



The Royal College of Pathologists
Pathology: the science behind the cure



Health Education England



NSHCS
National School of
Healthcare Science



AHCS
Academy for Healthcare Science

Higher Specialist Scientific Training in the Life Sciences

Joint statement

Introduction

This joint statement sets out the key features of the Higher Specialist Scientist Training (HSST) programme for the Life Sciences, and describes how the programme will be implemented through partnership working between the Royal College of Pathologists (RCPath), the HEE Modernising Scientific Careers (MSC) team, the National School of Healthcare Science (NSHCS) and, where appropriate, the Academy for Healthcare Science (AHCS).

It recognises that the new FRCPath training and examination process for Clinical Scientists is synergistically linked with formal HSST programmes for the first time and that the integrity of these arrangements going forward needs to be maintained.

1. Completion of the HSST Programme

The HSST programme provides opportunities for learning, knowledge and skill acquisition and assessment related to three key themes:

- Specialist scientific knowledge
- Clinical skills, values and behaviours
- Innovation in healthcare science

Across the five-year HSST programme, learning primarily takes place within the workplace, although Clinical Scientists (CSs) in HSST may, if they wish and in discussion with their workplace training supervisor and the NSHCS, enroll for a Professional Doctorate; either in full, or for selected components.

CSs in HSST in the Life Sciences will complete FRCPath in parallel to their workplace-based learning, while those in the physical and physiological sciences will complete the Professional Doctorate, in full, as a requirement for completion of HSST. The successful outcome of HSST for Life Sciences will therefore be the FRCPath in the relevant specialism plus the Certificate of Completion from the National School of Healthcare Science, which will be awarded for completion of the workplace-based training and demonstration of all the learning outcomes of the HSST programme.

2. Integrated Assessment Programme

This model of assessment for HSST in the Life Sciences has been developed through a series of formal discussions between the RCPath and the MSC Assessment Team. The programme of assessment for HSST spans the full five years and combines assessment *for* learning and assessment *of* learning opportunities. The emphasis in years 1 and 2 is on demonstrating competence within the workplace on a number of key procedural skills that are relevant to each specific curriculum. The emphasis in years 3-5 is on completion of FRCPath Parts 1 and 2 (where not completed earlier), and on capturing evidence to demonstrate the acquisition of the higher order skills expected of Consultant Clinical Scientists, such as the application of knowledge,

professionalism, leadership and ability to innovate within the clinical or scientific context. The workplace-based assessment programme for each Life Science specialism will be mapped to the agreed learning outcomes for each curriculum to enable clarity and transparency across all HSST programmes.

In addition to the workplace-based assessment programme, as noted above, CSs in HSST will complete the assessments as required for FRCPATH, which will incorporate assessment of an individual's contribution to innovation or improvements to quality management, service delivery or patient safety. Individuals may also complete assessments as part of the professional doctorate if they have elected to enroll for this, in full or in part. Progression through HSST from one year to the next will be dependent upon successful completion of the specified assessment targets and the combined judgement of an Annual Review Board panel consisting of representatives from RCPATH and the NSHCS, subject specialists and workplace training supervisors. The criteria on which the panels will make their progression judgments will be defined as part of a research exercise to be conducted by the NSHCS in consultation with RCPATH and other medical royal colleges.

3. Participation in the Professional Doctorate programme

Clinical Scientists undertaking HSST in the Life Sciences will be offered the opportunity to participate in the underpinning professional doctorate programme on the basis of individual choice rather than a mandatory requirement. This will ensure that all trainees have equal access as part of HSST programmes to either all or specific modules. The professional doctorate has three overarching components: 1) Specialist Scientific Clinical knowledge; 2) Leadership and Professional Development; and 3) Research, Development and Innovation. Individuals may choose to complete any or all of these components.

4. Funding support

A training allowance of £16,000 per year is payable for those individuals entering HSST who form part of LETB commissioned places on the basis of submitted workforce plans for expected consultant posts in the relevant HSST specialisms. This allowance includes the cost of tuition fees for the professional doctorate programme whether that is completed in part or full which will be held by the lead LETB for Healthcare Science (HEWM).

5. Recruitment to HSST programmes

Entry into all HSST programmes is on the basis of individuals meeting the following:

- Registered clinical scientist (at the point of application individuals could be applying for equivalence from AHCS and/or be waiting for registration with HCPC)
- Minimum selection and benchmarking criteria determined at interview
- Allocation of a national training number by NSHCS

These criteria would apply both to those who form part of LETB commissioned HSST places and also to those who may be entering what is now being referred to as 'employer sponsored' HSST programmes where the requirement for FRCPATH is linked to service delivery at various times of duty and not to employment at a consultant level. The MSC team will work with RCPATH to better define the clinical requirement for Clinical Scientists in employer sponsored HSST programmes. The details of this new development and its operation will importantly be worked through with NHS Employers and with LETBs. Clinical Scientists in employer sponsored HSST programmes would be able to access workplace-based assessments on the NSHCS's online assessment tool (OLAT), probably over a longer training period given their greater focus on service delivery.

6. Transitional arrangements

It is recognised that in the Life Sciences some individuals have already begun the training process towards FRCPATH and that these individuals need to be transitioned into the new system and the new FRCPATH training programme for Clinical Scientists. A pragmatic way forward, which is time limited will be agreed between the MSC team and RCPATH. The agreement will be linked to completion of FRCPATH Part 1, which provides the requirements to demonstrate that stage 1 of HSST programme has been achieved enabling individuals to progress rapidly to stage 2 of the new HSST programme. Individuals who are in the final years of FRCPATH training, having already

completed Part 1, will complete FRCPATH without entering HSST and then provide documented evidence to the Academy of Healthcare Science (AHCS) equivalence process.

7. Equivalence

AHCS has commenced work on an equivalence process to enable Clinical Scientists to gain entry to the Higher Specialist Scientist Register (HSSR) by a means other than completion of HSST. AHCS recognises that there are many Clinical Scientists with FRCPATH who may wish to pursue the equivalence route to join the HSSR. AHCS also recognises that RCPATH has extensive experience of working with the General Medical Council to operate an equivalence process for medical doctors in pathology. Accordingly, AHCS will engage with RCPATH at an early stage to collaborate on developing the standards for HSST equivalence and the process for assessing equivalence against those standards for Clinical Scientists who have already attained FRCPATH.

8. Partnership working between NSHCS and RCPATH

Many College Fellows are already directly involved in the work of the NSHCS, and this partnership will be strengthened and formalised. The NSHCS has invited RCPATH representation on the Life Sciences Theme board, for quality management and monitoring of trainees. In addition to this formal link the NSHCS will work with RCPATH on recruitment and selection for STP and HSST, development of the workplace-based assessment programme and the optimal use of the OLAT, and development of accreditation processes for training providers.

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