

## **COVID-19 and Trainee Progression in 2020 (update V) – 7 August 2020**

Please note this is primarily a UK-based document.

You can find all our previous statements [here](#).

The JCST is an advisory body to the four Surgical Royal Colleges of the UK and Ireland. It works closely with the Statutory Education Bodies<sup>1</sup> (SEBs), the General Medical Council (GMC), the Confederation of Postgraduate Schools of Surgery (CoPSS), and Trainee and Specialty Associations.

\*\*\*

We would like to start by welcoming new trainees to core and specialty training programmes. Although we are all currently living in atypical times, we hope your experience in the first few months (and beyond) of your training is positive and hope that you feel supported throughout.

We have all seen the impact of the pandemic and how training delivery has been adversely affected. We all now hope that the situation across the NHS stabilises and that your training resumes in full force. Well done to you all for all your hard work and resilience, and thank you.

Trainees' wellbeing and provision remains a high priority for all and we are continuing to work to find the safest and most pragmatic solutions. We hope this update addresses some of the current queries and offers further support and clarity.

This document includes information on the following:

1. Resuming surgical training
2. Training in the independent sector
3. ARCP management and Outcome 10
4. FRCS and MRCS examinations
5. New surgical curricula – August 2021 implementation, transition arrangements and the MCR
6. National Selection and Person Specifications for 2021
7. GMC's National Training Survey
8. Wellbeing support
9. Useful links and publications

Given the changing nature of the current situation, the advice below could be subject to further reviews and updates.

\*\*\*

---

<sup>1</sup> Health Education England (HEE), Health Education and Improvement Wales (HEIW), NHS Education for Scotland (NES), and Northern Ireland Medical & Dental Training Agency (NIMDTA)

## 1. Resuming surgical training

Now that the pandemic has subsided from its initial peak the NHS is [committed to returning elective activity to 80-90% of 2019 levels through the autumn](#). Surgical training activity should at least parallel this return. Our Twitter campaign [#NoTrainingTodayNoSurgeonsTomorrow](#) provided our followers with some tips on how to resume training in surgery and how to get the most out of all training opportunities. We list below some of our most popular suggestions:

- *Improve communication – go through a few of your trainee’s outpatient letters with them. Give feedback!*
- *Help trainees learn how to obtain consent – watch them in this COVID-19 era. Give feedback*
- *Learn from your trainee – have a coffee, go through the cases, ask how the unit is.*
- *Get better at training - get some feedback from others on how you train them, no matter what your grade.*
- *Involve trainees in the Multidisciplinary meeting– give them ownership of a few cases for discussion. Give feedback!*
- *Help trainees learn to plan – involve them in COVID-19 recovery planning.*
- *Watch your trainee assess an emergency admission. Give feedback!*
- *Take a back seat on the ward round once a week and let your trainee lead. Give feedback!*
- *Take your trainee to the virtual clinic and sit with them as they "see" patients. Give feedback!*
- *Get the most out of the training opportunity by taking 5 minutes to give objective specific feedback. Don't wait to be asked for it. Please give feedback kindly and constructively.*

Join in the conversation using [#NoTrainingTodayNoSurgeonsTomorrow](#)

## 2. Training in the independent sector

We are aware of the unsatisfactory situation in England (we believe this is not as widespread in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales) which exists with regard to trainees’ access to training in the independent sector. We know that Colleges, Schools of Surgery and SEBs share our concerns and are all working towards ensuring the delivery of clinical and operative training in the independent sector. We have worked with CoPSS to jointly raise our concerns with senior staff in HEE.

In the meantime, as part of our Twitter campaign [#NoTrainingTodayNoSurgeonsTomorrow](#), we posted a Twitter poll for feedback from trainees on what level of training they are receiving while working in private hospitals. The response rate was low, but the majority of those who engaged with our poll confirmed they are providing ward care only.

Please complete our Twitter polls when we post them – they give us useful information which can help us influence support for training.

We will continue to monitor training delivery on private provider sites on NHS patients. Discussions between relevant organisations are taking place to ensure that the NHS contract with the independent sector provides the level of support necessary to address training delivery.

See our previously published guidance on training in the independent sector [here](#).

### 3. ARCP management and Outcome 10

As reported in our previous update, the four SEBs published guidance on the management of ARCPs this summer and the new Outcome 10 – you can find it on the Conference of Postgraduate Medical Deans of the United Kingdom (COPMeD) website [here](#).

We also produced additional guidance on how Outcome 10 should be applied in surgery. Our guidance was required to follow SEB and GMC requirements. You can find it [here](#).

In line with the introduction of the new Outcome 10 we also published [curriculum derogations<sup>2</sup>](#). The GMC and the SEBs are due to review all current derogations across all medical specialties to ensure they are still relevant. We are currently reviewing derogations relevant to surgery in preparation for this review.

We continue to encourage our SAC Liaison Members (LMs) to attend all ARCPs to which they are invited, especially those for trainees who are at critical progression points such as certification. The current COVID-19 situation places an additional emphasis on the advice and support that SAC LMs can provide at ARCP panel meetings.

