to meet other new Trainees, recent and experienced Fellows and members

of the RCPA Council and Management team. Supervisors should strongly encourage all new Trainees to attend the induction day.

The Basic Pathological Sciences Seminar is held annually and offers a mock examination and opportunity for discussion with panels of experts. The seminar is open to all, but is most suitable for Trainees, Medical Students and Junior Medical Officers preparing for the Basic Pathological Sciences examination. Other resources to assist the candidate with preparation for the examination, including mock examinations, videos, notes and web links, will be available via the Trainee education portal.

## ***7.4 Giving helpful feedback***

Trainees frequently cite the one-on-one time spent with supervisors as being among their most valuable learning experiences. The feedback you provide to them in this time will influence their attitudes and guide performance throughout their professional lives. You may appreciate this as you reflect on your own training experience.

Trainees, like all learners, benefit from relevant, timely and constructive feedback on their competence. It is important to keep in mind that providing feedback when they are performing well is at least as important as when they are encountering difficulties. Not only does this inform them that they are meeting expectations (which even the brightest learner can doubt), it also enhances their sense of professional competence and self-confidence.

When meeting with the Trainee to provide feedback:

- Use the Supervisor's Report form, and Learning Diary if used, as a guide for discussion.
- Ask the Trainee for his or her own evaluation of their performance – they will usually be harder on themselves than you will be.
- Reinforce positive aspects of their performance, using examples of results or activities which impressed you.
- Where improvement is needed, provide clear and constructive feedback, again giving specific examples.
- Discuss with the Trainee how they might improve their competency or overcome any gaps in their knowledge and skills.
- Provide practical guidance on additional activities or resources that may help.
- Confirm with the Trainee a follow-up to this course of action, for example: in 2 weeks you will assess their performance of a specific skill with which they have had difficulty.

Regular meetings will not only assist the Trainee to meet the requirements of the College within a reasonable time frame, they will also make your job as supervisor a lot easier by enhancing your working relationship with the Trainee and ensuring that any difficulties come to your attention quickly.

## **8 Supervisor and Trainee workshops and other resources**

The College conducts workshops for supervisors and Trainees in the major cities of Australia, New Zealand, Hong Kong and Singapore. These interactive workshops are based on the popular Teaching on the Run program developed by Professor Fiona Lake and adapted for the specific environment of pathology. Topics covered include small group teaching, formative assessment and feedback, and supporting Trainees in difficulty.

The dates are published in Pathology Today and notified by email to those eligible to attend. Supervisors can also contact the College for further information on the workshops.

Supervisors are expected to attend at least one workshop every five years. All Trainees should be strongly encouraged to attend Trainee workshops. As far as possible, arrangements should be made for them to be released from work to do so.

A supervisor training module is currently available on CD-ROM. This will be replaced in late 2010 by an interactive collection of videos, exercises and notes based on the Teaching on the Run program. This will be available both online and on DVD. All supervisors will be expected to complete specified activities in this module.

## 9 When things go wrong

### 9.1 *Mentoring for Trainees*

Reference:

- Guideline No 9/2002: Mentoring for Trainees

A mentor can be defined as “an experienced and trusted advisor” or “a person, chosen by the Trainee, to provide professional and personal guidance throughout their training”. A Trainee’s supervisor may fulfil the role of mentor, or the Trainee may develop a mentor relationship with another person. Alternatively in the smaller states and regions, the relevant Councillor may fulfil that role. However, the College may be asked to nominate a suitable mentor when:

- The Trainee is unable to communicate effectively with his/her supervisor
- The State/Regional Councillor (or the Board of Censors Representative in New Zealand) is unable to fulfil the role
- The Trainee needs objective discipline- specific advice, particularly related to examination failure
- The Trainee is an Overseas Trained Specialist undertaking additional training.
- The Trainee/supervisor relationship has broken down.

