

# Guidance for Advisory Appointments Committees (AAC)

Guidance for HR Departments  
setting up an AAC 2020



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This guidance will be reviewed in March 2023.

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## Introduction

The Royal College of Anaesthetists (RCoA), the Faculty of Intensive Care Medicine (FICM) and the Faculty of Pain Medicine (FPM) seek to help employing authorities to attract the best available candidates and to ensure high quality posts. The support offered is described in this guidance, which should be used by employers when making appointments to consultant and Specialty and Associate Doctor (SAS) posts.

NHS Trusts/Boards are required by the [Consultant Appointment regulations](#), produced by the Department of Health (DH), to include a representative from the appropriate royal college/faculty on the appointment committee for consultants. This guidance describes the process that employers must follow in order to secure a representative from the RCoA, FICM or FPM.

NHS Trusts/Boards are required by the [Consultant Appointment regulations](#), produced by the Department of Health (DH), to include a representative from the appropriate medical college or faculty on the appointment committee.

NHS Foundation Trusts are not required by law to follow the [Consultant Appointment regulations](#). However, they are encouraged by the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges and the Foundation Trust Network to include a representative from the appropriate college or faculty as described in the [Concordat between the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges and the Foundation Trust Network](#). The process for Foundation Trusts to secure a representative of the RCoA, FICM or FPM is the same for all trusts, regardless of their foundation status.

## What is an AAC?

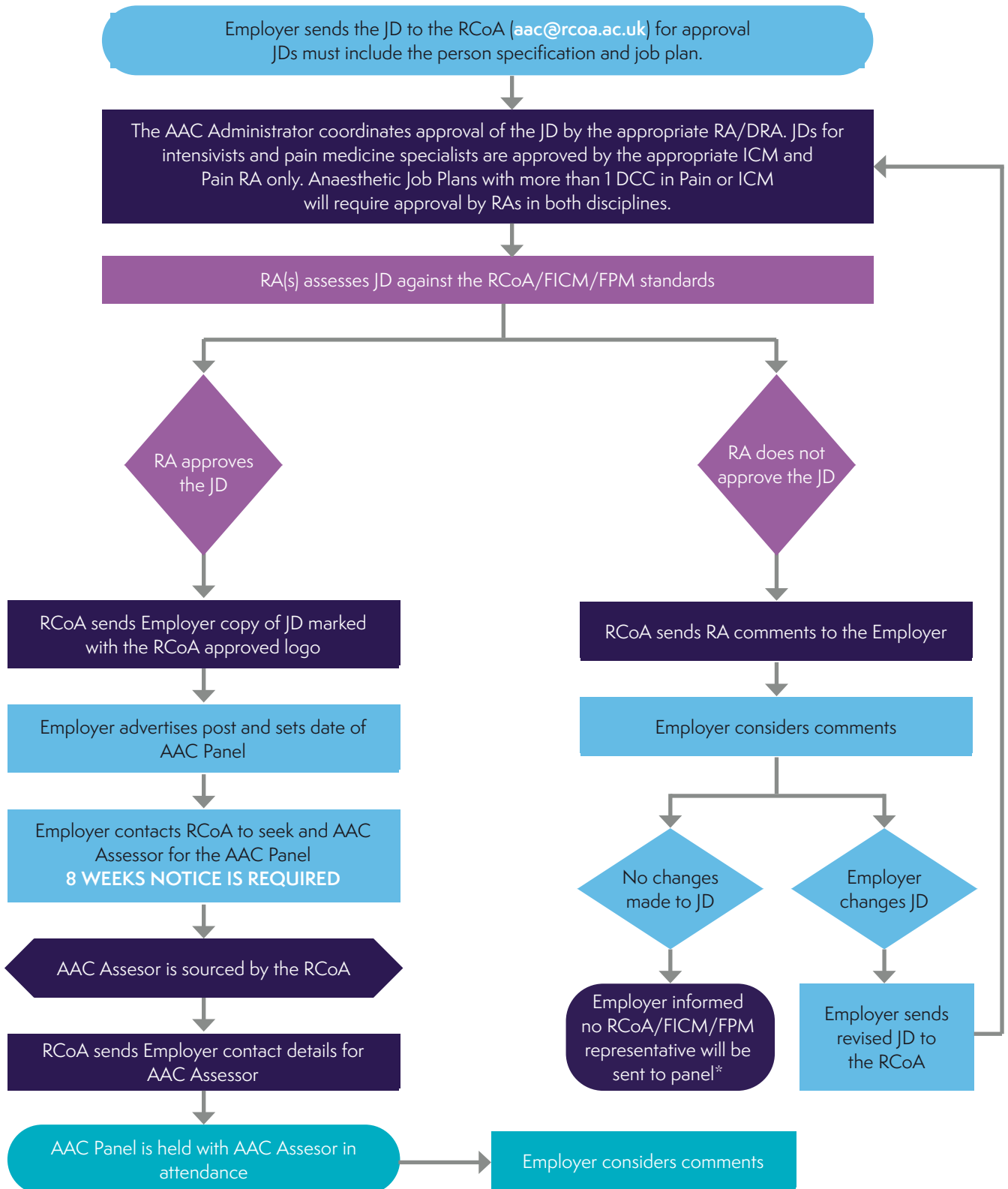
An Advisory Appointments Committee (AAC) is a legally constituted panel that is established by an employing body when appointing consultants or SAS doctors. The remit of an AAC is to decide which, if any, of the applicants is suitable for appointment and to make a recommendation to the employing body.

