

# The Royal College of Psychiatrists

**Consultation on Association with the Royal College of Psychiatrists for those who have been admitted to the Specialist Register maintained by the General Medical Council in the United Kingdom or the Register of Medical Specialists held by the Medical Council in Ireland and who have been appointed to a substantive, honorary or fixed term consultant post in the United Kingdom or Ireland respectively and who have not passed the examinations of the Royal College of Psychiatrists (the College) leading to the qualification MRCPsych**

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# The Royal College of Psychiatrists

## Introduction

This consultation seeks the views of a wide audience on association with the Royal College of Psychiatrists (the College) for those who have been admitted to the Specialist Register maintained by the General Medical Council in the United Kingdom or the Register of Medical Specialists held by the Medical Council in Ireland and who have been appointed to a substantive, honorary or fixed term consultant post in the United Kingdom or Ireland respectively and who have not passed the examinations of the College leading to the qualification MRCPsych.

In this consultation document the term specialist register refers to both the Specialist Register maintained by the General Medical Council in the United Kingdom and the Register of Medical Specialists maintained by the Medical Council in Ireland.

In order to be appointed to a substantive, honorary or fixed term consultant post in the National Health Service in the United Kingdom (NHS) a doctor must hold specialist registration with the General Medical Council in the United Kingdom.

## Background

Until 2000 the designation MRCPsych was conferred upon those who had passed the examinations of the College and who had paid the appropriate registration fee and subscription to the College. Membership without examination was given to a very limited number of medical graduates of exceptional distinction who had not passed the examinations.

In 2000 the Bye-Laws and Regulations of the College were amended by the Privy Council so that the following group of doctors might apply for membership without having passed the College examinations:

*qualified medical practitioners who had qualified outside the UK or Ireland; and*

*who were on the Specialist Register of the General Medical Council in the United Kingdom or the Medical Council in Ireland; and  
who were either a consultant psychiatrist in the NHS or in an equivalent grade outside the NHS appointed upon the recommendation of an appointments committee on which there was a College representative.*

*Additionally, any practitioner outside the NHS who was of equivalent status to that of a consultant psychiatrist and who had been appointed without a College representative on the appointments committee could apply for membership subject to the College being satisfied that the status of the practitioner was at the appropriate level.*

In 2005 the College received clear legal advice that the policy of admitting psychiatrists to membership without examination was in potential breach of the Race Relations Act and must be brought to an immediate end. The College was advised to undertake a full consultation on a different type of association with the College.

## **Context**

As the professional body for psychiatrists in the UK and Ireland the College is committed to including all registered medical practitioners who practise psychiatry in the UK or Ireland in its work. It seeks to encourage all such practitioners to take up full membership of the College once they have passed the College examinations or, if they have not passed the examinations, to apply for another form of association with the College.

To encourage trainees to be associated with the College at an early stage of their career there is a Pre-membership Psychiatric Trainee (formerly known as Inceptor) grade. There is also a grade known as Affiliate which may be awarded to those who are not in training or a post for which specialist registration is required. Affiliates are normally in posts known as Staff and Associate Specialist posts. Since 2004 there has additionally been a grade known as International Associate. Members can nominate psychiatrists with five years' experience in psychiatry, who do not hold the MRCPsych, but who hold a specialist qualification in psychiatry and who reside outside the UK and Ireland.

There is an increasing number of doctors practising psychiatry in the UK and Ireland who have been admitted to the appropriate specialist register but who have not undertaken specialist training in the UK or Ireland and have not, therefore, obtained the qualification MRCPsych. It is this group of psychiatrists for whom the College now wishes to establish a form of association with the College. It is particularly important to include them in the College as consultants are asked to become educational supervisors, trainers of SpRs and College Tutors and we need them to uphold the College's professional standards and to encourage junior psychiatrists to participate in the College.

## Proposal

The College wishes to make it possible for psychiatrists practising at consultant level in the UK or Ireland to become associated with the College at the earliest possible stage wherever they trained, qualified or gained experience.

