

Notes of Guidance for Representatives on Advisory (Consultant) Appointments Committees

The following Notes of Guidance are sent to all College Assessors on Advisory (Consultant) Appointments Committees and are regularly revised by the Court of Electors.

1. The College attaches great importance to the duties of its representatives on Advisory Appointments Committees as they play an important part in safeguarding the standards of psychiatric practice.
The application of these guidelines is intended to raise standards of psychiatric practice and will allow some flexibility of interpretation for excellent candidates.
2. The representative of the College has two functions. The first is to advise the Committee to exclude those candidates who do not meet the required standards. This can mean all candidates. The standards laid down by the College are set out in the appendix overleaf. The representatives of the College are asked to make sure that they are completely satisfied that candidates applying for Consultant posts have undertaken sufficient training in appropriate posts, in the Senior Registrar grade, which have been approved by the JCHPT. The second function is to assist in the selection of the most able candidate among those eligible who are judged to meet the particular requirements of the advertised post. The relevant Regulation is as follows:
'The Committee . . . shall consider all applications so referred to them [and] shall select from the applicants any persons whom the Committee consider suitable for the appointment and submit their names to the Authority, together with such comments as they consider appropriate.'
National Health Service (Appointment of Consultant) Regulations 1982 (S.I. 1982 No. 276)
3. College representatives are entitled to receive copies of all applications for Consultant posts (as are all members of Advisory Appointments Committees), and are expected to take an active part in the short-listing procedures, which may be conducted by correspondence. They should also ask to see a final short-list in good time for the meeting of the Committee, to satisfy themselves that no fully eligible candidate has been unreasonably excluded. If they believe that this has happened, they have the right to insist on a meeting of the Committee to review the short-list.
4. Because the role of an Appointments Committee is to recommend the candidate or candidates they consider suitable for the post, it is not appropriate for them to recommend a candidate who is not yet suitably qualified but who would become so after undertaking further training. They may, however, advise that a particular candidate who is at present qualified for the post would nonetheless benefit from particular further training before taking up his duties.
5. College representatives are occasionally involved in Committees where questions of sexual or racial discrimination or health may arise. The following points should be noted.
 - (i) Employers in the United Kingdom and Eire are required by law not to discriminate on grounds of race or of sex against their employees or their candidates for employment. The College representative is expected to insist that this principle is at all times scrupulously observed during the proceedings of the Committee.
 - (ii) Service on an Advisory Appointments Committee may possibly result in its members having to appear before a Tribunal in a race or sex discrimination case. It would be prudent for members to make and keep in their own possession notes about the candidates and the proceedings of the committee if such an appeal seems at all likely. If a representative is in any way concerned that there has been an irregularity in the proceedings of the Appointment Committee, he should notify the President of the College.
 - (iii) It is not the task of the Appointments Committee to make a judgment on the physical or mental health of a candidate. If, however, serious doubt regarding health does arise during the course of an interview, the College Assessor should apply the usual criteria of suitability and may wish to make a recommendation for appointment subject to satisfactory medical examination.
6. The College reminds its representatives that it attaches great importance to the criteria set out above and in the appendix. It is open to a College representative on an Advisory Appointments Committee to send a minority report to the Chairman of the relevant employing Authority if, in the light of the above criteria, he is in disagreement with the recommendations of the Committee. The same action would be apposite if the representative should be concerned about some irregularity of composition or procedure of the Appointments Committee.

7. If any of these difficulties arise, the College representative should recommend very strongly that the Appointments Committee should either delay its recommendations or else submit them to the employing Authority *without informing the candidates*. If this is not done, he should ask that his disagreement be minuted.
8. If action under 5 is to be undertaken, the College representative should tell the Appointments Committee what he proposes to do*. He should then send a copy of the minority report, giving full reasons for his opinion, and any further relevant observations, to the President of the College as soon as possible. This information will be regarded as strictly confidential.
9. College representatives are invited to keep the Registrar informed of any difficulty in interpreting these notes.

April 1986

*In Scotland National Panel Members are asked to apply these guidelines and in cases of difficulty should inform the Chairman of the Scottish Division before writing to the Secretary of State.

Appendix

Criteria for Consultant Posts in Psychiatry

1. Before appointment to a Consultant post, whether in general psychiatry or one of the other psychiatric specialties, a candidate *must* have undertaken a basic training in psychiatry and hold the MRCPsych or equivalent qualification. If there is an outstanding candidate, or circumstances are highly exceptional, other relevant qualifications and experience may constitute an acceptable alternative.
2. The successful candidate should normally have reached the age of 32, but there is no bar to the appointment of younger applicants.
3. Due weight should be attached to breadth of experience, participation in organised rotation schemes, periods spent abroad in relevant posts, and work in medical fields allied to psychiatry.

The view of the College is that the responsibilities of all Consultant posts include the function of training those in medical and related disciplines, so that some teaching experience and supervision of trainees is desirable in candidates for appointment as Consultant. Experience in research, especially if this has proved worthy of publication, will enhance a candidate's application. But even the most outstanding experience of this kind should not be allowed to override the essential requirements laid down in (1) above.
4. The Joint Committee on Higher Psychiatric Training (JCHPT) has decided not to institute an accreditation procedure at this stage. Senior Registrar or equivalent posts have, however, been inspected and the JCHPT urges College Assessors to ensure that candidates have been trained in such posts and that they are not normally appointed to the consultant grade before completing at least three years of higher training. A proleptic appointment may be appropriate for candidates lacking in part of this experience (see p. 2, para 6). (The JCHPT's second report was published in 1980).
5. Specific requirements for various types of Consultant posts are as follows:
 - (a) *General Psychiatry*

Normally three years of recognised general professional training in psychiatry followed normally by at least three years of higher training in an approved training post. Exceptions may occasionally be made for outstanding candidates with other relevant experience (e.g. research or service overseas) but a minimum of five years training in psychiatry, including *clinical* research, is still required. Although part of the three year period of higher training can be spent working in any specialised field, at least one year must have been spent in general adult psychiatry.
 - (b) *Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*

Basic training in general psychiatry, which may also include time in a registrar post in child psychiatry, should have been followed by experience in all aspects of the speciality in a Senior Registrar training post, preferably for a period of three years.
 - (c) *Mental Subnormality (Mental Handicap)*

The basic training in general psychiatry should have been followed by experience in the practice of psychiatry with the mentally handicapped in different settings; this experience should preferably be in a Senior Registrar training post, normally for a period of three years, but experience in a related field should be given due weight.

For a joint appointment with general psychiatry, specialist training in mental handicap should be obtained at Senior Registrar level in a training scheme which can offer further experience in those aspects of mental handicap necessary to consultant psychiatric practice in this field. A candidate for a specialist post in mental handicap, be that post on a full-time, joint