

# The Royal College of Ophthalmologists

## SPECIALIST DOCTOR POST IN OPHTHALMOLOGY

### **Introduction**

The Specialist Doctor grade (formerly Staff Grade) is a non-training career grade which can provide a secure and fulfilling career in ophthalmology but the opportunity to progress is limited and a move back into a training programme is the exception. Therefore it is vital to seek good career advice before appointment.

A Specialist Doctor is responsible to a named consultant. Within the boundaries agreed with the named consultant(s) and accepted professional standards, specialist doctors should be free to take clinical decisions. However the commitment relates solely to service requirements and does not involve continuous 24 hour responsibility for patients.

Specialist doctors are paid an equal amount for each session worked, regardless of what time of day or which day of the week. Thus individual doctor's working weeks may be flexible and not necessarily adhere to a standard working week. Whole-time specialist doctors are contracted for a minimum average of 10 sessions per week (i.e. 40 hours). Additional sessions may be negotiated provided the EC Directive on Working Time (48 hours per week) is followed. Part time doctors are contracted for a maximum of nine sessions per week.

Most specialist doctor contracts are subject to a probationary year but after this may be extended without term.

Although the job is predominantly service orientated it is essential that there are opportunities for professional development, participation in audit and for the improvement of skills. Specialist doctors should be registered with the College for continuing professional development (cpd) and take study leave where appropriate. (see BMA guidance, appendix 1). An active role in the educational programme is recommended.

Local clinical governance arrangements must apply equally to all grades of staff.

### **Job description**

The job description should include the following details:

#### **THE TRUST**

- Management structure
- Hospitals
- Key services
- Catchment area and population
- Regional and national services

- University links
- Arrangements for cpd
- Development plans

## **THE HOSPITAL OR UNIT**

- Tertiary centre, teaching hospital or DGH
- On-site services
- Relationship with other hospitals
- Development plans

## **THE DEPARTMENT**

- Work of the department
- Location
- Numbers and composition of medical staff:
  - (consultants, trainees, associate specialists, specialist doctors / staff grades, clinical assistants)
- Support staff:
  - (orthoptists, optometrists, medical photographers, technicians)
- Relationship with other departments
- Clinical activity - contracts e.g. outpatient attendance figures
- Facilities available:
  - inpatient (number of beds)
  - day case
  - theatres
  - outpatient (general and special interest)
  - accident and emergency
- Diagnostic facilities

## **THE JOB PLAN**

- Job title, whether whole or part-time and employing authority.
- Consultant(s) to whom responsible; names and grades of other members of staff. Relationships with non-medical staff.
- Details of all clinical commitments including fixed sessions and duties at other establishments.
- Details of out-of-hours and unsocial hours responsibilities, including rota commitments, where appropriate.
- Timetable (see appendix 3).
- Details of any other duties including the supervision and support of other staff (for example the role of Associate College Tutor), teaching, administrative and research requirements or opportunities.

- Requirements to participate in audit and clinical governance under local arrangements.
- Management responsibilities (where appropriate).

The job plan should be reviewed annually by the specialist doctor and consultant so that changes and amendments can be made if necessary.

### **CONTINUING EDUCATION**

- Facilities for study leave
- Libraries and courses available locally
- Arrangements for obtaining advice on cpd and careers
- Procedure for annual appraisal and revalidation with review of an educational plan

### **APPOINTMENT PROCEDURES**

- Requirements as to experience (Person Specification - see appendix 1)
- Arrangements for visits to the unit and meetings with the staff
- Date when appointment is to be taken up.

## Appendix 1

### SPECIALIST DOCTOR – OPHTHALMOLOGY PERSON SPECIFICATION

	ESSENTIAL	DESIRABLE
Registration	Full GMC Registration	
Qualifications		DRCOphth, MRCOphth, FRCOphth or equivalent
General	Acceptance that the post requires a strong service commitment	
Experience	A minimum of three years as ophthalmic SHO or higher grade since registration	
Audit	Experience in and participation in departmental audit	
Clinical skills	Experience working in busy outpatients, accident & emergency and theatre. Ability to work/operate unsupervised	Special interest
Teaching	Ability to teach junior staff	
Interpersonal skills	Willingness to seek timely assistance from senior colleagues when appropriate. Ability to establish good working relationships with staff and be able to communicate well with patients. Flexibility.	
Management	Good organisational skills and time management	

## Appendix 2

### Information on the Grade

<http://www.bma.org.uk/ap.nsf/Content/Hubsascontractandnegotiations>

Terms and Conditions of Service for the Staff Grade: NHS Executive - Advance letter (MD) 4/97

Non-consultant career grade doctors - recommendations for an improved career structure: Royal College of Physicians of London (June 2000)  
[http://www.rcplondon.ac.uk/pubs/comm\\_nccg.htm](http://www.rcplondon.ac.uk/pubs/comm_nccg.htm)

## Appendix 3

### **Suggested weekly timetable:**

- Up to 8 clinical sessions, which may include general or specialist outpatient sessions, operating lists (as appropriate to the appointee's experience), treatment sessions, outreach or primary care sessions (as appropriate to the appointee's experience)
- 1 administrative / audit session
- 1 session for cpd

Under the 1997 terms of service for doctors in the staff grade there is no strict limit on the number of sessions per week. However the College advises that one session is allocated for continuing professional development and one for administration / audit both for doctors who choose to remain on the staff grade contract and for specialist doctors.

The exact number of fixed clinical sessions will depend upon other commitments such as a particularly onerous workload or significant extra responsibilities. Any on-call commitments should be accounted for in the job plan and will also influence the number of fixed day-time commitments.