

Draft specialty guidance on job planning for microbiology

Microbiology has special characteristics that must be taken into account in job planning. These include:

- A high proportion of the clinical work is in the form of telephone requests for advice from other consultants and general practitioners. Therefore it is unpredictable and does not occur in discrete time periods.
- Whilst microbiologists undertake some fixed clinics and ward rounds, the core clinical duties include infection control, policy development, managing the laboratory, introducing new investigations, validating investigations, trouble-shooting etc. Many duties involve reacting to events and do not occur at fixed times.
- There is considerable variability in support staff available to microbiologists (for example, clinical scientists, infection control nurses).

This guidance is intended to facilitate job planning for microbiologists.

The **overall approach** to job planning should conform to the Guidance from the CCSC (*Job Planning for the 2003 Consultant Contract, October 2003*) for other consultant groups.

When agreeing **duties and responsibilities**, the consultant's duties should cover the standard categories set out in the Guidance. However, the expectations, definitions and norms for microbiologists are likely to need adjustment or explanation.

Direct clinical care should include:

- Ward rounds and case conferences
- Out-patient clinics
- Infection control work
- Laboratory diagnostic work, including bench rounds, review and validation of laboratory reports, etc.
- Advising clinical and public health colleagues about clinical matters (individual patients or incidents)
- Preparation or review of protocols; policy development
- Validating and trouble-shooting investigations
- Surveillance activities
- Service development

Supporting professional activities should be as for other specialties: CPD, teaching, training, administration, audit, job planning, appraisal, research, local clinical governance activities.

The proportion of direct clinical care and supporting professional activities should include at least 2.5 P.A. of supporting activities. Extra time for supporting activities may be necessary, for example in cases where the consultant microbiologist is required to assist other clinical departments with audit. Additional NHS responsibilities may also be necessary e.g. to reflect the management duties of Heads of Department.

Reconfiguration of hospital and laboratory services is resulting in increasing amounts of consultant time spent travelling between sites. **Travel time between sites** should be counted in the category of PA that necessitates the travelling. For example the direct care PAs should be allocated for time spent travelling to another site to do diagnostic work.

The job plan should include **on-call work**. Where this follows a regular pattern each week, consultants should identify within the weekly schedule when and where this takes place. Where such work is unpredictable, consultants should assess the average amount of time per week and enter it in a separate row on the time table.

The job plan should also show the **frequency of the on-call rota** and the agreed category. Category A typically requires either an immediate return to site when called or a complex intervention such as telemedicine or a complex telephone consultation. Category B applies where the consultant can typically delay response. For example, if you can take the calls on an answer-phone while you are unavailable for a few hours, and respond on return, then this would be category B.

The following sample job plan may be helpful:

Day	Time	Location	Work	Categorisation	No. of PAs
Monday	9am-1pm	St. Giles	See comments below	Direct care	1.0
	1pm-5pm	St. Giles	See comments below	Direct care	1.0
Tuesday	9am-5pm	St. Anthony's	See comments below	Direct care	2.0
Wednesday	9am-1pm	St. Giles	Postgraduate teaching	Supporting	1.0
	1pm-3pm	St. Giles	See comments below	Direct care	0.5
	3pm-5pm	St. Giles		Supporting	0.5
Thursday	9am-1pm		See comments below	Direct care	1.0
	1pm-5pm			Supporting	1.0
Friday	9am-1pm			Supporting	1.0
	1pm-5pm		See comments below	Direct care	1.0
Saturday/Sunday	Variable, usually morning	St. Giles		Direct care	0.5
Unpredictable emergency on-call work	Variable	St. Giles or St. Anthony's or by telephone		Direct care	0.5
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Comments

Most of the direct clinical care sections in the schedule above do not specify the precise work to be undertaken during these commitments. This is to allow flexibility in the type of work undertaken at these times, according to the exigencies of the service. Some duties may be undertaken at the specified times on a shared rota basis with colleagues.