The core membership of the committee for a consultant post can be found in the DH [Good Practice Guidance](#) section 2.1 – 2.8, which includes a representative of the appropriate college or faculty

This guidance does not pertain to Scotland since, from 2009, it has had a different appointment process. Job descriptions (JDs) in Scotland are not required to be sent to the Regional Advisor (RA). An External Assessor is instead provided by the Academy of Royal Colleges and Faculties in Scotland.

For more information about any part of this guidance please contact [aac@rcoa.ac.uk](mailto:aac@rcoa.ac.uk) or call 020 7092 1571

## The RCoA Process for securing representation at AAC Panels



\*The RCoA may send a representative to an unapproved role if the only reason for non-approval is the amount of supporting professional activity (SPA) time. See FAQs for more details.

## Glossary

AAC	Advisory Appointments Committee
AoMRC	Academy of Medical Royal Colleges
DCC	Direct Clinical Care
DH	Department of Health
DRA	Deputy Regional Advisor
DRAA	Deputy Regional Advisor Anaesthesia
FICM	Faculty of Intensive Care Medicine
FPM	Faculty of Pain Medicine
JD	Job Description
PS	Personal Specification
RA	Regional Advisor
RAA	Regional Advisor Anaesthesia
RCoA	Royal College of Anaesthetists
SAS doctor	Staff grade, associate specialist and specialty doctor
SPA	Supporting professional activity

## Frequently asked questions

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- [How long does it take for a Regional Adviser to approve a job description? »](#)
- [Do I need to contact other colleges regarding dual specialty roles? »](#)
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- [What happens if the AAC assessor cancels in advance? »](#)
- [Who pays the AAC assessors' fee and expenses? »](#)
- [What happens if the AAC assessor has concerns about the process? »](#)
- [What happens if the employer has concerns about an AAC assessor? »](#)
- [What happens if employing authorities do not follow this guidance? »](#)

## Where do I send my JD approval request?

All JDs should be sent to [aac@rcoa.ac.uk](mailto:aac@rcoa.ac.uk) for approval. [Guidance on writing a JD is available.](#)

## How long does it take for a Regional Adviser to approve a job description?

RAs will normally provide approval or initial reasons for non-approval within two weeks. If there are significant changes requested by the RA, discussions between the employing authority and the RA may last longer.

## Do I need to contact other colleges regarding dual specialty roles?

Where consultant intensivist jobs are proposed with unspecified second specialty commitments, e.g. anaesthesia, medical specialties and emergency medicine, the employer should also contact the relevant medical royal colleges. Paediatric ICM roles should be sent to the RCPCH in the first instance.

Posts advertised for other specialties, such as rheumatology or neurology, with a component of pain medicine sessions cannot be approved by the FPM. Such posts should be reviewed by their parent specialty.

## What is the RCoA / FICM / FPM's role in the appointment to academic posts?

The process for the appointment to senior academic posts varies slightly from the standard AAC in that responsibility for the approval of the JD is split between the RA and the appropriate university. The RA approves the clinical content and the appropriate university approves the academic requirements of the post. The AAC assessor's role at the AAC panel is confined to the clinical aspects of the role.

## Will the RCoA, FICM or FPM send an assessor to an AAC panel if the JD is not approved?

In most circumstances, the RCoA, FICM and FPM will not send a representative if the JD has not been approved. However, exceptions are made when the only reason for non-approval of the role is the amount of supporting professional activity (SPA) time in the job plan.

The RCoA, FICM and FPM, require a minimum of 1.5 SPAs per week for consultants and specialty doctors to maintain competence and allow revalidation.

We will seek to send a representative to these AAC panels however the employing authorities in this situation should note:

- not all of our assessors are willing to attend panels where the JDs have not been approved for this reason, so it may be more difficult for us to secure a representative
- the assessor or the AAC Chair should check on the day that the candidates are aware if a post is not approved and why. The Chair of the AAC panel should be made aware of this before the day of the interview panel.

