



# Principles for reasonable adjustments to training in GMC-approved pathology specialties

## Context

The Royal College of Pathologists firmly believes that doctors with disabilities should be welcomed to the pathology specialties and valued for their contribution to patient care. The RCPATH encourages organisations with responsibility for postgraduate medical education and training to adopt guidance from the General Medical Council ([Welcomed and valued: Supporting disabled learners in medical education and training](#)). There are several possible reasons for needing adjustments to training and that need may be temporary, change during training, or persist throughout training. Doctors with disability may require reasonable adjustments to be made to the way in which they achieve the high-level learning outcomes set out in the relevant specialty curriculum. Similarly, doctors who have ill health, or are pregnant, may also require reasonable adjustments.

All postgraduate doctors in training (PGDiT) are required to meet the level of competence set out for their stage of training in order to ensure patient safety. These are reflected in the specialty curricula as entrustment levels expected for each high level learning outcome, described as capabilities in practice (CiPs), for each year of training. All PGDiT must demonstrate having achieved the required entrustment level for every CiP at completion of training, alongside all other curriculum requirements, in order that a recommendation can be made to the GMC for the award of a CCT. Doctors who require reasonable adjustments to training are expected to achieve the same standard. Therefore, adjustments should be made to the learning process but not to the learning outcomes.



A PGDiT requesting reasonable adjustments to training may be unable to fully adhere to the expected learning methods set out in their specialty curriculum. This may arise because their ability to complete certain tasks, work in specific environments, or undertake particular assessments is impacted by their needs. While the CiPs and their entrustment levels have been set by the College and approved by the GMC, delivery of education and ensuring an appropriate educational environment are the responsibility of the Postgraduate Dean and hosting Trust, working within GMC Standards for Education and Training.

When a PGDiT is sitting one of the RCPATH examinations, they may require adjustments to be made to the process of the examination for various reasons, including disability, depending on their needs.

While the standard required for passing an examination, including the range of capabilities examined, cannot be adjusted there is scope for evaluation of what adjustments may be possible. These tend to change with time and with practice. As such, the College is establishing a Reasonable Adjustments Advisory Panel to continue to support feasible and proportionate adjustments and ensure appropriate consistency between exam candidates. The advisory panel may also provide advice on reasonable adjustments to training, when required.

## **RCPATH principles for supporting reasonable adjustments to training**

1. Priority should be given to ensuring patient safety when planning reasonable adjustments to training.
2. Postgraduate Deans and employers should consider whether adjustment to training is required because of a disability or other reason. The need for such adjustment may arise at any stage before or during training. It is expected that a PGDiT declares to their trainers at an early stage when the need for adjustment



is anticipated. The PGDiT should engage constructively in exploring the options for curriculum delivery with their trainers in those circumstances. It must be clear which party is responsible for the implementation and monitoring of any reasonable adjustments.

3. When possible, RCPATH will offer informal advice, in principle, to doctors considering embarking on a training programme in one of the pathology specialties, when they have a disability that may require reasonable adjustment to training, before being appointed to a specialty training programme. Similar informal advice can be offered to recruitment teams, when requested. The purpose of such advice is to indicate whether it is likely that curriculum outcomes could be met, with reasonable adjustments to training, rather than to identify which adjustments would be appropriate. This will usually be delivered through liaison with the Chair of the relevant College Specialty Training Committee (CSTC) who may approach the College Reasonable Adjustments Advisory Panel for guidance, when required. The scope for offering advice of this nature is necessarily limited by the information available, such as Occupational Health assessment; therefore, any such advice is offered in good faith but should not be considered binding.
4. If reasonable adjustments to training are being considered, this should be informed by an occupational health service assessment, where appropriate. It is expected that the occupational health service will provide advice about the impact of the trainee's disability (or needs) on their ability to perform usual training activities and participate in discussion about the feasibility, and expected effectiveness, of any proposed adjustments.
5. Employer consideration should be given to adjustments that may be made to the work environment, provision of specialist equipment or enabling participation in specific tasks with assistance, if appropriate and as far as is reasonably practicable. It is recognised that Postgraduate Deans, their teams, and Trusts are familiar with the principles of adjusting the work environment, and methods



of working, for people with disability and other needs. Therefore, while RCPATH does not anticipate that College input will be required for many trainees with disability in pathology specialties, the College may be asked to contribute to the process for agreeing reasonable adjustments, when this is considered appropriate.

6. If it is determined that a trainee is unable to participate in a task or learning encounter their trainers should consider what adjusted or alternative activities would enable the trainee to meet the high level learning outcomes (framed as Capabilities in Practice [CiPs]) set out in the relevant specialty training curriculum. While it is appropriate for the process of training to be adjusted, in order to meet the standards required for the award of CCT, the CiPs cannot be adjusted.
7. Training Programme Directors may, if required, seek advice on ensuring that learning outcomes will be adequately achieved, and demonstrated by assessments. Guidance is usually provided by Postgraduate Deans and their teams; advice may also be sought from RCPATH, through the College Specialty Training Committee (CSTC). The Chair of the CSTC may liaise with the College Reasonable Adjustments Advisory Panel, as required, when offering such advice.
8. If it is determined that a trainee is unable to undertake a particular workplace-based assessment, despite reasonable adjustment to the assessment process, alternative assessments that may demonstrate similar capability to enable trainee progression should be considered.
9. In some cases, trainees may require adjustments to training that would preclude achievement of the CiPs to the level specified in the relevant specialty curriculum. In such instances, unless a trainee's circumstances should change during training, recommendation for the award of CCT in that specialty will not be possible.



10. Reasonable adjustments that have been agreed should be documented locally and, ideally, a record to indicate that an adjustment has been made should be included in the trainee's portfolio (without necessarily detailing the adjustment or reason why it is required).
11. When progression decisions have been taken at ARCP, this provides an opportunity to consider whether reasonable adjustments have effectively enabled trainees to achieve the expected curriculum outcomes. Around the time of ARCP, it would be appropriate for supervisors and, if necessary, employers to review reasonable adjustments that are in place, consider their effectiveness, determine whether they are still required and, if so, whether they should be amended.

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