

**RCoA Northern Ireland Board meeting
Tuesday 10th October 2023
Remote meeting: Via Teams**

MINUTES

Members:

Elected Board: Dr Will Donaldson, Chair Dr Killian McCourt (apologies) Dr Sinead McGuirk Dr Mark McCague Dr Alex Greene	Ex-Officio: Dr Richard Laird Dr Esther Davis Dr Conor Farrell Dr Neal Beckett Mrs Mary Lynne Smith
RCoA Dr Claire Shannon, RCoA Vice President (apologies) Mr Russell Ampofo, RCoA Director of Training and Exams Ms Susan Rees (Minutes)	

1. Welcome and Apologies

Apologies were noted from Dr Killian McCourt and Dr Claire Shannon.

A tribute to Dr Sean McMahon was read by Dr Donaldson and a moment's silence was observed by the Board.

2. Declarations of Interest

Dr Will Donaldson invited the Board to submit any declarations of interest relating to the agenda items.

3. Minutes of the Previous meeting held on 12 April 2023

The minutes of the previous meeting held on Wednesday 12th April 2023 were circulated in advance of the meeting and were approved as a true and accurate record.

Ongoing actions from last meeting:

Actions to be carried over from the last meeting:

- SAS recruitment is ongoing and the Board noted they need an SAS representative on the Board.
- Letter from Peter May action is closed.
- Newsletter is ongoing and in progress.

4.RCoA College Report

Mr Russell Ampofo presented the College report and highlighted the following:

Elections for roles on Council are now open. There are three consultant and two anaesthetist in training vacancies available in this year's ballot, and the window for self-nomination is open until 19 October 2023. More details can be found at <https://rcoa.ac.uk/council-2023-elections>.

It was noted that on this occasion, there are no SAS vacancies at present. Mr Russell Ampofo asked the group to invite as many members as possible to share this with colleagues or to apply themselves if they are interested and this will be communicated as much as possible with the RCoA members.

RA updated that a Diplomates Day was hosted on the 8th September at the Central Westminster Hall and it was hosted for all RCoA members and was well received on the day. For the future, the college will make improvements on membership engagement and improve the venue and experiences for our Diplomates.

Anaesthesia Associates and EGM being held on the 17th October 2023

AAs has been high on the agenda for Council and Trustees over the last few months. EGM is going ahead on the 17th October 2023. All members have received instructions on how to attend in person or cast your proxy votes remotely and the motions being discussed.

RA reported that the EGM will be a good opportunity to ensure membership engagement and hear opinion around AAs and the work of the college. A Series of Let's Talk events have been held prior to the EGM and the college have produced a number of FAQ's around AAs which have been uploaded to the website and a guidance and information pack to help inform the vote and those engaging with the EGM.

The process for bringing motions to the college was part of a push to increase member voice and allow members to bring motions and issues to the RCoA.

CPOC update

RA reported that Professor Daniel Conway has been appointed as Education Lead for the perioperative Care commission lead by NHSE to draft the training content for perioperative care coordinators and this work is ongoing for CPOC.

Once there is a document in draft there will be an opportunity for a broad consultation with the membership and we hope that this will again provide better multi professional engagement for perioperative care in a more standardised way that is in place currently.

Events update

RA updated that the college ran the first 'Welcome to Anesthesia' event in early September 2023. This was for all new trainees to attend via a webinar hosted by the President to open the doors of the college to new trainees and to explore critical progression points in their careers. The college is hoping that this event will be held annually in the college.

RA reported that in this SAS week, there is another online 'Let's Talk event' is planned for SAS doctors on the 11th October 2023 and is a good opportunity for all to engage with the Board in this meeting.

Workforce Committee group has resumed

RA updated that the Workforce committee group has held 2 meetings with four nation representation and the college is establishing what the 12 month work plan for the committee will involve. RA has held interesting meetings with NHSE following this committee. Following these meetings, RA would like to reach out to Northern Ireland to enquire on what the workforce pressures are in Northern Ireland to investigate further.

As one example, NHSE wish the college to look how training slots could be used flexibly, particularly when there are people working less than full time. This is to maximise training capacity within the school. The college recently drafted guidance and this has been released to TPD's.

RA would like the Workforce Committee to generate a list on some topics or issues that the board felt were really critically important for Northern Ireland. The college wishes to be able to feedback to the committee in order to develop a comprehensive workforce strategy, whilst also ensuring the work is relevant and topical for everyone across the UK.

