

Charter *for* SAS Doctors



RCPE Royal College of
Physicians of Edinburgh

Representing physicians, maintaining standards.

Introduction

Staff grades, specialty doctors and associate specialists (SAS doctors) play a vital role in NHS service delivery. Historically their role and expertise have been significantly under-recognised and under-valued. In recent years an increasing number of doctors have chosen to become SAS doctors rather than enter higher specialty training and this trend is set to continue as the demographic of the medical workforce changes and greater flexibility in working hours is sought.

SAS doctors have distinct training and educational needs from those of trainees and consultants. They are a diverse group with individual and often highly specialised skills. Despite this, there is no definitive strategy for post-graduate medical education and training for SAS doctors. There is an increasing awareness that such a strategy is essential.



The role of the SAS doctor is absolutely vital for the NHS and the RCPE helps to ensure that such doctors are supported in their professional development and careers.

Dr Mike Jones, Vice President RCPE, 2013

The current SAS contract introduced in 2008 was intended to provide guidance to staff and employers on the need for access to Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for SAS doctors. However, significant challenges remain, in part relating to a misunderstanding of the SAS role and its contribution to the service.

The RCPE SAS Sub-committee believes it is vital that SAS doctors are better supported and that the SAS role must become a more attractive career option if we do not wish to lose highly skilled doctors from hospital medicine. Against this background it has produced a Charter for SAS doctors to clarify the roles and responsibilities of SAS doctors and their employers, regardless of specialty or College affiliation.

SAS doctors, National Health Service employers, mentors, medical Royal Colleges and others involved in CPD should make the following commitment to SAS CPD.

Guiding Principles

- Patient safety and care is paramount.
- Service needs and educational requirements must be balanced.
- SAS doctors are valued for their diversity of role and their major contribution to patient care.
- SAS doctors are actively engaged in maintaining and developing knowledge and skills and meeting the specialty-specific requirements for CPD
- SAS doctors are supported in meeting their training and CPD needs by NHS employers
- CPD is fair, based on principles of equality and fosters the development of professionalism.



Commitments to Continuing Professional Development

Ensuring patient care and safety

- The duties, workload and work patterns of SAS doctors ensure patient safety and quality care.
- SAS doctors work at a level commensurate with their competence and experience, seeking assistance where appropriate.
- SAS doctors receive supervision and support with their clinical case-load in relation to their level of competence and experience.

Recruitment and induction

- Processes for recruitment, selection and appointment are open, fair and effective.
- Clear job descriptions, including details of sessional commitments, are available at the time of application.
- SAS doctors receive a comprehensive induction both to the hospital and the individual unit in which they will be working prior to commencing a new post.
- All contracts of employment will adhere to agreed national terms and conditions.
- Each SAS doctor is allocated a named Clinical Lead who will have overall responsibility for any clinical governance issues that arise. They will also be allocated an appraiser with whom they will develop a relevant personal development plan which will allow a job plan to be agreed with the Clinical Lead.

Balancing CPD with service provision

- Service and educational needs are considered in parallel, recognising the importance of maintaining and developing clinical competence while maintaining safe, high quality patient care.
- SAS doctors demonstrate professionalism and respond flexibly to service needs.
- A sufficient breadth and depth of clinical work and relevant professional activities are provided to enable SAS doctors to achieve and maintain relevant competencies and develop as clinicians.
- Identifiable sessions are allocated to each SAS doctor to support professional activities; these include administration, education, audit, appraisal and teaching.
- SAS doctors receive protected time for training to meet their professional development requirements.

Ensuring quality professional development

- SAS doctors have frequent access to both their Clinical Lead and mentor and all parties have a clear understanding of their respective roles.
- SAS doctors fully engage in the CPD and revalidation processes.
- Protected time for appraisal, and appraisal training is provided to all SAS doctors.
- Appraisers are selected and appropriately trained for their role with specific reference to the unique educational needs of SAS doctors. Appraisers have a suitable job plan, appropriate workload and time to appraise SAS doctors. Appraisers are supported by external agencies including the Royal Colleges.
- Constructive feedback is provided to all SAS doctors at appraisal and at frequent intervals. Personal development plans and actions are

agreed to address development issues, with suitable support.

- Personal study leave budgets are provided for all SAS doctors, who manage this to address their development needs.
- SAS doctors have access to a range of relevant, high-quality, targeted educational events from a variety of providers, including the Royal Colleges.

- Where appropriate, SAS doctors are supported in pursuing research and/or relevant top-up training.

Support and development

- The role of the SAS doctor is fully acknowledged and respected by the employer and colleagues.
- Support and resources for professional development are provided for SAS doctors by their employer.
- SAS doctors, particularly those in difficulty, have access to pastoral support from the employing health board or trust. Their point of contact for such support is made explicit to them at commencement of post.
- The Royal Colleges provide support, advice and representation in relation to education and training to SAS doctors along with career advice and guidance.

Miscellaneous

- All SAS doctors should have access to support and guidance relating to application for the Certificate of Eligibility for Specialist Registration (CESR) should they wish it, and support to apply for additional funding for personal and professional development activities where available.

As Chair of the Academy SAS Group I welcome the RCPE Charter. SAS doctors are a largely under-used group of doctors whose contribution to the NHS could be more widely recognised. I strongly believe that SAS doctors are a key element in the NHS in all four nations. The Academy welcomes SAS grades' participation in the work it does and is committed to taking issues forward on behalf of all SAS doctors.

Dr Naila Kamal, Chair of the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges SAS Doctors Committee

The RCPE SAS Sub-committee (of the Trainees and Members' Committee) was established in 2011. It is dedicated to promoting and supporting SAS doctors in their professional and educational development, and to representing their views within the RCPE and on a variety of national groups. It is represented at RCPE Council by the Trainees and Members' Committee on which it holds a seat. It is overseen by Dr Mike Jones (Vice President), the RCPE's lead for SAS doctors.

The SAS Sub-committee actively promotes the role of SAS doctors within the National Health Service. It organises an annual educational event, hosted by the RCPE and aimed at SAS doctors regardless of specialty or College affiliation.

www.rcpe.ac.uk



SAS doctors are confident and competent healthcare professionals, delivering clinical services in partnership with consultants and other health workers. They make significant contributions to the advancement of medicine and the profession in areas of leadership, education, research and governance. This charter will help SAS doctors use the available funding for career development to maximum effect.

Dr Radhakrishna Shanbhag, Chair, BMA SAS Committee

The Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh

The Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh (RCPE) is a professional standard-setting body and membership organisation concerned with promoting the highest quality of patient care, predominantly in the hospital sector, both nationally and internationally.

Along with our sister Colleges in Glasgow and London, we are responsible for overseeing:

- Examinations for entry into specialist training in the UK for doctors who wish to undertake postgraduate training to become hospital consultants. The Membership of the Royal College of Physicians (UK) exam is an internationally recognised standard of clinical excellence.
- Training of UK doctors through the Joint Royal Colleges of Physicians' Training Board which oversees the development of curricula for trainee doctors in 30 specialty areas of medicine.

In parallel to our standard-setting activities, the RCPE provides education and support to around 12,000 Fellows and Members worldwide, including around 2,500 in Scotland, covering 30 medical specialties as diverse as palliative medicine and cardiology.

The RCPE also acts in an advisory capacity to Government and other organisations on aspects of healthcare and medical education and seeks to ensure that the views and practical clinical experience of our members are taken into account by policymakers when developing health policy. The RCPE is also committed to championing patients' interests and has a strong tradition of influencing public health, most notably in relation to smoking and alcohol.

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