



Royal College  
of Surgeons

ADVANCING SURGICAL CARE

# Course Accreditation



# Course accreditation

The Royal College of Surgeons (RCS) is a leading provider of surgical education, running courses in over 100 centres regionally and internationally. A robust quality-assurance mechanism underpins the development, monitoring and review of these courses to ensure that RCS courses are of the highest educational quality in design and delivery.

In order to assist its fellows and members in identifying high quality educational short courses (five days or less) in surgery or allied health fields, the RCS has developed its Course Accreditation processes. Ongoing monitoring and review of these courses will ensure that they remain at the standard expected by the RCS.

Course Accreditation is the process by which the RCS reviews surgical or surgery-related courses to ensure that they meet the RCS standards for course design, delivery and quality assurance. The process will confirm that the rationale, course structure, educational content, teaching methods, and learning aims and learning outcomes are sound. It will also confirm that the course is delivered to the appropriate standard, and that the course provider employs suitable quality-assurance practices.

Course Accreditation is the highest form of recognition that the RCS can grant for an educational course. It is applicable to well-established courses which can provide evidence of positive feedback from several previous course sittings, and courses that have previously received RCS Course Approval. Course Accreditation will require a panel visit from The Royal College of Surgeons to review the course in delivery. Accredited courses will be expected to comply with RCS monitoring requirements.

# Benefits of course accreditation

Having a course accredited will demonstrate that it meets the standards as defined by The Royal College of Surgeons for short courses, and that it offers a high-quality learning experience. Recognition of these factors may assist in attracting course delegates.

Accredited courses will receive the following benefits:

- » Review from a panel of leading surgeons
- » Use of the RCS Logo on course materials, certificates and website
- » Use of the strap line 'Accredited by The Royal College of Surgeons of England' for a three year accreditation term (subject to satisfactory monitoring and review)
- » Listing on RCS Website
- » Listing on RCS Accreditation Portal
- » Listing in RCS Bulletin
- » Use of RCS online participant evaluation, SCOPE
- » Applicable courses will be awarded with Continuing Professional Development (CPD) points as part of Course Accreditation

Course attendees can expect the following benefits:

- » Confirmation from RCS that the course provides a high quality learning experience, is delivered by a qualified faculty, is relevant for its target audience, is free from inappropriate bias, and has evidenced successful delivery
- » Confirmation that feedback will be collected, reviewed and acted upon by RCS through its online SCOPE evaluation process
- » A certificate of attendance from the course organiser bearing the RCS Logo
- » Confirmation from the course organiser that the course carries CPD points (for applicable courses)

# Criteria and standards for the Accreditation of short courses

## Accreditation criteria

Documents and information submitted as part of the Course Accreditation process to The Royal College of Surgeons of England should demonstrate that the course meets the following criteria:

- » The course does not last longer than five days.
- » The course has a scientific and/or educational purpose only. Any commercial sponsorship of the course is clearly stated and has no inappropriate influence on the educational programme content and structure.
- » The course content is underpinned by evidence-based research and practice, and aims to promote the development of competent surgeons and/or allied healthcare professionals
- » The target audience of the course falls within the remit of The Royal College of Surgeons, and is in line with the course title and content
- » The learning aims are clearly defined, appropriate for the target audience, and are properly referenced in the course content
- » The learning outcomes are achievable and properly reflected in the course content, structure and assessment (if applicable)
- » The course structure and teaching and learning methods used are relevant and appropriate to deliver the defined learning outcomes
- » Assessment methods (if applicable) are relevant and appropriate, and in accordance with the course learning outcomes
- » Appropriate resources and learning materials are available to support the learning by the delegates
- » The course organiser has proven relevant expertise in conducting such courses.
- » There is an appropriate ratio of faculty to participants. A consultant surgeon is included on the course faculty for all skills courses
- » The presenters/teachers/facilitators have proven relevant expertise, skills and knowledge to deliver the education programme within the specific subject(s) identified
- » Any award granted is commensurate with the activity undertaken and granted following appropriate assessment
- » A defined quality-assurance process underpins the activity and includes an effective assessment process that evaluates the intended learning (eg evaluation or feedback form)
- » The course has received positive feedback from several previous sittings from which detailed feedback is available
- » The course is in line with the strategic portfolio and business interests of The Royal College of Surgeons
- » There is no inappropriate conflict of interest on the part of the organiser or of any course faculty members



# Accreditation standards

The criteria for accreditation define the set of standards that have to be met by the course organiser. The Accreditation Standards represent qualitative characteristics that define the evidence required from course organisers sufficient to meet the Accreditation Criteria.

## Organisation

The provider must supply full details of the organisation running each course. This should include the job titles and contact details of the course tutor and lead contact for the course (if different).

