

9th September 2015

Miss Rhiannon Harries BMBS MRCS
President
Association of Surgeons in Training
At The Royal College of Surgeons of England
35/43 Lincoln's inn Fields
London
WC2A 3PE

Dear Rhiannon

Thank you for your letter of 14 August and for setting out your concerns regarding the Surgical Training Fee. We would like to assure you that we are aware of the financial outlay by our trainees, in particular for those who have had to meet the costs of undergraduate training. The decision regarding fees for our trainees was made in 2012 against a backdrop of substantial financial pressure on the JCST, including the withdrawal of funding by the Department of Health. We thought it would also be of value to detail the background the decision regarding fees in 2012 through the following explanation from the Presidents at that time.

“In May this year we issued a statement explaining why we had decided to increase the trainee fee to £150 this year – the first increase since its introduction in 2008. We explained that the Joint Surgical Colleges no longer receive funding from the Department of Health to support the work of the JCST and that we receive no funding for any of the training-related work that the JCST carries out on behalf of the General Medical Council (GMC). This work includes enrolling and monitoring trainees and making recommendations for CCT; developing, maintaining, updating and delivering the curriculum and the online training management system; and supporting national quality assurance and local quality management processes for surgical training programmes.

The GMC has now confirmed that it will not pay for this work carried out by the Colleges, as it considers that the beneficiary should pay. This leaves the Joint Surgical Colleges with a combined funding deficit of up to £600k pa for the work that we do to support training. In 2011-12 the income from the fee (£723,480) offset approximately 54% of the cost of this work (£1,347,568).

All of the Surgical Colleges are committed to supporting training and we have thought very carefully about how we can continue to do so. Our resources are limited, however. At the October meeting of the Joint Surgical Colleges we decided that we had no alternative but to increase the fee further by £35 per year for the next 3 years. This means that future fee levels will be as follows:

2013: £185 2014: £220 2015: £255. We recognise the increasing financial pressures that trainees face and are phasing the increase to help to spread the load. The costs for JCST will be kept under review and any further uplift in fees beyond 2015 will simply reflect any increase in running costs.”

You raise the issue in regard to Royal College of Surgeons of Ireland and for your information the following is an explanation from the RCSI detailing the situation in that College which as you will see differs from the situation in the UK.

“As you will be no doubt aware the entire funding model for specialist training is fundamentally different in Ireland to that of the UK. The training budget (apart from salaries) is funded centrally directly to the training bodies in Ireland. These bodies, under the supervision of the Medical Council, manage selection, training post administration/QA, curriculum, structured teaching and training intervention as well as assessment. This funding is planned annually under a detailed Service Level Agreement, specific to each training body. Under these agreements, training bodies are required to meet all the costs associated with mandatory elements of the training curriculum and the bodies are precluded from charging any of these costs directly to trainees, including ISCP costs in this specific case”

The fees will be reviewed again towards the end of 2015 and we would like to assure you that all reasonable efforts will be made to keep the fees as low as possible. We hope this provides context to this matter and would be happy to raise this issue at the next joint college’s meeting if you would find this helpful or have a separate discussion at some other point if that is preferable.

Best Wishes

Yours sincerely



Mr Ian K Ritchie
President, RCSEd



Miss Clare Marx
President, RCSEng



Professor Francis G Dunn
President, RCPSG

Copy: Mr Bill Allum, Chairman of JCST
Ms Sallie Nicholas, Head of JCST
Mr Mike Lavelle-Jones, President Elect, RCSEd
Prof David Galloway, President Elect, RCPSG
Mr Declan Magee, President, RCS Ireland