

*at The Royal College of Surgeons
35/43 Lincoln's Inn Fields*

*London
WC2A 3PE*

www.asit.org

Telephone: 0207 973 0302

Fax: 0207 430 9235

Email: info@asit.org

Professor Frank Dunn PRCPSPG
President of RCPSG
Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow,
232-242 St Vincent Street,
Glasgow,
G2 5RJ

Miss Clare Marx PRCS
President of RCS
Royal College of Surgeons of England,
35-43 Lincoln's Inn Fields,
London,
WC2A 3PE

Mr. Ian Ritchie PRCSed
President of RCSEd
Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh,
Nicholson Street,
Edinburgh
EH8 9DW

14th August 2015

Dear Professor Dunn, Miss Marx and Mr Ritchie,

I write on behalf of the Association of Surgeons in Training, regarding the increase in surgical training fee¹: £125 in 2011, £150 in 2012, £185 in 2013, £220 in 2014, and £255 in 2015. Whilst ASiT are mindful of the costs involved in the administration of specialty trainees we remain disappointed that this cost is solely at the expense of trainees.

ASiT has previously demonstrated in our statement 'The Cost of Surgical Training' that trainees pay a staggering amount of their own money in order to complete their training, with minimal training budgets afforded to them per year². We however recognise that this document was published before the advent of £9000/year tuitions fees at medical schools, so any figures included do not factor in an initial debt from

tuition fees alone of £39,945³. With inclusion of interest fees on this debt the average full-time male graduate repays £57,303 over 20 years, while the average female earns less and so repays £61,809 over 26 years³. Furthermore, current costs for meeting the essential criteria for entry into surgical ST3 range from £2,735 (general surgery, plastic surgery and urology) to £20,780 (oral and maxillofacial surgery)⁴. Whereas the desired criteria (arguably necessary for success!) ranged from £4,965 (general surgery, plastic surgery, trauma and orthopaedics, urology, vascular surgery) to £22,280 (oral and maxillofacial surgery)⁴. These costs are significantly more expensive when compared with other specialties including anaesthetics, medicine and emergency medicine.

Taking into account the decreasing popularity in careers in surgery, demonstrated by declining competition ratios for specialty training posts in all surgical specialties this year, ever-increasing training costs may well be a crucial factor. We must acknowledge that to provide the highest possible care to future patients, surgeons must continue to be the product of a high-quality and respected training process, and as such it is imperative that we maintain surgical specialties as an attractive career option.

We note that the General Medical Council (GMC) feels that the beneficiary of surgical training should pay for its administration. ASiT does not dispute this but takes issue with the GMC's insistence that the trainee is the only beneficiary. It is surely undisputable that the public gain great benefit from excellence in surgical training and its careful administration.

We recognise that the shortfall in Joint Committee on Surgical Training (JCST) 2014 finances of £198,190 was made by the Joint Surgical Colleges; however we feel strongly that the training fee should be spread across the entire college member/fellowship, for the benefit of both trainees and trainers.

ASiT was delighted to hear that following the recent introduction of ISCP for Irish trainees' that RCSI has agreed to cover the cost of the training fee. We would once again urge you to reconsider the fee being incorporated into the remaining three college membership fees. As current and future Members and Fellows of the four

Surgical Royal Colleges, ASiT views this as an equitable solution that will cement the Colleges' commitment to its trainees.

Yours sincerely,



Miss Rhiannon Harries BMBS MRCS
President, Association of Surgeons in Training

cc. Mr. Bill Allum, Chairman of JCST
Ms Sallie Nicholas, Head of JCST
Mr. Mike Lavelle-Jones, President Elect of RCSEd
Professor David Galloway, President Elect of RCPSPG
Mr. Declan Magee, President of RCSI

1. <http://www.jcst.org/uk-trainees/str-trainees/jcst-trainee-fee/jcst-fee-statement>
2. http://www.asit.org/assets/documents/ASiT_Cost_of_Surgical_Training_final.pdf
3. Ercolani M, Vohra R, Carmichael F, Mangat K, Alderson D. The lifetime cost to English students of borrowing to invest in a medical degree: a gender comparison using data from the office of National Statistics. *BMJ Open* 2015;5:e007335
doi:10.1136/bmjopen-2014-007335
4. Stroman L, Weil S, Butler K, McDonald CR. Can you afford to become a surgeon? The bill, please. *The Bulletin of the Royal College of Surgeons of England*, 2015. DOI: 10.1308/147363515X14162390057944