



Annual Review of Competence Progression (ARCP) guidance for Cellular Pathology: Histopathology, Diagnostic Neuropathology, Paediatric and Perinatal Pathology and Forensic Pathology during the COVID-19 outbreak 2021

Introduction

This guidance should be read alongside the following (also available on the [College website](#)):

- [Temporary approval of curricula derogation to support Annual Review of Competence Progression \(ARCP\) where training has been disrupted by coronavirus \(Covid-19\)](#) (March 2021);
- ARCP guidance: Stage A examination (for trainees in ST1 and ST2) (March 2021);
- [Contingency planning for ARCPs – COVID 19 outbreak](#), the publication of Management of Annual Review of Competency Progression (ARCP) by the Statutory Education Bodies;
- [Supporting the Covid-19 Response: Enabling Progression at ARCP](#) and [Coding for ARCPs](#) and;
- the [Derogation to GG8: 4.91 in response to COVID pandemic and impact on trainee progression assessments \(ARCP\)](#).

This guidance was approved by the General Medical Council and Health Education England for ARCPs held in 2021.

The Cellular Pathology College Specialty Training Committee is cognisant that a disruption in training due to examination deferral, temporary redeployment out of specialty and/or temporary suspension of training is beyond the control of the trainees concerned and that training progression and ARCPs should adjust expectations accordingly.

General guidance for trainees and trainers in the cellular pathology specialties

- Trainees must follow any adopted national practice and safety guidance with respect to the handling of fresh tissues and their own personal conduct inside and outside of work premises.
- It is expected that routine autopsy practice in all of the cellular pathology specialties will be markedly reduced during the COVID-19 outbreak and trainees must follow the guidance of the RCPATH and adhere to local adopted practice. COVID-19 is regarded as having a high risk of acquisition via inhalation (aerosol producing procedures for example). Should the local trust or health board make the decision to stop trainees from undertaking autopsies during the COVID-19 outbreak, then they must adhere to this. Please see the [RCPATH Briefing on COVID-19 – autopsy practice relating to possible cases of Covid-19 – February 2020](#) and all other relevant resources regarding care of the deceased in the [Covid-19 Resources Hub](#). Once practice and training restrictions are lifted within individual training programmes the trainees must work with their Training Programme Directors to seek sufficient experience to satisfy curriculum requirements prior to moving to the next stage of training. Trainees must undertake training in the use and application of full PPE. It is recommended that trainees' potential exposure to diseases such as COVID-19 be minimised and pre-autopsy testing of the deceased be undertaken locally.
- Sick leave/special leave should be discussed with Educational Supervisors/TPDs as normal and taken into consideration by the ARCP panel in accordance with the Gold Guide
- Where trainees have been out of programme it should be ensured that the ARCP takes into consideration any interruptions as described above.

Stage A



Trainees in the following categories, must also refer to the ARCP guidance: Stage A examination:

- all trainees who entered ST1 histopathology training from August 2019.
- all current ST1 histopathology trainees (beginning August 2020).
- any trainees who entered histopathology training prior to August 2019 who have not passed the Stage A examination.

Trainees in the above categories must submit a completed Assessment of Performance (AoP) form as part of their ARCP evidence. Trainees currently in ST1 must submit a minimum of one AoP and trainees in ST2 must submit a minimum of two AoPs (one for each year of training). The AoPs replace the Stage A examination which has been cancelled due to Covid-19.

Critical progression points for histopathology, diagnostic neuropathology, forensic histopathology and paediatric and perinatal pathology

- The critical progression points are for trainees moving from stages B to C and stages C to D as well as any trainees in Stage D who have sufficient evidence to demonstrate that they have completed their training.
- Trainees in Stages B and C who have sufficient evidence to present to the ARCP panel of the curriculum defined competences and who are in possession of the FRCPATH Part 1 (for progression to Stage C) and FRCPATH Part 2 (for progression to Stage D) may proceed to the appropriate stage of training may be awarded an outcome 1 and progress to the next stage of training.
- Trainees in Stages B and C who are not in possession of the FRCPATH Part 1 (for progression to Stage C) and FRCPATH Part 2 (for progression to Stage D) should be awarded an outcome 10.2 where the delay has been caused by COVID-19 disruption, or an outcome 3 where it has not (e.g. related to repeated examination failure).
- Trainees in stage D who have sufficient evidence to present to the ARCP panel of the curriculum defined competencies may be awarded an outcome 6 and apply for CCT if they are within 6 months of their projected CCT date.

