



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

Guidance on the appointment of consultant clinical scientists in pathology to employing bodies in the UK

September 2014





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1 Introduction and purpose

- 1.1 This document is intended to provide advice to assist employing bodies when making appointments to consultant clinical scientist level posts and other senior posts. It is based on a similar guidance document that the College has produced for the appointment of medically qualified pathologists.
- 1.2 It provides an overview of the appointment process recommended by The Royal College of Pathologists, from preparing a job description to interview, and includes the services offered by the College to facilitate it. The overriding aim of an interview panel is to ensure that the best candidate for the job is appointed and that the process of the appointment is open, fair and consistent.
- 1.3 The process described is for the appointment to consultant level posts. The College Workforce Department will also assist in identifying an assessor to support the appointment of other senior clinical scientists.

2 Background

- 2.1 The procedures for the appointment of consultant clinical scientists in the UK are governed by the National Health Service's *Agenda for Change* Terms and Conditions of Service. <http://www.nhsemployers.org/your-workforce/pay-and-reward/agenda-for-change/nhs-terms-and-conditions-of-service-handbook>
- 2.2 The job description review and appointment process recommended and offered by The Royal College of Pathologists that are described in this document are available to all NHS employing bodies, including Foundation Trusts and are free of charge (see Appendix 1).
- 2.3 'Clinical scientist' is a protected title and all clinical scientists are required to be registered with the Health and Care Professionals Council (<http://www.hcpc-uk.org/>) before they can take up an appointment.
- 2.4 The NHS Employment Check Standards, last updated in July 2013, outline the employment checks that employers carry out before appointing staff into NHS positions across the UK. See Appendix 2 for full details of these checks.

3 Vacancy and establishment of the post

- 3.1 Employing bodies should normally begin planning for appointments well before the post is to be advertised or filled.
- 3.2 For consultant posts, the employing body should normally determine in advance whether it wishes to appoint a medical consultant or a consultant clinical scientist. Such a decision should be informed both by the duties to be undertaken by the consultant appointed, and by the balance of senior staffing within the department or network. There may be some circumstances where the employer would wish to advertise a post as 'either/or' (see Appendix 3, 'Guidance notes on the 'either/or' appointment of medical consultants and consultant clinical scientists').
- 3.3 Employing bodies may wish to consider, with relevant professional advice:
 - service needs

- continuing educational requirements
- teaching
- training and supervision of junior staff
- research.

3.4 Employing bodies may wish to take into account the views of the other consultant staff in the department.

4 Preparation of the job description, person specification, job plan and selection criteria

4.1 It is the responsibility of the employing body to prepare the job description, person specification, job plan and selection criteria. It is important that the job description includes all information relevant to the post and that the document is as informative as possible for potential applicants. A consultant clinical scientist model job description and person specification are available at

<https://www.rcpath.org/profession/workforce/jd-review/consultant-clinical-scientist.html>

4.2 The job description, person specification and job plan should be reviewed and endorsed by The Royal College of Pathologists.

4.3 The selection criteria should outline the minimum qualifications, skills and experience required to perform the job. Essential and desirable criteria should be identified. The criteria should avoid unfair discrimination.

4.4 Applicants will use the job description to find out details of the post, including:

- the work programme and fixed commitments together with information on the employing body
- information about its hospitals, units and clinics and the range of services provided by the department in which the applicant will work
- information about associated undergraduate or medical/dental teaching work.

The job description should form part of a general information package, which should include a list of the relevant terms and conditions of service, including pay and any local terms of service. Details of local attractions and places of interest should also be included in the job description.

5 Job description review

5.1 The College's Workforce Department is the single point of contact for employing bodies seeking review and endorsement for job descriptions, and they will identify appropriate assessors.

5.2 The employing body should submit the job description to the Workforce Department for review.

5.3 The Workforce Department will select a College assessor and send the job description directly to them for review.

5.4 The College assessor will comment on the draft job description and provide suggestions for modification if necessary and inform the employing body of endorsement.

