



## From SAS doctor to NHS consultant via Article 14

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A survey by the British Medical Association in November 2009 revealed that over 40% of associate specialists and over 25% of staff grade doctors wished to become a consultant through Article 14. All doctors who wish to work as a consultant in the NHS must be on the specialist register of the General Medical Council (GMC). Article 14 has opened the door to doctors in associate specialist and specialty doctor grades who have not followed an approved training programme to apply for specialist registration.

The conventional pathway to achieve specialist registration in the UK is to complete training approved by the GMC and be awarded a certificate of completion of training (CCT). Specialty and associate specialists (SAS) doctors who have not followed an approved training programme, but who feel that they have acquired the same level of experience and skills, can apply to the GMC for specialist registration via Article 14, also known as the certificate of eligibility for specialist registration (CESR). Doctors applying through Article 14 must provide evidence that they have the same competencies as those applying through the standard CCT route. CESR holders are then eligible to apply for a consultant post in their specialty.

The GMC has taken over the role of guiding applicants through Article 14 since the merge with the Postgraduate Medical Education and Training Board, and efforts have been made to make the process through non-standard training pathways to specialist registration

less bureaucratic. However, the time and effort required in demonstrating evidence of competencies should not be underestimated.

### Collecting your evidence

The process of applying through Article 14 is clearly set out on the new GMC website, which provides detailed information about each step including the criteria to be met and supporting evidence required. All UK postgraduate deaneries have been issued with an Article 14 (CESR) briefing pack to help support applicants. The Joint Royal Colleges Postgraduate Training Board (JRCPTB) has also published on its website a CESR handbook containing useful information about applying to CESR. The key point is that evidence must be presented for every claim.

The GMC website gives details of the curriculum and associated assessment system for trainees. For SAS doctors there are some areas where evidence for knowledge, skills and performance will be lacking, for example, approved assessments such as case-based discussion, mini-clinical examination, directly observed procedures and multisource feedback. However, SAS doctors can arrange with senior colleagues to have similar assessments to doctors in training posts and so acquire evidence of the competencies they need. Other types of clinical experience that can be submitted include logbooks, records of daily practice and letters containing details of patient management.

Areas of the curriculum where the necessary experience and skills are missing should be identified and steps

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taken to acquire additional clinical experience and to attend courses. SAS doctors sometimes lack experience in teaching and training, and service improvement and research, because of their job plans. For these areas, appraisals, job-planning processes and the recent SAS career development funding should be used to acquire missing competencies.

### Submitting your application

The single reason applications to Article 14 fail is because they are incomplete. Therefore, all applications should be discussed with advisers at deaneries, royal colleges and the GMC. Completed applications may take three to six months to be approved by the GMC, and additional evidence may be requested along with structured references from referees. Applications are then sent to assessors at royal colleges for evaluation, after which it may take the GMC three months to issue a decision.

However, the result is commensurate to the efforts required to apply to Article 14. Obtaining specialist registration opens up opportunities for career development by expansion in a current role for SAS grade or by application to a consultant post. ■

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