## Course details

The provider must supply a course specification including the title of the course, its length, the proposed venue(s), the number of delegate places available on the course, the target audience for the course and the expected frequency that the course will be run each year.

A course rationale should be provided including an explanation for why the course was originally developed and how it will contribute to the development of competent surgeons.

The provider must detail any eligibility criteria for course attendance, such as prerequisite knowledge, skills, qualifications or level of entry.

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

The provider must detail any award or qualification provided as a result of having attended or completed the course.

The provider must detail any fee charged for attendance on the course.

## Faculty

The provider must supply full details of the staffing structure for the course. Roles of individual staff involved in the delivery of the course should be identified, against the areas for which they will be responsible. Evidence must be provided that staff in both academic and practice settings are appropriately qualified and experienced.

The provider must supply full details of any current or prior association on the part of its faculty with any RCS course(s).

## Learning aims

The course learning aims should be described in full. Learning aims describe the intent, intellectual challenge and skills development to build upon or complement previous knowledge, and give participants a short description of the teaching intentions for the course. It may be appropriate to use terms such as: provide; develop; enable; assist; and to refer to the learning opportunities that are offered to participants. At least two learning aims should be listed.

## Learning outcomes

The course learning outcomes should be described in full. A learning outcome is a statement of what a participant is expected to know, understand and be able to do at the end of a period of learning and of how the learning is to be demonstrated. It is therefore concerned with the achievements of the learner and is a way of communicating clearly what we expect our learners to be able to achieve by the end of the course. Learning outcomes can fall under the following headings: Knowledge and understanding; Practical (Clinical and Technical) Skills; Personal and professional skills.

Knowledge and understanding will detail what knowledge was gained as a result of attending the course, and how it would be applied. Practical Skills are those which require a clinical or technical element such as surgical skills, dexterity, or an ability to use equipment. Personal and professional skills are skills that are readily transferable to employment in other contexts, such as written and oral communication, working within a team, problem solving, numeracy and IT skills etc. At least two learning outcomes should be listed.

There must be clear linkages between the course learning aims and learning outcomes.

## Course structure and content

There should be a detailed programme outlining the content, structure and timetabling of the course. Each individual session should be recorded separately with a brief outline of what will take place during that session.

## Learning methods

The provider must detail the range of teaching and learning methods employed on the course and the reasons behind the choice of methods.

The provider must detail the range of assessment methods employed on the course (if any), and the reasons behind the choice of assessment. There should be clear linkages between the course learning outcomes and any assessment undertaken.

The provider must detail all equipment and resources that are used during the course. This would include learning materials, audio-visual resources, clinical equipment, cadavers and simulators. Any pre or post-course learning materials should be provided to the RCS as part of the documentation submission.

## Quality assurance and enhancement

The provider must detail what process will be used to evaluate the quality of teaching and learning provided on the course. This should include the frequency of any review and details of who will be involved.

The provider must detail any planned future changes or improvements to the course.

## **Previous participant feedback**

The provider must demonstrate that the course has been received positively by previous course delegates. The provider must supply either individual or cumulated participant evaluations from at least the two previous course sittings. The feedback should detail whether the learning outcomes for the course had been achieved. Where previous course feedback highlights areas of dissatisfaction, details of any remedial action should be included within the submission.

## **Additional information**

Full details of any commercial sponsorship for the course should be provided. This should include the names of all sponsors, details of the support offered (ie financial/equipment/venue/catering) and any influence that they have had on the course agenda, design or content.

The provider must confirm that the course is financially viable and that any changes to the course will be communicated to the RCS.

Once course accreditation has been granted, the applying organisation will be subject to the conditions outlined below.

## **Faculty declaration of interest**

Providers are required to ask faculty to declare any interest they may have relating to the course, and to make each faculty's declaration available at the course.

# Monitoring

It is a requirement that the organisers of any accredited course comply with the RCS monitoring processes. The processes are two-fold:

## 1) Course Participant Feedback

It is a requirement that course participants evaluate their educational experiences shortly after the conclusion of the course via the College's online evaluation platform SCOPE. The College will provide detailed guidance and a link to the online evaluation form which will include both general and course-specific questions.

## 2) Course Faculty Feedback

The Course faculty will be required to provide feedback following each course which runs during the accreditation term. The Course Tutor will also be required to provide a report to the Royal College of Surgeons Quality Assurance & Accreditation Department at the end of each year of the accreditation term. The report should detail how the course has run over the previous 12 months and should critique the Learning Outcomes; Learning Materials; Teaching and Learning methods; Facilities and Resources; and Assessment methods. The report should also detail any planned changes to the course such as changes to the programme, content, learning outcomes, faculty, location, or duration of the course.

