Principles for delivering a quality assured Annual Review of Competence Progression (ARCP) process for specialty training

Health Education England

Postgraduate Medical Education, Wessex

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Contents

1. The Rationale for standardising the approach to ARCPs
2. The Purpose of ARCPs
3. Key Principles
1.0 Rationale for standardising the approach to Annual Review of Competence Progression (ARCPs)

- Historically the Deanery has had a number of appeals usually against ARCP Outcome 4s and an Employment Tribunal
- An external review by Chair of COPMED reported serious concerns with our internal ARCP processes which led to an appeal and Employment Tribunal
- The Gold Guide is increasingly seen as guidance by ourselves and increasingly used by lawyers and trainees as the law
- There has been significant variability between how Schools implement ARCPs and capture information e.g. on review of paperwork it has at times been impossible to determine which year of training was assessed at ARCP, how much additional training time had been granted, why decisions were made
- Historically, we have caused significant trauma to trainees who we have released from training based on both incorrect information and incorrect process – and on occasions have had to return trainees to training when we are aware that there are very significant concerns but our lack or process has tripped us up
- Revalidation – this is the basis on which the Responsible Officer (RO) makes decisions and needs clear and unequivocal assurance that decisions are being made on the basis of sound evidence and process
- Deaneries across the country have changed their processes in accord with the Gold Guide and we were becoming an outlier

This document has gone back to first principles to define the purpose of the ARCP and to base our principles around the Gold Guide.

Wessex has always prided itself on adding something extra to medical education which goes above and beyond the ‘tick-box competency’ culture which ARCPs are drawing us into. We recognise that we need to do the ARCPs – they are the currency by which trainees progress but are essentially a summative assessment process. Fundamentally we want our educators to focus on the formative and this change in process is to help deliver the compulsory summative process (the ARCP) in as simple, streamlined and consistent process as possible in order for Schools to really focus on the formative component of good medical education. We believe that the separation of summative and formative will allow us to achieve

- A quality assured consistent ARCP process which is in line with the Gold Guide and will reduce the problems Wessex has had with appeals and inconsistent decision-making
- Provide the RO with assurance on which decisions for Revalidation can be made
- Most importantly, deliver the added benefit of bringing the ‘Wessex Way’ back into Medical Education by removing it from the summative ARCP process

This document sets down an agreed set of principles which will quality assure the ARCP process. There is recognition that Schools have differing access to ePortfolios, numbers of trainees and already well-established processes which are in accord with many of these principles. We acknowledge that a ‘one size fits all’ approach will be unlikely to work – rather, this document defines the core principles to set out ‘what’ needs to be delivered by Schools and let Schools determine ‘how’ this will be operationalised.

2.0 The Purpose of ARCPs

The ARCP is a summative formal process to review submitted evidence (usually on the ePortfolio) to determine if training has been completed or progression into next stage of training can occur. It also clarifies any need for directed training or extension to training and is the process to assure the Responsible Officer (RO) and employer that the trainee is up to date and fit to practise.

3.0 Key Principles

These key principles are based on the Gold Guide but are not intended to capture all aspects of the Gold Guide. The entire terms of the Gold Guide govern our ARCP process in all cases.

3.1 Schools will define acceptable evidence for submission to ARCP panel i.e. ePortfolio only or ePortfolio and paper

3.2 There will be a clear separation of summative assessment (the ARCP) from the formative process

3.3 All panel members will have ARCP training

3.4 The panel’s decision of the summative assessment will be made in advance of the decision being communicated to the trainee and is non-negotiable

3.5 The ARCP should occur within the last 2-4 months of each year of training for full-time trainees to determine suitability for progression to next year of training

3.6 A trainee will have only one ARCP each year (unless on an Outcome 3 or 5). Formal and informal interim reviews of progress are acceptable but are not called ARCPs (these are called and documented as Interim Reviews).

3.7 Any school considering an ARCP outside the annual review to deal with performance and progression issues should NOT do this until a discussion has occurred with the Postgraduate Dean.

3.8 Timelines and year of training will be documented for each trainee and CCT date confirmed at ARCP

3.9 The minimum ARCP panel composition is three panel members of which one must be the Postgraduate Dean/Deputy or a Training Programme Director (TPD)/nominated deputy. A random 10% of ARCP outcomes must be reviewed by an external adviser and lay advisor. Lay advisors do
not need to be present at all ARCP panels but schools may decide how much input they require from lay advisors.

3.10 Lay advisors are not part of a formative education planning discussion with trainees.

3.11 Panel members should declare an interest if they are the Educational or Clinical Supervisor for a trainee being considered and withdraw while their trainee is being considered. The panel must be constituted to remain quorate (3 members) in this situation, as above.

3.12 Trainees with ARCP Outcome 1, ARCP Outcome 5 and ARCP Outcome 6 are not required to be seen face-to-face on the day that the ARCP is held.

3.13 Expected ARCP Outcome 2, ARCP Outcome 3 and ARCP Outcome 4 outcomes will be concentrated into defined sessions with trainees available for face-to-face feedback.

3.14 There will be a clear process for discussion between the TPD, the Named Educational Supervisor and the trainee following an ARCP Outcome 2 or 3 to confirm a Learning Agreement. (This may be face to face or via teleconference which and must be documented). This must result in a Learning Agreement signed by the trainee, Educational Supervisor and TPD (and included in trainee’s portfolio).

3.15 Communicating outcomes following an ARCP will be in accordance with section 7.71 Gold Guide.

3.16 All trainees will have face-to-face meetings with a TPD at least once a year. This enables the TPD to have an overview of the rotation, training placements and trainee progression.

3.17 ARCP for Less-than-full-time (LTFT) trainees will be timed to coincide with the process for full-time trainees, apart from the year in which they will be moving from one year of training to the next, when this coincides with this anniversary. All LTFT trainees will have a minimum of one ARCP per year.

3.18 There will be a process to individualise ARCP timing if a trainee falls out of synchronisation with the established annual system, e.g. ARCP Outcome 3, OOPC, sick leave ≥ 3/12, maternity leave.

3.19 There will be a robust and consistent process to ensure Revalidation/Form R review and to inform the RO of the outcome.

3.20 A trainee with an ARCP Outcome 2 will remain on an Outcome 2 until their next annual ARCP. An Interim Review to determine progress will occur however. An ARCP Outcome 2 does not change the timing of subsequent ARCPs or the Certificate of Completion of Training (CCT) date.

3.21 If an ARCP Outcome 3 is recommended by the panel, the length of the proposed extension of training should be proposed to the Dean for agreement. Following an ARCP Outcome 3, a further ARCP must be arranged for the month preceding completion of the extension. This will review the evidence of completion of the learning agreement and will result in an ARCP outcome. Subsequent ARCPs will then occur on the anniversary of the review of extension to training for full-time trainees, i.e. progression to next year of training. An ARCP Outcome 3 will require a formal change of CCT date.

3.22 Schools must clearly define the role of College Tutors/Educational Leads and how they interface with the ARCP process and the role of Training Programme Director.