

Guidance for trainees on preparing for the ARCP

The Annual Review of Competence Progression (ARCP) is a summative event which will determine your level of achievement and define what progress you are making. It therefore records evidence of your training during the year.

Evidence submitted to the ARCP would include core data such as workplace-based assessments, your logbook, examinations carried out by external bodies and related supporting products such as audits, projects, research, any teaching you performed and your interpretations of (or reflections on) all these experiences. It is based entirely on the surgical curriculum and the learning agreement which should indicate what evidence will be accumulated during a specified training programme. It is important that the evidence in your portfolio is a representative record of your progress. You should use the [annual review checklist](#) to ensure that your portfolio is up to date and contains the evidence you need to submit.

Through the portfolio, evidence of your learning will be presented to the ARCP panel. Clearly you want to present yourself in the best light, and as part of this it might be expected that your assessments will show a progression with time and with repetition. It is important to include all the assessment that you have undertaken in order to demonstrate progression, when it has occurred.

When the ARCP panel meet they will want to consider a number of factors in your portfolio. The key document is the learning agreements together with report from your AES. This needs to be clear with regard to the following:

- Was the level of achievement you and your AES agreed you started the training period with realistic?
- Was the proposed level of achievement aimed for at the end of training feasible in the time, given your entry level?
- Based on the written evidence in the portfolio, were appropriate checks and balances in place in terms of feedback including a mid-point appraisal?
- Was the period of training and/or support legitimate? For example factors such as illness, curtailment of services and so on can contribute to a trainee not achieving the terms of the learning agreement and should be recorded.

It is on the basis of this information that the ARCP panel will be in a position to receive your presentation and discuss the next steps in your training with you. The required information is described in detail below.

For a given period of training the learning objectives in the learning agreement must map to the curriculum syllabus which also maps to the standards of *Good Medical Practice*.

How will this work?

Through the learning agreement you and your AES will agree the learning and development to be acquired during the period of training. This should be reviewed at least once formally at the mid-point of your training period. Your AES must record an overall summary of your performance and progress made at the end of your placement.

In order to underpin this agreement with evidence you should also agree with the AES what evidence will be accumulated. A minimum number of satisfactory workplace-based assessments is described elsewhere but you are encouraged to accumulate more than the minimum and use a range of assessors including other interested third parties such as your peers and include self-assessments.

Evidence would typically include the following:

- Workplace-based assessments and feedback (you should accumulate more than the minimum number and use a range of assessors)
In addition to carrying out some assessments, the AES should have observed your day to day behaviour and performance.
- Examinations
- Surgical logbook
- Audit and projects

- Research
- Outcomes of courses
- Reflective practice (includes self mini-PAT and other self-assessments, written accounts of CBDs)
- Case presentation / teaching
- Timetable and rota attendance

Organising the evidence

The electronic portfolio has been designed to store evidence of your competence and fitness to practise. You are solely responsible for the contents of the portfolio both in terms of quality and veracity. Submission of information known to be false, if discovered, will have very serious consequences. The portfolio is supplemented by the logbook. Appropriate parts of your portfolio are also accessible to your AES Programme Director.

All entries to the portfolio must respect the confidentiality of colleagues and patients and should not contain names or numbers to identify patients or staff. Portfolio evidence must be collected and documented systematically as you progress through each placement.

The key areas of your electronic portfolio will automatically be displayed to an ARCP panel using the electronic ARCP within the ISCP.

You must ensure your portfolio is complete and up to date in good time for the ARCP.

Sharing the evidence

In order to ensure your learning meets curriculum standards, a formal appraisal process provides you with supervision and support as you progress through each stage of the curriculum. At the beginning of a placement the appraisal meeting with your AES serves to agree the placement objectives and learning strategies, at the mid-point of a placement it checks on progress and provides constructive feedback and at the end of the placement it reports on learning outcomes and leads to a final AES report. The learning agreement is central to these appraisal meetings. It enables you to contribute to the planning of your training, to comment and sign it off. It also offers you a process whereby you can appeal to your Programme Director.

The final review with your AES at the end of your placement is an ideal time to review your portfolio of evidence. You should ensure you both agree on the evidence and overall summary of performance you are submitting to the summative ARCP process.

The purpose and outcome of the ARCP

The ARCP panel will make one of the following recommendations about each trainee based on the evidence put before them:

1. Achieving progress and the development of competencies at the expected rate
2. Development of specific competencies required – additional training time not required
3. Inadequate progress by the trainee – additional training time required
4. Released from training programme with or without specified competencies
5. Incomplete evidence presented – additional training time may be required
6. Gained all required competencies; will be recommended as having completed the training programme and for award of a CCT or CESR

You will have a chance to respond and of course participate in the planning of the next stage of your programme. If the conclusion is based around descriptions 2 or 3 then this should not be seen as entirely negative. In an outcomes-based curriculum such as this we would expect some trainees to require more training or time than others and some less. What is most important is that there is evidence to show that your rate of progression is achieving firmly based competencies. Clearly, repeated failure to progress cannot be allowed to continue and in those circumstances you and your programme director must have a realistic discussion of where your professional future best lies.

Trainees who have an incomplete portfolio will be awarded a grade 5 and the ARCP cannot be completed until such time as evidence is available.

What happens if I don't agree with the ARCP recommendation?

You have the right to appeal over the way the process was conducted, the legitimacy of your training or the ARCP judgement. Each Deanery will have a specified appeals process which you will be pointed towards. You can also refer to the [Gold Guide for Postgraduate Specialty Training](#) for further information.

Conclusion

The ARCP process is conducted in the manner of a performance review centred on a range of evidence about your training and development. At the completion of each ARCP, the panel should have a clear understanding of your current position and will base their summative judgement on how that relates to the curriculum and your learning agreements.

A complete and accurate learning portfolio is vital to this process and is an indicator of your professional development and commitment to lifelong learning.