



Federation of the Royal Colleges  
of Physicians of the United Kingdom

Dear Colleagues

## **Re: Temporary suspension of Penultimate Year Assessments (PYAs) for physicianly specialties**

We are writing to clarify the current position in relation to the temporary suspension of PYAs. This suspension, during the COVID-19 pandemic, was requested by the four Statutory Education Bodies (SEBs) and supported by the JRCPTB and GMC and has been in place since 16 March 2020. The purpose of the suspension was to free up as much administrative and clinical time as possible, given the vital contribution of trainees and educators in the physicianly specialties in dealing with the coronavirus outbreak.

Trainees and trainers value the PYA process and have been keen to understand the implications for trainees who have missed or will miss their PYAs. The PYA normally takes place 12-18 months prior to the expected training completion date. It provides an opportunity for a trainee to meet with a senior trainer from their specialty who is external to their school or deanery, to review progress against the curriculum and identify outstanding training targets. The PYA also provides an opportunity for external review of local training programmes enabling sharing of good practice and improvement.

The benefits of the PYA need to be balanced against the time pressures on clinicians and administrative staff in the context of the ongoing COVID-19 outbreak and their ability to deliver important requirements of training, particularly as we enter a second wave of infections across the UK.

The four SEBs, the JRCPTB and the GMC have collaborated to explore how processes could be implemented to ensure that any impact of the PYA suspension on training is minimised. We are aware of two key points which have caused some anxiety among trainees and trainers. To clarify:

- **The PYA is not a requirement for trainee progression to CCT.**
- **Trainees who were due to have a PYA during the period of suspension will not be expected to undertake one if PYAs restart before their CCT date.**

The following principles have been agreed between the SEBs and the JRCPTB and supported by the GMC:

- PYAs will remain suspended until further notice, but the benefits of the process for individual trainees should be maintained by ensuring there are enhanced local supervision arrangements for all and targeted support from the JRCPTB where need is identified
- The local supervision enhancement should ensure that all trainees who would have been due a PYA during the period March 2020 to April 2021 have a 'looking forward' meeting with their educational supervisor (ES). This meeting will include reviewing progress against the curriculum and the identification of outstanding training targets, similar to the process that would be carried out by an external advisor during a PYA. This should include a review of the relevant JRCPTB ARCP decision aid(s) (including approved derogations), which will ensure both trainers and trainees are fully aware and informed of any outstanding training requirements
- If a trainee and/or their educational supervisor has concerns that they do not feel can be addressed locally, then they should escalate these to the Training Programme Director (TPD). Examples might include, but are not restricted to, uncertainties about outstanding training requirements in GIM for dual training trainees or a trainee requesting to bring forward their CCT date
- If a TPD considers that an individual trainee would benefit from further external input, they can approach the JRCPTB PYA office who will offer support, advice and external input from advisors familiar with undertaking the PYA. Any external input must be provided virtually and arranged by the TPD and the JRCPTB
- This would not involve a local panel of trainers so that local administrative input is kept to a minimum although the local office must be notified
- TPDs should ensure the postgraduate Dean is informed of all cases where external input from the JRCPTB is requested and any information (positive or negative) relating to the local training programme identified as part of the process.

We hope that this letter clarifies the current position, and we will keep you updated of any further changes with an update well in advance of the summer ARCPs to ensure clarity, consistency and alignment of processes. We are grateful to all trainers and trainees for your understanding, support and commitment in these unprecedented circumstances.



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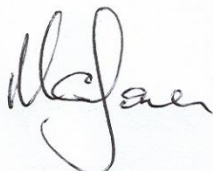
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