



Royal College  
of Surgeons  
ADVANCING SURGICAL CARE

The Royal College of Surgeons  
in collaboration with the Surgical  
Specialty Associations

# National Surgical Fellowship Scheme



**Summary Document**

# Criteria and Standards for the Approval of Fellowship Posts

## Approval Criteria

It is intended that documents and information submitted as part of the fellowship approval process to The Royal College of Surgeons of England should demonstrate that your fellowship post meets the following criteria of a fellowship post as defined by the National Surgical Fellowship Scheme:

- » The post provides a structured educational experience prior to [E.g. ST5 or above] or immediately following CCT, designed to deliver the requirements of a particular sub-specialty which are not readily available within the CCT training programme
- » The post has an established curriculum (which includes levels of patient care, patient safety, medical knowledge, practice-based learning and improvement, communication skills, and professionalism)
- » The post does not impinge on the training of pre CCT trainees
- » The post is allied to workforce opportunities in the specialty
- » The post takes place in an institution that assumes ultimate responsibility for delivery of the programme of training and education; this includes providing sufficient protected time for both trainer(s) and trainees (fellows) and necessary financial support for the programme.
- » The post has a single programme director/senior consultant assigned, with authority and accountability for the fellowship post.
- » The post has identified faculty that will assume educational and supervisory responsibilities throughout the programme.
- » The post has a written agreement in place specifying responsibilities for training, teaching, supervision and evaluation of the programme.
- » The post provides opportunities for audit and research
- » The post has an external evaluation process

# Approval Standards

The criteria for approval define the set of standards which have to be met by the Fellowship organiser. The Approval Standards represent qualitative characteristics which define the evidence required from Fellowship organisers sufficient to meet the Approval Criteria.

## Institution(s)

The provider must supply a description of the training structure of the institution and how the fellowship is managed within this structure. This should include over-arching details of how the fellowship is monitored and reviewed.

Full details of all hospitals or training centre(s) involved in the fellowship(s) should be provided. This should include a statement about the population served by the centre, the number of beds, theatres, expected caseload, operative workload, and the facilities available.

Where a fellowship rotates between more than one centre, details of the workload split between the centres should be provided. Details of any service requirement or on-call facility should also be provided.

The provider should detail the number of fellowship programmes that it has run over the last 5 years.

## Fellowship Details

The provider must supply a fellowship specification including the title of the fellowship, an outline or summary; the duration; target audience; details of how the fellowship is funded; and the completion criteria.

The provider must specify which specialty, specialties, or sub-specialties the fellowship covers and provide details of any aspects which fall outside of surgery. Where there is more than one specialty/specialism taking place, the fellowship organiser must detail what measures have been put in place to ensure effective cross-specialty collaboration during the fellowship.

The provider must supply a history of the fellowship post for which approval is sought. This should include the year that the fellowship was created or first ran, the number of previous instances of the fellowship, and any previous or planned revisions to the fellowship structure, content or delivery.

The provider must supply a job description or job plan detailing all of the responsibilities of the post-holder.

The fellowship learning aims and outcomes should be described in full. There must be clear linkages between programme aims, programme objectives and/or programme learning outcomes. All programme learning outcomes must be evidenced within the curriculum.

Any other pertinent information about the fellowship such as any award provided must be clearly articulated in the submission.

## Recruitment

The provider must detail the number of posts recruited into and the likely frequency of recruitment into the post(s) along with any pre-requisite knowledge, skills, qualifications, level of entry, or other requirement that without which, attendance on the programme would be denied.

## Curriculum Content and Structure

There should be a detailed statement or curriculum outlining the content, structure and timetabling of the programme including the contact time, details of research, practical and other activities and work expected in own time. Materials, products and technologies used as part of the fellowship should be referenced within the curriculum.

The provider should detail the academic and clinical competencies that will be achieved as a result of having undergone the fellowship.

Skills development is an essential element of a fellowship and the submission must demonstrate clearly how the acquisition or development of skills will be achieved.

Details of the evolution of the curriculum development and design should be included in the submission.

## Learning and Teaching

The provider should present a cohesive learning and teaching strategy for the programme, which reflects both the curriculum and principles of teaching and learning.

The rationale for the choice of learning and teaching methods should be articulated in the submission.

The provider should detail the skills related competencies (Knowledge and Understanding, Intellectual skills, Practical skills, Transferable skills) that the fellow would be expected to acquire or develop.

The provider should detail the range of learning resources available/will be used such as online message boards, VLE, e-learning, IT support for staff etc.

The provider should supply full details of the staffing structure for the fellowship. Roles of individual staff involved in the delivery of the programme should be identified, against the areas of the curriculum that they are responsible for. This should include clinical supervisors, mentors, educational supervisors and teachers.

