

The Faculty of Dental Surgery
The Royal College of Surgeons of England
Associate Specialist Appointments

The following guidelines incorporate the revised arrangements for the appointment of associate specialists as described in EL(97)25, direct quotes from which are printed in bold italics in this guidance.

It should be remembered that an associate specialist post is a senior grade in the National Health Service, and this should be reflected both in the post itself, and in the criteria for appointment.

There are two areas where the Faculty of Dental Surgery should be involved in the appointment of associate specialists:

The Post

The Regional Adviser, or appropriate Specialty Adviser, should be involved in planning the post, and agreeing the job description prior to advertisement (where appropriate) and appointment. The involvement of the Faculty representative in the establishment of the post and agreeing the job description provides a check on local procedures.

The Appointment

The Faculty will be asked to nominate a representative to be involved in the appointments process, and sit on the appointment committee. The involvement of the Faculty in the appointment procedure provides a quality check to ensure that individuals appointed to an associate specialist post have appropriate training to fulfil the requirements and senior position of the post.

THE POST

The Need for the Post

Trusts considering an appointment to the associate specialist grade should first establish the need for the post. They should consider carefully whether the service need cannot more appropriately be met by a consultant appointment and should seek advice from the Faculty, and may also wish to seek advice from the Local Medical Workforce Advisory Group (LMWAG) on general quality issues. The following factors should be taken into account:

- ***The need to develop a consultant based service.***
- ***Overall consultant responsibility for patient care.***
- ***Consultant cover both in and out of hours in the relevant specialty, and where necessary, in related specialties.***
- ***Provision for the teaching of junior doctors and for the supervision of both junior and career grade medical grade dental staff.***

An associate specialist post should be established only where this is in the best interests of the service.

The Job Description

The job description should include details under the following headings:

- The hospital(s) and clinics where services are to be provided
- The work of the department
- Numbers and designation of clinical staff.
- Out patient, ambulatory, day care and in patient facilities.
- Diagnostic and support services.
- Working relationships with other specialties.
- Availability of other facilities including laboratory, nursing and secretarial.
- Details of the post with an outline of the clinical responsibilities.
- The job title should reflect the clinical work of the post but should designate the recognised specialty of the consultant(s) to whom the associate specialist is responsible. For example, an associate specialist with duties in providing care to special needs patients might be designated an associate specialist in oral & maxillofacial surgery, or an associate specialist in restorative dentistry, depending upon the local circumstances.
- The employing authority.
- An indication as to whether the contract conforms to the national terms and conditions of service current for the associate specialist grade.
- Type of contract ie whole time, or part time.
- Weekly work programme including any commitment to the care of emergencies. Time should be allowed in the weekly programme for administration and clinical audit
- It should be noted that the basis of the contract is similar to that of a consultant.
- Details of any teaching or administrative duties or research opportunities.
- The level of experience required by the applicant including the requirement for postgraduate qualifications. This would normally form part of the person specification which should be considered with the job description.
- Opportunities for CME which should be reflected in the weekly programme, and a commitment to provide appropriate paid study leave.
- The names and specialty of the consultants to whom the associate specialist will be responsible

In considering the job description the Regional or Specialty Adviser should particularly bear in mind the following points.

1 Do the duties proposed for the associate specialist really call for a new consultant appointment? In other words is associate specialist the appropriate grade for the appointment?

2 Will the work of the associate specialist compromise training experience of those in existing training grades?

3 Will the appointment of the associate specialist have an impact on the on call commitments of existing staff?

4 Although the associate specialist should be considered a senior post within the National Health Service, work undertaken by an associate specialist must be carried out under the care of named consultant. Is this clearly defined?

5 Who is responsible for providing the ongoing care of patients treated by the associate specialist when they are not on duty?

6 Are the terms and conditions of service, and contractual commitments, appropriate?.

Where the Regional or Specialty Adviser is in doubt about any aspect of the job description, the matter should be referred to the Faculty.

THE APPOINTMENT

Personal regrading without advertisement

Personal regrading without advertising the post is the normal route into the associate specialist grade. Where a suitable candidate is already employed by a Trust they should make an application for regrading. The applicant will then be considered by a Trust appointments committee where the post has been properly established in accordance with the preceding guidance.

Appointment of Associate Specialist by Advertisement

While personal regrading is the normal route for the appointment of associate specialist, in certain circumstances Trusts may advertise for and recruit associate specialists directly by competition. This would be appropriate where an existing associate specialist had vacated a post and the Trust had established a continuing need for an associate specialist or where it had established that a new associate specialist post was required and that it would not be appropriate to create a consultant post. The guidelines for establishing the post need to be followed.

Appointment Criteria

To be eligible for appointment to an associate specialist grade candidates should have:

- ***Completed ten years dental work since obtaining a primary qualification which is, or would have been at the time, acceptable by the GDC for full, limited or temporary (but not provisional) registration.***
- Full registration with the GDC. It would not be appropriate for a dentist with temporary registration to be appointed to such a senior post within the NHS.
- ***Served for a minimum of four years* in the registrar or SpR grade, or in the staff grade, two of these years having been served in the appropriate specialty. Equivalent service is also acceptable with the agreement of the relevant Faculty Regional Adviser and of the Postgraduate Dean.***

* Full time or equivalent part time.

Educational Requirements Expected by the Faculty of Dental Surgery

The associate specialist grade is a senior position and it is expected by the Faculty that appointees will have demonstrated a commitment to training and CME as demonstrated by:

- A higher qualification relevant to the clinical work which will be undertaken in the post.

and / or

Inclusion on a specialist register of the GDC in a specialty relevant to the clinical duties of the post.

- That the appointee should be able to demonstrate a personal ongoing commitment to CME since qualification, and that they have enrolled for CME with the appropriate Faculty.

Appointments Committee

The appointments committee should comprise as a minimum:

- ***A senior manager in the Trust.***
- ***A consultant, or if appropriate a senior associate specialist, in the Trust and preferably in the relevant specialty. The Faculty would consider it essential that a consultant in the appropriate specialty should be a core member of the appointment committee.***
- ***An external senior hospital dentist nominated by the Faculty of Dental Surgery. This may be the Faculty Regional Adviser or Regional Specialty Adviser***
- ***For posts that have been advertised there should be a further Faculty representative.***

The trust may appoint further members to the committee as necessary.

Trusts should ensure that all members of appointment committees are aware of relevant national and European law and are trained or experienced in appointment procedures including good practice and equal opportunities.

Further Information:

Appointments to the Associate Specialist Grade in the Medical and Dental Specialties (Appendix 2 to EL(97)25).

Model Workload Document for Associate Specialists in all Specialties (British Medical Association, 1997).

Consultant Practice and Workload in the Dentally Based Specialties (CCHDS, British Dental Association, 1997).