Dear Colleague

We are writing to update you on the solutions we have identified to address the current issues for trainees in their final year of GP specialty training. We recognise that the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on training and the MRCGP examination has particularly affected those GP trainees in ST3 who were due to CCT in the summer. The 4 Statutory Education Bodies (HEE, HEIW, NES and NIMDTA), RCGP, GMC, BMA, NHSE and DHSC, as well as trainee representatives have all been working together to achieve a deliverable solution. Your concerns and feedback on the acceptability of possible solutions have been heard and have fully informed these discussions.

As you will recall from previous communications, some of the solutions that have been advocated such as waiving some of the MRCGP requirements or temporary certification are not legally permissible. In addition, some of the possible examination solutions are not deliverable in the required time frame. However, we have agreed the following to enable trainees to take the outstanding assessments required for CCT.

Pragmatic Workplace Based Assessment (WPBA) requirements are already in place.

The RCGP is working with Pearson Vue to enable the Applied Knowledge Test (AKT) to resume at their test centres with appropriate social distancing safeguards in place from July. We have agreed that priority should be given to ST3 candidates. The College is also investigating options for remote invigilation for those that are shielding.

We heard very strong feedback that trainees do not feel it would be appropriate, or necessarily safe, to travel from across the UK to London in order to take the Clinical Skills Assessment (CSA) at 30 Euston Square in the Summer. We also heard that trainees were concerned that the CSA might be too uncertain a solution due to the possible risk of cancellation if a further lockdown proves necessary. Therefore, we have agreed that an alternative temporary assessment, to meet the standards of the CSA component of the MRCGP should be developed to enable you to have the opportunity to gain the full MRCGP in the time available. The CSA exam will not be run during this timeframe.

A ‘recorded assessment’ is to be developed which will enable you to submit video or audio recordings of consultations, recognising that many consultations are now remote. RCGP and GP training educator colleagues are rapidly working on details of this assessment, building on experience with the former MRCGP video assessment, to enable submission of this temporary solution to the GMC for consideration of approval. We are also working together on ensuring the secure transfer and handling of these recorded consultations.

The 4 Statutory Education Bodies are also working together to resume your education sessions with a focus on current models of consulting and preparation for these assessments. The SEBs have considerable experience of recorded consultations for training and assessment and will put in place the support trainees need to prepare for this.

We believe that this temporary alternative to the CSA will enable trainees to have the opportunity to demonstrate their competence. This will be required to be at the same standard as covered by the CSA in order to gain MRCGP and thereby the Certificate of Completion of Training (CCT).

We recognise that every year some colleagues are not able to achieve the MRCGP in the 3-year WTE time frame. As has been previously communicated, it is expected that ARCP panels will be held using video-conferencing and appropriate Outcomes will be determined. The Statutory Education Bodies will ensure support for colleagues who require additional training time.
We recognise that no solution will please everybody but believe these changes are deliverable and will help as many colleagues as possible to complete their training on time.

We would like to thank you for all that you are doing to support patient care during this time and to offer our continued support to you.

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