

Information and guidance on the Multi-source feedback (MSF) assessment ST3/5 and ST5/7 trainees (Stages B-C/D)

This guidance is also relevant to Oral and Maxillofacial Pathology trainees at year of training 3 and 5.

1 Introduction

The Royal College of Pathologists has developed a universal pathology focussed multi-source feedback (MSF) tool to be completed by trainees that are appropriate to all pathology specialties. The MSF generates part of the necessary evidence for appraisal and the Annual Review of Competence Progression (ARCP).

It is a requirement for pathology trainees to undertake three MSF assessments during training – at ST1, 3 and 5 (or ST3, 5 and 7 if entering training after completion of Core Medical Training and acquisition of MRCP) prior to the award of a Certificate of Completion of Training (CCT). This is in addition to workplace-based assessments.

ST3/5 and ST5/7 trainees (Stages B-C/D) and those trainees who have transferred to the 2010 and beyond GMC-approved curriculum and assessment system must undertake their MSF assessments. This applies to all trainees in:

- ST3 (ST5 for chemical pathology/metabolic medicine trainees)
- ST5 (ST7 for dual medical microbiology and virology/infectious diseases and chemical pathology/metabolic medicine trainees).

Less than full-time trainees can participate in MSF based on their cohort year. This is to ensure that they are given the appropriate opportunities to undertake the MSF assessments. Less than full-time trainees may request a delay in undertaking their MSF (e.g. to the following year) if they think it may be more appropriate.

The following table is an example of when trainees, who started training in 2016 on a less than full-time training (LTFT) basis, (i.e. at 50%) ideally should undertake their MSF assessments.

Start Year 2016	ST1	2016-17 and 2017-18	MSF ST1 in 2018
	ST2	2018-19 and 2019-20	
	ST3	2020-21 and 2021-22	MSF ST3 in 2022
	ST4	2022-23 and 2023-24	
	ST5	2024-25 and 2025-26	MSF ST5 in 2026

MSF is a systematic process whereby the recipient is rated on their performance by people who are familiar with their work.



The purpose of the MSF assessment in pathology specialties is to:

- encourage professional and self-development;
- generate candid feedback on behaviour, attitude, communication and team-working issues;
- provide feedback about learning needs and areas for improvements by highlighting strengths, identifying weaknesses and indicating problems in practice to inform personal development planning;
- provide evidence to be discussed and triangulated at the ARCP and appraisal;
- facilitate discussion at appraisal;
- provide evidence for future revalidation processes.

2 Background

The MSF assessment is based on SPRAT (Sheffield Peer Review Assessment Tool) and was initially developed in Sheffield for obtaining multi-source feedback for trainees in paediatrics and is also the basis of the Royal College of Pathologists' existing MSF for year 1 trainees.

SPRAT is a peer-rating tool, explicitly mapped to *Good Medical Practice* (GMP), the General Medical Council's (GMC) framework for good practice for all doctors in the UK covering all grades and specialties. Evidence from the US and Canada supports the use of peer ratings as part of workplace-based assessment programmes. The GMC has identified peer ratings as suitable for postgraduate assessment and revalidation evidence.

Please see www.bmj.com/cgi/content/full/330/7502/1251 for further information on the origins of SPRAT.

The College has developed its own non-specialty specific questions that reflect the attitudes required for a pathologist. These questions have been subjected to expert review.

The MSF assessment will be administered by The Royal College of Pathologists. The process is being provided online via the Learning Environment for Pathology Trainees (LEPT) system.

3 Why multi-source feedback (MSF)?

Multi-source feedback can be an effective form of assessment with distinct characteristics. In particular, it concerns performance over time rather than individual supervised learning events. Also, specific training is not required in order to contribute to reliable and valid MSF. MSF can be used for both assessment of learning and assessment for learning within medical education and training and also for doctors who have completed their postgraduate training.

The College has chosen the MSF tool because of the following (non-exhaustive) list of reasons:

- it assesses a range of generic skills
- it stimulates learning in important areas
- it provides structured feedback with a potential for behavioural change
- it works in other healthcare environments
- it provides an opportunity for individuals to compare how they rate themselves with how they are perceived by their colleagues
- it promotes personal development as well as flagging up problem areas
- it enables the trainee to collect high-quality evidence to inform the ARCP and appraisal process.



4 Summary of the MSF process

MSF assessments for ST3/5 and ST5/7 trainees are conducted on an individual basis and as trainees are at different stages of training, a collective MSF start date cannot be stipulated by the College. Trainees can initiate their MSF assessments anytime; however, it should coincide in a timely manner with the planned date of the ARCP. (For those trainees who are out of training, e.g. on maternity leave, please initiate your MSF assessment at an appropriate time when you return to training).

