



Royal College
of Surgeons

ADVANCING SURGICAL CARE



RCS England Senior Clinical Fellowship Scheme

Scheme guide

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Introduction

The National Surgical Fellowship Scheme was set up in 2012 by The Royal College of Surgeons of England in collaboration with the Surgical Specialty Associations. The scheme was renamed the RCS England Senior Clinical Fellowship Scheme (SCFS) in 2016.

These fellowships are designed for senior surgical trainees who are around the time of the Certificate of Completion of Training (CCT). Their durations can vary between 6 and 24 months depending on the fellowship scheme and provide subspecialty or super-specialty training, typically higher than normally received under the Intercollegiate Surgical Curriculum Programme.

The SCFS aims at ensuring that all fellowship programmes provide a well-structured training opportunity with clear learning aims and outcomes, aligned to workforce needs. A key concern of the scheme is to ensure that pre- or post-CCT fellowships do not compromise the training of pre-CCT surgeons.

The purpose of this document is to provide information about the scheme and its benefits and set out the criteria, standards and application process for those wishing to apply for a fellowship scheme approval.

The benefits of the scheme

For trainees

The transition from senior trainee to consultant can be a challenging step. The RCS England Senior Clinical Fellowships help bridge this gap.

These peri-CCT fellowships are jointly approved by the Royal College of Surgeons of England and the Surgical Specialty Associations. They offer a well-structured programme with clear learning aims and outcomes and typically focus on expert training in a subspecialty.

Comments from recent fellows:

'The fellowship was excellent – the training and career development worked very well for me. I highly recommend it' – Laparoscopic colorectal fellow.

'The fellowship was very useful and has greatly enhanced my career' – Endovascular fellow.

'My fellowship supervisors have been extremely supportive always available for advice and are very approachable [...] I am now proud to be appointed as a consultant urological surgeon' – Urological robotic fellow.

For consultants

The RCS England Senior Clinical Fellowships provide an opportunity to develop high-quality subspecialty training for surgeons around the CCT stage. Fellowships approved under the RCS England Senior Clinical Fellowship Scheme have several benefits, including:

- ▶ Expert review by surgeons in the appropriate specialty.
- ▶ Assistance in attracting high-calibre candidates.
- ▶ Assurance that posts offer a high-quality learning experience, reflecting the standards set by the RCS England and Surgical Specialty Associations, with a curriculum and assessment using the Intercollegiate Surgical Curriculum Programme methodology.
- ▶ Listing on the National Fellowship Register.
- ▶ Use of the RCS logo on course materials and website.
- ▶ Use of the strapline 'This RCS Senior Clinical Fellowship post has been approved by the Royal College of Surgeons and [...] [specialty association(s)]'.
- ▶ Listing in the RCS *Bulletin*.

Comments from fellowship supervisors:

'[...] approval provides this fellowship with the highest standards of training and assessment to meet quality insurance. It will also provide recognition both nationally and internationally attracting high calibre candidates seeking excellent training opportunities...'

'[...] our current fellow has managed to get a substantive consultant post in spine neurosurgery as a result of this fellowship.'