The aim is to start a discussion on whether the RCoA can take on some work to analyse data or and get some local trainers involved. The college have got good experience of doing some quite successful deep dives, looking at regional data or regional workforce issues in order to support everyone. RA stressed that the college want to hear the small issues, the issues that could be resolved by policy changes or guidance from the college, and even quite structural big changes that may be required as well.

Equivalence applications

RA also reported that the college are seeing a 50% increase in the number of equivalence applications. They are responding to this by taking more of a proactive approach to see whether the college can map out the perspective CESR programmes which are being established across the UK and creating a database of what rotations there are, how many people are going through each of those programs and thinking about how the college can support regions.

Exams update

RA reported that the college is launching a new post, which is called the Affiliate Examiner role and this will provide a way to foster greater, wider participation in the exam development process.

This Affiliate role will be focused on developing exam content and exam questions ready for the live exam and it's one of the recommendations from the exams review where the college is aiming for a wider input into where the questions originate from and from where questions are developed and the source material that it's developed from will make for a richer examination. This will be launched during SAS week as it is a role which is appropriate for SAS doctors as well as Senior trainees.

Action: RA will share the Training and workforce issues letter with Dr Will Donaldson who will then circulate this to the Board and any feedback on further discussions will be relayed to RA.

5.Chair's Business

i. NI Board Term of Office Document.

The Board agreed to review the individual Board members term of office to support planning

for 2023/24 elections. It was noted there are possibly five vacancies on this Board which does include the SAS vacancy and the college is keen to submit to the Election process.

Action: It was agreed to update the TOO and send this to Mrs Natalie Walker, Governance Officer, so the RCoA will be aware of how many vacancies there are on the Board and support the Election process.

Action: WD to progress with the newsletter which will highlight the Elections and Board representation vacancies and it can be raised at future council meetings.

ii. June Workshop for Peter May, the Permanent Secretary for Health in the UK.

Dr Will Donaldson has held an Intercollegiate meeting with other Royal Colleges and subsequently an online meeting was held with Peter May in June 2023. The agenda was focused on workforce and the current action plan and which was generic rather than a product of each specialty input. This group will act to provide expertise and help to Peter May. They discussed college expertise to support a new delivery workforce strategy and the RCoA has a 2021 strategy which can input into their workforce plan of 2026.

It was noted that Dr Donaldson will keep the Board informed of further meetings with the Department of Health and with Peter May.

Northern Ireland National Audit Office tackling Waiting lists document.

Dr Donaldson submitted the Northern Ireland National Audit office report which had been published on the day of the meeting, the 10th October and circulated on the day for this reason.

The document is alarming, the report shows there were 47,000 patients waiting in 2013, then 80,000 in 2018, but by 2023 it is nearly 120,000. It was also noted that 26% of Northern Ireland's population are on a waiting list. This has nearly doubled in a decade.

6. Advisers' business:

i. Regional Advisor for Anaesthetics: (Dr Richard Laird)

Dr Laird reflected that it was with great sadness that he had learnt of the sudden death on 22nd August 2023 of one of their anaesthetic trainees, Dr Sean McMahon. Anaesthesia is a small community and this great loss has been felt across the province by his family, friends and colleagues. The support from NIMDTA and the school of anaesthesia has been welcome.

Dr Laird reported that the landscape for anaesthetic training in Northern Ireland remains challenging.

According to the BBC News NI website today, the NI Audit Office have published a report that looked at waiting list data from 2014 to 2023. It found the number of patients waiting for elective care has risen by 452,000 during that nine-year period. In December 2022, the number of patients on waiting lists equated to more than a quarter of the population of Northern Ireland.

- A total of 696,000 patients were waiting on either outpatient, inpatient or diagnostic elective care by March 2023.
- That is a rise of 185% compared to the 244,000 people who were on the list in March 2014.
- The report compared this figure to 12% of the population in England and 24% in Wales.

This situation is compounded by the lack of an executive and clear governmental leadership.

Anaesthetic departments throughout the province continue to experience heavy workloads and challenging working conditions. The prospect of both a junior doctor and consultant strike loom on the horizon. But despite these issues anaesthetic trainees and trainers continue to work hard and care for their patients.

