

Update on the new SAS grade contract

Negotiations on a new contract for SAS doctors and dentists began in May 2005. An agreement was reached with NHS Employers in 2006. The contract was ratified, with some amendments, by the Government in December 2007, following which SAS grades were asked to vote on whether they wished to accept the new contract. The BMA Staff and Associate Specialist Committee (SASC) met on 19 March 2008 to consider the results of the contract ballot, and accepted the new SAS contract on behalf of UK SAS doctors. 60.4% had voted that they supported the introduction of the new national contract for doctors and dentists in the SAS grades.

The new contract will be offered on an optional basis from 1 April 2008 to doctors / dentists in the following grades:

- staff grades
- associate specialists
- senior clinical medical officers
- clinical medical officers
- clinical assistants
- hospital practitioners

The new grade of Specialty Doctor will replace staff grade and will be offered by employers from 1 April 2008, so there will be no new appointments to the above grades after that date.

The Associate Specialist grade will be closed. There is a new Associate Specialist grade with similar structure to the Specialty Doctor. Current Associate Specialists

will have the option to express an interest in switching to this new grade. As no new appointments will be made to Associate Specialist level, the only other route to enter the grade will be to regrade from Staff Grade or Specialty Doctor, but applications will only be possible until 31 March 2009, and after that time new applications for regrading will not be accepted.

Work has begun on implementation and employers will write to all SAS doctors asking for expressions of interest. SAS grades will have 12 weeks from receipt of the letter from employers to express an interest in the new contract. This does not commit doctors to accepting the new contract but guarantees back pay to 1 April 2008 once a job plan has been agreed. Written offers of an agreed job plan need to be accepted within 21 days (28 days in Scotland).

- Current SAS doctors must consider whether they would like to apply for the new contract. Consideration of individual circumstances will be essential.
- If expressing an interest, it is advisable to begin a diary planning exercise to aid you in job planning discussions. This should last for a minimum of 6 weeks, or one rota cycle (whichever is longer), though a longer period of time would be helpful.
- Staff grades eligible to apply to regrade to the AS grade should do so as soon as possible, as applications will not be accepted after 31 March 2009

- BMA SASC is working on producing further guidance to assist in assimilation. This will be available as soon as possible.

The contract is based on a 10 Programmed Activity (PA) contract, most of the work being for Direct Clinical Care (DCC) with a minimum of one PA for Supporting Professional Activities. A PA is of 4 hours duration. The job plan in the new contract should be based on the current job plan, so SAS doctors who currently have more than one NHD/ session for SPA activity should continue to receive this.

Contracts can be for up to 12 Pas but only the basic 10 PAs are superannuable.

There is a supplement for on-call work, payable as a percentage of the basic salary with the percentage being dependent on the frequency of the on-call. This will not be payable for a shift pattern.

Work actually carried out as Out of Hours work (OOH), as demonstrated by diary exercise, will be payable at an enhanced rate where the rate of pay will be time and a third. OOH work is work done between 19:00 and 07:00 on weeknights and all work at weekends and on public holidays. Where OOH work is included within the 10 session job plan this will be superannuable. If it forms part of additional PAs above the basic ten PAs it will not be superannuable.

Optional and Discretionary point awards will no longer exist in the new contract, but will continue to be available for those SAS doctors who chose to remain in their old contracts.

This new contract should hopefully create opportunities for SAS grades to have proper recognition of their skills and experience.

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BMA SASC Conference Chair**

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THE ASSOCIATION OF ANAESTHETISTS
of Great Britain & Ireland

Evelyn Baker Medal

An award for clinical competence

The Evelyn Baker award was instigated by Dr Margaret Branthwaite in 1998, dedicated to the memory of one of her former patients at the Royal Brompton Hospital. The award is made for outstanding clinical competence, recognising the 'unsung heroes' of clinical anaesthesia and related practice. The defining characteristics of clinical competence are deemed to be technical proficiency, consistently reliable clinical judgement and wisdom and skill in communicating with patients, their relatives and colleagues. The ability to train and enthuse trainee colleagues is seen as an integral part of communication skill, extending beyond formal teaching of academic presentation.

Dr John Cole (Sheffield) was the first winner of the Evelyn Baker medal in 1998, followed by Dr Meena Choksi (Pontypridd) in 1999, Dr Neil Schofield (Oxford) in 2000, Dr Brian Steer (Eastbourne) in 2001, Dr Mark Crosse (Southampton) in 2002, Dr Paul Monks (London) in 2003, Dr Margo Lewis (Birmingham) in 2004, Dr Douglas Turner (Leicester) in 2005, Dr Martin Coates (Plymouth) in 2006 and Dr Gareth Charlton (Southampton) in 2007.

Nominations are now invited for the award to be presented at the WSM in January 2009 and may be made by any member of the Association to any practising anaesthetist who is a member of the Association.

The nomination, accompanied by a citation of up to 1000 words, should be sent to the Honorary Secretary at honsecretary@aagbi.org by Friday 3 October 2008.

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