The approval process

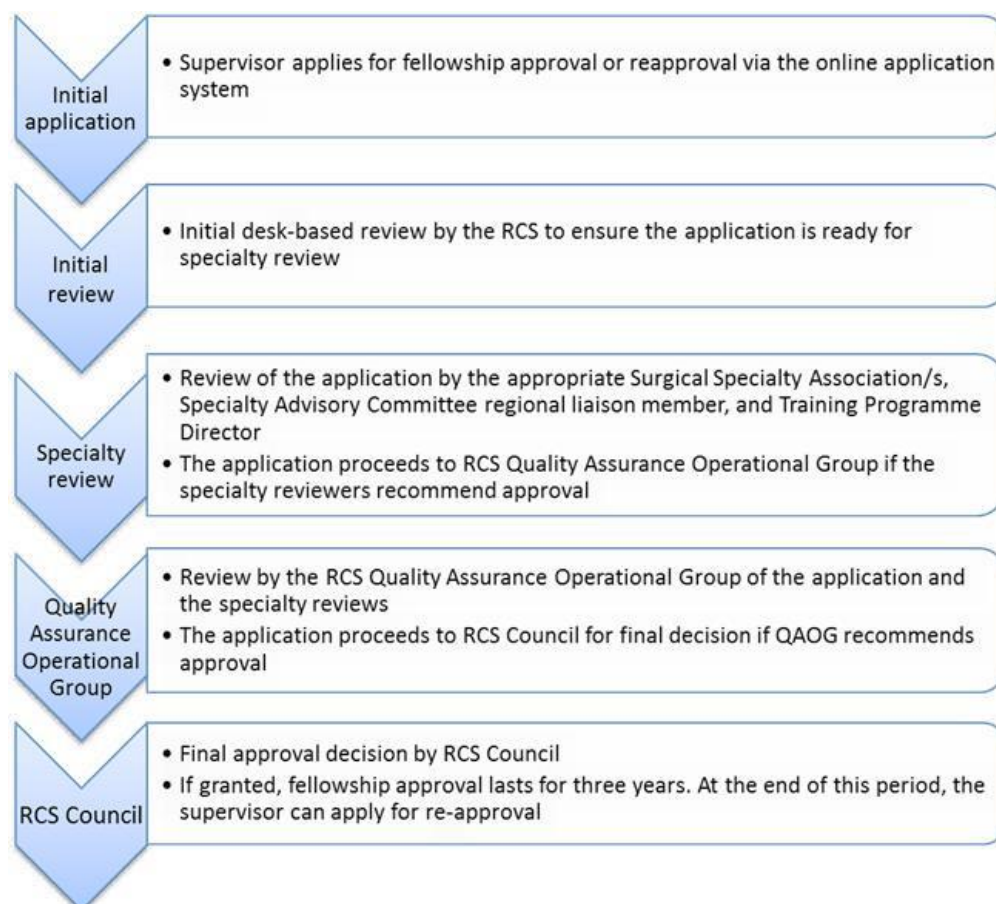
There are five main stages in the approval process, also outlined in the chart below. At each stage, the applicant may be asked to amend their fellowship programme. The time taken between initial application and final approval can take about four to six months, depending on the availability of the reviewers, the straightforwardness of the application, and the timing of the RCS England Quality Assurance Operational Group meetings.

The approval process is rigorous. Each application is initially assessed to ensure it is ready for the external specialty review process. The latter includes a review by a representative of the appropriate Surgical Specialty Association (SSA), the regional liaison member of the appropriate Specialty Advisory Committee (SAC), and the appropriate Training Programme Director (TPD). The reviewers are asked to consider whether the fellowships meet the criteria and standards of the RCS England SCFS and are specifically asked whether there is any likelihood the fellowship will impinge on the training of any pre-CCT trainees. The applicant is often asked to provide additional documentation such as logbooks and feedback from fellows and their faculty.

After the external specialty review, the application is reviewed by the College's Quality Assurance Operational Group, which includes several surgical specialty association Council Members. If the group agrees to recommend approval, the application goes to the RCS England Council for final approval.

A fellowship scheme approval lasts for three years, at the end of this term, it is then required to apply for renewal.

At each stage in the process, the applicant may be – and often is – asked to amend the programme on offer or provide further information. Sometimes applications are turned down, for various reasons, including where there is concern that other trainees might have reduced operating opportunities.



Criteria and standards

for the approval of fellowship posts

Approval criteria

It is intended that documents and information submitted as part of the fellowship approval process to the RCS England should demonstrate that the fellowship post meets the following criteria as defined by the RCS England Senior Clinical Fellowship Scheme:

- ▶ The post provides a structured educational experience prior to [eg ST6 or above] or immediately following CCT, designed to deliver the requirements of a particular subspecialty that are not readily available within the CCT training programme.
- ▶ The post has an established curriculum (which includes levels of patient care, patient safety, medical knowledge, practice-based learning and improvement, communication skills, and professionalism).
- ▶ The post does not impinge on the training of pre-CCT trainees.
- ▶ The post is allied to workforce opportunities in the specialty.
- ▶ The post takes place in an institution that assumes ultimate responsibility for the delivery of the training programme and education; this includes providing sufficient protected time for both trainer(s) and trainees (fellows) and necessary financial support for the programme.
- ▶ The post has a single programme director/senior consultant assigned, with authority and accountability for the fellowship post.
- ▶ The post has identified faculty that will assume educational and supervisory responsibilities throughout the programme.
- ▶ The post has a written agreement in place specifying responsibilities for training, teaching, supervision and evaluation of the programme.
- ▶ The post provides opportunities for audit and research.
- ▶ The post has an external evaluation process.

