Job Description Assessment and Approval
Policy and Process

This document sets out the policy and the process for the assessment and approval of consultant and specialty doctor job descriptions in English divisions and RCPsych Wales.

1. Signing up to the policy

All Regional Advisors and Deputy Regional Advisors who sign up to this policy will undertake to have all job descriptions assessed and approved electronically. This means that no paper records will be held and all copies of job descriptions, comments made at the assessment stage, letters to and from all relevant parties and final approval letters will be filed on the College system by the Division Administrator.

2. Facilitating the policy

Regional Advisors and Deputy Regional Advisors will be responsible for contacting all the relevant parties in trusts to inform them that they are now participating in the electronic process. Any job descriptions which are received by post or fax will not be processed. The Division Administrator will contact the trust and ask for a copy to be sent by email. Regional Specialty Representatives should also be informed of the process and will be asked to confirm their preferred email address for all correspondence. This should ideally be their work email address but exceptionally can be their home email address.

All letters from Regional Advisors and Deputy Regional Advisors are sent by email from the Division, many are standard drafts. To facilitate this process Regional Advisors and Deputy Regional Advisors will be asked to supply a signature which can be scanned in to the system. Signatures are kept safe at all times and all letters bearing signatures are password protected.

The Division provides the following formats to enable Regional Advisors, Deputy Regional Advisors and Regional Specialty Representatives to convey their comments on job descriptions:

3. Checklists

To help Regional Specialty Representatives with the assessment process, two sets of guidelines are available. One for consultants which is based on the Guidance for Appointment of Consultant Psychiatrists and one for non consultant grades which is based on guidance provided by NHS Employers. These are in the format of simple checklists and are to help ensure that each job description contains the basic elements required. Regional Specialty Representatives are asked to complete the checklists – additional space is provided at the bottom of each checklist should they have more detailed comments that they wish to make. These checklists are intended for College internal use only and **should not** be copied to trusts. Any comments and suggestions to trusts should be made by Regional Advisors using the appropriate College template letter.

4. General comments on assessment

Regional Advisors, Deputy Regional Advisors and Regional Specialty Representatives **must** submit all comments by email. This is the quickest and most efficient method and ensures that a full audit trail is available on the electronic system.

The main points to note are:

- Comments should always be typed either directly onto an email or onto a separate word document attached to an email.
- Manuscript and PDF documents are not acceptable. Neither are amendments made directly onto documents using track changes.
- Comments received are then transferred onto template letters which are sent to the trust or PCT by email.

PLEASE NOTE: Dictated comments should not be taken over the telephone and dictation should not be left on voicemail.

5. Good practice advice to trusts

The aim of the College assessment and approval process is to offer help and guidance to Trusts. Although Trusts are independent and are able to decide how to carry out their recruitment processes without reference to the College – they should be encouraged in all instances to refer job descriptions to the College for assessment and approval. Trusts should also be encouraged to invite a College Approved Assessor to sit on the Advisory Appointments Committee when recruiting to posts. Trusts should be encouraged to refer all job descriptions to College when:

- **The post is newly created:**
  This would include consultants, specialty doctors and some locum posts
- **The post has been significantly redesigned:**
  This could include current posts which have already been approved – in which case consultation with the College should be encouraged
- **The post has remained unfilled for 12 months:**
  The job description may not have significantly changed – but it is good practice to have a more recently dated approval letter
- **The post will be filled by a locum**
  The Code of Practice in the Appointment and Employment of HCHS Locum Doctors advises that wherever possible locum appointments should be

restricted to an initial period of 6 months and any extension beyond that period should be reviewed by the employing authority in consultation with the College. It is advisable that all locum posts should be limited to the maximum of 12 months. If, subsequently, a locum post were made into a substantive post, then the Trust should seek to have the job description re-approved and the appointment decided by an Advisory Appointments Committee.

6. The electronic process

- All Consultant and Specialty Doctor job descriptions will be sent directly to the Division Office and recorded onto the Job Description database. If a Regional Advisor, Deputy Regional Advisor or Regional Specialty Representative receives a job description directly from the Trust, they should immediately instruct the Trust to email the job description to the Division Office.
- Each Job Description will be given a unique reference number. This number will remain with the job description throughout all stages of assessment. Each time a job description is changed following an assessment the number will remain the same but the version will change. For example, CY001 (V1) CY001 (V2) CY001 (Final). This is the same job description but it has had changes made to it during assessment. CY001 (Final) is the final approved version.
- The Job Description and relevant checklist will be sent to the Regional Specialty Representative for assessment.
- If the Regional Specialty Representative does not feel able to comment on the Job Description (for example, if they have been involved in the drafting of the job description) then the Division Office must be informed immediately and an alternative Regional Specialty Representative will be sourced.
- The Regional Specialty Representative will return the Job Description and checklist plus any comments/revisions to the Division Office by email.
- The Division Office will forward the first version of the Job Description, the checklist and any comments from the Regional Specialty Representative to the Regional Advisor or Deputy Regional Advisor for final checking and sign off.
- The Regional Advisor or Deputy Regional Advisor will confirm to the Division Office if the Job Description has been approved.
- The Division Office will send out the approval letter to Medical Director/HR department (or relevant recruitment contact) with a copy to the Workforce Manager in the Professional Standards Department.
- If a vacancy is not filled and needs to be re-advertised after a period of time then the Job Description must be re-submitted to the Divisional Office who will send it to the Regional Advisor for review in each instance.

7. Monthly Reports

Each month the Division Office will provide the Regional Advisors and Deputy Regional Advisor with a monthly report indicating the current number of live job descriptions and which stage they are at in the process of assessment and approval.

Monthly reports can be tailored to suit the needs of individual Regional Advisors and Deputy Regional Advisors and may be copied to Regional Specialty Representatives if they express an interest.

8. Conflicts of Interest

Regional Specialty Representatives are expected to take an objective view of the job descriptions sent to them to assess and this includes jobs within their own organisation. However, from time to time Regional Specialty Representatives will find that the job they have been asked to review is a job in their own organisation or for a job which they may have been directly involved in drafting. If such a conflict of interest does occur then in the first instance the Regional Specialty Representative should inform the Division office and suggest a colleague who they think would be willing to review the Job Description. Only in exceptional circumstances would the job description be sent to a Regional Specialty Representative in another Region – wherever possible the job should be assessed by someone who knows the locality where the job will be based. If any Regional Specialty Representative has a query about a potential conflict of interest they should contact the Division office.

9. Aims to Review and Improve

The Process aims to have job descriptions assessed and returned to the Trust for review within 15 working days of receipt. The College has no influence over the length of time Trusts take to review the job descriptions once comments have been received.

However, the aim is to build confidence with Trusts by ensuring that initial turnaround time by College happens as quickly as possible and in the majority of cases well within the 15 working days. In time, this should in turn encourage Trusts to return reviewed job descriptions as quickly as possible to enable the entire assessment and approval process to shorten in timescale.

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