

ASiT Position on the MTAS Appointments Process

ASiT have considered the recent events with regards to the Medical Training Application System and the well documented concerns over this process. We have reached the following conclusions:

- That ASiT enthusiastically support reforms of the training grades that are of benefit to individual trainees, and most importantly the patients under our care in the NHS, in order that we can provide a higher standard of health care. To this aim we support that MMC, in Surgery, is a positive step to address some concerns and to revolutionise surgical training.
- That ASiT is committed to commencing Specialty Training in August 2007.
- That ASiT have serious concerns over the MTAS system and the process by which it has been administered, and we have been raising these concerns at various forums since October 2005.
- That ASiT feel strongly that no trainees should be disadvantaged for appointment to training posts as a result of a flawed application process.
- That ASiT feel strongly that the shortlisting process has been subject to serious discrepancies, and that some high-quality candidates may not have been shortlisted as a result of the flawed MTAS system. Equally however we fully recognise that many high quality candidates have been appropriately shortlisted and have already been subsequently interviewed. We do not wish to denigrate these colleagues by implying that they are not worthy of shortlisting or appointment.
- That ASiT believe that the process for selection cannot feasibly return to the old practices as this would not allow the best candidates from respective year groups to be selected for entry to training grades, and would unfairly disadvantage the more junior trainees applying at each level of entry. ASiT must insist that there is a method in the selection process to allow the best and brightest individuals from each respective year group to be selected regardless of 'time served', or in proportion to 'time served'.
- That ASiT have significant concerns over the differing approaches taken by deaneries and interview panels with regards to the shortlisting and interview processes.
- ASiT are seriously concerned regarding the trainee representative input to the MTAS process. It is continually alluded to that the decisions relating to the application form and process arose out of consultation with trainees, however despite repeated direct

questions we have been unable to ascertain who the trainee representatives were, how they were identified, and how representative that they were in the process.

- ASiT had raised significant concerns over the proposed application process to Professor Fiona Patterson of the Workforce Psychology Partnership, at a meeting, to which we were initially invited, to hear the outcome of the initial reviews and processes.
- ASiT welcome the review of the MTAS process that we have lobbied for, but fear that it will not go far enough to redress the problems that have been encountered to date, and which are increasing day by day.
- ASiT are concerned that the review body does not contain surgeons-in-training, and are therefore skeptical that the review will reach conclusions that are favourable and acceptable to surgical trainees.
- ASiT remain concerned over the independence of the Review to reach a favourable conclusion due to the nature of some of the constituent members and their previous high level involvement in the initial flawed process.
- In considering the options available in order to benefit trainees at this time, ASiT tentatively agree with the actions proposed for the review of Round 1 of the MTAS process, although have major reservations in doing so. We could only support the ongoing review if the following conditions are met:
 - Interview panels should immediately be provided with all sections of the individual's application form for use in a structured interview process
 - ALL failed applications, regardless of other offers of interviews, should be urgently reviewed by medically trained staff, in the specialty to which the application has been made, and in the Unit of Application to which they have applied. The process for review should be funded, and adequately resourced, in order that sufficient numbers of staff are available for this to take place in the timeframe allowed. Trust Chief Executives should be instructed to immediately, and without question, release the required number of individuals to carry out this process swiftly, efficiently, and accurately.
 - That ALL applicants deemed suitable for interview, by regionally determined criteria which the local panel have confidence in, should be invited to an interview within the stipulation for funding and resources as outlined above.
 - That in settings where interviews have already taken place, yet further individuals are to be recalled to interview, the initial interview candidates should be offered the opportunity of being re-interviewed for comparison with the standard at the new interviews (as both consultants and trainees will have a learning curve for these processes).
 - That the urgent review of the MTAS system for round 2 will reach agreement as a matter of urgency with regards to the appropriate weighting of the application domains. This should have significant input from trainees working in the specialties involved.
 - That the details of the background work including the trainee involvement and input to the selection process is made available publicly as a matter of urgency.
 - That the deadlines for completion of round one are significantly altered in order to allow time for these processes to take place.

- That people offered posts as a result of round 1 are able to view the 'minimum' number of posts available in Round 2, and have the ability to reject posts offered in Round 1, in order to apply to posts in their specialty of preference in Round 2, without prejudice or discrimination, recognising that the review of Round 1 may favour some candidates to be appointed in their specialty of choice.
- ASiT, at this stage, support the work of the Review panel but would regrettably be forced to withdraw its support for the Review if the above conditions cannot be met in a fair and equitable manner, and a firm and direct statement issued by the Review Panel to cover each of the points issued above.
- ASiT are anxious to aid the review body as far as is possible in order to represent surgical trainees in these matters, and could provide a reasonable and respected body of opinion, taking into account our membership of over 1900 trainees in surgery at all levels with Foundation and SHO trainees from all surgical specialties represented, as well as our close links with the Surgical Specialty Trainee bodies who contribute to our council structure.



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