
Advisory Appointments Committees (AAC)

Guidance for representatives on AACs

Contents

Introduction	2
What is an AAC?	2
The RCoA Process for AAC assessors	3
Glossary	4
Frequently asked questions	5

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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) provide representatives to serve on the Advisory Appointment Committees for consultant, staff grade, associate specialist and specialty (SAS), and specialist doctor anaesthetist, intensivist and pain medicine roles. The process to arrange representation is supported by the RCoA on behalf of all three organisations. This guidance is intended for our representatives, also known as AAC assessors; separate guidance is available for employing authorities on the RCoA website.

What is an AAC?

An Advisory Appointments Committee (AAC) is a legally constituted interview panel that is established by an employing body when appointing consultants, specialist 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 Department of Health [Good Practice Guidance](#) (section 2.1 – 2.8).

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.

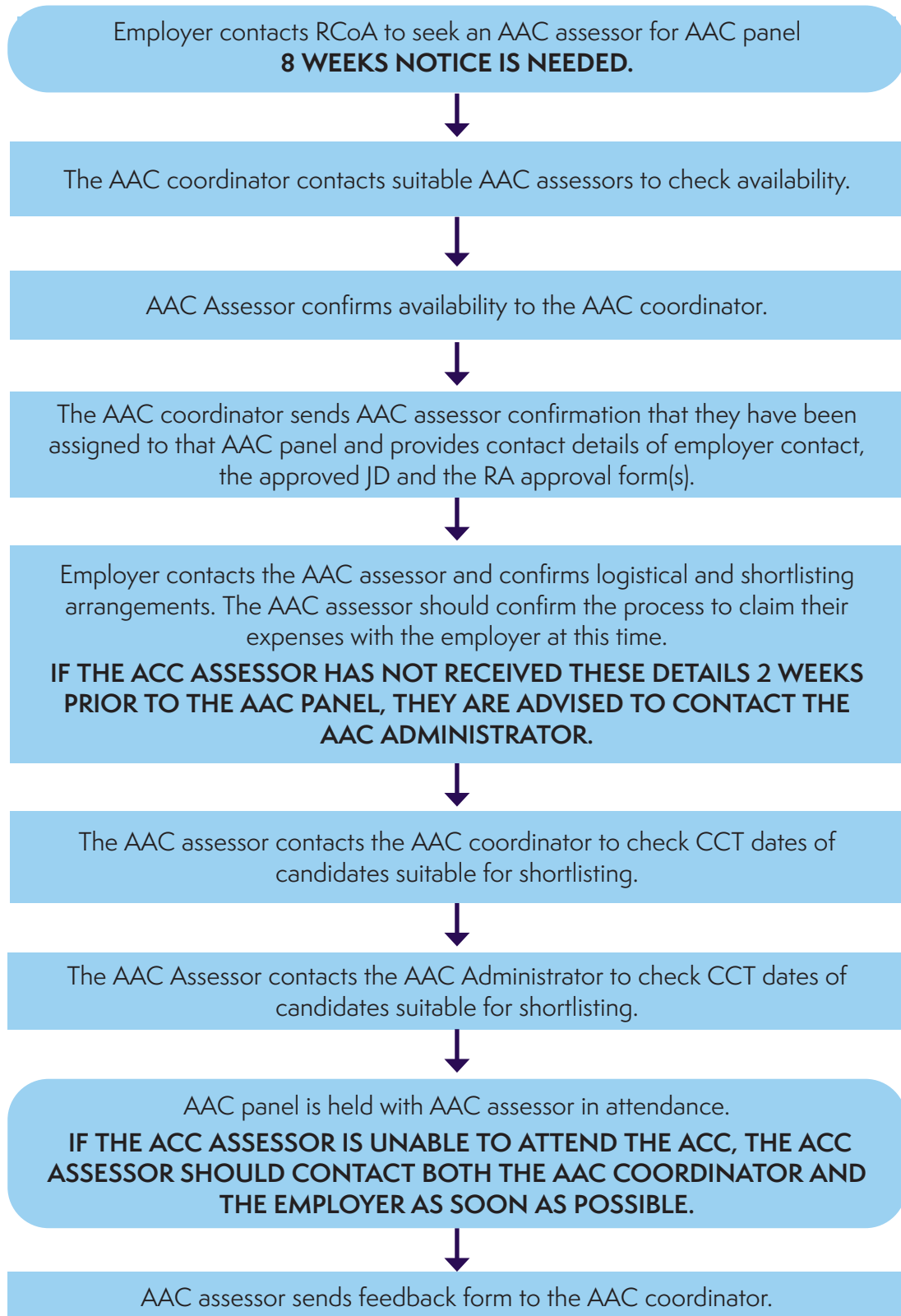
NHS Foundation Trusts are not required by law to follow the [Consultant Appointment regulations](#). However, they are encouraged by the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges (AoMRC) and the Foundation Trust Network to include a representative from the appropriate college or faculty as described in the [Concordat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

The RCoA encourages all employing authorities to include a representative from the RCoA, FICM or FPM on their interview panels for permanent specialist doctor or SAS roles as a point of good practice.