Both trainees and trainers are encouraged to refer to the JCST's [Guidance for recording COVID-19 experience in ISCP](#).

### 4. FRCS and MRCS examinations

The [Joint Committee on Intercollegiate Examinations](#) (JCIE) is responsible for running the FRCS exam and the [Intercollegiate Committee for Basic Surgical Examinations](#) (ICBSE) and individual Colleges are responsible for running the MRCS exam.

The latest guidance from the JCIE is available [here](#). A JCIE [statement](#) has also been sent to all Section 2 examination candidates to confirm the date of the next sitting.

The ICBSE has also published guidance on the format and sittings of MRCS Part A / DOHNS Part 1 and MRCS Part B / DOHNS Part 2 OSCE [here](#).

For further guidance on the FRCS examination please visit the [JCIE website](#) and for further guidance on the MRCS exam please visit the [ICBSE website](#).

The GMC has also now developed exceptional guidance and a self-assessment approval process to support medical royal colleges and faculties to introduce temporary changes to assessments so that they can be delivered during this period. This guidance has been shared with the relevant stakeholders.

---

<sup>2</sup> A derogation is a relaxation of a rule, in this case allowing relaxations of some aspects of the curriculum to allow for the impact of COVID-19

## **5. New surgical curricula – August 2021 implementation, transition arrangements and the MCR**

Following consultation with key stakeholders and discussions with the GMC on the impact of COVID-19 on the delivery of training this year and the impact it is having on the profession as a whole, it was agreed that implementation of the new curricula should be postponed to August 2021.

We plan to publish the new curricula on the [ISCP website](#) in the coming weeks but you can already find detailed information including transition arrangements [here](#). This will hopefully give trainees, trainers and those involved in the delivery of surgical training an opportunity to review and prepare for the implementation of the new curricula next year.

The trial Multiple Consultant Report (MCR) is available on ISCP (follow links to trial MCR after logging in). Trainees can use the MCR self-assessment to drive learning agreement meetings, using the tool to define learning priorities after COVID-19 disruption by taking the MCR self-assessment to the meeting. Because of disruption caused by COVID-19, it might be difficult for trainers to provide feedback in all areas of work using the MCR, but it can still be used to provide high quality feedback to trainees in those areas where clinical supervisors and trainees have worked together over the last few months.

## **6. National Selection and Person Specifications 2021**

We are currently working with the Specialty Advisory Committees (SACs) on possible contingency plans for national selection processes in 2021 (and for OMFS in September 2020). We are aware that the SEBs will run this autumn's selection using self-assessment, validation and virtual interviews. This is only possible because the numbers will be a lot smaller compared to the main round of national selection earlier in the year.

The Medical and Dental Recruitment and Selection (MDRS) group has commissioned an independent assessment to review and analyse the impact of national selection this year and investigate any bias in the process, particularly around the self-assessment and validation and we look forward to seeing the results later this month.

We are also reviewing the **person specifications** for 2021. The aim is to avoid disadvantaging those impacted by COVID-19 and to ensure flexibility without any detriment to patient safety. These will be discussed with MDRS in due course and we will keep you updated.

## **7. GMC's National Training Survey – Take part in the 2020 national training survey**

The General Medical Council's (GMC) 2020 national training survey is now live. Doctors in training and trainers have until Wednesday 12 August to take part.

The survey gathers important data from doctors in training and trainers on the quality of postgraduate medical education. It was originally scheduled to take place in March, but it was postponed to support doctors and health services to prioritise frontline care.

This year's survey is shorter and should take less than 10 minutes to fill in. Doctors will also be able to complete it on a mobile device. As well as the usual questions on topics such as workload,

wellbeing and clinical supervision, this year's survey also includes specific questions about the impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic on training.

The GMC is keen to hear about doctors' experiences of working and training during the pandemic. The results will help to identify learning points that could help the health services and employers prepare for similar events in the future.

The GMC will also use the data to work with other organisations to share good practice, tackle concerns and help to develop supportive and inclusive training environments.

If you're eligible, it is especially important for both trainers and trainees to take part this year. Your feedback is needed now more than ever.

[Visit the GMC website to find out more about the survey.](#)

Join in the conversation on Twitter using #GMCSurvey

## 8. Wellbeing support

Many people have found the last few months very difficult on top of the usual stresses and strains of work and life. If you are feeling the effects of these stresses, we strongly encourage you to seek support sooner rather than later. Support can be accessed through Trust's or Health Board's Director or Associate Director of Medical Education, or through the Educational Supervisor (ES), Training Programme Director (TPD), Associate Postgraduate Dean or Programme Support Unit.

