



Academy of Medical Royal Colleges and Faculties in Scotland

EXTERNAL ADVISER SERVICE
ANNUAL REPORT 2022



Background

External Advisers have an important role to play in the consultant appointment process in Scotland, as governed by The National Health Service (Appointment of Consultants) (Scotland) Regulations 2009.

The regulations require that a single specialty External Adviser is present on each NHS consultant appointment panel in Scotland. The External Adviser is a full panel member providing specialty knowledge and an important external perspective throughout the recruitment process.

[The National Health Service \(Appointment of Consultants\) \(Scotland\) Regulations 2009](#)

[The National Health Service \(Appointment of Consultants\) \(Scotland\) Amendment Regulations 2010](#)

The Academy of Medical Royal Colleges and Faculties in Scotland (“The Scottish Academy”) has been contracted by the Scottish Government Health and Social Care Directorate to compile and maintain a list of External Advisers (EAs) for this purpose and to run a service to assign an EA per specialty consultant interview panel across Scotland.

This report to the Scottish Academy contains information on EAs requested, panels completed and cancelled over the previous years, details of panel activity and appointments made from 2022, the EA list and recruitment process, Scottish Academy service provision, along with issues raised and recommendations for improving the current service. The proceeding Appendix contains the data referred to in the report.

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Chair of the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges and Faculties in Scotland

Co-ordination of the External Advisors is one of the actions that defines the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges and Faculties (“The Scottish Academy”). I am delighted to see the results of this report.

Before I reflect on the report’s findings, I must thank the many colleagues who have made the External Advisors service possible. As you will see later there are currently 449 External Advisors, and without these individuals the service would not happen. On behalf of the Academy, I thank each and every one of you, and also your employers for allowing you to provide your time and expertise. I hope you gain fulfilment from your role and am grateful to you for encouraging and supporting colleagues to step forwards when you reach the end of your time in post. We are also in debt to Clare Anstock our Senior External Adviser Coordinator; arranging External Advisors for the 705 panels in 2022 is a huge undertaking. The Academy is also grateful to the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh for hosting the External Advisor service.

These were the facts that caught my eye in this year’s report:

- The 705 requests for External Advisers in 2022 was the highest yet, and 90% higher than in 2010.
- There were 521 consultants appointed by 427 panels, a subtle reduction in appointments from the 533 in 2021.
- 42% of appointment panels were cancelled, mostly due to no applicants, no suitable applicants or the applicant withdrew.
- The proportion of jobs advertised as “9+1” (where data were available) was 50% in 2022.
- We are fortunate to have the ideal number of External Advisors in post for the great majority of specialties, a shortfall in Psychiatry External Advisors persists.
- 49% of External Advisors rated their experience as “excellent” and a further 43% gave a “good” rating.
- External Advisors see positives and negatives in doing interviews remotely.

In recognition of the increasing number of panels which were cancelled we are grateful to External Advisors and Health Boards for their flexibility and support.

We look forward to carrying on working with Health Boards and the Scottish Government, and contributing to the governance of the consultant interview process.



Panel requests and outcomes

The number of panels continues to rise year-on-year from 2016 (figure one). The number of consultant appointments fell slightly from 533 in 2021 to 521 in 2022 (figure two). The main reason for cancellation continues to be applicant related (no applicants, no suitable applicants, or applicant withdrew): 2018: 87%, 2019: 83%, 2020: 83%, 2021: 86%, 2022: 88%. See table one.

Figure one. The number of requests for an external advisor.

