



Guidance for trainee representatives sitting on RCPATH committees including the Trainees' Advisory Committee

Introduction

Representing trainees on a committee is a very enjoyable, rewarding, and interesting opportunity. Not only does it provide you with very useful experience of leadership and management roles, but it can also show you how different committees work and allows you to see how changes can be made to improve and develop different aspects of pathology workstreams. This guide will be helpful to those who are very new to representative roles and are seeking information about what the roles entail and how to make the most of the opportunities that they present.

The Committees

Committees can range in size from very small numbers to 60+, but whatever the size, a committee can work effectively and efficiently with engaged members. As a trainee representative, you may be involved in the following committees within the College:

Trainees' Advisory Committee (TAC):

The committee is comprised of trainees from all pathology specialities. We meet to discuss issues or projects related to training within the different specialities and pathology as a whole. Topics for discussion include examinations, assessments, curricula, trainee wellbeing and support, amongst others. The committee meets twice a year and in advance of the meeting, a questions portal is opened on the website which allows the trainee committee to submit questions that they would like the committee to address. The committee works very closely with the College Officers and the President, Vice-President for Learning, Director of Learning, Director of Examinations, and Clinical Director of Learning and Assessment attend part of the meeting to support the work of the committee and seek trainee views on other College workstreams.

Specialty Advisory Committee (SAC):

There is a SAC for each of the different specialities of pathology, which deal with speciality specific professional issues and helps to set direction. There is a trainee representative on each of these committees and they are a valued member of the team, providing the trainee perspective on the different projects that the committees are involved with.

College Specialty Training Committee (CSTC):

Each of the specialities for which RCPATH is responsible for training has a CSTC, including Cellular Pathology, Medical Microbiology & Medical Virology, and Chemical Pathology. Training Programme Directors meet to discuss matters specifically related to training (e.g., workplace-based assessments, the LEPT system, the curriculum, the New Trainees Welcome Day.)



There are many other committees that are part of the College, including the Examinations Committee, the Digital Pathology Committee, the Diversity & Inclusion Network, the Medical Examiners Committee, amongst many others, which you may sit on as a trainee representative. If you join one of these, each committee will have a 'Terms of Reference' document which will allow you to read and understand more about the structure of the committee and how it works.

Each committee also has a 'Governance and Committee Services Officer' who supports the administrative side of the committee. They will be very happy to answer any questions or queries you may have and will notify you about the meeting schedules and the papers that may need to be reviewed in advance.

Key principles for representative roles

For any representative role, you are expected to show professionalism in all aspects of your work and communication on the committee. Equality, diversity, and inclusion are key principles for any College committee, and the TAC will be comprised of members who are at different stages of training, from different backgrounds and also hold differing opinions/views. Differences and diversity are key strengths which help committees to develop and expand. You may find that you disagree with certain opinions or views which are expressed, and it is absolutely fine to do so. But in all communications and interactions, you must show respect, courtesy and an appreciation for all views expressed. This is expected on all RCPATH Committees and in all correspondence.

How will I know what to do?

You may be a trainee who has occupied a representative role before, or this may be your first experience. Either way, the College team want to support you throughout your term. It is expected that the new and demitting representatives will arrange a handover meeting to ensure that the new representative is aware of the important ongoing items of relevance. You will also have access to the previous meeting minutes to allow you to read through these before the next meeting and explore any outstanding actions with the demitting representative. However, if you have any further questions, all you need to do is ask and the committee executive members will be very happy to help you.

What are my roles and responsibilities as a trainee representative?

On the committees outside of the TAC, you may be the only trainee representative as part of that committee. This may feel quite daunting in the early stages. However, please be assured that whichever role you have or whichever committee you are part of (including the TAC), you are highly valued as a trainee representative and will be made to feel very welcome on any committee that you are a part of. Your overarching role on any committee is to provide the trainee perspective and view for any points of discussion where you think this would be helpful, so don't be afraid to raise your hand to put across your view. You may have a different view from others, but this does

not mean that you cannot express it. We can all learn from hearing different views, opinions, and perspectives. Outside of the meetings, the committee may be asked to review different documents or provide views on particular issues; please do contribute to these where it is appropriate to do so, and you feel able.

As a member of the TAC, you will be expected to provide a short report about the training-related issues or workstreams of the other committees that you are a part of so it would always be helpful to take some notes at the time of the meeting to assist with the composition of this. These reports are then circulated in advance of the TAC meeting for review by the committee and the College Officers.

For some matters, you may feel it is important for the committee to be aware of them earlier than the next meeting. You also may feel that some topics require wider committee input to help you. It is important to remember that you are not expected to have all the experience and knowledge to be able to provide a view on the wide range of different matters that you may encounter – all committee Chairs are away of this! If you feel you need further support on a particular issue or would like to notify the committee of a particular workstream of relevance, please do get in touch with the Chair or Vice-Chair of the committee to seek their advice.

What if I am unable to attend a scheduled meeting?

As a representative, your training remains your priority. Meetings may clash with other training related factors, and you may have to send you apologies for the meeting, and this is completely acceptable. For some roles, it may be important for trainee representation to be present for all meetings. You can therefore submit a written report, or ask other members of the committee to deputise for you if required. However, always remember to show the committee the professional courtesy of letting the Governance and Committee Services Officer know (with sufficient time) of the arrangements/planned attendance at the meeting when this is requested.

A [letter of support](#) has also been written and co-signed by leaders from the NHS, Department of Health and Social Care, Academy of Medical Royal Colleges and the General Medical Council to help medical staff (including trainees) provision the time they need for the purposes of carrying out work for the wider health system. Your role and work associated with the TAC would be included in this remit.

What do I do if I feel that I am struggling in the role?

Representative roles can be challenging for different reasons; some projects may require a lot of trainee input and sometimes this can be a challenge to balance with the demands of your training programme. We also all experience challenges in different forms outside of our working lives too. You also may feel that you need further advice specific to the role. If you do feel you need more support or would like to discuss a particularly challenging item related to the current role, do get in touch with the committee executive team who will be able to direct you to the support you need. You are not on your own!

What opportunities may come from this role?

It is hoped that you will enjoy your time in the role! This may lead to further opportunities to explore more senior positions within the committee such as becoming a future Vice-Chair or Chair. But remember, you don't have to do everything as a trainee! As a consultant, SAS doctor, or senior scientist, there are lots of opportunities to get involved in committee work so look out for these too. Committee representative roles as a trainee will provide you with useful knowledge and experience in whatever you decide to do next.

If you have any further questions or queries, please don't hesitate to contact any of the following:

Dr Matthew Clarke (TAC Chair); matthewclarke20@yahoo.com

Dr Rachel Rummery (TAC Vice-Chair); rachel.rummery@nhs.net

Alison Morgan (Governance and Committee Services Officer); alison.morgan@rcpath.org