Approval standards

The criteria for approval define the set of standards that have to be met by the fellowship organiser. The overall surgical education standards of the RCS England are included in the Appendix. The approval standards represent qualitative characteristics that define the evidence, required from fellowship organisers, to meet the approval criteria.

Institution(s)

The provider must supply a description of the training structure of the institution and how the fellowship is managed within this structure. This should include over-arching details of how the fellowship is monitored and reviewed.

Full details of all hospitals or training centre(s) involved in the fellowship(s) should be provided. This should include a statement about the population served by the centre, the number of beds, theatres, expected caseload, operative workload, and the facilities available.

Where a fellowship rotates between more than one centre, details of the workload split between the centres should be provided. Details of any service requirement or on-call facility should also be provided.

The provider should detail the number of fellowship programmes that it has run over the past five years.

Fellowship details

The provider must supply a fellowship specification including the title of the fellowship; an outline or summary; the duration; target audience; details of how the fellowship is funded; and the completion criteria.

The provider must specify which specialty, specialties, or subspecialties the fellowship covers and provide details of any aspects which fall outside of surgery. Where there is more than one specialty/specialism taking place, the fellowship organiser must detail what measures have been put in place to ensure effective cross-specialty collaboration during the fellowship.

The provider must supply a history of the fellowship post for which approval is sought. This should include the year that the fellowship was created or first run, the number of previous instances of the fellowship, and any previous or planned revisions to the fellowship structure, content or delivery.

The provider must supply a job description or job plan detailing all the responsibilities of the post-holder.

The fellowship learning aims and outcomes should be described in full. There must be clear linkages between programme aims, programme objectives and/or programme learning outcomes. All programme learning outcomes must be evidenced within the curriculum.

Any other pertinent information about the fellowship such as any award provided must be clearly articulated in the submission.

Recruitment

The provider must detail the number of posts recruited and the likely frequency of recruitment into the post(s) along with any prerequisite knowledge, skills, qualifications, level of entry, or other requirement that without which, attendance on the programme would be denied.

It is recommended that the post salary (per annum) be at a minimum level of ST6-8, Nodal Point 5 and the recruitment is also open to SAS Doctors and international candidates who demonstrate the appropriate entry criteria.

Curriculum content and structure

There should be a detailed statement or curriculum outlining the content, structure and timetabling of the programme including the contact time, details of research, practical and other activities and work expected in own time. Materials, products and technologies used as part of the fellowship should be referenced within the curriculum. Providers are encouraged to make use of the Intercollegiate Surgical Curriculum Programme (ISCP) for the structure of the fellowship.

The provider should detail the academic and clinical competencies that will be achieved as a result of having undergone the fellowship.

Skills development is an essential element of a fellowship, and the submission must demonstrate clearly how the acquisition or development of skills will be achieved.

Details of the evolution of the curriculum development and design should be included in the submission.

Learning and teaching

The provider should present a cohesive learning and teaching strategy for the programme, which reflects both the curriculum and principles of teaching and learning.

The rationale for the choice of learning and teaching methods should be articulated in the submission.

The provider should detail the skills-related competencies (knowledge and understanding, intellectual skills, practical skills, transferable skills) that the fellow would be expected to acquire or develop.

The provider should detail the range of learning resources available/will be used such as online message boards, VLE, e-learning and IT support for staff.

The provider should supply full details of the staffing structure for the fellowship. Roles of individual staff involved in the delivery of the programme should be identified, against the areas of the curriculum that they are responsible for. This should include clinical supervisors, mentors, educational supervisors and teachers.

Evidence must be provided that staff in both academic and practice settings are appropriately qualified and experienced.

The provider should detail the mechanisms and criteria for the selection, approval and monitoring of staff to support students in placement, including the training and support of placement staff and the establishment of an appropriate range of staff.