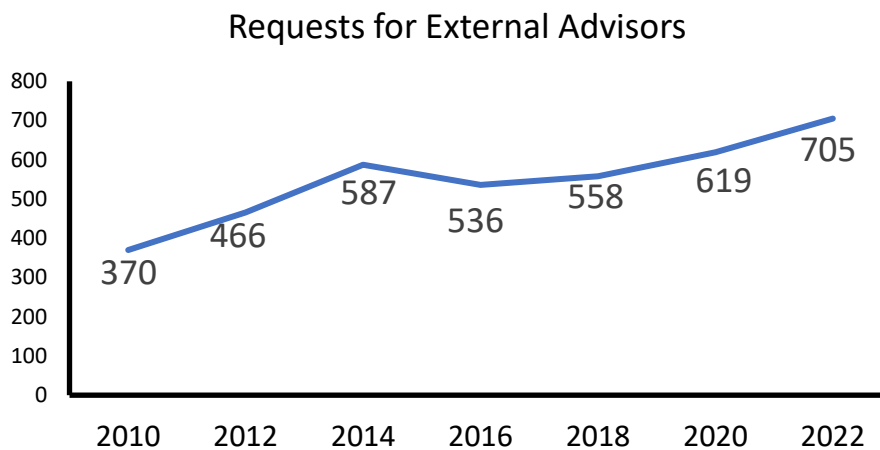
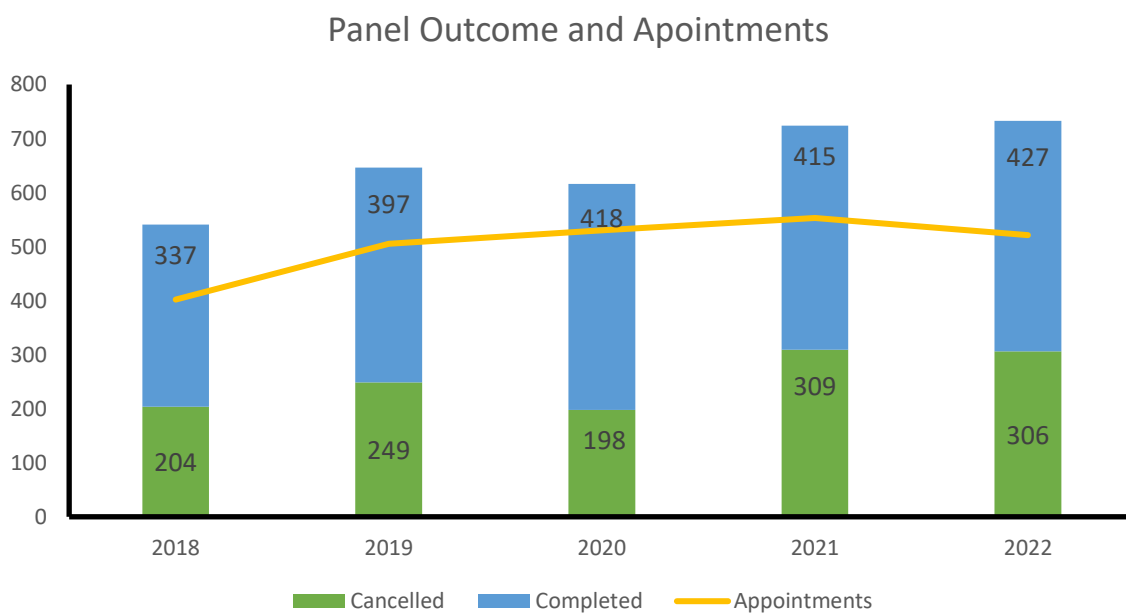


Figure two. The outcome of panels 2018 – 2022.

Requests are “time stamped” when received. In cases where a request is received in November or December and the subsequent panel is scheduled for the following year, the Panel Outcome data is recorded under the following year. The number of appointments is higher than the number of uncancelled panels – this is due to some panels appointing more than one candidate following interview. Supplemental table one presents the raw data for this figure.





Panel cancellations

Table one. Reason for panel cancellations.