Evidence must be provided that staff in both academic and practice settings are appropriately qualified and experienced

The provider should detail the mechanisms and criteria for the selection, approval and monitoring of staff to support students in placement, including the training and support of placement staff and the establishment of an appropriate range of staff.

## Quality Assurance and Enhancement

The provider must detail in full the quality assurance, quality management and clinical governance procedures and mechanisms that underpin the fellowship. These should include:

- » The process for periodic review of both the academic content and quality management of programmes including details of who conducts the review of the programme and the frequency and timing of the review
- » Details of the monitoring and review process for the faculty
- » Details of review process for the assessment tools and criteria
- » A summary of the outcomes of any annual programme monitoring or audit
- » A summary of the outcomes of any relevant internal or external review of the programme and/or plans for any future external review
- » Details of any opportunities for fellow to evaluate the programme

## Assessment

Full details of the assessment strategy should be provided as part of the submission. This should include the types of assessments used, details of the timing and loading of assessments and mechanisms for observation and moderation of practice based assessments, and any marking schemes used.

## Facilities and resources

The provider should supply details of the facilities and resources are available as part of the fellowship.

## Fellow support

The provider must detail the conditions of employment for the post along with the policies, mechanisms and practices in place to support the fellows.

The provider must supply a draft copy of the fellowship learning agreement.

## Faculty declaration of interest

Providers are required to ask faculty to declare any interest they may have relating to the fellowship.

# Frequently Asked Questions

## What is the National Surgical Fellowship Scheme?

A scheme managed by the Royal College of Surgeons of England in collaboration with the Surgical Specialty Associations, to identify, manage, quality assure, and publically recognise fellowship posts in England, Wales and Northern Ireland that comply with standards of educational quality.

The process also has input from COPMeD, the nine Specialty Advisory Committees, the Training Programme Directors, and trainee organisations such as BOTA and ASIT.

## What are the goals of the Scheme?

The goals of the Scheme are to:

- » Identify, assess and approve fellowship posts (after due consideration of the future needs of the health service).
- » Provide a mechanism to maintain and raise standards and ensure uniformity of fellowship provision.
- » Maintain and publish a central register of high quality approved posts to assist trainees
- » Assist providers in attracting high calibre candidates
- » Ensure the availability of targeted opportunities for surgeons to obtain super-specialty and multidisciplinary skills not easily available within specialty training programmes/regions
- » Prevent indiscriminate proliferation of fellowship posts and align fellowship opportunities more closely to workforce needs.
- » Ensure that the training of pre-CCT surgeons is not compromised by pre or post CCT fellowships.

## What is a Fellowship Post?

The College and Specialty Associations define a fellowship post as a period of additional medical training, beyond that available in a usual CCT training programme, which:

- » Provides a structured educational experience prior to [Eg. ST5 or above] or immediately following CCT, designed to deliver the requirements of a particular sub-specialty which are not readily available within the CCT training programme.
- » Has an established curriculum (which includes levels of patient care, medical knowledge, practice-based learning and improvement, communication skills, and professionalism)
- » Where the subject matter relates to one of the following:
  - Acquisition of sub-specialist skills – Eg. where specialist surgery has been centralised in line with commissioning decisions.
  - Acquisition of super-specialty technical skills – for example, in new technologies and treatments which may not be readily available within a given region or training programme
  - Acquisition of multidisciplinary skills in a given clinical area.

- » Does not impinge on the training of pre CCT trainees
- » Is allied to workforce opportunities
- » Takes place in an institution that assumes ultimate responsibility for delivery of the programme of training and education; this includes providing sufficient protected time for both trainer(s) and trainees (fellows) and necessary financial support for the programme.
- » Has a single programme director assigned, with authority and accountability for the fellowship post.
- » Has identified faculty that will assume educational and supervisory responsibilities throughout the programme.
- » Has a written agreement in place specifying responsibilities for training, teaching, supervision and evaluation of the programme.
- » Provides opportunities for audit and research
- » Has an external evaluation process

### **Who can apply for approval?**

Any trust, fellowship organiser, programme director or lead trainer who is responsible for running a fellowship in England, Wales or Northern Ireland can apply for fellowship approval. Fellowships run or sponsored by Industry are eligible to apply.

If your fellowship does not run in England, Wales or Northern Ireland please contact the Quality Assurance Policy Manager at [qa@rcseng.ac.uk](mailto:qa@rcseng.ac.uk) or on 020 7869 6221/6236 to discuss whether the post is eligible to apply.

### **Why should I apply to join the Scheme?**

Having a fellowship approved will demonstrate that the post meets the standards as set out by the College and Specialty Associations and that it offers a high quality learning experience. Recognition of these factors will assist in attracting high calibre candidates. The scheme will also benefit patients and the public, protect the interests of trainees and fellows and improve the quality of teaching, research and professional practice.

