



ASSESSMENT DEPARTMENT

COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS PROCEDURE

The Assessment Department of The Royal College of Pathologists is responsible for workplace-based assessments and year 1 assessments.

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The Assessment Department is committed to providing a quality service to all its users and achieving the highest standards of conduct. It is recognised that sometimes mistakes may be made. To deal with mistakes a complaints and appeals procedure have been devised which aims to cover all the activities managed by the Assessment Department.
- 1.2 The department takes the view that complaints helps to improve its services and procedures. One of the ways for continuous improvement is listening and responding to the views of the department's users.

2 Definition of complaint

- 2.1 In this document, a complaint is defined as any critical comment about assessment conditions, procedure, assessors or College staff involved in the assessment where there is no intention to query the result of the assessment.
- 2.2 Complaints regarding workplace-based assessment or the Annual Review of Competence Progression (ARCP) are dealt with by the Deanery responsible for the training programme and not the College. Deaneries have protocols for dealing with complaints and trainees should contact the deanery directly in such instances.

3. Definition of appeal

- 3.1 In this document, an appeal is defined as a submission by a trainee against the result of an assessment (invariably a failing trainee who feels he/she should have passed). An appeal can only be entertained by the department if it concerns a College-organised assessment. The only such assessment currently being organised through this department is the Year 1 assessment.
- 3.2 If a trainee wishes to appeal the decision of an assessor for workplace-based assessment or the Annual Review of Competence Progression (ARCP) panel, he/she should approach the Deanery responsible, and not the College. Deaneries have protocols for dealing with challenges and trainees should contact the deanery directly.



4. When to complain or appeal

- 4.1 Complaints and appeals to the College should ideally be made within one month of the date the problem or concern arose to enable us to establish what happened more readily.

5 How to complain

- 5.1 A formal complaint should be notified to the Assessment Manager either by post or email setting out all the details. It should include what is believed to have gone wrong and what actions could possibly remedy the problem. Her contact details are:

Ms Sandra Dewar
Assessment Manager
The Royal College of Pathologists
2 Carlton House Terrace
London
SW1Y 5AF

sandra.dewar@rcpath.org

6 How the complaint will be handled

- 6.1 Once the Assessment Manager receives a written complaint she will arrange for it to be fully investigated. The complaint will be acknowledged in writing within five working days of receiving it and the letter will say when a full response can be expected. This will normally be within three weeks. It is recognised that this may not always be possible, particularly if it is necessary to obtain further information, for example, from assessors. In such cases the complainant will be notified about what action is being taken and when a full response can be expected.
- 6.2 In considering the complaint, the Assessment Manager will:
- find out what happened and what went wrong
 - analyse the complaint in the context of the assessment procedures
 - determine whether the complaint is valid
 - where applicable, identify what can be done to ensure the problem does not happen again
- 6.3 Any complaints which directly concern the Assessment Manager will be dealt with through the College complaints procedure by referring the matter to the Chief Executive. This procedure may also be used by complainants who are not satisfied with the initial response of the Assessment Department outlined above. Details of this procedure can be found on the College website at <http://www.rcpath.org/index.asp?PageID=913>
- 6.4 Complaints and their outcome will be monitored by the Joint Committee on Pathology Training (JCPT) to ensure that appropriate preventative measures are put in place when necessary.

7. How to appeal

Workplace-Based Assessment

- 7.1 If a trainee wishes to appeal the decision of an assessor or the Annual Review of Competence Progression (ARCP) panel, he/she should approach the Deanery responsible, and not the College.



Year 1 Assessment

- 7.2 Some candidates who have failed a critical assessment feel that they deserved to pass, and may wish to appeal against the declared result. The College considers that in applying marking schemes and making expert judgements nothing can supplant the judgement of the original assessor(s) marking an assessment. The principle underlying this is that the reliability of the marking decision is greatest at the time of the initial assessor's judgement, i.e. when written papers or communication stations are marked at the time of the assessment. Subsequent review by different or by independent assessors cannot guarantee greater accuracy or reliability, as the conditions that foster marking reliability cannot be recreated at a later date.
- 7.3 A candidate who has taken the College year 1 assessment has the right to appeal if there is evidence of a procedural or administrative irregularity by the College or its contractors in the conduct or content of the assessment that has adversely affected the candidate's result. Any such appeal should be made by the candidate himself/herself, and must be made in writing to the Director of Examinations and Assessment at the College within four weeks of the issue of the result.

Director of Examinations and Assessment
The Royal College of Pathologists
2 Carlton House Terrace
London
SW1Y 5AF

8 How the appeal will be handled

- 8.1 The Director of Examinations and Assessment will arrange appropriate investigation of the appeal. This will include checking that no administrative, procedural, numerical, data transcription or computing errors have occurred, and that the declared result accurately reflects the judgement of the assessors.
- 8.2 Appeals submitted on the grounds that a candidate seeks to challenge the professional or academic judgement of the assessor will **not** be considered. **In no circumstances** will papers be re-marked.
- 8.3 Where an appeal is upheld, the Director of Examinations and Assessment will decide if and what further action is appropriate. Such action may comprise a review of assessment procedure, refund of the assessment fee or waiving the fee for the next opportunity to attempt the year 1 assessment etc. A reasoned response will normally be provided within four weeks of receipt of the appeal.
- 8.4 Appeals and their outcome will be monitored by the JCPT to ensure that appropriate preventative measures are put in place when necessary.
- 8.5 If, following the department's response, you are not satisfied you can take the matter further by going through the College complaints procedure and referring the matter to the Chief Executive. Details of this procedure can be found on the College website at: <http://www.rcpath.org/index.asp?PageID=913>



9 Learning lessons

- 9.1 A register of complaints and appeals will be maintained by the Assessment Manager detailing the nature of the complaint and the outcome. To help us learn lessons from the complaints and appeals received, the register will be reviewed on a periodic basis by the Director of Examinations and Assessment and the JCPT. They will be aiming to identify trends that indicate a need to review regulations and procedures. Furthermore, the Training Department and the College Advisory Training Team (CATT) Chairs will be advised of all complaints and appeals relating to their specialty.

ASSESSMENT DEPARTMENT

Updated December 2009