A number of additional resources are also available at:

- NHS England/Improvement – includes a package of [wellbeing support](#), designed to help all NHS staff take steps to maintain their physical and mental health, and overall wellbeing. It includes:
  - a free wellbeing support helpline, providing confidential listening from trained professionals and specialist advice, including coaching, bereavement care, mental health and financial help on **0300 131 7000**, available from 7.00 am – 11.00 pm seven days a week
  - a 24/7 text alternative to the above helpline - simply text **FRONTLINE** to 85258
  - [online](#) peer to peer, team and personal resilience support, including through [Silver Cloud](#), and free mindfulness apps including [Unmind](#), [Headspace](#), [Sleepio](#) and [Daylight](#).
- NHS Scotland – NHS Inform website [here](#)
  - Further resources also available on the Scotland Deanery website [here](#)
- NHS Wales – [Staff Wellbeing COVID-19 Portal](#)
- NHS Northern Ireland – NIDirect website [here](#)
- The Intensive Care Society's website [here](#)
- The [Academy of Medical Royal Colleges](#)' (AoMRC) website – includes a number of resources and advice.
- The Royal College of Surgeons of England – [Confidential Support and Advice Service – Helpline](#)

## 9. Useful links and publications/guidance (new are highlighted in red)

- 1) [Gold Guide](#) (8<sup>th</sup> edition) released on 31 March 2020
  - includes derogation to GG8: 4.91 in response to COVID pandemic and impact on trainee progression assessments (ARCP) [here](#)
- 2) [Association of Surgeons in Training \(ASiT\)](#)
- 3) [British Orthopaedic Trainees' Association \(BOTA\)](#)
- 4) [GMC advice for Doctors](#) and trainees [ADD HYPERLINK]
- 5) [Health Education England \(HEE\)](#)
  - [Trainee Webinar on working in the private sector, shielding and BAME issues](#)
  - [Guidance on shielding](#)
- 6) [NHS Education for Scotland \(NES\)](#) and [Scotland Deanery](#)
  - includes guidance for Educational Supervisors (ES) in preparing for ESs reports for ARCPs in 2020 [here](#)
- 7) [Health Education and Improvement Wales \(HEIW\)](#)
- 8) [Northern Ireland Medical and Dental Training Agency \(NIMDTA\)](#)
- 9) [NHS England and NHS Improvement](#)
  - next [phase of the NHS response to COVID-19](#) (published 31 July)
- 10) [NHS Employers – Guidance on how to manage untaken annual leave due to COVID-19 for junior doctors](#)
- 11) [Academy of Medical Royal Colleges \(AoMRC\)](#)
- 12) Additional guidance and advice on COVID-19 is also available at:
  - [Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh](#)
  - [Royal College of Surgeons of England](#)
    - resources on the recovery of surgical services during and after COVID-19 [HYPERLINK]
    - [Surgical Prioritisation Guidance updated 30 July](#)
  - [Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow](#)
  - [Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland](#)
- 13) Additional guidance and advice on COVID-19 is also available at:
  - [Society of Cardiothoracic Surgery \(SCTS\)](#)
  - [Association of Surgeons of Great Britain and Ireland \(ASGBI\)](#)
  - [Society of British Neurological Surgeons \(SBNS\)](#)
  - [British Association of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons \(BAOMS\)](#)
  - [British Association of Ear, Nose and Throat Surgeons \(ENT UK\)](#)
  - [British Association of Paediatric Surgeons \(BAPS\)](#)
  - [British Association of Plastic, Reconstructive and Aesthetic Surgeons \(BAPRAS\)](#)
  - [British Orthopaedic Association \(BOA\)](#)
  - [British Association of Urological Surgeons \(BAUS\)](#)
  - [Vascular Society](#)

Please refer to JCST's previous statements [here](#) for additional links.

\*\*\*

**The following topics were addressed in previous JCST's statements released on:**

➤ **1 June 2020**

- ARCP management and outcome 10 (includes link to guidance on the management of ARCPs for LATs)
- FRCS and MRCS examinations
- Training in the COVID-19 recovery phase
- National Selection
- Wellbeing support
- Working during pregnancy
- Out of Programme (OOP)
- Clinical academic training

➤ **27 April 2020**

- Wellbeing support
- ARCP management and outcome 10
- Training Interface Group (TIG) Fellowships
- Out of Programme (OOP)
- Useful links

➤ **17 April 2020:**

- Wellbeing support
- National Selection
- [Guidance for recording COVID-19 experience in ISCP](#)
- ARCPs management
- Out of Programme (OOP)
- Acting Up as a Consultant (AUC)

➤ **1 April 2020:**

- National Selection
- Training Interface Group (TIG) Fellowships
- FRCS examination
- Acting Up as a Consultant (AUC)

➤ **19 March 2020:**

- MRCS and Progression to ST3
- Annual Review of Competence Progression (ARCP)
- Workforce and training vacancies
- Out of Programme (OOP)
- Trainee time off due to illness/self-isolation
- Training post rotations

\*\*\*

Trainees and trainers (TPDs, AESs and CSs) should communicate regularly to enable trainees' concerns to be discussed openly and ways forward to be found.

The JCST will continue to endeavour to support trainees and trainers during this time, and will update those involved in training on a regular basis as we continue to monitor the situation.

This update will be posted as a news item on the [JCST](#) and [ISCP](#) websites and will be shared on Twitter [@JCST\\_Surgery](#).

For ongoing updates on surgical training in the UK and Ireland, please follow us on Twitter [@JCST\\_Surgery](#).