The feedback received will be reviewed by the College's Quality Assurance & Accreditation Committee on an annual basis. It will also feed into any re-Accreditation application at the conclusion of the accreditation term.

The College will charge a monitoring fee at the end of each year of the Accreditation to cover the costs of the monitoring activity. Details of the fee can be found on the Accreditation Portal at <http://accreditation.rcseng.ac.uk/Home/Fees>.



# Conditions for course accreditation

Once Course Accreditation has been granted, the applying organisation will be subject to the conditions outlined below.

## 1. Third party accreditation

Course Accreditation from The Royal College of Surgeons of England is not transferrable. Where a course is accredited by the College and the course is then franchised, or the organisers decide to run the course at an additional venue, the franchisee or additional centre cannot state that the course has been accredited by The Royal College of Surgeons of England. They must also apply for Course Accreditation.

## 2. Statements regarding accreditation

Once applicants have received confirmation stating that their course has been accredited and full payment has been received, the following statement can be made: 'Accredited by the Royal College of Surgeons of England'. Details of all Accredited courses will be listed on the College website and Accreditation Portal.

## 3. Logo

Accredited Courses can use the RCS Logo on course materials, delegate certificates and websites relating to the course. The initials 'RCS', the words 'The Royal College of Surgeons of

England', and the RCS 'eagle' logo are all registered trademarks and may not be used without the written consent from the Royal College of Surgeons. Copies of all materials bearing the RCS logo must be provided to the RCS.

## 4. Certificates

Accredited courses will be able to provide certificates to course delegates following the conclusion of the course, which bear the RCS logo. These certificates should be 'certificates of attendance' unless stated otherwise by the RCS.

## 5. Eligibility

Course Accreditation is only applicable to short courses that run for five days or less, unless stipulated by the College. Applicants who run graduate or postgraduate courses, or their equivalent, and wish to apply for Accreditation should apply through the College's Higher Education / Degree Programmes accreditation process.

Only courses that meet RCS standards and align with the business interests of the College will be accredited.

## 6. Validity

Course Accreditation will be valid for a specific course for three years unless stated otherwise by the College. The terms of the accreditation will be communicated to the course provider once the Course Accreditation process has been completed.

Once the Course Accreditation term has expired, the course organiser will be required to apply for re-accreditation. If Course Accreditation is not renewed, the course provider must cease to advertise or publicise any association with The Royal College of Surgeons of England.

## 7. Quality assurance

Organisers of Accredited Courses will be required to comply with the College's monitoring processes. All course participants and faculty will be required to complete a post-course evaluation on the College's online monitoring platform, SCOPE. The course organisers will also be required to provide an annual progress report. Details and timescales of any further paperwork required will be communicated to the course provider once the accreditation process has been completed.

The Royal College of Surgeons of England reserves the right to send representative(s) to review any accredited course in delivery.

## 8. Copyright

Any materials distributed to delegates/participants must comply with legal requirements and state that copyright has been obtained, where necessary. It is illegal to use the published work of others by photocopying from books, journals, periodicals and the internet without permission. Further information can be obtained from: The Copyright Licensing Agency, 90 Tottenham Court Road, London W1T 4LP Tel: 020 7631 5555 Fax: 020 7631 5500 Email: [cla@cla.co.uk](mailto:cla@cla.co.uk), [www.cla.co.uk](http://www.cla.co.uk).

A useful overview of copyright, including frequently asked questions and any changes in the law, can be obtained from: [www.ipo.gov.uk/copy/](http://www.ipo.gov.uk/copy/).

It is the responsibility of applicants to check that copyright is obtained and any breach of this requirement may allow the College at its discretion to withdraw accreditation.

## 9. Equality legislation

All courses must comply with the relevant equality legislation.

## 10. Health and safety

All venues must comply with the relevant health and safety legislation.

## 11. Limitation of accreditation

The College must be informed if any significant changes are made to the course programme, educational content, frequency or duration of the course, number or location of centres, or to those delivering the course. The Royal College of Surgeons of England retains the right to withdraw Course Accreditation for an activity at any time, for any reason, including one or more of the following reasons:

- » Significant changes to educational content
- » Significant changes to the presentation format
- » Failure to disclose to the College any conflict of interest on the part of the organiser, provider or speakers
- » Any of the conditions are breached
- » Misuse of any branding, wording or insignia of The Royal College of Surgeons of England

# Frequently asked questions

## Who can apply for Course Accreditation?

Any course organiser or provider that runs educational or scientific courses for the development of competent surgeons, or those from allied health professions, and can provide evidence of high-quality provision, can apply for Course Accreditation. Courses that have previously been awarded with Course Approval can also apply for Course Accreditation.

