

Guideline

Subject: Assessment of Training Programs for Accreditation of RCPA Training: Process for Assessment of Adequate Staffing Levels for Training for Fellowship of the RCPA

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While it is not possible to provide a standardised ratio of Pathologists to Trainees because of differences in the specimen number, specimen type and complexity of samples reported by different laboratories, assessors are asked to take into account a number of factors that collectively determine the fitness for training of a laboratory. The assessment is therefore largely a qualitative one that relies on a variety of non-quantifiable factors based on the following principles.

- Assessors consider the total number of cases the laboratory performs and the complexity of the case mix. For example, some laboratories may do small numbers of complex cases, with cases taking an hour to review while others do large numbers of less complex cases, which may only take 10 minutes.
- Assessors then review the pathologist FTEs taking into consideration clinical case load, including all the components of that work. For example, for Anatomical Pathology, numbers of surgical cases, cytology cases, frozen sections, fine needle aspirations and autopsies (foetal versus adult) need to be looked at with adjustment for complexity levels. For the other disciplines, the clinical commitment, especially for direct patient care, must be considered to ensure that there is sufficient laboratory FTE to cover service and training. In addition to clinical case loads, other commitments such as preparation and attendance at clinical case conferences, teaching, research, administrative work and quality assurance responsibilities are reviewed.
- Assessors review the number of Trainees in the department and look at work versus training commitments. A rough estimate of the amount of one-on-one training required to pass the Part 1 exam is approximately 1500 hours for Anatomical Pathology and 750 hours for the other disciplines.

The Assessors have discussions with Trainees as to whether they consider they are receiving adequate training. **This is critical.** The assessment of suitability for training is not determined solely by the quantity of tests performed in a laboratory, but rather by the overall experience of the Trainee in the operation of the service. The Trainee must be integrated into all of the activities of the laboratory from advice about specimen collection to the receipt of the specimen and the reporting of the results, including the performance of the assays and interpretation of the results.

- Assessors have discussions with the pathologists to assess their opinion of adequacy of the training program. This is also important.
- In Anatomical Pathology, average figures for surgical cases per pathologist have been developed and these are used as a rough guide, balanced with all previous criteria, as to whether there are adequate pathologists to provide training.