



19 March 2020

Dear trainee colleagues

We are writing to you to give you some guidance related to the coronavirus outbreak as we know there are concerns regarding the impact on your training.

Firstly, it is important to stress that the situation is changing very rapidly. The College is following the national guidance very closely. This is an unprecedented situation and we fully acknowledge that this will be affecting everyone in some way and we will do our part to try and reduce the impact from our perspective.

The following are some points which we hope will be useful for you to be aware of:

Examinations

- As you will now be aware, the College has made the very difficult decision to [defer the Spring sitting of the examinations](#). This was not undertaken lightly and was done for the health and wellbeing of all involved. It is appreciated how much of a significant impact this will have for a lot of trainees.
- The policy is that your examination will be deferred. If you do not wish to do this, your money will be refunded. For those sitting the Stage A examination, at present the College is intending to go ahead with the June sitting but this is subject to continued monitoring and change depending on the evolving situation. The College will do everything it can to minimise the impact on your training journey and FAQs are being kept up to date on the [College website](#).
- The College will let you know at the earliest possible time regarding the arrangements for the next sitting of the examinations. Everything remains very dependent on how the pandemic evolves in the coming weeks and months. The College is keen not to announce new dates until the situation with regard to Covid-19 is clearer. This is to further minimise disruption to trainees' examination preparation and lives but the College will aim to give candidates a minimum period of six-weeks' notice of their new exam date.

Pathology trainees providing clinical assistance

- If the outbreak escalates to a significant level, each individual trust will be deciding about the re-deployment of staff to areas potentially outside the usual scope of practice; this may mean that pathology trainees are required to help in ward-based or frontline settings.
- If you are required to do this, we would urge you to consider your clinical competencies and capabilities carefully. There are several generic competencies that are relevant to all trainees where you can provide useful support in the clinical settings. The [healthcare regulators](#) have released a statement to provide more information about this.
- We advise you to keep a record of duties that you perform during this time, which will again be useful for consideration of your generic competencies.
- The TAC are contacting the medical defence organisations to ensure that this is also given due consideration in such circumstances.



- The College has been emphasising the essential role that pathologists play in diagnostics to ensure that where possible and appropriate, trainees can contribute to increased demands in service in the setting they are most familiar with for reasons of efficiency and patient safety. However, if existing staffing levels in the ward-based settings are affected significantly, we are all likely to need to adopt more patient-facing roles, as the need arises, within our clinical competencies, to help our colleagues and our patients within our scope of practice.

ARCP guidance

- There is [guidance from the four nations](#) about requirements for upcoming ARCPs published very shortly. This will focus on the flexibilities that can be introduced and the College is currently developing specialty guidance to complement this. This will likely be agreed with the GMC prior to publication.
- Overall, it should be stressed that whatever situation you find yourself in, whether that be a disruption to your training or an inability to sit an exam, everything possible is being done to minimise the disruption to your training journey.

College Events

- All RCPATH [conferences and events](#) have been postponed for the next few months. This arrangement will initially remain in place until the end of May. We will continue to monitor any developments, take government advice where required and, if necessary, postpone or cancel further events.
- In some cases, events may be held virtually or using pre-recorded videos.

We also appreciate that there are a lot of questions and concerns related to the virus and the outbreak itself. We will continue to use social media platforms and the RCPATH website to disseminate important information as it comes to us. Please make use of the [web page set up for trainees](#) and the [RCPATH hub of coronavirus related advice](#).

Wishing you all every good health in this very challenging situation.

Kind regards

Dr Sanjiv Manek
Clinical Director of Examinations

Dr Nicki Cohen
**Clinical Director of
Training & Assessment**

Dr Matthew Clarke
**Chair, Trainee Advisory
Committee**