## How do I apply for Course Accreditation?

In order to apply, a course organiser must register an account with the Accreditation Portal at <http://accreditation.rcseng.ac.uk/> and complete an application under 'Short Course'. As part of the application, a course organiser must demonstrate that their course complies with College standards. Any additional information including previous participant evaluation should be submitted. Course organisers will be able to save an application and return to it later at a later point.

## What is the Course Accreditation process?

Each application will first be reviewed by the RCS Quality Assurance Department. If it complies with the RCS standards, it will be reviewed by a panel of senior surgeons from the RCS Quality Assurance & Accreditation Committee. If the course is deemed eligible, a panel visit will be arranged to review the course in delivery. The panel would usually consist of one consultant surgeon and one staff member. A report of the visit will then be discussed at the RCS Quality Assurance & Accreditation Committee, and if supported, the Course will be recommended for Accreditation at RCS Council.

## How long does the Course Accreditation process take?

The time frame for Course Accreditation would depend upon the date(s) of future sittings of the course, and the availability of the visiting quality assurance panel. It is therefore advised that an application should be submitted as far in advance of the next course sitting as possible, or at least ten weeks prior to the sitting of the next course.

## How long is the Course Accreditation term?

Course Accreditation is usually awarded for three years subject to satisfactory annual monitoring and review. This can be further extended by mutual agreement.

## I am planning to run a course for the first time, can I apply for Course Accreditation?

No. Detailed feedback from at least the previous two sittings of the course, which demonstrates that the course has been received positively in delivery, must accompany any application.

## **What information would be required as part of the previous course evaluations?**

Participant evaluations from at least the previous two course sittings should form part of the documentary submission for Course Accreditation. The evaluations should provide detailed information about how the course ran and confirm that it was received positively in delivery. The evaluation should also confirm that the course learning outcomes had been achieved. Examples of course feedback forms can be provided upon request from the RCS Quality Assurance Department.

## **If accredited, will there be a monitoring process?**

Yes. As part of the Course Accreditation process, applying organisations will be required to comply with the College's monitoring requirements. Course participants will be required to complete an online evaluation of their learning experience following attendance on the course. The Course Tutor and/or members of the course faculty will be required to provide a report to the College Quality Assurance Department at the end of each year of the Accreditation period.

The College retains the right to withdraw Course Accreditation where any of its standards are breached.

## **Do I have to pay a fee for Course Accreditation?**

Yes. The College charges a processing and review fee for each application, and a fee if the course is accredited. The applying organisation will also be required to cover the costs of the panel visit.

As part of its quality assurance procedures the College will set each course up on its online evaluation platform, SCOPE, and collect both participant and faculty feedback. Each course will be monitored annually by the RCS Quality Assurance and Accreditation Committee and an annual monitoring fee will be levied after each year of the accreditation period. The College fee structure is listed on the Accreditation Portal at <http://accreditation.rcseng.ac.uk/Home/Fees>.

## **When do I have to pay the fee?**

The processing and initial review fee is payable upon submission of an application. Payment of any panel visitation fee will be required once the panel visit has been established. Payment of any accreditation fee will be required following confirmation that the course has received RCS Course Accreditation.

## **Can my course receive Continuing Professional Development (CPD) points from the College?**

Yes. The College does recognise eligible courses for the purposes of CPD for no additional charge. Each course will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis against the criteria and standards for accreditation of CPD activities, which are listed on the Accreditation Portal under 'Guidance/FAQs'. If the RCS deems a course not to be worthy of CPD points, the course organisers cannot advertise the course as bearing CPD points.

## Where will my course be listed?

Accredited courses will be listed on the Accreditation sections of the College website, the RCS Accreditation Portal, and in the RCS Bulletin.

Courses accredited with CPD points will also be listed on the CPD Accreditation section of the Accreditation Portal, and on the Intercollegiate Surgeons Portfolio.

## Can industry or privately funded courses apply for Course Accreditation?

Yes.

## If my course is longer than five days, can I apply for Course Accreditation?

If your course is longer than five days, or is a modular or distance-learning course, then please contact the Accreditation Manager to discuss your course. Contact details are listed below.

## Can I apply for Course Accreditation retrospectively?

No. Course Accreditation will be in place from the sitting of the course following confirmation of Course Accreditation by the RCS. Course organisers are therefore advised to apply well in advance of the next sitting of their course.

## Where can I find further information?

If you have any queries about any of the College's Accreditation processes then please contact the Accreditation Manager at [qa@rcseng.ac.uk](mailto:qa@rcseng.ac.uk) or on 020 7869 6236/6221.





