

## Specialty Monitoring report Addendum

**Training Commissioner:** The Royal College of Surgeons of England (RCS Eng)

**Education Quality Assurance Lead:** Scott Wollaston (Support - Natalie Watson)

### Panel:

Richard Cure, David Young

### Re-Inspection 12 July 2023

#### Summary:

RCS Eng were inspected in January 2023 and a report on that inspection was completed with 10 actions. This follow up inspection activity has been conducted to assess progress made against the report actions. RCS Eng submitted further evidence in June 2023 ahead of the re-inspection, which demonstrated their progress against the actions set. The panel were pleased to see the progress made and now consider that 3 requirements are now met, and 5 are partly met. There are still some processes we will need to see have been actioned, and the GDC will follow up with RCS Eng in October 2023. The below table outlines the requirements and status as they stand after the July 2023 re-inspection.

Requirement	Status
E1	Met
E2	Partly Met
E3	Partly Met
E4	Met
E5	Met
E6	Met
E7	Partly Met
E8	Partly Met

Action number (Requirement)	Progress towards report actions:
E1 Action 1	<p><b>Action:</b> <i>Develop a clear statement on where responsibility lies with both RCS England and RCPSG within bi-collegiate exams.</i></p> <p><b>Progress:</b></p> <p>In their additional evidence, RCS Eng provided us with copies of their updated Exam Regulations documents for both their RSME and MOrth exams. In each of these documents there are clear statements which outline the responsibility of each party for the exams.</p> <p>We consider that this action has now been completed, and Requirement E1 is now <b>Met</b>.</p>
E2 Action 1	<p><b>Action:</b> <i>Conduct an audit of the QAF and follow up on actions identified in a timely manner.</i></p> <p><b>Progress:</b></p> <p>The Quality Assurance Framework (QAF) was audited internally in June 2023 by RCS Eng and a copy of this was provided to us in the latest evidence. This audit document shows that RCS Eng have reviewed how each area of the MOrth and RSME exams meets the standard expected within the QAF and a RAG rating has been provided for each overall area and the individual components. Where a component is not RAG rated green, there is a note explaining why and a recommendation and due date to complete the action. There is then an expected status RAG rating by that due date.</p> <p>There are several areas in the audit where they have RAG rated red or amber, and RCS Eng stated during the inspection that they consider most of these will be completed by the next diet in September 2023. The deadline for most of the recommendations is September 2023 and RCS Eng stated they will review these areas after the next diet. They also confirmed that if the item is not RAG rated green at that point, further recommendations will be made with a further follow up date.</p> <p>RCS Eng told us during the inspection that the QAF will now continue to be audited on a three-yearly basis, unless there is any major changes to the exams, at which point an ad-hoc audit will take place.</p> <p>The panel were pleased to see this audit had been undertaken with clear recommendations and deadlines to follow up and consider this action has been completed. As there are several areas within the audit that are due to be followed up by September 2023, the GDC will follow up on this in October 2023 to ensure this review has taken place at this point.</p>

<p>E2 Action 2</p>	<p><b>Action:</b> <i>Review and update the risk register more frequently, with clear evidence of follow up on actions identified.</i></p> <p><b>Progress:</b></p> <p>RCS Eng stated that they have now moved from a generic risk register, to a specific one for these SMEE exams. They now review their risk register twice a year, before taking it to the SMEE board. This ensures that it is a focused topic of discussion at the SMEE board meetings, where they can review and consider all of the items on the register. RCS Eng told us that if there were any urgent issues that could not wait until the next SMEE board meeting, this would be followed up outside this process.</p> <p>During the inspection, RCS Eng gave the panel an example of a risk (potential candidate malpractice) and how this was identified, actioned and followed up. The panel consider that this action has been completed.</p>
<p>E2 Action 3</p>	<p><b>Action:</b> <i>Develop and implement an examiner calibration process that ensures consistency across all examiners.</i></p> <p><b>Progress:</b></p> <p>RCS Eng have introduced a number of processes for this action, in order to ensure consistency across all examiners. They have provided us with evidence of clear marking descriptors for both exams. Examiners still calibrate in pairs for each exam, however the guidance given to the examiners is now more detailed. RCS Eng also provided us with a copy of their presentation for their recent training session for examiners. The panel were pleased with this evidence and considered that it clearly demonstrated how they ensure consistency across all examiners, including education specific equality, diversity and inclusion.</p> <p>The examiner training policy states that examiners must attend training at least every three years. RCS Eng keep a record of examiners and the last training session they attended, to ensure compliance, and do not use examiners where they have not completed training within the last three years. RCS Eng told us that for another of their exams they have successfully trialled remote examiner observations, which they are considering for the SMEE exams. They are also considering examiner evaluations which is something they are currently working on with another exam; the panel would encourage RCS Eng to introduce this.</p> <p>The panel consider this action to be completed.</p> <p>We consider that Requirement E2 is now <b>Partly Met</b>. This is pending review of the follow up on recommendations identified within the QAF Audit. We will review this in October 2023 and would expect to see evidence that RCS Eng have fully reviewed all items within the QAF audit containing actions with a September 2023 deadline. Following the review in October, if we are assured that the actions and recommendations have been followed up then this requirement will move to Met.</p>