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 Adviser (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 or call 020 7092 1571

The RCoA Process for AAC assessors



Glossary

AAC	Advisory Appointments Committee
AoMRC	Academy of Medical Royal Colleges
DCCww	Direct Clinical Care
DH	Department of Health
DRA	Deputy Regional Adviser
DRAA	Deputy Regional Adviser Anaesthesia
FICM	Faculty of Intensive Care Medicine
FPM	Faculty of Pain Medicine
JD	Job Description
PS	Personal Specification
RA	Regional Adviser
RAA	Regional Adviser Anaesthesia
RCoA	Royal College of Anaesthetists
SAS doctor	Staff grade, associate specialist and specialty doctor
SPA	Supporting professional activity
Specialist doctor	A new senior role open for SAS grade doctors who have attained experience and qualifications according to the competency framework approved by the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges.

Frequently asked questions

- [What training do I need to be an AAC assessor?](#)
- [How many AACs will I be asked to attend per year?](#)
- [What should I do if a hospital asks me directly to attend an AAC?](#)
- [Will the RCoA, FICM or FPM send an assessor to an AAC panel if the job description is not approved?](#)
- [How am I selected to attend an AAC?](#)
- [I have agreed to attend an AAC, what happens next?](#)
- [Should I be involved in shortlisting?](#)
- [What if I have concerns about the job description?](#)
- [How can I check that candidates are eligible to be appointed?](#)
- [What if I am approached by a candidate prior to the panel?](#)
- [What if I am no longer able to attend an AAC panel?](#)
- [What happens at the AAC?](#)
- [If attending the panel virtually what happens if my connection is lost?](#)
- [What happens if the trust decides to appoint more candidates than had been advertised?](#)
- [What do I need to do after the AAC?](#)
- [What if I am asked to give feedback to the candidates?](#)
- [What happens if I have concerns about the process?](#)
- [What happens if employing authorities do not follow AAC guidance](#)
- [Who to contact regarding the AAC assessors' fee and expenses?](#)

What training do I need to be an AAC assessor?

As a minimum you must have completed equal opportunities training before attending an AAC.

The RCoA runs training sessions for assessors, which includes equal opportunities and interviewing techniques. You must attend one of these trainings at least once every three years.

How many AACs will I be asked to attend per year?

It is up to you how many AACs you attend each year. The RCoA AAC team sets no upper or lower limit on the number of AACs an assessor attends each year. The RCoA AAC team will send you a letter at the end of each year confirming the number of AACs that you have attended and the amount of Continuing Professional Development (1 CPD credit per panel) for your records. However, it would be helpful for consistency if you were to be able to attend on average 3 panels per year.

What should I do if a hospital asks me directly to attend an AAC?

If you are approached directly by a hospital to serve on an AAC, you should refer the request immediately to the AAC Coordinator at the RCoA (aac@rcoa.ac.uk).

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

In most circumstances, the RCoA, FICM and FPM will not send a representative to an AAC panel if the job description is not 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.

If you do not feel comfortable attending AACs when the post is not approved, please let us know. You or the Chair should check with candidates at the time of interview that they are aware the post is non-approved.

How am I selected to attend an AAC?

The College will send a weekly email outlining all upcoming AAC panels pertinent to your specialty or subspecialty. Simply review the email, check your availability, and reply to confirm which panel(s) you can attend.

I have agreed to attend an AAC, what happens next?

Once you agree to sit on an interview panel, the College will send you a confirmation email with details and documents about the appointment, including contact information for the medical staffing team.

You will then be contacted by the employing body to:

- Confirm your attendance
- Discuss your role in the shortlisting process
- Provide details of the trust's travel and expenses policy

If you have not made contact with the employer two weeks before the AAC, please contact the RCoA AAC team via aac@rcoa.ac.uk.

Should I be involved in shortlisting?

You should be involved in the shortlisting process. If you have agreed to attend an AAC at short notice, the shortlisting may have already taken place. In this case, you should review the candidates' applications to ensure that you are comfortable that all shortlisted applicants meet the minimum criteria for the role.

There can be a significant variation in the application and short-listing processes between employers. You should encourage employers to make explicit what information is required for application, as well as what the panel members will receive to shortlist.

In some regions, a local shortlisting meeting is held before the AAC. It is usually impractical for the assessor to travel twice, so assessors should make sure that their views on the proposed shortlist will be noted. Using video or telephone conferencing to join the shortlisting meeting may be an option.