Quality assurance and enhancement

The provider must detail in full the quality assurance, quality management and clinical governance procedures and mechanisms that underpin the fellowship. These should include:

- ▶ The process for periodic review of both the academic content and quality management of programmes including details of who conducts the review of the programme and the frequency and timing of the review.
- ▶ Details of the monitoring and review process for the faculty.
- ▶ Details of the review process for the assessment tools and criteria.
- ▶ A summary of the outcomes of any annual programme monitoring or audit.
- ▶ A summary of the outcomes of any relevant internal or external review of the programme and/or plans for any future external review.
- ▶ Details of any opportunities for the fellow to evaluate the programme.

Assessment

Full details of the assessment strategy should be provided as part of the submission. From 2016–17 fellows and fellowship providers are requested to use the ISCP assessment tools for their fellowship. The strategy should include the types of assessments used, details of the timing and loading of assessment mechanisms for observation and moderation of practice-based assessments, and any marking schemes used.

Those applying for reapproval for a fellowship will need to provide reviewers with logbooks of previous fellows, together with fellow and faculty feedback from assessments, and the completed learning agreement.

Completion of fellowships

On completion of a fellowship, the fellow and their supervisor should provide feedback on the fellowship – particularly regarding the extent to which the fellow's learning outcomes have been met – together with the fellow's logbook. These will be assessed by the RCS England and surgical specialty reviewers. Those, who successfully, complete their fellowship will be awarded a certificate signed by the RCS England and the appropriate surgical specialty association. Fellows who are members of the RCS England will be entitled to receive their certificate at a Diplomates' Ceremony at the College; non-members will be invited to become Ad Eundem members of the College if they wish to receive their certificate at a Diplomates' Ceremony.

Facilities and resources

The provider should supply details of the facilities and resources that are available as part of the fellowship.

Fellow support

The Scheme requires that fellows are employed on contracts with NHS terms and conditions, or the equivalent; fellows should not be engaged on a bursary.

The provider must detail the conditions of employment for the post along with the policies, mechanisms and practices in place to support the fellows.

The provider must supply a draft copy of the fellowship learning agreement.

Faculty declaration of interest

Providers are required to ask faculty to declare any interest they may have relating to the fellowship.

Frequently asked questions

What is the RCS England Senior Clinical Fellowship Scheme?

A scheme managed by The Royal College of Surgeons of England in collaboration with the surgical specialty associations, to identify, manage, quality assure, and publicly recognise fellowship posts in England, Wales, Northern Ireland and overseas that comply with standards of educational quality.

The process also has input from COPMeD, the specialty advisory committee, the training programme directors, and trainee organisations such as BOTA and ASIT.

What are the goals of the scheme?

The goals of the scheme are to:

- ▶ identify, assess and approve fellowship posts (after due consideration of the future needs of the health service).
- ▶ Provide a mechanism to maintain and raise standards and ensure uniformity of fellowship provision.
- ▶ Maintain and publish a central register of high-quality approved posts to assist trainees.
- ▶ Assist providers in attracting high-calibre candidates.
- ▶ Ensure the availability of targeted opportunities for surgeons to obtain super-specialty and multidisciplinary skills not easily available within specialty training programmes/regions.
- ▶ Prevent the indiscriminate proliferation of fellowship posts and align fellowship opportunities more closely to workforce needs.
- ▶ Ensure that pre- or post-CCT fellowships do not compromise the training of pre-CCT surgeons.

What is a fellowship post?

The RCS England and specialty associations define a fellowship post as a period of additional medical training, beyond that available in a usual CCT training programme, that:

- ▶ Provides a structured educational experience prior to (eg ST6 or above) or immediately following CCT, designed to deliver the requirements of a particular subspecialty that are not readily available within the CCT training programme.