E3 Action 1	<p><b>Action:</b> <i>Recruit suitable external examiner(s), and appropriately induct and train them before involving them within the assessment process.</i></p> <p><b>Progress:</b></p> <p>RCS Eng set up a Short Life Working Group (SLWG) to review and improve their processes following the actions within the GDC's initial inspection. For this action, they worked closely with the Exam Board Chairs to identify specifically what they are looking for in an External Examiner and have agreed the role specification with the SLWG.</p> <p>RCS Eng have not yet recruited an external examiner, but they expect that they will be in place for the Autumn diets for both exams. The panel were pleased to see progress has been made towards this action, and this will be followed up in October 2023.</p> <p>We consider that Requirement E3 is <b>Partly Met</b>. We will review this in October 2023 and would expect to see suitable external examiner(s) in post and completed reports from them on the Autumn diet exams. If following the review in October we are happy the external examiner(s) are in post and fulfilling their function, this will move to Met.</p>
E4 Action 1	<p><b>Action:</b> <i>Clearly document and implement an effective assessment evaluation process.</i></p> <p><b>Progress:</b></p> <p>RCS Eng state that to meet this action they have written short answer questions (SAQs) based on a two part evaluation, and undertake statistical analysis on how the questions have performed. If for any specific questions there are high pass or fail rates, these will be flagged for review. The examiners now also completed a feedback form which addresses a number of points on how the candidates have performed and how well the questions are written. This then allows the exam board to review the material. There is a similar process for the unseen cases aspect of the exam; examiners will fill out feedback forms and identify any common misconceptions and this will be discussed at the exam board before signing off the results.</p> <p>We consider that Requirement E4 is <b>Met</b>. We will review this in October 2023 and would expect to see evidence of the above outlined process taking place in the September 2023 diet.</p>
E5 Action 1	<p><b>Action:</b> <i>Develop a more specific blueprinting process, mapping to each individual learning outcome.</i></p> <p><b>Progress:</b></p>

	<p>RCS Eng have developed their blueprint mapping to the GDC's Learning Outcomes (LOs) significantly and now identify where each individual LO is assessed by them. There are several LOs they stipulate are not assessed, and during the inspection RCS Eng explained to the panel that they do not consider these to be exit exams from specialty training and that it is just one source of information around a trainee's readiness. The GDC accepts that not all LOs are able to be fully assessed appropriately by the exams.</p> <p>We consider that Requirement E5 is <b>Met</b>.</p>
E6 Action 1	<p>Action: <i>Formalise and document training requirements for examiners.</i></p> <p><b>Progress:</b></p> <p>As noted under E2 Action 3, RCS Eng provided us with a copy of their presentation used for the recent examiner training, which the panel were pleased with. They also provided us with an Examiner Training Policy in the latest evidence, which outlines the need for examiners to attend training once every three years, and any examiners who do not will be barred from examining. It also outlines the requirement of an examiner briefing before each exam, and what this briefing should cover.</p> <p>RCS Eng explained during the inspection that the overseas examiners undertake the same training, but remotely. And this covers the same topics and ensures that they are aware of the UK standard.</p> <p>The panel consider that the evidence shows that training requirements are now suitably documented and that this action has been completed and Requirement E6 is <b>Met</b>.</p>
E7	<p>There were no actions under E7 in the initial report, but the panel consider that following the additional evidence, this requirement is now <b>Partly Met</b>.</p> <p>We will review this in October 2023 and would expect to see the external examiner(s) in post and appropriate reports from them on the September 2023 exam diet. Following the review in October, if we are satisfied that this has taken place this requirement will move to Met.</p>

E8 Action 1	<p><b>Action:</b> <i>Develop a statement that clearly outlines the standard expected of specialty trainees taking the exams.</i></p> <p><b>Progress:</b></p> <p>Within the Regulations documents for both the RSME and the MOrth exams, RCS Eng have stated: <i>“In order to pass the examination, candidates will need to demonstrate that they possess the knowledge, skills and behaviors required of a day-one specialist practitioner in the relevant single specialty.”</i></p> <p>Although a statement is now in place for candidates, the panel did not consider that it clearly outlined the standard expected of them. RCS Eng told us during the inspection that there is a piece of work across the whole college to work on improving candidate information, including; a candidate friendly version of the blueprinting which will allow trainees to see what they are being assessed against, mock timetable for the exam day(s) and helpful info on what to experience on the day. Once the candidate friendly version of the mapping is completed, this action would be considered addressed.</p>
E8 Action 2	<p><b>Action:</b> <i>Develop and utilise a more specific standard setting process.</i></p> <p><b>Progress:</b></p> <p>RCS Eng told us that they propose to use a modified Angoff standard-setting method for all written exams. The proposal was put to the SMEE board and accepted and so will be used from the next diet. Examiners will be trained in this process ahead of this.</p> <p>We consider that this action has been addressed and that Requirement E8 is <b>Partly Met</b>. We will review this in October 2023 and would expect to see clearer information for candidates of the standard required of them and that the standard setting process has been utilised for the September 2023 exam.</p>