



Practical skills examiner training programme: A novel approach to recruiting assessors

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The solution devised by us was to design a teaching logbook; it will enable educators to design lesson plans, log teaching activities and promote reflection.

The study demonstrates that this programme facilitates valuable and relevant near-peer teaching for medical students, whilst providing opportunities and educational benefits for FY1s. It is a mutually beneficial scheme for all involved, but perhaps most importantly, may provide a platform for junior doctors wishing to pursue a future career in medical education.

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Dear Sir

The GMC mandates that all medical school graduates are “able to perform a range of practical procedures safely and effectively” (GMC 2009). In order to meet this need for training and assessment at Oxford Medical School, we ran a programme to train doctors to become examiners for final year practical skills assessments. Before being invited to examine, participants were mandated to teach a minimum of three practical skills tutorials to sufficient standard and attend an examiner training day, which consisted of interactive demonstrations by the chief examiners who set the marking criteria.

The recruitment, monitoring and organisation of the programme were done through a tutorial booking website (www.TuteMate.com 2013). The website allowed sign-up teaching sessions to be created and advertised to specific doctors and students. Feedback was completed by students on the website after each session occurred. We were able to

customise the feedback questions and collate the resultant data into a spreadsheet at a click of button.

In this way, we were able to easily monitor the quantity and quality of teaching provided, which was essential for ensuring the quality of the examiners recruited. This process would previously have been very difficult and time-consuming with paper-based feedback, where we would have had to be reliant on collecting forms and manually inputting them into a spreadsheet. The use of the website reduced the organisational burden for course organisers and tutors. Results of our questionnaires to the tutors showed that 31 out of 38 found the website an easier way to organise tutorials and 33 of 38 preferred it as a way of generating feedback than existing email and paper based methods.

Fifty doctors ranging from foundation doctors to senior registrars completed the programme, and were subsequently invited to examine in the final year clinical skills exam. The exam consisted of four 10-minute practical skills stations. Each student was marked against a checklist of tasks for each skill. All mark-sheets were subsequently collated and cross-referenced by senior examiners against criteria for passing and failing each station. This involved a weighted score, taking into account the importance of minor and major errors or omissions.

In this way, the examiner training programme increased the provision of teachers and examiners for practical skills assessments whilst safeguarding the quality of assessment for 160 students. Using the tutorial booking website reduced the logistical burden of organizing the programme for administrators and was rated favourably by tutors.

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