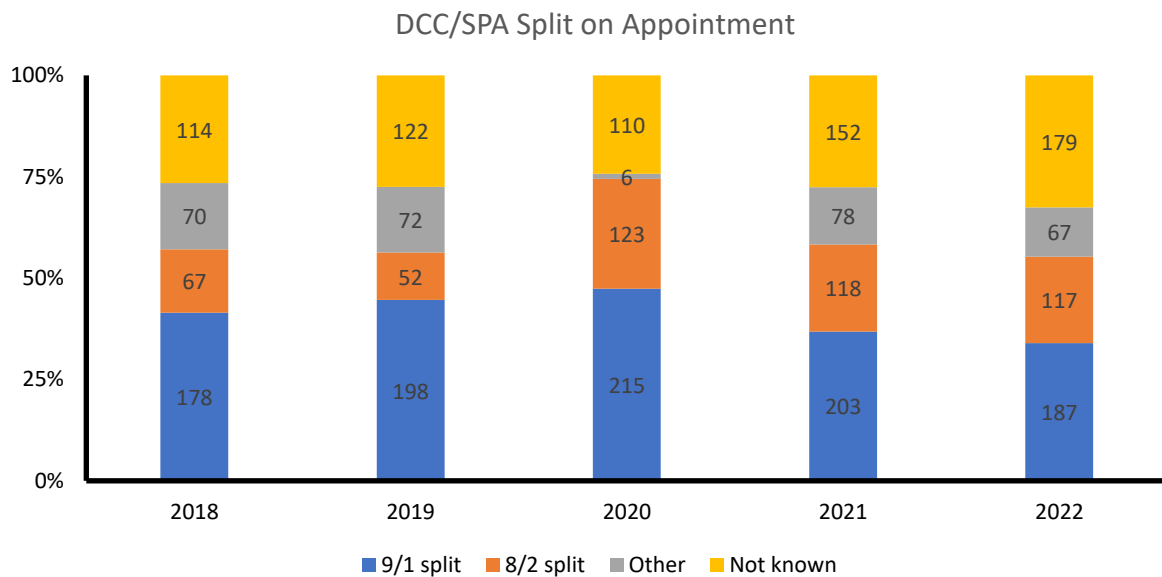
YEAR	NO APPLICANTS	NO SUITABLE CANDIDATES	CANDIDATE(S) WITHDREW	COVID-19	HB POSTPONED / REARRANGED	NO REASON GIVEN	OTHER	TOTAL	% APPLICANT RELATED
2018	132	25	20	N/A	26	0	0	203	87%
2019	152	27	26	N/A	31	0	12	248	83%
2020	114	25	27	6	23	0	4	199	83%
2021	185	57	25	1	36	1	4	309	86%
2022	194	53	24	0	22	1	13	306	88%

Job descriptions

Figure three. The split in direct clinical care (DCC) and supporting professional activities (SPA) 2018-2022.

Supplemental table two presents the raw data used for this figure.

While the data reflects a small decline in the number of 9/1 splits offered on appointment, approximately 50% of jobs are not advertised as 9/1. There has been an increase in boards reporting “Not Known”. Boards may report this when they are yet to negotiate a split with the successful candidate, or if the HR representative was not present at the interview panel.





Geographical spread of interviews

Table two shows the number of panels within each Health Board or university.

The cancellation rate in 2022 is 42%, comparable to the figure of 43% in 2021. The number of appointments in 2022 (521) is lower than 2021 (553).

Table two. The number of consultant appointment panels in each Health Board and University.

HEALTH BOARD	TOTAL	COMPLETED	APPOINTMENTS	CANCELLED	% CANCELLED
Ayrshire & Arran	32	19	28	13	41%
Borders	19	7	7	12	63%
Dumfries & Galloway	27	18	21	9	33%
Fife	52	27	34	25	48%
Forth Valley	42	23	38	19	45%
Golden Jubilee	9	6	8	3	33%
Grampian	73	41	46	32	44%
Greater Glasgow & Clyde	151	107	127	44	29%
Highland	57	21	22	36	63%
Lanarkshire	49	28	36	21	43%
Lothian	101	66	84	35	35%
Orkney	7	4	3	3	43%
Shetland	6	2	1	4	67%
Tayside	65	31	38	34	52%
Western Isles	6	0	0	6	100%
National Services Scotland	2	2	1	0	0%
NHS Education for Scotland	3	3	5	0	0%
NHS 24	2	0	0	2	100%
Public Health Scotland	10	6	6	4	40%
University of Aberdeen	4	2	2	2	50%
University of Dundee	7	6	5	1	14%
University of Edinburgh	7	7	8	0	0%
University of Glasgow	2	1	1	1	50%
Grand Total	733	427	521	306	42%



Appointments by specialty

Appendix table three shows the number of panels across each of the specialties; the busiest specialties continue to be Anaesthetics, General Psychiatry, and Paediatrics.

Where there were 5 or more panels in 2022, there were:

- 13 specialties with >50% cancellations
- 16 specialties with 25-50% cancellations
- 9 specialties with 0-25% cancellations

Compared to the cancellations in the previous year, cancellations rose in 19 specialties and fell in 16 specialties.

