

# General Practice – minimising training extensions

**Taking a similar approach to the Schools of General Practice (GP) in East of England and London, the East Midlands School of GP's response to clinical exam changes during the pandemic enabled pass rates to be maintained and minimised the number of COVID-related training extensions.**

## Background

The Clinical Skills Assessment (CSA) is a component of the MRCGP clinical exam, usually taken by trainees in the third year of GP specialty training. In the East Midlands, pass rates in the CSA over the past five years have been largely comparable to the national average. The School has previously undertaken much work around the assessment in practices and in the GP training programme. In addition, it ran CSA sessions at weekends providing space each year for every ST3 trainee to undertake simulated surgery with feedback from examiners and educators.

CSA exam diets in Spring 2020 were cancelled due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and consequently the Recorded Consultation Assessment (RCA) was developed as an alternative assessment of clinical skills. Trainees were therefore required to prepare for the introduction of a different exam format at short notice, whilst they were facing disruption to training experiences.

## Responding to clinical exam changes

For 2020/21, the School adapted its processes to respond to the enforced changes to the clinical exams caused by the pandemic and were proactive in communicating these to trainees and educators. This included:

- disseminating RCGP guidance and providing regular updates to trainees and educators in order to provide further clarity and details about the RCA exam
- developing RCA webinars for trainees and educators. Materials were partly adapted from the School's weekend CSA sessions, and modified to incorporate trainee feedback and changes to RCGP guidance
- developing virtual workshops for small groups, with simulated patients and experienced educators.

In order to develop these interventions, all members of the School's senior GP team attended webinars aimed at supporting MRCGP examiners, who would help deliver RCA teaching.

## Supporting training recovery

Pass rates for 2020 RCA exams in the East Midlands were comparable to their historical CSA results, and were maintained in comparison to other regions. Whilst detailed results for 2021 are not yet available, the School reports that these remain positive, with pass rates for trainees undertaking the latest diet in July 2021 being above the national average.

By supporting trainees and educators with the RCA exam, the School were able to maintain exam pass rates in the region. As a result, the majority of their GP trainees were able to gain their CCT and training extensions were minimised.

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