Appointments

Three colleagues have now taken up their role as College Tutors throughout Northern Ireland. Dr Julie O'Neill taken up the role in Craigavon Hospital (Southern Trust), Dr James Reid College Tutor in the Royal Victoria Hospital (Belfast Trust) and Dr Rebecca Barr in Altnagelvin Hospital (Western Trust). Dr James Quinn and Dr Lisa Taylor are now educational supervisors in the Belfast Trust.

Workforce

There will be eight trainees who will complete their CCT in February 2024. We have three trainees OOPE, one who will return in February 2024 and two who return in August 2024. There are 9 trainees on maternity leave with three on long term sick leave. LTFT has expanded from 12 to 30 trainees recently.

Consultant Job Approvals

Here is a list of consultant posts approved in the last six months.

1. AAC 2679.ni Consultant Anaesthetist with an interest in Cardiac anaesthesia in the Belfast Trust. (October 2023).
2. AAC 2674.ni Consultant anaesthetist with an Interest in Obstetrics in Northern Health and Social Care Trust (Antrim) (September 2023).
3. AAC 2666.ni Consultant Anaesthetist in Southern Health and Social Care Trust (Daisy Hill) (August 2023).
4. AAC 2567.ni Consultant Anaesthetist in Northern Health and Social Care Trust (Coleraine) (March 2023).

Recruitment

ST4 recruitment in October 2023 has had no applications. Autumn recruitment is usually quiet but this is disappointing. From February 2024 Northern Ireland will be able to recruit from national recruitment clearing.

CT1 interviews were held in March 2023. These interviews were carried out virtually with the interviewers based in NIMDTA. This process also ran smoothly with no major technical issues. There was generally good feedback.

Exam results

We continue to have encouraging results. I would continue to appeal for more College examiners from Northern Ireland.

Courses and Meetings

Over the summer, courses and meetings had taken a break but recently we have had the CT1/ACCS introductory day which ran successfully in September in Antrim Hospital. Thank you to Dr Jane Turner and the team for organising this.

The school is planning half day visits to all the training centres around Northern Ireland to provide an update for all trainers. We will be highlighting the changes in the new curriculum.

Annual Faculty Education Day was held last week jointly with NIMDTA and Queens University.

The Primary and Final FRCA courses have continued to run successfully. Thanks has been conveyed to the Clinical Tutors in organising these.

SPA time is currently available for senior trainees to support professional development.

Amongst the other local meetings, the NIStar transfer course continues to run, led by Dr Andrew Topping and the NIOAN (Northern Ireland Obstetric Anaesthetic Network) study day will be held on 8th April 2024. This meeting will be providing face to face and virtual obstetric anaesthetic training.

It was noted there are plans to run a course for trainees approaching CCT, covering consultant interviews, CV building and wellbeing as a consultant.

ARCP panels

The ARCP panels were undertaken in June 2023 with the process running smoothly.

New Curriculum

Nearly all trainees are on the new curriculum with only a few ST7s remaining on the old curriculum. These trainees will complete their CCT in the next 6 months.

Dr Mary Molloy thanked Dr Richard Laird for his six years as Regional Advisor on the Board. It was noted that he has contributed so much over this time and has been a very good support to the school.

ii. Regional Advisor for Intensive Care Medicine - Dr Esther Davis, Regional Advisor for Intensive Care Medicine.

Training

Dr Davis reported that there are currently 29 training in ICM in NI. There are 16 dual training with anaesthesia, 4 of whom will CCT in January; six are dual training with EM; 3 are triple/dual training with AIM; 1 triple/dual training with respiratory; and 3 are currently single ICM. Two of those in a single ICM programme intend to dual train with anaesthetics from February and the other has been appointed to the ACL programme so will be 50% research til his CCT date.

Recruitment

Dr Davis advised that they had recruited 5 to the training programme starting in August 2023 – one anaesthetics, one EM, one AIM and 2 planning to apply for ST3 anaesthetics in February. They have replaced one CCT (dual EM-ICM) in May 2023 and the 4 expected CCTs in January so keeping our overall training numbers steady. We had hoped to increase our numbers but we were unable to secure funding for that. The Recruitment to NI ICM training for August 2024 will again be part of the national process with a similar format to previous years.

Exam

The next FFICM OSCE-SOE will be held in the first week of October. At the last sitting, all 8 local candidates passed held at the end of March. At this sitting, there are 2 local candidates and a larger cohort expected in the spring. The next written exam will be held in January. The Faculty are participating in the newly established Examinations Development and Assurance Group (EDAG) and ways to develop FFICM are being explored. Any changes being implemented, after approval by GMC, will be publicised in advance for candidates.

