



Appointment of professional performance reviewers

1. Background

Under its Royal Charter, The Royal College of Pathologists has a responsibility to maintain professional standards in pathology practice. This extends to all aspects of the professional activities of pathologists, including both NHS and private work and diagnostic, managerial and educational activities. The College's Professional Standards Unit (PSU) supports this work. The primary aim of the College is to protect the public interest by ensuring that all pathologists perform to a high standard. Inevitably, there will be individuals or teams whose conduct and/or competence will be called into question, but the College also recognises that pathology specialists have a right to expect that any investigation of their professional practice is fair and expeditious.

The Royal College of Pathologists has a Professional Performance Panel (PPP) that oversees the College's involvement in reviews of individuals or wider services. Panel membership is drawn from senior members of the profession from various pathology disciplines and includes a lay member. The College President chairs the Panel. The PSU is responsible for the administration of the organisational aspects of the review process.

2. Types of review

Initial enquiries are directed to the College's Professional Standards Unit. All enquiries are screened and advice is offered. Where appropriate, the Professional Standards Unit will send a request form for a performance review visit. The form must be completed by the Medical Director or Chief Executive, and returned to the Director of Professional Standards.

Based on the information provided in the request form and any supporting documentation, a decision will be taken as to whether or not a College review is appropriate.

The College will consider conducting a review visit if the problem relates to:

- a) concerns about the performance of an individual pathologist
- b) concerns about the performance of a pathology department
- c) concerns about the overall quality of a pathology service.

3. Role of assessor

- Conduct each review in accordance with the Royal College of Pathologists' guidance.
- Agree terms of reference with the employing organisation and conduct each review in accordance with them.



- Work closely with the other members of the review team and College staff to plan the content and process of the review.
- Maintain the confidentiality of all information relating to the College, the employing organisation, the practitioner(s) under service review, patients and other parties.

4. Person specification

- Be a Fellow of the Royal College of Pathologists and in active practice.
- Be a currently registered medical practitioner of good standing with the General Medical Council and on the Specialist Register in a pathology specialty.
- Have at least five years' standing as a consultant working in pathology and be currently practising in an NHS environment.
- Be familiar with and able to apply standards relevant to their clinical specialty.
- Have continuous participation in CPD.
- Must have previous training in equality and diversity issues.
- Possess excellent oral and written communication skills, including the ability to write substantial reports.
- Be able to collect, analyse and synthesise information and record data accurately.
- Be able to demonstrate qualities or experience that would assist in a reviewer's role.
- Be committed to working with the College's performance review process.
- Be participating in relevant interpretive EQA.
- Work in a CPA-accredited or conditionally-approved laboratory or must make a declaration why the laboratory is not accredited, which can be assessed for relevance to the proposed investigation.
- Have demonstrable integrity, and base judgements upon an unbiased and logical approach, maintaining flexibility and consideration of the wider context.
- Be able to work effectively as a team member to complete a task.
- Be able to manage a challenging and complex environment, sometimes under stressful conditions.
- Be able to work under pressure and to deadlines, while maintaining enthusiasm.
- Be able to demonstrate understanding of others' contributions, while being sensitive to others' verbal and non-verbal reactions.
- Have a clear understanding of confidentiality in relation to both evidence and the review team's deliberations, and have a commitment to its maintenance.
- Have demonstrative commitment and respect for equality and diversity.
- Be prepared to make a declaration of any involvement in complaint or litigation proceedings against them.
- Not currently being investigated for poor performance.

5. Term of office

Membership of the College's review panel will be for a period of up to five years in the first instance, with the opportunity of a further period. Any further membership would be subject to a review process and attendance at necessary training days (one day per year maximum).

6. Time commitment

Reviewers should be prepared to undertake up to two reviews per year and be willing to travel within the UK. Each review will involve being away for two to three nights. It is possible an individual may not be called upon during the year at all.

7. Remuneration

When acting as a reviewer, the organisation commissioning the review (normally a Trust) will reimburse all expenses.

8. Confidentiality

This role requires integrity and sensitivity in dealing with confidential matters. The reviewer must maintain confidentiality of information about health service staff and patients. This means that when the reviewer is responsible for personal and confidential information, he/she must take reasonable steps to be protected against improper disclosure. If the reviewer is concerned about the confidential nature of any issue, he/she is encouraged to raise the subject first with the Director of Professional Standards. The reviewer should also ensure that he/she is aware of the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1998, Human Rights Act 1998, the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 and the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

9. Equality and diversity

The Royal College of Pathologists is committed to ensuring equality of opportunity, in line with the Equality and Diversity Policy (www.rcpath.org/resources/pdf/EqualityAndDiversityPolicy.pdf). No reviewer, staff member or practitioner under review will be discriminated against on grounds of their race, ethnicity, religion or belief, nationality, gender, marital status, sexual orientation, disability, age or family/caring responsibilities. The Royal College of Pathologists aims to provide equal services to all its staff and clients, and will not tolerate behaviour which does not support this policy. Reviewers undertaking services on behalf of the College should adhere to the equal opportunities policy and have up-to-date knowledge with Equality and Diversity legislation.

10. The appointment process

New reviewers are selected by their respective Regional Councils, who then communicate the names to the Professional Standards Unit. The process is as follows.

1. The advertisement and recruitment information is posted on the College website.
2. Regional Council Chair sends an email to Fellows in the region, drawing their attention to this round of recruitment.

3. Applicants apply to the Regional Council via email with a covering letter stating how they meet the person specification (section 4) and why they wish to be a reviewer, and a short *curriculum vitae*.
4. The Regional Council reviews each application and selects candidates who match the person specification. If there are more eligible candidates than places requested, the Regional Council takes a vote. The names and details are forwarded to the PSU.
5. The PSU invites the selected candidates to join the panel as reviewers and invites them to a training day.