The current structure is such that those at consultant level in the UK or Ireland do not fit comfortably into it unless they have passed the college examinations.

We therefore propose to establish a new grade of association with the College. Those eligible to apply for the new grade would be:

*qualified medical practitioners, no matter where they qualify, who are on the Specialist Register of the General Medical Council in the United Kingdom or the Register of Medical Specialists of the Medical Council in Ireland; and*

*working in the UK or Ireland; and*

*working in a substantive, honorary or fixed term consultant psychiatrist post in the National Health Service of the United Kingdom or an equivalent grade outside the National Health Service of the United Kingdom appointed upon the recommendation of an appointments committee on which there was a College representative; or*

*of equivalent status to that of a consultant psychiatrist and have been appointed without a College representative on the appointments committee provided he or she can demonstrate to the satisfaction of the College that the status of the practitioner is at the appropriate level.*

Psychiatrists applying for the new form of association would be required to be proposed and seconded by two full Members or Fellows of the College and to confirm their good standing with the General Medical Council in the United Kingdom or the Medical Council in Ireland. The Education, Training and Standards Committee would consider applications at each meeting.

Those elected to the new form of association would:

- Receive the British Journal of Psychiatry, the Psychiatric Bulletin and International Psychiatry
- Be eligible to the members' discount on a subscription to Advances in Psychiatric Treatment
- Be entitled to join any or all of the College's Faculties, Sections and Special Interest Groups
- Be a member of one Division
- Receive notification of College meetings
- Receive notification of Faculty and Section meetings
- Receive notification of Divisional meetings
- Be eligible to attend the College's Annual Meeting
- Be eligible to serve on College Committees
- Participate in the College's programme of Continuing Professional Development
- Access the members' area of the College website
- Access the College's Information Service, which includes the full use of course stock of psychiatric texts and journals for reference purposes as well as on-line electronic journals

Those admitted to the new grade would be entitled to vote at College committee meetings but not at the Annual General Meeting or in College elections.

### **Name of new grade**

It has been suggested that the name of the new grade of association with the College should be 'Associate Member' or UK / Irish Associate. Comments and suggestions would be welcome.

### **Fees and Subscriptions**

It is proposed that the initial Registration Fee and the annual Subscription would be at the same level as those for College Members. For 2006 these are £141 and £334 respectively.

## Consultation Process

All College Members, Affiliates and Inceptors in the United Kingdom and Ireland are being consulted together with those who have previously applied for membership without examination and who were unsuccessful because of the legal advice received.

Brief comments are invited on the proposals in this consultation document. It would be particularly helpful to have comments on:

1. whether you believe a new grade should be created so that consultants who have not passed the examinations for the MRCPsych may be associated with the College;
2. what relationship consultants in this situation should have with the College if you do not believe a new grade should be created;
3. what you believe the name of the new grade should be, if you believe that one should be created;
4. whether you believe consultants elected to a new grade of associateship should be entitled to use a designation such as AMRCPsych;
5. whether you believe that consultants elected to a new grade of associateship should become in good standing for CPD with the College;
6. whether you believe the criteria for entry to the new grade of associateship are pitched at the correct level; if not, what should they be?;
7. whether the benefits of the new grade of associateship are appropriate / adequate; if not, what should they be?;
8. whether it would be appropriate for consultants elected to a new grade of associateship to be eligible to apply to be examiners for the MRCPsych examinations (having received appropriate training);
9. whether the proposed fees and subscriptions are at an appropriate level.

Please submit your brief comments **by letter or email only** as soon as possible, but in any event not later than **Friday 31<sup>st</sup> March, 2006**.

If you require further information please contact us at the address below **by letter or email only**.

Written comments and requests for information should be sent **by letter or email** only to:

The Registrar  
The Royal College of Psychiatrists  
17 Belgrave Square  
London SW1X 8PG

[consultation@rcpsych.ac.uk](mailto:consultation@rcpsych.ac.uk)