Education Programme

Regional seminars continue to be delivered and have mostly returned to in-person format. Feedback is consistently very positive. As part of our educational programme, an exam prep course with practice OSCE-SOE is provided for local candidates as needed and feedback is excellent. The organisers, Dr Black and Dr Headley, and the rest of the volunteer faculty do an excellent job and their work on this is very much appreciated.

ARCPs

ARCPs in June 2023 were held in a hybrid format, with most of the panel in person in NIMDTA and trainees attending by videocall. A regional advisor from another deanery attended as an observer on behalf of FICM. Likewise I attended another deanery's ARCP and the collated feedback will help assess how the new curriculum is being implemented and be used to develop best practice recommendations.

New curriculum and portfolio

There are no new issues to report on the new curriculum or portfolio. A multiple consultant report assessment has been successfully piloted in paper format. It has been adapted following feedback and is expected to be added to the ICM LLP in the near future.

Consultant positions and workforce

One ICM consultant post has been filled since the last meeting but has been deferred for an overseas fellowship. Two Trusts are interviewing this month for further posts. Workforce review of ICM in NI is overdue and there is no indication of when this may happen. We continue to be concerned about the mismatch between vacant consultant posts and the number in ICM training. We will continue to seek funding for additional training posts and potentially explore the possibility of Trust funded training posts.

iii. Regional Advisor for Pain Medicine - Dr Conor Farrell

Recruitment

Dr Farrell reported that they do have a current fellow or SAS doctor in post. This was a competitive interview. The previous fellows have the 100% record in terms of exams that continues. It was noted there have been some conversations over the last few years in terms of the implementation and agreeing sessions, based on stages of training and that Dr Mary Molloy and Dr Richard Laird have been involved with this.

Dr Farrell passed his thanks to the school for helping with this. There has been only positive feedback and it's been implemented reasonably well locally and meetings have been arranged well. There is also a Northern Ireland Pain Society meeting which occurs annually, which had stopped due to COVID, but this is the first year in 2023, that is has resumed in person.

It was reported that the meeting is taking place in late October and Dr Alex Greene is giving the keynote speech. Dr Farrell noted that his term as Regional Adviser is coming to an end and he thanked the Board.

7. College of Anaesthesiologists of Ireland business (by Professor George Shorten)

CAI and BJA relationship

CAI have signed joint Statement of Purpose and journal access agreements with the British Journal of Anaesthesia (26/9/23) putting in place a commitment to formalise and strengthen the relationship between the two organisations for a term of five years. The overall aim is to provide mutual support to each organisation in the best interests of the specialty of anaesthesia. Some of the collaborative activities to be explored include:

Adoption of BJA, BJA Education and BJA Open as a "Society Partner" on the BJA and CAI websites and in other materials and communications as agreed between the Parties.

Joint BJA/CAI grant funding for projects that advance the specialty, support College membership, or improve outcomes for patients.

Consideration of BJA sessions at CAI meetings including its Annual Congress.

Consideration of submission of research outputs, reports and guidelines produced by CAI to the BJA journal. Joint BJA/CAI activities to support trainees.

CAI Planning around Reflective Practice.

RP core management team.

Council Lead Dr Robert Ghent

Course Director Dr Audrey Dunn Galvin

Event co-ordinator Ms Juliana Gonzalez

Faculty member Prof George Shorten

“Reflective Practice for Health Professionals - a short introductory course” was delivered as part of the SAT 1 Introduction to Anaesthesiology programme on June 16th 2023. Course Director Dr Audrey Dunn Galvin, Course Faculty: Dr Robert Ghent, Dr Eilís Condon, Dr Brian McCloskey and Prof George Shorten. College certificates of satisfactory completion were awarded. The course will be next be delivered on October 18, 2023 to College Tutors as a component of the Annual Tutor Training Day.

Development of a College position on Assisted Dying, specifically relating to prospective new legislation in Ireland:

Background: An Oireachtas committee on assisted dying is gathering views from across Irish medicine in terms of positions on this, with a view to drafting legislation next year. As a College and Council, we previously discussed advance health care directives draft legislation in 2018/2019 but this is a different issue.

The College Council has approved establishment of a short-term working group, to be chaired by Professor Donal Buggy to consider the College position on this matter.

