

3 February 2021

Professional support for implementation of the new surgical curriculum

Dear Colleagues,

From August this year, all surgical training programmes must transition to the new GMC-approved surgical curriculum. The new curriculum represents a major revision of the way training is delivered, moving assessment away from the consolidation of competencies towards the achievement of high-level outcomes. It aims to better support all surgical trainees in understanding what is expected of them in their training programmes, while capitalising on the professional judgement of clinical supervisors.

The curriculum is supported by NHS Employers but if this major change is to succeed, it will need to be professionally supported at all organisational levels. Planned activities, subject to your endorsement, will include specific training sessions for trainers and additional induction time for trainees, amounting to no more than 4 hours per trainer and trainee at the beginning of the academic year.

The JCST is in the process of delivering comprehensive online ‘champion’ training to those in the key roles of Director of Medical Education, Head of School, Training Programme Director, Assigned Educational Supervisor, Clinical Supervisor and Surgical Tutor in order that they can in turn cascade this learning and so prepare the training body for the specific changes that relate to them. If this is successful, trainers and trainees everywhere will know about the changes, understand their responsibilities and be ready to start from day-one.

We are mindful that trainers and trainees are currently working in extremely challenging conditions and that training has not been a priority. The curriculum has, however, already been postponed by a year and there is a growing realisation that training must resume to safeguard standards and ensure patient safety. The flexibility of the new curriculum can aid recovery by helping to distil the learning trainees have gained during the pandemic, allowing their progression, while a smooth roll out will help trainees and trainers re-engage with training, expediting recovery of both services and individual well-being.

The GMC is concerned that outcomes-based curricula are delivered uniformly across the UK and to this end the JCST will be measuring the success of its implementation nationally by collecting qualitative and quantitative data by region. The analysis will help us to gauge how successful each region has been in the implementation of the new curriculum.

We would be very grateful if you could sanction this agenda in your region by recognising those leading change and giving them time to fulfil their role in this development.

Yours sincerely,



Mr Jon Lund
Chair of JCST



Mr Keith G Jones
ISCP Surgical Director



Miss Esther McLarty,
Chair, Confederation of
Postgraduate Schools of Surgery



Professor Rowan Parks
on behalf of the Conference of
Postgraduate Medical Deans (UK)