1. Access the College website at: <https://www.rcpath.org>.
2. Enter your email address and password at 'Log in to MyRCPath' which is at the top of the screen. If you do not have logins for the website, please click into the 'Forgotten password' link, enter your email address in order to receive further instructions.
3. Click into the link – 'Access the LEPT system' which is under the section called 'About the College' on the front screen. This will enable LEPT access.
4. Click into the tab named 'Assessments', then select 'Enter new assessment', scroll to the bottom of the page to begin the process. (ST1 trainees (i.e. ST1 Chemical Pathology and ST3 Chemical Pathology (Metabolic Medicine, ST1 Histopathology, **SHOULD NOT** use this section to create their MSF assessments).
5. If the 'Enter MSF assessment' tab do not appear at the bottom of the screen, it probably means that the correct year of training is not listed on the LEPT system. The likely cause for this is non-receipt of the ARCP outcome form which shows progression to Year 3 of specialty training. Please either send a copy of the ARCP outcome form to training@rcpath.org or ask the deanery/LETB to do so.
6. Trainees must nominate at least 10 assessors (maximum 12) to rate them. Guidance on the selection of assessors is given below. The consent of the nominated assessors to complete an MSF assessment should be sought in advance.
7. The list of nominated assessors requires educational supervisor's approval. **It is important that the educational supervisor's details are updated in the LEPT system beforehand.** This is to ensure that the list of nominated assessors is automatically electronically submitted to the right person.
8. A self-assessment MSF form (the same as the one completed by assessors) must be completed before the list of nominated assessors can be submitted to the educational supervisor for approval. The self-assessment will enable the comparison with that of the assessors and not be seen by anyone until the MSF assessment process is complete. Trainees must compare themselves with peers at the same stage of training (i.e. Stage B). For example, an average trainee at Stage B would score 4.
9. The whole MSF process will run for 4 weeks (with an additional 2 weeks if necessary). The time starts as soon as the educational supervisor has approved the list of proposed MSF assessors.
10. The assessors are contacted automatically by email and asked to provide the multi-source feedback. Those assessors who are already listed on the LEPT system will be able to log in with their existing passwords. However, those not already listed on the system will receive temporary links and passwords.



11. The assessors will be automatically reminded, by the system, to complete the assessments. However, trainees are also asked to remind their assessors to complete the MSF assessment within the given timescales.
12. The assessors complete the online assessment form so that the aggregation can take place. Whilst the assessors are completing the assessments, trainees and educational supervisors are not able to see the progress, so it may be useful for trainees to make a note of the 4 week (or 6 week) duration in terms of the expected closure.
13. The minimum required amount of MSF assessors before the aggregation takes place is 7. This is to ensure a higher degree of validity and feasibility. Trainees with fewer than 7 assessors completing their MSF assessment will **not** receive feedback within the initial 4 weeks deadline and therefore the system will automatically allow an additional 2 weeks for the process to complete.
14. When the MSF process is complete, a MSF report will be generated for each trainee. It will be automatically available electronically (via an email alert) to the educational supervisor and will appear on their LEPT home page. If this has not taken place after the 6 weeks from the commencement of the MSF assessment, then trainees are asked to email assessment@rcpath.org.
15. The MSF report is verbatim and anonymised. Educational supervisors are asked to present the feedback to trainees with the aim of helping them to gain a better understanding of their strengths and weaknesses and to identify areas for development.
16. Guidance notes on presenting feedback are available [here](#).
17. Following the verbal feedback, educational supervisors must electronically release the MSF report to trainees' LEPT ePortfolio.
18. Trainees will be automatically alerted via emails when the MSF reports are released by their educational supervisors. The opportunity to link the MSF reports to learning outcomes will become available at this point, after which they will be populated into the relevant ARCP and then become viewable by trainees' educational supervisors, training programme directors and heads of pathology schools where relevant.

5 Guidance on the selection of assessors

The following types of MSF assessors can be selected. The list is intended to cover all of the types of potential assessors a trainee may come in contact with and wish them to give an assessment of their performance. Not all trainees in all pathology specialties will come in contact with all types. This is the list from which to categorise the MSF assessors.

1. Consultant in same specialty
2. Consultant outwith specialty
3. StR in same specialty
4. Trainee outwith specialty
5. Clinical scientist
6. Senior biomedical scientist
7. Nurse/allied health professional
8. Anatomical pathology technologist
9. Pharmacist
10. Admin or clerical staff member
11. Other (particularly for Forensic Pathology trainees)



Trainees are asked to select assessors in the following way:

When choosing assessors from the above list you must choose less than three assessors currently in training within or outwith your specialty. You must include your supervising consultant(s) in your list of assessors. If the intention is for the educational supervisor to be one of the MSF assessor, then their name must be included.

The type and number of assessor you select will be listed on the feedback report demonstrating again to the educational supervisor that an appropriate selection was made.

6 Identifying problem areas for trainees

As a result of this process, problem areas will be identified for a minority of trainees. Further assessment may be required to clarify the nature of problems identified in a given domain. Problem areas are to be addressed using an agreed framework and a plan for re-assessment.

Repeated MSF assessment can be generated as and when required.

7 Data protection issues

It is very understandable that there may be questions in relation to the Data Protection Act.

Written comments from assessors will be fed back to trainees as reproduced verbatim, but these will not be attributable to a specific assessor.

Assessors completing the MSF assessment do so on the understanding that their confidentiality will be maintained at all times and that any feedback supplied to trainees is anonymous. Trainees will not at any stage be provided with information which would allow them to identify individual assessors.

No personal information will be released to a third party without the expressed consent of the data subject. This is in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998: Section 7, paragraphs 4 and 6.

The MSF data is personal information and as such is subject to an absolute exemption (Section 40) from the Freedom of Information Act.

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