The WG’s purposes are to:

1. To develop a process enabling the CAI to express a position on Assisted Dying specifically in relation to future legislation in Ireland;
2. As part of above, to elicit information across the College Community to inform that position. This will likely take the form of a survey of Fellows, trainees, NTPDs and others specifically on how they would respond to being asked to implement possible clinical scenarios in the event of new laws being passed in Ireland; The survey would refer to current legal restrictions to conscientious objection (CO) and what provisions around CO they would like to see implemented in new legislation. The data and findings of this survey may inform but shall not bind any decision Council might take on this issue.
3. To produce a short report (based on the collated information gathered and other sources) setting out a position which the CAI might adopt in relation to future legislation on Assisted Dying; this report to be considered for adoption by CAI Council.

Forum of PGTBI Strategy for Postgraduate Medical Training in Ireland. National Learning Analytics Unit Update

NLAU Steering Group convened in July 2023.

On June 2nd 2023, Mary McGeown (Head of Patient Safety Surveillance and Performance, National Patient Safety Office, Dept of Health) wrote to inform CAI that Sláintecare have confirmed that the development of a National Learning Analytics capability for healthcare professionals will be included in a call for SIIF Round 3 funding, subject to finalising scope and size of theme in coming weeks. On August 24, 2023 the National Doctors Training and Planning Unit made application sponsored by the Chief Clinical Officer to that call. Ongoing engagement with Pobal the agency responsible for appraisal. Outcome due on November 1, 2023.

A consensus statement on the meaning, value and utility of training programme outcomes, with specific reference to anaesthesiology.

Statement complete, published (www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC10328513/) and formally endorsed by:

Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada
European Society of Anaesthesiology and Intensive Care
College of Anaesthesiologists of Ireland
European Board of Anaesthesiology (Section of Anaesthesiology UEMS)

Training efficacy / Proficiency based Progression Training – Project.

“Development of objective performance metrics for ultrasound-guided internal jugular vein cannulation on behalf of the College of Anaesthesiologists of Ireland and observation of scores amongst novice and experienced operators.” [European Journal of Anaesthesiology](#), 2023;Volume 40, Number 6:391-8. Initial delivery of PbP training to SAT trainees on CVC insertion planned for November 2023.

8. Association of Anaesthetists business – Dr Neal Beckett

Dr Beckett reported that the Association of Anaesthetists has received official responses to the Department of Health’s Consultation on Anaesthetic Associates and there are statement changing amendments to pension schemes and NHS long term planning.

On a more prosaic level, this is crystallised into how the association can actually formulate the opinion and guidance and have a voice beyond its anaesthetic body, as well as it’s ‘Fighting Fatigue’ campaign that’s includes a policy manifesto around six points which will feed into all the political parties and try and get engagement with overall medical issues.

Dr Beckett reported the concerns of the trainees and consultants and raised the question of how is the NHS going to make it competitive and attractive for doctors to continue to work in the NHS. How is it going to show workforce planning on regular reports and how is it meeting these goals.

Dr Beckett feels it has some responsibility, rather than making grandiose statements, to actually deliver on them and to try to actively see what the issues are behind recruitment and retention and address them. The Association have regulated and assessed this and it dovetails the need for overall clinical and medical anaesthetic expansion and have a commitment to that. This is a lobbying tool, not for all the political parties but to see how they respond to this. It highlights a lot of the concerns of trainees and consultants over the last six months or so. It was reported that Dr Beckett held a successful annual meeting in Edinburgh in September. There will be a winter meeting in January 2024 for discussion of core topics.

9. Lay Committee business

None

10. Trainee Representative business – Dr Alex Greene

Dr Donaldson welcomed Dr Greene to the first Northern Ireland Board meeting.

Dr Greene reported that some issues had already been discussed at the school and therefore there was nothing to raise at the Board today. Dr Greene thanked the school under the leadership of Dr Mary Molloy as everyone was able to attend Dr Sean McMahon’s funeral and how compassionate everyone has been following his passing.

11. AOB

Dr Molloy noted that she has been in talks with CPOC and Perioperative Medicine in Northern

Ireland and there is ongoing work within the Belfast Trust with Dr Ronan Haughey and Dr Simon Marcus and perioperative care that will have a regional network attached to this. It was advised that this may be something to explore for the Northern Ireland Board Newsletter, but this is also for information today.

Action: Dr Mary Molloy will connect Dr Donaldson with both doctors for further information on this work.

Dates of next meeting:

Friday 19th April 2024 from 1 – 5pm, to include lunch in person, at the Titanic Hotel in Belfast.