- ▶ Has an established curriculum (which includes levels of patient care, medical knowledge, practice-based learning and improvement, communication skills, and professionalism, where the subject matter relates to one of the following:
 - Acquisition of subspecialist skills – eg where specialist surgery has been centralised in line with commissioning decisions.
 - Acquisition of super-speciality technical skills – for example, in new technologies and treatments which may not be readily available within a given region or training programme.
 - Acquisition of multidisciplinary skills in a given clinical area.
- ▶ Does not impinge on the training of pre-CCT trainees.
- ▶ Is allied to workforce opportunities.
- ▶ Takes place in an institution that assumes ultimate responsibility for the delivery of the programme of training and education; this includes providing sufficient protected time for both trainer(s) and trainees (fellows) and necessary financial support for the programme.
- ▶ Has a single programme director assigned, with authority and accountability for the fellowship post.
- ▶ Has identified faculty that will assume educational and supervisory responsibilities throughout the programme.
- ▶ Has a written agreement in place specifying responsibilities for training, teaching, supervision and evaluation of the programme.
- ▶ Provides opportunities for audit and research.
- ▶ Has an external evaluation process.

Who can apply for approval?

Any trust, fellowship organiser, programme director or lead trainer who is responsible for running a fellowship in England, Wales Northern Ireland or overseas can apply for fellowship approval. Fellowships run or sponsored by industry are eligible to apply.

If a fellowship does not run in England, Wales or Northern Ireland please contact the Quality Assurance and Accreditation Manager at qa@rcseng.ac.uk or on 020 7869 6772 to discuss whether the post is eligible to apply.

Why should I apply to join the scheme?

Having a fellowship approved will demonstrate that the post meets the standards set out by the Royal College of Surgeons of England and specialty associations and that it offers a high-quality learning experience. Recognition of these factors will assist in attracting high-calibre candidates. The scheme will also benefit patients and the public, protect the interests of trainees and fellows and improve the quality of teaching, research and professional practice.

Successful fellowship providers will be able to advertise their post using the College Eagle motif and the strapline 'This fellowship post has been approved by the Royal College of Surgeons of England and [...] [specialty association(s)]'. Approved posts will also be listed on the RCS England and specialty association websites.

Can fellowships outside the UK be approved?

Yes

What is the process?

The scheme will be administered and managed by The Royal College of Surgeons of England's Quality Assurance and Accreditation Department. Fellowship organisers will be expected to provide documentation on the structure, organisation, curriculum, management, faculty and quality assurance processes for the fellowship post.

Completed applications will need to be submitted at least six weeks before the advertisement of the fellowship programme.

How long does the fellowship approval process take?

The time taken between initial application and final approval can take about four to six months, depending on the availability of reviewers, the straightforwardness of the application, and the timing of RCS England meetings.

How long does fellowship approval last for?

Approval is awarded for three years subject to satisfactory annual monitoring and review. This can be further extended following a reapproval.

What training period does the fellowship scheme cover?

The fellowship scheme covers peri- and post-CCT fellowships.

If my post is approved, what wording can I use?

Centres with approved fellowship posts will be able to advertise the post using the College eagle motif and the strapline 'This fellowship post has been approved by the Royal College of Surgeons of England and [...] [specialty association(s)]'.

Will approved posts be publicised?

Yes. The RCS England will maintain and publish a central register of high-quality approved posts to assist trainees. This will be available on the Royal College of Surgeons of England website. Newly approved fellowships are listed in the RCS *Bulletin*.

Will there be a monitoring process?

Yes. Postholders will be expected to complete an online evaluation of their learning experience after the first three months and at the end of their fellowship, using the ISCP assessment methodology. The programme director/tutor of the fellowship will be asked to complete an online evaluation at the end of each post.

If the monitoring outcomes reveal any serious issues with the fellowship post, the College may envisage a visit to investigate the issue(s) or ask for a report from the applicant. The College retains the right to withdraw the post-approval where any of the standards are breached or if fees are unpaid.

Will a visit to the lead centre be necessary?

The initial approval and monitoring review process will be performed by correspondence. However, if the reviewing panel feel that a monitoring visit is necessary, this will be communicated to the applicant.

What information will be required in annual monitoring?

Annual monitoring will need to include – via the ISCP assessment methodology – details of the postholder's progress, of any assessment undertaken and of any issues with the postholder or the fellowship in general that arose during the year, and any planned changes that would be made to the post for the following year.

Does the scheme cover academic fellowships?

Yes. Full details regarding the nature of the research will need to be included as part of the documentation submitted.