5.5 There are College assessors for clinical scientist posts in:

- blood transfusion
- clinical biochemistry
- genetics (i.e. cytogeneticists and molecular geneticists)
- haematology
- immunology
- clinical microbiology
- virology
- histocompatibility and immunogenetics (tissue typing)
- reproductive science (embryology and andrology)
- ultrastructural pathology (electron microscopy).

Other specialist assessors will be recruited to meet further scientific developments.

6 Advertisement and preliminary visits

- 6.1 Employing bodies should advertise internally and externally, using the most relevant outlets for all new consultant clinical scientist posts. Based on current 'Agenda for Change' job profiles, consultant clinical scientist posts can be banded as 8c, 8d, or 9.
- 6.2 For upgraded posts, it is recommended that employing bodies should also consider advertising to potential external candidates as well as considering internal candidates.
- 6.3 Internal regrading of an existing post to a consultant post should be done by appropriate changes to the job description followed by evaluation in accordance with 'Agenda for Change' job evaluation scheme rules. Advertisement is not required, but the job description should be reviewed by a College assessor and the candidate should be interviewed.
- 6.4 The advertisement should include the closing date and date of interview where possible.
- 6.5 Applicants or prospective applicants should feel able and be encouraged to visit the relevant unit and meet some of their prospective colleagues before the appointment committee selects its shortlist and holds interviews.

7 Appointment committee

- 7.1 The employer should convene an appointment committee to select the appropriate candidate for the post.
- 7.2 The College assessor's role at an appointment committee is to advise on the suitability of the candidates for appointment to a specific post. The assessor is also important in guiding questioning to gain an effective picture of a candidate's expertise especially in specialised areas. The College assessor does not vote.
- 7.3 It is not mandatory that the College assessor participates in the shortlisting exercise but the College recommends that they should, where possible. The assessor should be consulted on the shortlist before candidates are invited for interview, in order to confirm that all candidates are suitable for interview.

8 Composition of the appointment committee

Whilst there is no legislation governing these appointments, it is recommended that the composition of the committee be similar to that for a medical consultant appointment:

- a lay member
- an external assessor from The Royal College of Pathologists
- the Chief Executive or nominated deputy
- the Medical/Clinical Director of the employing body or nominated deputy.
- in the case of appointments to departments that have substantial teaching and/or research commitments, the committee should include a professional member nominated after consultation with the relevant university
- a consultant from the employing body from the relevant specialty
- employing bodies may include additional members in the panel and particular care needs to be taken when appointing to posts across two or more employing bodies.

9 The interview

- 9.1 The appointment committee must consider all the candidates against objective selection criteria.
- 9.2 A decision on the suitability of a candidate should relate to the agreed selection criteria and be based on facts rather than impressions.
- 9.3 The Chair is responsible for the procedure and ordering of the interview questions. However, it is customary and helpful to the appointment committee if the College assessor opens the questioning with questions related to training, experience and qualifications necessary for the post.
- 9.4 The Chair is responsible for ensuring that principles of equal opportunities are adhered to.
- 9.5 The Chair must ensure that candidates are not questioned on the following areas:
- the type of contract for which the applicant would opt
 - matters relating to terms and conditions of service, including salary.

10 Post-interview process

- 10.1 A brief report of the appointment committee should be prepared by the Chair and kept as a record by the employing body.
- 10.2 All records and documents in connection with the shortlisting and interviewing, including records of decisions and notes taken by members, should be retained by the employing body according to their data protection policy.
- 10.3 The successful candidate should be formally offered the post, in writing, within two working days of the decision to appoint.
- 10.4 The employing body should not appoint a candidate who was not been found suitable and recommended by the appointment committee.

- 10.5 The employing body is not required to make an appointment and may decide to re-advertise the post.
- 10.6 The College assessor should complete, and return to the College, the Advisory Appointments Committee Feedback Form
<https://www.rcpath.org/profession/workforce/info-college-reps-aacs/clinical-scientist-consultant-level-aacs/clinical-scientist-aac-feedback-form.html>
- 10.7 It is not the College assessor's role to provide feedback to unsuccessful candidates.
- 10.8 Any member of the appointment committee may express concern to the employing body if they are unhappy with the conduct of the committee, including decisions made. This can include disputes over appointments or equal opportunities.