External Advisers

In 2022 there were 265 Active External Advisers and 184 Reserve External Advisors.

Appendix table four shows the number of active and reserve EAs in each specialty.

External Advisers are expected to assist with 3 consultant advisory appointment committees per year. To support this, an additional 59 advisers were recruited in 2022, 22 fewer than required. There is a shortage of External Advisers particularly within Psychiatry specialties.

In 2023, there are 84 vacancies for External Advisers across 37 specialties:

- 13 specialties which require 1 additional EA
- 15 specialties which require 2 additional EAs
- 4 specialties which require 3 additional EAs
- 3 specialties which require 4 additional EAs
- 2 specialties which requires at least 5 additional EAs



Scottish Academy Service to External Advisors

Feedback is requested from Health Boards and External Advisors regarding various aspects of the process both leading up to the interview and at interview stage.

Appendix tables five, six and seven shows that the Health Boards, External Advisors, and External Adviser Coordinators were all consistently rated high. Training for External Advisors should continue in order to maintain standards.

Issues Raised

There is a mixed response regarding whether interviews should be held in person or online:

Pro in person

- *Virtual interviews on Teams are not suitable for making a consultant appointment.*
- *We need to return to face to face interviews*
- *Nice to do a proper face to face rather than a virtual interview- much preferable and we need to get back to this for Consultant interviews*

Pro virtual

- *I continue to be impressed at the effectiveness of carrying out interviews virtually, I think this interview worked well.*
- *Being able to join virtually saved me a 4 hour round trip and was much preferable. Prefers Teams interview. Works well and saves time*
- *Much easier than in person, which would effectively take me away for a whole day.*

Mixed

- *Great to see we are continuing to use virtual means to do these. Would be nice to explore the option for in person attendance where possible.*
- *Although being in the same room is always the best case scenario, given the pressures on a Radiologist's time, I felt a Teams interview was a reasonable compromise*



Conclusion

We continue to monitor feedback for quality assurance and seek out areas for continuous improvement. Overall, most remain happy with the process and prefer having the option of being able to attend either in person or remotely.

Other feedback includes comments that Job Train is not a suitable tool for assessing candidate suitability, poor communication from Health Boards, particularly in relation to arranging/changing the interview date, and the limitation of not being able to advertise a vacancy until an EA has been arranged for an interview date.

This report has been circulated to:

The Academy of Medical Royal Colleges and Faculties in Scotland
The Scottish Government Health and Social Care Directorate
NHS Education for Scotland (NES)
NHS Ayrshire & Arran
NHS Borders
NHS Dumfries & Galloway
NHS Fife
NHS Forth Valley
NHS Golden Jubilee
NHS Grampian
NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde
NHS Highland
NHS Lanarkshire
NHS Lothian
NHS Health Scotland
NHS Orkney
NHS Shetland
NHS Tayside
NHS Western Isles
NHS 24
Public Health Scotland
University of Aberdeen
University of Dundee
University of Edinburgh
University of Glasgow

Contact and Support:

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Appendix: Data Tables

Table one. Trend Data: 2018 – 2022 Panel Outcomes

YEAR	CANCELLED	COMPLETED	APPOINTMENTS	GRAND TOTAL
2018	204	337	402	541
2019	249	397	505	646
2020	198	418	530	616
2021	309	415	553	724
2022	306	427	521	733

Table two. Trend Data: 2018 – 2022 DCC/SPA Split on appointment

YEAR	9/1 SPLIT	8/2 SPLIT	OTHER	NOT KNOWN
2015	316	44	48	78
2016	241	64	68	48
2017	196	69	55	109
2018	178	67	70	114
2019	198	52	72	122
2020	215	123	6	110
2021	203	118	78	152
2022	187	117	67	179



Table three. The number of consultant appointment panels convened in 2022, stratified by specialty. Percentage change from 2021 is presented for those specialties where there were at least five panels.

