



My name is Dr Anna Grundy. I am a Foundation Year 1 Doctor currently working in West Wales, looking to apply to Anaesthetics in the next few years. The application for Core Training or Acute Care Common Stem (ACCS) can feel quite overwhelming. From the challenges of securing a training post to the intricacies of the application process, there's a lot to consider. I am writing to share my thoughts on why I want to apply to anaesthetics, the resources I'm using to maximise my chances, and the challenges many of us might face when navigating the competitive and stressful process.

Why Anaesthetics?

I have been drawn to the variety and complexity of anaesthetics since my initial exposure to the specialty in the last few years of medical school. The combination of clinical decision-making, acute care, hands-on procedures and managing critically ill patients, often in high-pressure environments, all appeals to me. It's a specialty that requires a unique set of broad skills, and I'm excited about the prospect of becoming part of such a dynamic team.

During my time at medical school and whilst working as a doctor so far, I have furthered my interest in a career in Anaesthetics significantly. I am yet to have done my Anaesthetics/ITU rotation as an FY1, however, working on a medical rotation and attending MET calls with the team, followed by a surgical rotation and working alongside the team in theatre, has reinforced my impression that Anaesthetics is a well varied, satisfying and rewarding career and one I would love to pursue. I am also yet to meet an anaesthetist that doesn't love their job!

One of the biggest challenges of securing a training post in Anaesthesia is the competitiveness of the application process. From discussions with my peers and feedback gathered through a survey I have carried out of all Foundation doctors in Wales, it is clear that there is a lot of uncertainty around building a competitive portfolio and how the application process works. As for many specialties, there are fewer training posts than there are applicants, with the most recent data showing that there were more than 6 applicants per post for core training in the UK, and the process can feel quite daunting. From the MSRA exam to the interviews, there's a lot of pressure to perform across multiple stages. However, building a strong portfolio is what appears to make most future applicants feel most stressed. The results of my survey showed that every single participant wanted more information about this aspect of the application.

January 2025 – Why I want to be an anaesthetist and navigating the application!

My Tips and Tricks

- I have so far found that it is useful to build relationships and links with anaesthetists (consultants or trainees), to look for opportunities to get involved in quality improvement projects, help with data collection for research projects, teach medical students, as well as engaging with anaesthesia-focused events or careers days, all of which can help demonstrate commitment to the specialty. Many of them are really keen to help and usually find something for you to be involved with!
- Regarding the application process, the MSRA is the first hurdle. It's an important part of the selection process and tests both clinical knowledge and situational judgment. From what I've heard from those who've previously sat the MSRA, it's a tough exam but manageable with good preparation. The Welsh School of Anaesthesia have compiled a comprehensive list of resources that can be used for the MSRA preparation which can be found here:
 - Passmed - <https://www.passmedicine.com/index.php>
 - Pastest - <https://www.pastest.com/>
 - Quesmed - <https://quesmed.com/>
 - Revise MSRA - <https://www.revisemsra.com/home>
 - Medibuddy - <https://medibuddy.co.uk/msra/>
- The score in the MSRA then determines success in securing an interview. There are only a certain number of available interview slots nationally, so gaining the best score in the MSRA is important in moving to the next stage of recruitment. Having had discussions with colleagues that have interviewed in previous years, the process is rigorous but fair, focusing not only on clinical competence but also on assessing your communication skills, ability to work under pressure and make decisions and how you handle challenging clinical scenarios. It seems the best way to prepare for this is to practice as much as possible – working with peers and asking colleagues to set up practice interviews to mimic the real thing. This seems to be people's biggest recommendation prior to interviews.
- Applying for Anaesthetics Core Training or ACCS is a competitive process that can feel overwhelming at times and comes with a degree of stress. The key to maximising success is by being well-prepared, seeking out help and building close links with anaesthetic trainees and consultants in departments you have access to. It really demonstrates commitment if you can aim to get involved in any relevant anaesthesia-based activities within your current place of work. Speak to your local RCoA college tutor in the Health Board you currently work in (all contact details are on the About pages of the School website)

My next post will include details of my experiences whilst working as an F1 in Anaesthetics/ICM.