The minimum data set for each year of training

For the 2021 ARCPs, it is expected that the Educational Supervisors Structured Report (ESSR) will be a key part of the evidence. It may include indicative assessment of the trainee, mindful of the impact of COVID-19.

The portfolio of evidence provided by the trainee for the period under review can include:

- any workplace-based assessments completed. The number of workplace-based assessments required for each year or stage of training is indicative¹. These can include any undertaken during redeployment which demonstrate evidence of generic or other relevant skills;
- any indicative cases undertaken;
- an MSF (although trainees who have not completed a required MSF but are otherwise satisfactory must undertake their MSF in the following year);
- suitable and appropriate alternative evidence (see 'Learning Experiences' listed in each curriculum for guidance²);
- any College exams completed.

Where there is overall evidence that a trainee is generally achieving progress and competences at the expected rate but has not been able to provide the indicative number of workplace-based assessments, suitable and appropriate alternative evidence can be taken into consideration.

¹ Please see the relevant curriculum for information about indicative numbers ([Histopathology](#), [Diagnostic Neuropathology](#), [Forensic Histopathology](#), [Paediatric and Perinatal Pathology](#)).

² Histopathology and Diagnostic Neuropathology trainees should refer to pages 13 and 14, Forensic Histopathology trainees should refer to pages 18 and 19 and Paediatric & Perinatal trainees should refer to pages 19 and 20 of their respective curricula.

Where there is overall evidence that satisfactory progress is not being made and an indicative number of workplace-based assessments has not been provided, trainees will generally be required to complete additional workplace-based assessments in the following year, as determined by the ARCP Panel.

The ARCP Panel are encouraged to be very clear with all trainees about any additional training, competencies, assessments or other requirements that must be achieved in the following year and document these accordingly.

There is clear guidance in each curricula and/or in additional guidance about the requirements for each stage or year of training. ARCP Panels are encouraged to refer to these, and existing ARCP guidance, and make an overall judgement about progression for each trainee, taking into account impact of COVID-19.

Conducting the ARCP

ARCPs can take place virtually, via secure videoconferencing, on appropriate platforms as determined by each deanery or LETB. The privacy of the individuals involved must be maintained, regardless of the physical location of all participants.

The ARCP outcome should be recorded on the revised [RCPATH Amended ARCP Outcome Form](#) (under 'College Guidance and Advice'). For trainees awarded an outcome 10.1 or 10.2, the 'Supplementary documentation for ARCP Outcome Form' must also be completed detailing what is required for a trainee to complete during the subsequent year of training. These forms should be emailed to the Royal College of Pathologists (training@rcpath.org). Outcomes will be recorded in the Royal College of Pathologists database which records trainee progress and subsequently updated in the trainee's e-portfolio.

Criteria for non-progression

The criteria for non-progression is as follows:

- Trainees who are on course to receive an outcome 3, 4 or 5 outwith COVID-19 derogations.
- Trainees who have not passed FRCPATH Part 1 (for progression from Stage B to C) or FRCPATH Part 2 (for progression from Stage C to D). This includes where examinations have been deferred. Trainees will not be penalised by the ARCP process if their examination has been deferred by the RCPATH. Trainees should be given an outcome 10.2 extension to training in order to allow them the necessary time to revise and sit the requisite examination. This may affect trainees hoping to transition from stage B to stage C and from Stage C to Stage D.

Circumstances where a complete ARCP panel would be required

The circumstances where a complete ARCP panel would be required are where trainees are making unsatisfactory progress and where an outcome 2, 3, 4, 5 outwith Covid derogations or 10.2 is likely.