**My fellowship is part of a formal pre-CCT training programme.
Can I apply for approval?**

Yes. But please note that RCS England Senior Clinical Fellowship posts might not be recognised as part of pre-CCT training under the General Medical Council. The status of any pre-CCT fellowship post should be clarified with the supervisor.

What is the minimum duration of a fellowship post?

A fellowship post would be expected to run for at least six months. If the post runs for less than this, please contact the Quality Assurance Policy Manager at qa@rcseng.ac.uk or on 020 7869 6772 to discuss the post.

**I am planning to run a fellowship for the first time, can I
apply for approval?**

Yes.

Can privately funded fellowships apply for approval?

Yes.

**My fellowship post is not always occupied by a fellow,
can I apply for approval?**

Yes.

I have two fellowship posts; will approval cover them both?

If the posts are identical then your approval will cover both posts. You will, however, be expected to demonstrate that there is enough work in the programme for both fellows and the monitoring activities will need to cover both posts. Additional fees are expected for more than one fellow appointed, more information on the fees can be found [here](#).

**My fellowship covers multiple specialisms of which
surgery is only one. Can I apply to join the scheme?**

In such cases, please contact the Quality Assurance Policy Manager at qa@rcseng.ac.uk or on 020 7869 6772 to discuss your application.

Does the RCS provide retrospective approval?

No. Any approval will be in place from the fellowship period following the confirmation of the approval.

Will there be a fee?

Yes. There will be a charge to cover the administrative costs of the process. If approved, there will be an approval fee, which will include a charge to cover the cost of the annual monitoring and review process. Full details of the fee structure can be reviewed on the accreditation [portal](#).

When do I have to pay the fee?

The administration fee is payable upon submission of the documentation for approval. The approval and monitoring fees are payable after the approval has been granted.

How do I apply?

To apply, it is required to complete an application form on the RCS England accreditation portal at: <http://accreditation.rcseng.ac.uk> or download the application form from the [website](#) and submit the documentation to the Quality Assurance and Accreditation Department at ga@rcseng.ac.uk

Where can I find further information?

If you have any queries about the approval processes, then please email ga@rcseng.ac.uk or contact the Quality Assurance and Accreditation Manager on 020 7869 6772.

Can overseas surgeons come to the UK to do a fellowship?

Yes, provided that they have GMC registration and are eligible to work in the UK. Fellowship providers seeking to recruit overseas may do this through the International Surgical Training Programme. For further information please contact mti@rcseng.ac.uk

Appendix

The Royal College of Surgeons of England Surgical Education Standards

Domain 1: Knowledge, skills and performance

The education provider should ensure that the educational activity/event should:

- 1.1 have clearly defined learning aim/s which reflect the overall purpose of the activity;
- 1.2 have a clear and appropriate structure and content;
- 1.3 have delivery methods and a learning environment which are appropriate to the achievement of the learning outcomes;
- 1.4 have supporting information and material that are clear, relevant and accessible;
- 1.5 have clear and measurable learning outcomes, expressed in terms of the specific knowledge, skills and behaviours that can be demonstrated by participants;
- 1.6 provide the educational support and learning resources to enable the participants to achieve the required learning outcomes;
- 1.7 have faculty with appropriate qualifications and experience to deliver the activity/event;
- 1.8 have, where appropriate, methods of assessment to support participants' development and/or demonstrate that they have achieved their learning outcomes;
- 1.9 have an appropriate proportion of faculty to participants to enable successful learning by participants;
- 1.10 have suitable equipment to enhance learning.

Domain 2: Safety and quality

The education provider should ensure that the educational activity/event should:

- 2.1 ensure that suitable administrative contact is made with participants, and have an efficient and transparent administrative process;
- 2.2 demonstrate a continuous quality-enhancement process, including opportunities for participant and faculty feedback;
- 2.3 comply with relevant regulatory and legislative requirements.

Domain 3: Communication, partnership and teamwork

The education provider should ensure that the educational activity/event is:

- 3.1 inclusive and equitable, allowing – where appropriate – dialogue between faculty and participants.

Domain 4: Maintaining trust

The education provider should ensure that the educational activity/event:

- 4.1 should not be inappropriately influenced or biased by commercial organisations in its content or organisation;
- 4.2 should provide the opportunity for faculty to declare any financial or other interest related to the educational activity/event.

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