Specialties	Grand Total	Completed	Appointments made	Cancelled	% Cancelled 2022	% Cancelled 2021	Difference
Acute Medicine	21	11	15	10	48%	64%	-21%
Anaesthetics	59	38	54	21	36%	32%	2%
Cardiology	14	13	18	1	7%	22%	-15%
Cardiothoracic Surgery	1	1	2	0	0%	100%	N/A
Chemical Pathology	3	3	3	0	0%	0%	N/A
Child & Adolescent Psychiatry	29	17	17	12	41%	52%	-10%
Clinical Genetics	3	3	3	0	0%	0%	N/A
Clinical Oncology	12	5	6	7	58%	43%	15%
Clinical Radiology	25	18	27	7	28%	41%	-13%
Community Child Health	3	2	4	1	33%	43%	N/A
Dental Public Health	6	5	6	1	17%	0%	17%
Dermatology	8	2	2	6	75%	25%	50%
Emergency Medicine	16	14	25	2	13%	22%	-10%
Endocrinology & Diabetes Mellitus	9	3	4	6	67%	46%	21%
Forensic Psychiatry	8	4	5	4	50%	50%	0%
Gastroenterology	10	7	8	3	30%	50%	-20%
General Medicine	12	3	3	9	75%	60%	15%
General Psychiatry	72	27	33	45	63%	51%	12%
General Surgery	32	27	28	5	16%	21%	-6%
Genito-Urinary Medicine	3	2	4	1	33%	100%	N/A
Geriatric Medicine	31	15	16	16	52%	52%	0%
Haematology	14	9	14	5	36%	43%	-7%
Histopathology	28	13	14	15	54%	35%	18%
Immunology	4	0	0	4	100%	50%	N/A
Infectious Diseases	4	2	2	2	50%	50%	N/A
Medical Microbiology & Virology	12	1	1	11	92%	63%	29%
Medical Oncology	9	4	4	5	56%	50%	6%
Neurology	6	6	7	0	0%	40%	-40%
Neurosurgery	2	2	2	0	0%	50%	N/A
Obstetrics & Gynaecology	21	18	21	3	14%	20%	-6%
Occupational Medicine	2	1	1	1	50%	50%	N/A
Old Age Psychiatry	26	8	8	18	69%	86%	-17%
Ophthalmology	14	5	4	9	64%	43%	21%
Oral & Maxillofacial Surgery	7	6	7	1	14%	43%	-29%
Oral Medicine	2	0	0	2	100%	0%	N/A
Oral Surgery	3	3	3	0	0%	0%	N/A
Orthodontics	7	4	4	3	43%	50%	-7%
Otolaryngology	10	2	2	8	80%	73%	7%
Paediatric Cardiology	1	1	1	0	0%	100%	N/A
Paediatric Dentistry	4	4	4	0	0%	N/A	N/A
Paediatric Surgery	2	2	4	0	0%	0%	N/A
Paediatrics	43	25	34	18	42%	40%	2%
Palliative Medicine	7	5	5	2	29%	13%	16%
Plastic Surgery	6	3	5	3	50%	0%	50%
Psychiatry of Learning Disability	2	2	2	0	0%	57%	N/A
Psychotherapy	3	2	3	1	33%	0%	N/A
Public Health Medicine	39	22	19	17	44%	42%	2%
Rehabilitation Medicine	2	0	0	2	100%	20%	N/A
Renal Medicine	1	1	1	0	0%	20%	N/A
Respiratory Medicine	18	13	15	5	28%	18%	10%
Restorative Dentistry	10	7	7	3	30%	33%	-3%
Rheumatology	8	6	4	2	25%	57%	-32%
Special Care Dentistry	16	14	17	2	13%	29%	-16%
Trauma & Orthopaedic Surgery	13	11	18	2	15%	7%	9%
Urology	7	3	3	4	57%	50%	7%
Vascular Surgery	3	2	2	1	33%	40%	N/A
Totals	733	427	521	306	42%	57%	-16%



Table four. The number of active and reserve External Advisors and the ideal required.