Amendments to the person specification needed to facilitate career progression of trainees who have been unable to acquire capabilities in their core programme due to the impact of COVID-19

Flexibility around the acquisition of FRCPATH Part 1 for trainees affected by delays in attempting the FRCPATH Part 1 examination due to COVID-19 is encouraged for trainees wishing to enter smaller specialties. Trainees affected can be allowed to enter cellular path training in ST3 without FRCPATH Part 1 as long as they pass the FRCPATH Part 1 exam in the following year of training.

Advice regarding capabilities which may be gained in an acting up position within a defined education/development plan.

Trainees who have spent additional time in Stage C while waiting to complete their FRCPATH Part 2 examination may, if they are on track to complete their training satisfactorily, spend reduced time in Stage D (a minimum of six months), and/or may accumulate evidence of competences during an acting up position within a defined training and development plan. Six months is the minimum period

allowable for Stage D in order to ensure that trainees have been able to obtain suitable competencies in independent reporting prior to the award of the Certificate of Completion of Training (CCT) and taking up a consultant post. For those cellular pathology specialties that have independent reporting guidance, this can be followed as a guide and any training recorded appropriately. Trainees are encouraged to follow the course of action that is right for their individual circumstances and with the support of their Educational Supervisor/Training Programme Director.

References

[Contingency planning for ARCPs – COVID 19 outbreak](#)

[Derogation to GG8: 4.91 in response to COVID pandemic and impact on trainee progression assessments \(ARCP\)](#)

[Gold Guide 8th edition](#)

[Histopathology curricula and ARCP links](#)

[Diagnostic Neuropathology curricula and ARCP links](#)

[Forensic Histopathology curricula and ARCP links](#)

[Paediatric and Perinatal Pathology curricula and ARCP links](#)

Curricular component	Comment	Recommended ARCP outcome
Cellular Pathology ST1-ST3		
Stage A examination	Trainees moving from Stage A to B last year or this year must complete an Assessment of Practice as outlined in the guidance. Trainee on course to complete requirements for year/stage of training.	ARCP 1
Stage A examination	Trainees moving from Stage A to B last year or this year must complete an Assessment of Practice as outlined in the guidance. Concerns raised about trainee (including probity and patient safety as well as general progress).	ARCP 2, 3 ARCP 4 (with a preceding outcome 3)
Stage A examination	Trainees moving from Stage A to B last year or this year must complete an Assessment of Practice as outlined in the guidance. COVID-19 has caused disruption to training including redeployment.	ARCP 10.1
COVID-19 has caused disruption to training including redeployment	E.g. Limitation of exposure to specimen range and experience, MDT, courses, QIPs and research opportunities.	ARCP 10.1
FRCPath Part 1 examination not passed	Completion necessary for progress to Stage C. Balance between satisfactory progress and pressurising by extra requirements in already busy Stage C.	ARCP 10.2 (if due to COVID-19) or ARCP 3 (if not due to COVID-19)
No disruption to training	Trainee on course to complete requirements for year of training, including acquisition of relevant examination.	ARCP 1
No disruption to training	Concerns raised about trainee (including probity and patient safety as well as general progress)	ARCP 2, 3 or ARCP 4 (with a preceding outcome 3)
Histopathology/Diagnostic Neuropathology/Forensic Histopathology/Paediatric and Perinatal Pathology ST3 – ST5		

COVID-19 has caused disruption to training including redeployment	E. g. Limitation of exposure to specimen range and experience, MDT, courses, QIPs and research opportunities.	ARCP 10.1
Trainees in ST3 Neuropathology, Forensic Pathology, Paediatric Pathology	Trainee not on course to complete FRCPATH Part 1 by end of ST3	ARCP 10.1 (if due to COVID-19) or ARCP 3 (if not due to COVID-19)
FRCPATH Part 2 examination not passed	Completion necessary for progress to Stage D. Balance between satisfactory progress and pressurising by extra requirements in already busy Stage D.	ARCP 10.2 or ARCP 3 (if not due to COVID-19)
No disruption to training	Trainee on course to complete requirements for year of training, including acquisition of relevant examination.	ARCP 1
No disruption to training	Concerns raised about trainee (including probity and patient safety as well as general progress)	ARCP 2, 3 ARCP 4 (with a preceding outcome 3)
Completion of training	Trainee on course to complete training, including acquisition of relevant examination.	ARCP 6