

College/Faculty Services to Foundation Trusts: Involvement in the Appointment of Consultant and SAS Posts

Colleges/Faculties involved in the appointment process are able to offer the following services:

1 Advice on Consultant Job Descriptions

- External advice to ensure that national standards are met
- Consistency of process, standards and interpretation, whilst keeping a local perspective from Regional Advisers
- Overall national review of job description trends
- Early awareness of posts and nomination of College/Faculty assessor
- Endorsement of or comment, normally within 3 weeks

2 Involvement of College/Faculty Advisers

- Access to a trained group of AAC assessors whose credentials are assured
- More effective and reliable provision of AAC advisers, especially with the new Guidance that Trusts release consultants to act as assessors
- Earlier identification of AAC assessors
- Reduces the workload on Trusts and provides an impartial source of advice on the suitability of candidates, thus helping to safeguard the Trust.

3 The Service

a) The Colleges/Faculties aim to help make the right appointment and are able to provide an appropriately trained and experienced assessor to contribute to the delivery of a high-quality service. Colleges/Faculties invest their own resources in supporting and improving this function and intend to do so in future. They believe that their contribution is valued by the NHS Confederation.

b) Colleges/Faculties are committed to providing the best possible advisory service to Trusts and this is ensured by continuous audit. The pressures faced by Trusts in the recruitment process, with increasing demand consequent on consultant expansion, are understood and can lead to difficulty in filling posts. Colleges/Faculties wish to make the process as fast and efficient as possible. All Regional Advisers take sub-specialty advice in considering Job Descriptions. They and the AAC

assessors are active, or recently retired, clinicians. Those who are retired will receive annual training to ensure they are aware of service developments. Since the College/Faculty role is to provide advice, their views may sometimes differ from those of the Trust but we find that discussion enables a mutually satisfactory agreement, facilitating a good appointment.

c) Consultations have taken place involving the DH, NHS and the Colleges/Faculties to revise the current national regulations. The feedback about College/Faculty involvement is nearly always positive. College/Faculty advice at the job description, short-listing and interview stage provides:

- Impartial medical comment on both the job itself and the suitability of the candidates. Possession of a CCST, CCT, or being on the Specialist Register does not guarantee the appropriateness of a candidate for an appointment. The Colleges/Faculties can provide advice, for example, on specific additional training to ensure patient safety. The reasons why an independent College/Faculty assessor is helpful in advising on the details of training include:
 - Posts are becoming increasingly specialised; a CCST in a parent specialty does not indicate adequate training in a subspecialty e.g. hepatology
 - It is becoming increasingly common for candidates to be on the Specialist Register through a specialist qualification in a European Union country. Training in such countries often differs very significantly in knowledge and expectation from the British equivalent.
- Assessment of the post against national norms. This is an important form of national setting of standards, including job description templates to share with Trusts and thus to streamline the endorsement of their job descriptions.
- Assurance to medical colleagues working with the new appointee that they will have been subjected to external peer assessment.

4 Nomination of College AAC Assessors

The NHS Confederation report (1) recommended that all Colleges/Faculties should maintain lists of approved assessors to perform an independent external advisory role on appointment panels. Pools of eligible consultants, who are prepared to commit (within reasonable circumstances) to making themselves available to undertake this work, are being created. They will form a trained cadre, which will be kept up-to-date on issues relating to the appointment process.