11 Expenses

- 11.1 The employing body should determine arrangements for the payment of expenses to candidates, whether for pre-visits or for interview, subject to the provisions of their terms and conditions of service, if applicable.
- 11.2 Members of the appointment committee will be reimbursed their actual expenses, including travel, hotel accommodation and other subsistence allowances.
- 11.3 College assessors attending appointment committees are entitled to fees according to NHS Employers Guidance Pay Circulars. Employing bodies are asked to make every effort to facilitate these fees.
<http://www.nhsemployers.org/news/2014/08/pay-and-conditions-circular-4-of-2014>

12 Further information

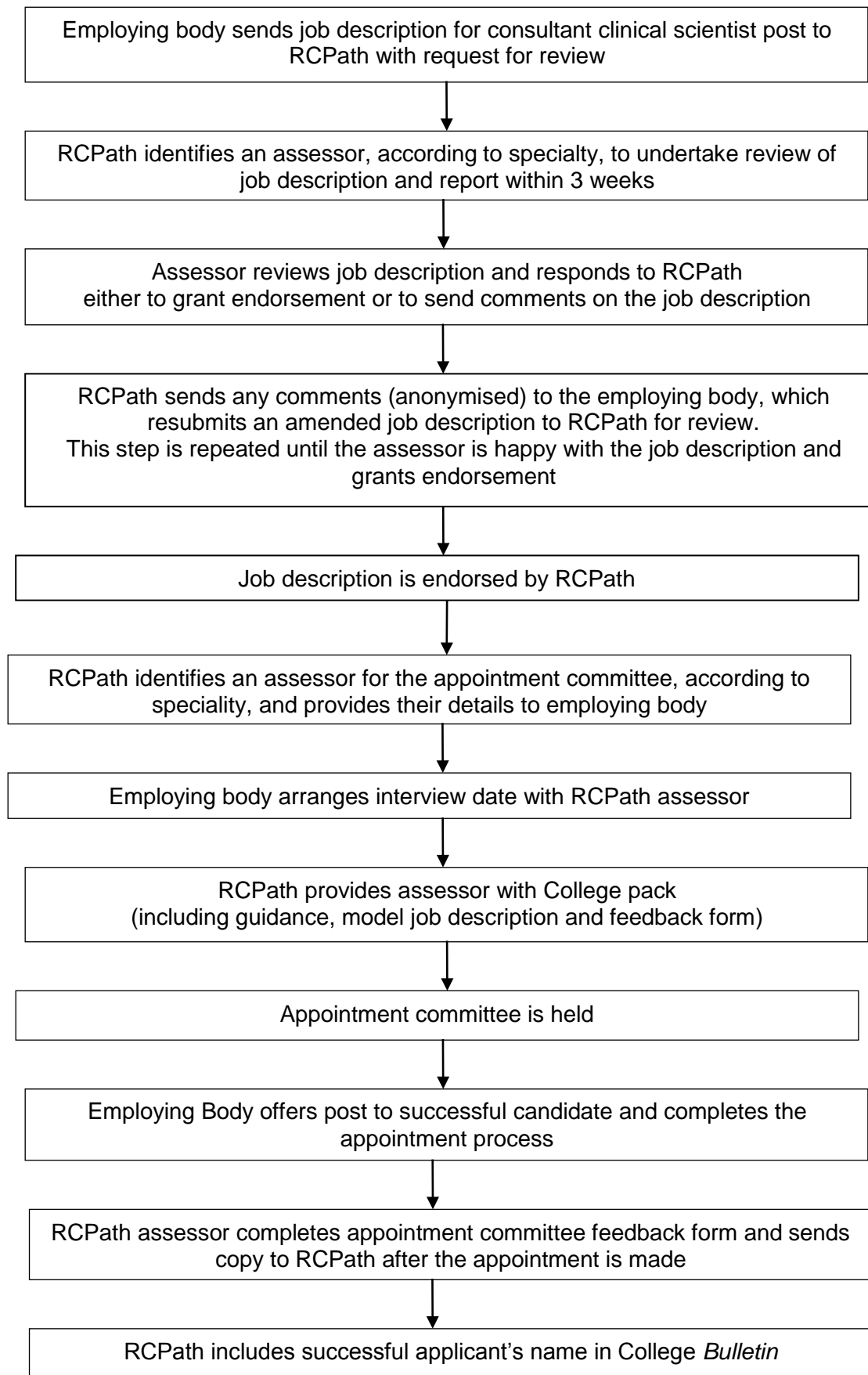
For further information on consultant clinical scientist appointments and to request a job description review and College assessor, please contact the Workforce Department.