Successful fellowship providers will be able to advertise their post using the College eagle motif and the strap line "This fellowship post has been approved by the Royal College of Surgeons and [.....] [specialty association(s)]". Approved posts will also be listed on the College and specialty association websites.

### **What is the process?**

The scheme will be administered and managed by the Royal College of Surgeons of England's Quality Assurance Department. Fellowship organisers will be expected to provide documentation on the structure, organisation, curriculum, management, faculty and quality assurance processes for the fellowship post. The application form is available on the Accreditation Portal: <http://accreditation.rcseng.ac.uk/>, under 'National Surgical Fellowship Scheme'.

Completed applications will need to be submitted at least 6 weeks prior to the advertisement of the fellowship programme.

## **How long does the Fellowship Approval process take?**

Confirmation of the panel decision will be made within 30 working days of submission of a completed application form. If sections of the form are incomplete or need clarification then this may delay the process.

## **How long does Fellowship Approval last for?**

Approval is awarded for three years subject to satisfactory annual monitoring and review. This can be further extended following a re-approval.

## **What training period does the fellowship scheme cover?**

The fellowship scheme covers peri and post CCT fellowships. If you are unclear as to whether your fellowship is appropriate, please contact the Quality Assurance Policy Manager at qa@rcseng.ac.uk or on 020 7869 6221/6236.

## **If my post is Approved, what wording can I use?**

Centres with approved posts will be able to advertise the post using the College eagle motif and the strap line "This fellowship post has been approved by the Royal College of Surgeons of England and [.....] [specialty association(s)]".

## **Will Approved posts be publicised?**

Yes. The College will maintain and publish a central register of high quality approved posts to assist trainees. This will be available on the Royal College of Surgeons of England website.

## **Will there be a monitoring process?**

Yes. Postholders will be expected to complete an online evaluation of their learning experience after the first three months and at the end of their fellowship. The Programme Director/Tutor of the fellowship will be asked to complete an online evaluation at the end of each post.

If the monitoring outcomes reveal any serious issues with the fellowship post, the College may envisage a visit to investigate the issue(s), or ask for a report from the applicant. The College retains the right to withdraw the post approval where any of the standards are breached.

## **Will a visit to the lead centre be necessary?**

The initial approval and monitoring review process will be performed by correspondence. However, if the reviewing panel feel that a monitoring visit is necessary, this will be communicated to the applicant.

## **What information will be required in the annual monitoring report?**

The annual monitoring report will need to include details of the postholder's progress, of any assessment undertaken and of any issues with the postholder or the fellowship in general that arose during the year, and any planned changes that would be made to the post for the following year.

## **Does the Scheme cover Academic fellowships?**

Yes. Full details regarding the nature of the research will need to be included as part of the documentation submitted.

## **My fellowship is part of a formal pre-CCT training programme. Can I apply for Approval?**

Yes.

## **What is the minimum duration of a fellowship post?**

A fellowship post would be expected to run for at least three months. If the post runs for less than this, please contact the Quality Assurance Policy Manager at [qa@rcseng.ac.uk](mailto:qa@rcseng.ac.uk) or on 020 7869 6221/6236 to discuss the post.

## **I am planning to run a fellowship for the first time, can I apply for Approval?**

Yes.

## **Can privately funded fellowships apply for Approval?**

Yes.

## **My fellowship post is not always occupied by a fellow, can I apply for Approval?**

Yes.

## **I have two fellowship posts, will approval cover them both?**

If the posts are identical then your approval will cover both posts. You will, however, be expected to demonstrate that there is enough work in the programme for both fellows and the monitoring activities will need to cover both posts.

## **My fellowship covers multiple specialisms of which surgery is only one. Can I apply to join the scheme?**

In such cases, please contact the Quality Assurance Policy Manager at [qa@rcseng.ac.uk](mailto:qa@rcseng.ac.uk) or on 020 7869 6221/6236 to discuss your application.

## **Does the College provide retrospective approval?**

No. Any approval will be in place from the fellowship period following the confirmation of the approval.

## **Will there be a fee?**

Yes. There will be a charge to cover administrative costs of the process. There will also be an annual charge to cover the cost of monitoring and review process. Full details of the fee structure can be reviewed on the accreditation portal at: <http://accreditation.rcseng.ac.uk/Home/Fees>.



## **When do I have to pay the fee?**

The administration fee is payable upon submission of the documentation for Approval. The monitoring fee is payable 12 and 24 months after the approval has been granted and should accompany monitoring reports.

## **How do I apply?**

In order to apply, please complete an application form on the RCS Accreditation portal at: <http://accreditation.rcseng.ac.uk/>

## **Where can I find further information?**

If you have any queries about the Approval processes then please email [qa@rcseng.ac.uk](mailto:qa@rcseng.ac.uk) or contact the Quality Assurance Policy Manager on 020 7869 6221/6236.