

Surviving and thriving: Learning from the Covid-19 national derogations to assessment in the UK

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Abstract

Background: The Covid-19 pandemic caused significant disruptions to postgraduate medical education across the world [1]. In the UK, this prompted introduction of a set of national assessment derogations, which were agreed by the General Medical Council (GMC), Statutory Education Bodies (SEBs) and the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges (AoMRC) [2]. These changes related to specialty examinations, Annual Review of Competency Panel (ARCP) processes, and ARCP outcomes. However, it is unclear what impact these changes had across specialties, and across stakeholder groups, and what learning we can gain from the changes [3]. This symposium explores the (ongoing) impact of these changes, drawing on large-scale, national, mixed-methods research carried out in the UK on behalf of the GMC. Further, it will stimulate discussion amongst attendees about their experiences of changes to the assessment framework, to identify wider learning that may support future responses to a force majeure.

Why is the topic important?: Understanding the impact of assessment derogations is crucial for medical educators and policymakers as medical education systems continue to recover from the pandemic. This learning may inform responses to similar exogenous events. The symposium aims to foster collaborative discussions and inspire evidence-based strategies to build resilience and adaptability in medical education systems globally.

Symposium format, including participant engagement methods: The symposium panellists will present an overview of the research findings, including a rapid review of published evidence in this area, secondary analysis of relevant assessment data (e.g., ARCP outcomes, professional exams), and large-scale qualitative data. There will then be a panel discussion, featuring representation from various stakeholder groups and their respective experiences of the assessment derogations. They will share their experiences and learning in relation to different types of assessment derogations, and thoughts regarding ongoing impact and research. Attendees will have the opportunity to participate in the symposium through live polls, an interactive question and answer session with the panel, and through engagement on social media.

Take home messages/outcomes/implications: The symposium will share key take home messages relating to UK assessment derogations and stimulate discussion regarding wider applicability of this learning. This will include discussion regarding the importance of 3C's – compassion, consistency, and communication – in relation to assessment derogations. A discussion regarding gaps in data will be facilitated, including the importance of further work exploring impact on minoritized groups; and the importance of acknowledging the personal impact on trainers supporting assessments during Covid-19. The relevance of the key messages extend beyond the UK and the symposium will offer valuable insights for an international audience who are dealing with similar ongoing challenges in postgraduate medical education. The collaborative discussion will add to our evolving understanding, and ongoing work in this area.

References (maximum three)

- 1: Papapanou M, Routsis E, Tsamakias K, Fotis L, Marinos G, Lidoriki I, Karamanou M, Papaioannou TG, Tsiptsios D, Smyrnis N, Rizos E. Medical education challenges and innovations during COVID-19 pandemic. *Postgraduate medical journal*. 2022 May;98(1159):321-7
- 2: General Medical Council et al. Joint statement on temporary derogations in medical education and training. Updated September 2021. Available online: <https://www.jcst.org/-/media/files/jcst/key-documents/joint-statement-on-temporary-derogations--september-2021.pdf> Last accessed 8/8/23.
- 3: Ahmed AE. The Impact of COVID-19 on Postgraduate Training of Doctors in the United Kingdom: A Narrative Review. *Cureus*. 2022 Dec 31;14(12).