

The Certificate of Eligibility for Specialist Registration (CESR) in Dermatology



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The CESR is already a well-established route for entry onto the Specialist Register for a number of specialities.

A successful application in Dermatology requires the candidate to show equivalence to the current UK curriculum and meet the rigorous criteria specified by the GMC. As it is a complex process requiring the assimilation of evidence alongside meeting the necessary competencies, it can seem a rather daunting task. However, CESR potentially offers more flexibility than the traditional NTN route and it may be considered an alternative career path in Dermatology. Although both the Dermatology NTN and CESR routes to specialist registration have their own challenges, this article explores some of those faced by the latter.

At present, the CESR process involves more administration than the NTN training route as it is not an official training programme regulated by a Deanery or LETB. Although it is administratively heavy, it is necessarily robust to assure the GMC that a baseline level of Dermatology expertise has been attained for anyone on the Specialist Register. This ensures standards throughout the UK are maintained whilst safeguarding patient care. Historically, the majority of applications for CESR in Dermatology were from overseas applicants, Associate Specialists, Staff Grades, Locum Consultants and Specialty Doctors working in Dermatology. The evidence for the application was collected retrospectively with an attempt to map data to the current curriculum. However, in more recent times, there has been a move towards a 'prospective CESR' approach, often from Dermatology Fellows, Speciality or Trust Grade Doctors who gain experience and demonstrate competencies

over a period of at least four years. As the CESR route is not a training programme, it is not regulated in the same way as NTN training and does not mandate an official ARCP. Arguably, the CESR route does confer candidates with greater flexibility in terms of working patterns as well as the potential to stay closer to home.

My own experience of the 'prospective CESR' route has so far been positive. I have been fortunate with my placements and currently work as a Clinical Fellow in a permanent role alongside others. My timetable aims to mirror that of a Dermatology Registrar with an allocated Educational Supervisor, structured teaching, study leave and timetabled educational events. This type of role may also suit someone still considering a career in Dermatology and hoping to gain more clinical experience. It could be ideal for someone who wishes to develop their own personalised training plan, special interests, undertake part-time research, work abroad or work flexibly. A strong motivation and mature organisational skills are fundamental as much of the work is self-directed. The BAD Education Unit recommends that if one is considering the prospective CESR route, this should be with the guidance of an Educational Supervisor or mentor.

As with any CESR application, evidence of the range of clinical work and associated competencies must be submitted to the GMC. This includes Work Place Based Assessments, clinic letters, patient lists, audits, research and presentations to demonstrate equivalent knowledge, skills and experience across the breadth of the Dermatology Curriculum. An E-Portfolio helps with the presentation of evidence. General Medical training equivalent to CMT core competencies also needs to

be demonstrated. The MRCP and SCE qualifications are the most straightforward way to show equivalence to CMT competencies and core dermatology knowledge, respectively. Although they are not currently mandatory, they may become so in the future. A well-presented application to the Dermatology SAC, with primary evidence, mapped to the current curriculum is more likely to be successful.

In summary, there are two routes to gain entry onto the specialist register: CESR and the traditional NTN training route. The BAD welcomes the option of both routes and seeks to encourage and support applicants for either pathway. Over the last two years the BAD Education Unit has been working in conjunction with Dr. Cathy Christie and the CESR work-stream to offer support and guidance to people considering the CESR accreditation process. In addition, the BAD CESR work-stream is aware that applicants as well as their mentors would benefit from an increased level of support and this is the intention for the future. At present, information is available on the BAD website as well as at the CESR workshops, which run two or three times a year. In conclusion, the CESR and CCT journey may be different but the outcome is equivalent i.e. a place on the UK Dermatology Specialist Register.

Thank you to Dr. Cathy Christie, Dr. Ruth Murphy, the BAD Education Unit, current and past colleagues who have provided me with insight into the CESR process.

The next BAD CESR Workshop is scheduled for 5th June and a further one is planned later in 2018. Please email monica@bad.org.uk for further information or if you may be interested in joining a 'prospective CESR Network'.