Phone: 020 7451 6725

Email: workforce@rcpath.org

Website: <https://www.rcpath.org/profession/workforce.html>

Appendix 1 Process for job description review and appointment



Appendix 2 NHS employment check standards

England

<http://www.nhsemployers.org/your-workforce/recruit/employment-checks>

Scotland – PIN safer pre- and post-employment checks: Policy for NHS Scotland

<http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2014/03/7176/0>

Wales

<http://www.wales.nhs.uk/governance-emanual/standard-25-workforce-recruitment-and-em>

Northern Ireland

<https://www.nibusinessinfo.co.uk/content/employment-checks>

Appendix 3 Guidance notes on the ‘either/or’ appointment of medical consultants and consultant clinical scientists

The view of The Royal College of Pathologists is that the employing body should determine in advance whether it wishes to appoint a medical consultant or a consultant clinical scientist. Such a decision should be informed both by the duties to be undertaken by the consultant appointed, and by the balance of senior staffing within the department or network. A post that requires direct patient-care sessions will necessitate the appointment of a medical consultant.

However, in exceptional circumstances, the employing body may not be able to decide whether it has a preference for a medical consultant or a consultant clinical scientist. An example of such a situation may be where the consultant role does not involve direct patient-care sessions and is centred on leadership and strategic direction of a department or major sub-specialty area within a department or network. In such circumstances, the employing body may wish to seek the ‘best candidate’, irrespective of their background and training route to obtaining FRCPATH by examination.

The ‘either/or’ appointment process

When an employing body chooses to proceed with an ‘either/or’ appointment the following procedure is recommended.

- Separate job descriptions for the medical and clinical posts, using the models available from the College website (<https://www.rcpath.org/profession/workforce.html>) should be prepared.
- The job description for the consultant clinical scientist post needs to be processed through the ‘Agenda for Change’ job evaluation system.
- It is recognised that there will be considerable overlap in the content of these job descriptions, but there will be differences in the eligibility criteria and the scrutiny process. Both job descriptions should be submitted simultaneously for the appropriate RCPATH review. See more information on JDRP Chairs on www.rcpath.org/workforce/medical-andscientific-workforce/job-descriptions/regional-jdrp-job-description-review-panel-chairs.htm
- The post should be advertised simultaneously through the channels most likely to be read by prospective candidates. Medical consultant posts should be advertised both electronically and in print in an appropriate journal.
- The eligibility of all applicants should be assessed by suitable RCPATH assessors as part of the appointment committee process.
- The eligibility of all applicants for the medical consultant post should be determined by a College Assessor, who will recommend to the employing authority the candidates suitable for the shortlist and advise the appointment committee. A parallel process will take place for applicants for the consultant clinical scientist post, and an appropriate College assessor will be identified by the College Workforce Department.
- If the shortlist for the appointment includes candidates for both the medical consultant and consultant clinical scientist posts, a single joint appointment committee should be established. All assessors should participate in the interview process by questioning all candidates.

- At the conclusion of the interview process, the College assessors will recommend which of the appropriately qualified candidates is suitable for appointment. The final decision will rest with the employing body.