What if I have concerns about the job description?

If you have serious concerns about a job description, you should contact the RCoA AAC team immediately.

If you think unapproved changes have been made, you should raise these with the RA, via the AAC team, and Chair of the AAC, so as to resolve the issue well before the AAC meets. It is poor practice for disputes over the job description to be first raised on the day of the AAC and unacceptable for them to be discussed during an AAC with candidates present.

How can I check that candidates are eligible to be appointed?

You can contact the RCoA AAC team on aac@rcoa.ac.uk before the AAC panel meets, usually at the shortlisting stage, to confirm the eligibility of candidates.

The RCoA AAC team will confirm the Certificate of Completion of Training (CCT) dates for all relevant candidates. Anaesthetist in training in a UK training programme are only eligible to be interviewed for consultant grade roles if they have less than 6 months remaining before their CCT date on the date of the AAC panel. If the date that the trainee has provided in their application is different to that provided by the RCoA AAC team, the trainee should be advised to contact the Specialty School Manager or equivalent in their deanery immediately to ensure that they are aware of the correct date.

Applicants for consultant grade roles, who have not undergone their training through the RCoA, FICM or FPM must be on the [Specialist Register](#) held by the General Medical Council by the date of the panel. Applicants who are still seeking approval of their Portfolio Pathway application (CESR) are not eligible to be interviewed for consultant roles.

What if I am approached by a candidate prior to the panel?

It is not the role of the College assessor to advise candidates before or after an AAC. If you are approached by a candidate redirect them to the trust. Contact details for who to discuss a job description with should be provided within the advertised job description.

What if I am no longer able to attend an AAC panel?

Assessors should inform the College aac@rcoa.ac.uk at the earliest opportunity of any problems arise relating to their attendance at the AAC. We will endeavour to source a replacement where possible.

What happens at the AAC?

The NHS Good Practice Guidance outlines the process that employers should follow.

The College highlights the following points:

- All [core members](#) of the AAC should be present throughout the interview process.
- Question areas should be agreed by the committee before the interviews start.
- You should be clear about how any other selection processes, such as psychometric testing or presentations, will be considered as part of the AAC. If they will be taken into account, then you should have at least received feedback from these exercises and information on how scoring of these processes was decided.
- You will take part in discussions at the end of the interviews to determine the AAC's recommendation.

Copies of any notes that you take at the AAC should be securely retained by the employing authority. Remember when making these notes that they will be retained and may be released to the candidate if a subject-access request is submitted or a challenge made to the process.

If attending the panel virtually what happens if my connection is lost?

If at any point you lose connection with the panel you should attempt to flag this with the Chair as soon as possible. The RCoA recommends discussion with the Chair before the panel starts, stating what method can be used to contact them if such a situation arises.

What happens if the trust decides to appoint more candidates than had been advertised?

If funding has been confirmed the trust may be able to appoint further posts following the AAC if there are suitable candidates. However, the job description for any extra roles should be the same as the one being interviewed for, to avoid excluding suitable candidates who did not apply. The trust has six months from the date of the AAC in which they can appoint this way. After this date, the JD will need reapproval (if expired) and a new AAC panel must be convened.

What do I need to do after the AAC?

You should return the post-AAC feedback form, sent to you when you agreed to attend, to the RCoA AAC team. This should be completed as fully as possible and returned to the RCoA even if no appointment is made. Completion of this form helps in all discussions regarding the workforce planning for anaesthetists, intensivists and pain medicine specialists.

You should destroy any personal data about the candidates and notes from the shortlisting process that you hold in accordance with the Data Protection Act.

What if I am asked to give feedback to the candidates?

It is not the duty of the assessor to provide feedback to the candidates. Any queries should be directed back to the HR department at the employer.

Should an employing authority receive a legal challenge from one of the candidates complaining that the AAC was unconstitutional or that there had been discrimination, we would expect the employing authority to confirm and comply with all the procedures required by the Statutory Instrument.

What happens if I have 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, you should alert the RCoA AAC team (aac@rcoa.ac.uk) as soon as possible. Please forward copies of relevant correspondence at this stage. This information will be considered by the relevant RCoA or Faculty officers.

When the appointment is considered to be unsafe, the President or Dean will contact the CEO of the employing organisation.

What happens if employing authorities do not follow AAC 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. 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.

Who should I contact regarding the AAC assessors' fee and expenses?

The employing authority pays the AAC assessor's fee and expenses, and all queries should be directed to them.

The fees that you can claim from the employing authority for attending an AAC Panel are set by NHS Employers and can be found in [Pay and Conditions Circular \(M&D\) 5/2024 R2](#).

You will claim your 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 \(Appointment of Consultants\) Good Practice Guidance, January 2005](#).

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