The role of the mentor includes:

- Providing career advice throughout training
- Providing personal and professional counselling to Trainees in difficulty
- Providing specific advice in the case of examination failure
- Monitoring and advising Trainees on their suitability for a career in pathology

The mentor’s role is at all times supplementary to that of the supervisor, who has prime responsibility for training matters.

### 9.2 *The role of the Ombudsman*

Reference:

- Roles and Responsibilities No 2/2003: Ombudsman for Trainees

An ombudsman is defined as someone who resolves disputes from a neutral, independent viewpoint. The Ombudsman role is an adjunct to the College’s Mentoring Program for Trainees. The RCPA Ombudsman for Trainees will deal with matters related to Trainees and their training that a Trainee in a given situation feels has not been satisfactorily resolved after initial review.

The Ombudsman is to be consulted only when a reasonable effort has been made to resolve the problem through normal processes and it still is not resolved.

The Ombudsman may recommend a course of action to bring about changes that will help prevent future problems.

A Trainee may request that the Ombudsman become involved in a matter related to his training by written request to the Chief Executive Officer.

### ***9.3 Complaints procedure***

Reference:

- Policy No 13/1999: Complaints Handling

The complaints policy describes the handling of complaints directed to the College and arising from any of the College's internal or external activities and relationships. It is intended to cover complaints about the College as a body corporate and is not intended to cover complaints in relation to individual Fellows from a professional practice point of view.

The College is committed to fair and appropriate quality service to its membership, organisations and the general public.

All complaints will be treated confidentially and will be investigated with absolute neutrality. The College will ensure there is no detriment or disadvantage to any complainant.

The College will respond to all complaints promptly and courteously, and fully inform the complainant of the process which will be followed.

All complaints which are not resolved immediately by the person receiving them will be referred promptly to the Executive Officer, thence to the Chief Executive Officer and Officers of the College as appropriate.

Complaints data will be used to identify and rectify recurring or systemic problems.

### ***9.4 Discrimination and harassment***

Reference:

- Policy No. 12/1999: Discrimination and Harassment

This policy describes the prevention or management of incidents of discrimination and/or harassment occurring in the course of activities relating to the business of the College, training or working within the College. For Trainees, most instances of discrimination or harassment will occur in their place of work and complaints will be most appropriately handled within that organisation. Thus, for Trainees, this Policy relates primarily to incidents which may involve a supervisor or other person appointed by the College and occur outside the place of work.

Discrimination is defined as unfairly treating or disadvantaging a person on the basis of gender, pregnancy, race, age, marital status, sexual orientation or disability.

Harassment is behaviour directed at another person who is uninvited and unwelcome, humiliating, offensive or intimidating or targeted on the basis of discrimination as above.

Sexual harassment includes sexually related behaviour such as offensive jokes, innuendoes, suggestions or telephone calls; deliberate and unnecessary physical contact such as hugging or brushing against a person's body; circulating or displaying sexual material; intrusive enquiries into a person's private life; reference to a person's sexuality or physical appearance; persistent requests

for social contact, which have been repeatedly rebuffed; or a persistent staring or leering at a person or at parts of his/her body.

The College is committed to the principle that all Fellows, Affiliates, Associates, Trainees, Fellows of the Faculty of Oral Pathology and employees have the right to attend to College business, train and/or work within an environment free of discrimination or harassment. All have a responsibility to ensure that their behaviour is of a standard which contributes to such an environment.

Any complaint of discrimination or harassment will be dealt with formally as detailed in the RCPA Policy on Complaints Handling. Incidents will be dealt with promptly and confidentially. The possibility of a complainant being disadvantaged or victimised will not be tolerated.

Any person who believes they have been the victim of discrimination or harassment has the right to consult an external body, such as the Anti-Discrimination Board in NSW, the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission throughout Australia, the New Zealand Human Rights Commission, or if appropriate, the police.



Comments and feedback on this manual are welcome and should be directed  
to the Director, Education