## Can I appeal the decision not to approve the JD?

The employing authority can appeal directly to the RCoA, FICM or FPM if it considers that the RA has insufficient grounds to refuse to approve a JD. The matter will be referred to the lead AAC Assessors and escalated to the Chair of the relevant committee at RCoA, FICM and/or FPM as appropriate.



## What will I receive when a JD is approved?

You will receive a copy of the RA Approval form and a version of the JD which has been appended with the RCoA's Approved Post logo:



The RCoA encourages all colleagues to look out for this logo in advertisements.

Please note that use of this logo outside of the AAC approval process is not acceptable.

## How long is JD approval valid for?

RCoA, FICM or FPM approval of a post is valid for one year from the date of approval, provided that there are no significant changes to the job plan.

If any changes occur to the job plan you are required to contact the RCoA for re-approval before advertising the post.

## Can we advertise the JD before RCoA approval is granted?

It is recommended that JD approval is sought before the post is advertised. If the employing body advertises before approval is confirmed they should inform any candidates once approval is granted and highlight any changes that have been made in order to gain approval.

## When should I contact the RCoA AAC team to find a representative?

You must give us at least 8 weeks' notice from the date of the panel. The vast majority of our AAC assessors are practising doctors and require this amount of notice to secure leave from their employers.

## What happens if I give less than 8 weeks' notice for an AAC panel?

The RCoA AAC team will still process your request however, you should be aware that the shorter the notice period given, the less likely is it that the team will be able to find a suitable representative for the AAC panel. This means it is more likely that you will have to rearrange the AAC panel date.

## What happens if the RCoA cannot find an AAC assessor for the date requested?

The RCoA makes every effort to provide an AAC assessor for the date requested by the employer however, on rare occasions the AAC team will not be able to find a representative for the date requested. In these situations, there are several options:

- The employer is able to suggest a consultant in the appropriate specialty, in good standing with the GMC and RCoA, who is willing to represent the RCoA, FICM and/or FPM as appropriate. In these circumstances, the RCoA AAC team may allow this consultant to act as the representative as long as there are no conflicts of interest. As stated in the NHS Good Practice Guidance, they must not work for the same employing body.

- NHS trusts/boards must rearrange the date of their AAC panel, as without college or faculty representation, the AAC would not be properly constituted as outlined in NHS Good Practice Guidance and any appointment would be open to legal challenge.
- NHS foundation trusts are within their rights to proceed with the AAC Panel as planned, without college or faculty representation. However, this is not recommended as good practice.

To avoid these situations, the RCoA recommends contacting us as soon as the panel date is known and to avoid scheduling panels on dates within the school holidays, when it can be more difficult to find available assessors.

## What happens if the assessor cancels with very short notice before the panel date?

If the assessor is unable to attend and there is insufficient time to assign a new assessor, the information from the above FAQ stands. In some instances, the individual circumstances will be taken into consideration. Please contact the AAC team for further advice.

## What happens if the AAC assessor cancels in advance?

The AAC assessor should inform the college at the earliest possible time that they will be unable to attend a panel. If they contact the employing body directly then this information should be passed to the AAC administration team. We will endeavour to find a new assessor to attend the panel.

## Who pays the AAC assessors' fee and expenses?

The employing authority pays the AAC assessor's fee and expenses. The fees that AAC assessors can claim from the employing authority for attending an AAC Panel are set by NHS Employers and can be found in [Annex A: Section 11 of the "Pay and Conditions Circular \(M&D\) 1/2017"](#).

AAC assessors will claim their actual expenses, including travel, hotel accommodation and other subsistence allowances, in accordance with the rules of the employing authority, from the employing authority concerned as outlined in Section 6 of the [NHS Good Practice Guidance](#).

## What happens if the AAC assessor has concerns about the process?

Full support will be given to any assessor who feels that having given their guidance, the AAC is making a recommendation that conflicts with the maintenance of appropriate standards. Where this action is taken by the employer, the assessor will primarily alert the RCoA Lead AAC Assessors.

## What happens if the employer has concerns about an AAC assessor?

If the employing authority has a complaint about the conduct of an AAC assessor, this should be made in writing and sent to [aac@rcoa.ac.uk](mailto:aac@rcoa.ac.uk). This will be reviewed by the Director of Clinical Quality and Research and the lead AAC Assessors in the first instance.

## What happens if employing authorities do not follow this guidance?

The RCoA, FICM and FPM are not regulators and have few sanctions they can apply if an employer fails to heed its best practice advice in organising an AAC. However, in practice it is rare for RCoA, FICM or FPM advice to go unheeded, as our focus is on assisting the employer to select the best possible candidate for the advertised post and to protect the employer from any subsequent claims by an unsuccessful candidate that the AAC was ill-formed and unjust in its decision making process.

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