PMETB EQUIVALENCE ASSESSMENT

Background

The General and Specialist Medical Practice (Education, Training and Qualifications) Order 2003 is a statutory instrument, which set up the Postgraduate Medical Education and Training Board (PMETB), to replace the Specialist Training Authority (STA). We anticipated that the review of regulations for entry onto the Specialist Register by the PMETB will change the situation faced by our members applying for assessment under the old STA rules. This has been highlighted in the press over the last 2 years. The Faculty responded to the consultation by the PMETB in 2004, representing the position of the Faculty’s Members. However, when the PMETB published the long awaited rules for entry into the Specialist Register (Article 14(4), 14(5) and 14(6)) it became clear that this new legislation does not address our issues.

Current legislation for admission onto the specialist register

The sections of the current UK legislation relevant to our specialty now stand as follows:

**Article 14(4):**
Under this a person is eligible to apply if he/she has
- Undertaken specialist training or
- Been awarded specialist qualifications

In a specialty listed in Schedule 3 (which in our case is O&G) and the doctor satisfies the PMETB that their training/ qualifications or both are equivalent to a CCT in the specialty in question. This means the assessment will be carried out against the standards required for a CCT in general O&G, which leaves us in the same situation as previously with the STA. In addition, the specialty specific guidance recently published by the PMETB has based the equivalence criteria purely on a general O&G consultant.

**Article 14(5):**
Under this a person is eligible to apply if he/she has
- Undertaken specialist training (at least for 6 months) or
- Been awarded specialist qualifications

**Outside the UK** in a medical specialty not listed in Schedule 3.

This is the category under which most of our members would have an opportunity of assessment of equivalence, had it not been for the words ‘Outside the UK’; however they do not qualify for entry into assessment as legislation currently excludes training/qualifications obtained within the UK. Neither PMETB nor Colleges/Faculties can change legislation. We are informed that even the BMA’s
considered legal opinion is that any legal challenge mounted against legislation will not be successful.

Article 14(6):  
This applies only to doctors who enter assessment under Article 14(4) and 14(5)  
• If a person is eligible to apply under Article 14(4) or 14(5), specialist medical experience or knowledge, wherever obtained, can be used in assessment of equivalence in addition to training and qualifications.

Our present position:

• The Faculty is working with support of the RCOG to request PMETB to change the specialty specific equivalence criteria proposed for assessment under Article 14(4) to a Day 1 Sexual and Reproductive Health Consultant. This should derive its criteria from core O&G training and SRH subspecialty training.

• The Faculty is also seeking legal opinion to check out the position adopted by PMETB in the interpretation of the current specialty specific guidance for 14(4).

• Doctors hoping to qualify under Article 14(4) should contact Ms. Sarah Qureshi (Head of Specialist Registration) at the RCOG to discuss their position and decide on the best time to make their application depending on how and when these issues are resolved.

• The Faculty is currently engaged in an exercise to influence the Department of Health, presenting a case for an amendment to Article 14(5), to allow UK trained doctors to apply. The Faculty takes this fundamental issue extremely seriously; however we can not guarantee success.

Meanwhile, doctors who are affected by this legislation are also seeking to influence the situation through the BMA. The Faculty encourages all our doctors to continue to highlight their position through their professional body and any other available avenue.