SPECIALTY	ACTIVE EAs	RESERVE EAs	ALL EAs	2022 REQUESTS	IDEAL NUMBER
Acute Medicine	8	8	16	19	7
Anaesthetics	20	12	32	58	18
Cardiology	3	4	7	14	5
Cardiothoracic Surgery	2	2	4	1	2
Chemical Pathology	1	3	4	3	2
Child & Adolescent Psychiatry	6	2	8	27	9
Clinical Genetics	1	1	2	3	2
Clinical Oncology	2	3	5	12	4
Clinical Pharmacology & Therapeutics	1	1	2	0	2
Clinical Radiology	16	9	25	20	10
Community Child Health	3	1	4	4	2
Dental Public Health	1	2	3	6	2
Dermatology	2	3	5	6	3
Emergency Medicine	7	4	11	14	5
Endocrinology & Diabetes Mellitus	5	5	10	8	4
Forensic Psychiatry	4	1	5	11	3
Gastroenterology	7	4	11	7	4
General Medicine	6	3	9	11	5
General Psychiatry	12	12	24	76	22
General Surgery	16	6	22	28	10
Genito-Urinary Medicine	2	0	2	2	2
Geriatric Medicine	6	6	12	28	9
Haematology	5	3	8	15	6
Histopathology	6	4	10	27	8
Immunology	2	0	2	5	2
Infectious Diseases	1	1	2	4	2
Medical Microbiology & Virology	3	1	4	11	4
Medical Oncology	3	5	8	9	3
Neurology	4	4	8	3	3
Neurosurgery	6	0	6	2	2
Obstetrics & Gynaecology	9	5	14	21	8
Occupational Medicine	0	4	4	3	2
Old Age Psychiatry	11	4	15	30	11
Ophthalmology	3	4	7	13	5
Oral & Maxillofacial Surgery	2	2	4	8	3
Oral Medicine	1	1	2	2	2
Oral Surgery	4	3	7	3	2
Orthodontics	3	3	6	6	2
Otolaryngology	4	4	8	9	4
Paediatric Cardiology	1	0	1	1	2
Paediatric Dentistry	1	0	1	4	2
Paediatric Surgery	3	0	3	2	2
Paediatrics	11	14	25	33	14
Palliative Medicine	4	1	5	8	3
Plastic Surgery	3	2	5	4	2
Psychiatry of Learning Disability	2	2	4	3	2
Psychotherapy	2	1	3	1	2
Public Health	8	1	9	37	10
Rehabilitation Medicine	2	1	3	2	2
Renal Medicine	3	2	5	0	2
Respiratory Medicine	4	4	8	18	5
Restorative Dentistry	2	4	6	9	3
Rheumatology	1	3	4	10	3
Special Care Dentistry	3	4	7	19	5
Trauma & Orthopaedic Surgery	8	2	10	13	5
Urology	5	2	7	8	3
Vascular Surgery	4	1	5	4	2
Totals	265	184	449	705	270



Table five. Feedback of Health Boards from External Advisers when asked:

“How would you rate the Health Board on the following:”

Average of 92% Positive (combined ‘Excellent’ and ‘Good’ ratings) across all categories:

	EXCELLENT	GOOD	FAIR	POOR	NOT APPLICABLE
JOB PLAN	151	203	23	5	4
SHORTLISTING	144	186	33	7	16
JOB TRAIN	97	166	66	33	24
CHAIR OF PANEL	261	104	13	1	7
PERFORMANCE AT INTERVIEW	227	139	10	1	9
DECISION MAKING	231	139	8	1	7
OVERALL PROCESS	191	165	16	6	8

Table six. Feedback of External Advisers from Health Boards when asked:

“How would you rate the External Adviser on the following:”

Average of 89% Positive (combined ‘Excellent’ and ‘Good’ ratings) across all categories:

	EXCELLENT	GOOD	FAIR	POOR	NOT APPLICABLE
JOB PLAN / JOB DESCRIPTION	308	73	0	0	31
SHORTLISTING	304	73	1	1	32
JOB TRAIN	291	78	0	1	42
SUPPORT	309	56	0	1	43
ADVICE	306	53	1	1	50
RELIABILITY	312	56	2	1	39
PERFORMANCE AT INTERVIEW	308	43	1	0	60

Table seven. Feedback of External Adviser Coordinators from Health Boards and External Advisers when asked:

“How would you rate the External Adviser Coordinators on the following:”

Average of 90% Positive (combined ‘Excellent’ and ‘Good’ ratings) across all categories:

	EXCELLENT	GOOD	FAIR	POOR	NOT APPLICABLE
COMMUNICATION	606	142	9	0	41
SUPPORT	572	143	7	1	75
AVAILABILITY	581	139	9	1	68
GUIDANCE	540	141	10	2	105