



**THE ASSOCIATION OF ANAESTHETISTS**  
*of Great Britain & Ireland*

March 2007

**Modernising Medical Careers and the Medical Training Application Service**

A statement from the Association of Anaesthetists of Great Britain and Ireland

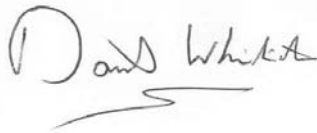
The Association of Anaesthetists of Great Britain & Ireland (AAGBI) represents more than 90% of practising anaesthetists in the UK and Ireland. One third of its members are trainees and, through their representative section (the Group of Anaesthetists in Training – GAT), the AAGBI is the main national body representing the views of trainees in anaesthesia and its associated subspecialties. In the light of events surrounding the short-listing and interview process for Modernising Medical Careers (MMC) operated by the Medical Training Application Service (MTAS), we wish to voice our serious concerns about a number of important issues.

From the start, the entire process has been fraught with difficulties, most of which were both predictable and predicted. Experience with the Foundation Year process raised many concerns upon which we commented, but our warnings appear to have gone unheeded. The current process for recruitment into run-through training has thrown up a number of other worrying issues. Problems so far identified by our members include:

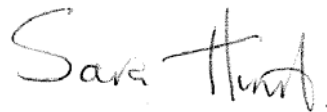
- The computerised application process appears to have been blighted by technical problems that resulted in the deadline for applications being extended in February.
- Once the applications had been received, MTAS was meant to assess the eligibility of the applicants so that only the names of those eligible for posts were forwarded to the Deaneries. This process failed. Many ineligible candidates were short-listed, thereby denying eligible candidates an interview. We are aware that the initial round of applications was processed before the appeal judgement on the status of International Medical Graduates (IMGs) was announced. In light of that judgement, we hope that the situation regarding IMGs has now been clarified, and we insist that matters of ineligibility are now resolved before the second round starts.
- The short-listing process at Deanery level was meant to be a computerised process. This too failed in some regions, and applications had to be marked by hand. The deadline for this process was so tight that those given the job of short-listing were overwhelmed with applications. This was particularly true for anaesthesia.
- We have received reliable reports that short-listing through MTAS was not blinded in some Deaneries. This meant that those doing the short-listing could not only see the marks given by others but could also, in theory at least, change these marks.

- These and other problems meant that many requests for references were sent out at the last minute. Although this process was intended to be electronic, no allowance was made for the lack of an electronic response from a referee and, as a result of this and other failures, paper-based systems had to be resorted to. Ultimately, some candidates were obliged to track down a signed, written reference at almost no notice. This is unacceptable.

Our modern, safety-orientated NHS culture is meant to eliminate errors by careful system design, rigorous process testing and thorough piloting before implementation. It is appalling that the consultants of the future have had their careers put at stake by a system that was not designed well, did not undergo adequate testing or piloting, and was not checked thoroughly before its abrupt implementation. Given that this process is recruiting doctors across the UK into a scheme that offers little scope for a change in career, we wish to express our profound dissatisfaction and disappointment in the process to date. We think that an urgent review should be conducted before the second round of interviews starts.



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