Agenda item: 7
Report title: Bringing tests of competence and the revalidation assessment in-house
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Action: For update

Executive summary

1. In March 2017, the Performance and Resources Board approved the project to bring in-house the tests of competence and the revalidation assessment processes before the end of the current contract with UCL which is due to expire in 2019.

2. In September 2016, we asked for advice from AAB on whether our proposed governance model was appropriate to ensure continued confidence in these assessments and whether there were any other options we needed to consider. At this time, AAB had no significant concerns about our proposals.

3. This paper provides an update on progress.
Governance model

4. As we proposed last year, we have opted to have a ‘Tests of Competence and Revalidation Assessment Panel’ comprised of associates with the range of knowledge and skills we need to oversee the quality and delivery of these assessments.

5. Following feedback from AAB last year, we reviewed the role profiles for the Chair, and Vice Chair. The final version of these documents is provided at Annex A (pages 3 to 5).

6. Once the Chair and Vice Chair are in post we will seek their guidance and input into the configuration of the panel. It is, however, still intended that panel membership will be representative of the main specialties of doctors who go through the performance assessment process. We already have draft roles and responsibilities for panel members which were reviewed by AAB last year and these are provided at Annex A (pages 6 and 7). We anticipate that recruitment of panel members will be completed before the end of 2017.

7. The process will be supported by a small in-house team who will be responsible for the administrative and support functions currently undertaken by UCL’s Project Manager, Events Administrator and Technical and Systems Manager.

8. We engaged with colleagues in our Continuous Improvement Team to review the existing in-house administrative and operational arrangements for PLAB assessments in light of the requirement to accommodate the same arrangements for tests of competence and the revalidation assessment. This presented the opportunity to create a GMC-wide centre of expertise which can support all of these assessments. The organisational structure for the assessment unit is provided at Annex B. There were a number of reasons for introducing an assessment unit which include that it would:

- Provide an administrative division between test development and the investigations team in the Fitness to Practise Directorate.
- Recognise synergies across assessments, allowing content to be used across test formats.
- Allow for a more sustainable team for the development of assessment content and methodology for PLAB Parts 1 and 2, tests of competence and the revalidation assessment.
- Create a centre of expertise on assessment that can work across the GMC.

9. The operational staff supporting this project will sit in the Assessment Development Team. This team will also assume responsibility for the development of assessments for PLAB Parts 1 and 2 under this model. Plans are underway to map the interactions between the assessment delivery and development teams to ensure there is no double handling and to avoid silo working.
Quality and risk assurance

10 To protect the integrity of the assessment process for tests of competence and the revalidation assessment and to ensure that they can withstand challenge, we will require a programme of quality assurance and audits. We will work with the current UCL team to develop appropriate processes, training and quality measures for the in-house process.

11 We have planned for a phased migration of the work over the remaining period of the UCL contract. The high level plan is provided at Annex C.

- Stage 1: Item writing, pilot and standard setting events.
- Stage 2: Tests of competence.
- Stage 3: Revalidation assessment.

12 The plan includes a period of dual running with UCL which will allow us access to support and advice from the current UCL team when developing and assuring our processes.

13 This project has been identified as a ‘Corporate Project’ and as such has oversight from the Corporate Business Planning Manager who has a project assurance role. This ensures that risks are being managed appropriately throughout the life of the project.

14 UCL use a Speedwell question bank to store data and produce reports; the functionality of this system is highly developed and proven. The UCL version of this software has undergone extensive customisation and interacts with a bespoke database for tests of competence data and analysis. We are currently planning to implement a replica of the UCL system within the GMC. This reduces many of the risks to the project as implementation times are likely to be short, data migration will be more straightforward.

15 There is dedicated project manager resource allocated to this project and there is strong project governance in place. We have up to date project documentation, including a detailed project plan. We have a monthly project board which provides governance, direction and a decision making function. The project team meets regularly between board meetings to progress actions and move the project forward.
Tests of Competence and Revalidation Panel

Statement of Purpose

Purpose

1. To provide expert advice to the GMC on the development and operation of the tests of competence process overseen by the GMC, in order to support the GMC in fulfilling its statutory purpose.

Duties and activities

2. The Panel will, as required:

   a. advise on the design, format and content of the tests of competence process.

   b. advise on standard setting methodologies and their application in the tests of competence process.

   c. advise on the development of Revalidation Assessment knowledge test papers.

   d. in sub-groups appointed by the Chair or Vice Chair review and sign off tests of competence written papers and Revalidation Assessment papers for administration.

   e. advise on the development of methodologies for the statistical analysis of assessments used in the tests of competence process.

   f. advise on the interpretation of statistical analyses of the tests of competence.

   g. review and consider external developments in assessments and published literature and advise on their implications for the GMC.

   h. assist with the development of proposals for research to be commissioned by the GMC on assessment methodology and practice.
i advise on best practice in relation to equality and diversity in the development and conduct of assessments.

j advise on the effective quality assurance of the tests of competence process.

k advise on any other aspect of best practice in assessment.

Membership

3 The Chair and Vice Chair of the Panel are appointed by the GMC.

4 The Panel will consist of individuals appointed for their relevant knowledge, skills and experience.

5 Members will be appointed for an initial four year term, and be subject to review as required.

6 Additional co-opted members may be appointed from time to time to provide expertise on specific issues.

7 The Panel may convene one or more working groups to report to it on specific assessments or specialist areas. These groups may comprise of panel members and/or co-opted members.

Meetings

8 The Tests of Competence and Revalidation Panel will meet six times a year.

Working arrangements

9 The GMC will provide the secretariat for the Panel and organise the agenda and papers for its meetings. GMC staff will attend meetings as required.

10 Discussion will be focused around a mix of papers and presentations. Papers for each meeting will normally be sent electronically to members at least seven days in advance of Panel meetings. Copy papers will be posted to members requiring a hard copy.

11 Meeting papers and minutes will be published on the GMC website.

Reporting and accountability

12 The Panel will provide advice to the GMC, who will take that advice into account in reporting to Council.

13 The secretariat will organise updates and reports from the Panel to the GMC’s Executive Board, which reports to Council through the Chief Executive. The Panel will
report to the Executive Board on an annual basis, or as required when issues necessitate it.

**Tests of Competence and Revalidation Panel Chair**

**Duties**

1. To be available for at least six days each calendar year to chair six Tests of Competence and Revalidation Panel meetings.

2. Any preparation and ad hoc days are in addition to the above time commitment.

3. To manage the Tests of Competence and Revalidation Panel meeting agenda, leading discussions and facilitating panel members in making decisions; ensuring that decisions are reached by consensus and that decisions are robust and defensible.

4. Approve the draft agenda and meeting notes for Tests of Competence and Revalidation Panel meetings.

5. To participate fully in meetings and contribute to policy discussions.

6. To provide constructive feedback on the performance of the other Tests of Competence and Revalidation Panel members and to support the GMC operational lead/Associate Services team in dealing with performance issues of Tests of Competence and Revalidation Panel members and item writers.

7. To support the GMC operational lead when dealing with doctors who challenge their Tests of Competence outcome.

8. Maintain great standing in the field of assessment.

9. To give evidence at Tribunals on the validity/reliability of the process and individual tests.

10. To give advice to the GMC as to whether the test methodology is up to date and fit for purpose.

11. To keep abreast of and inform the GMC of relevant developments in the field of assessment.

12. To be responsible for the integrity of the Tests of Competence as a whole, overseeing every aspect of the assessment to make sure it is up to date and fit for purpose. This includes involvement, as required, with the following processes: item writing, pilot
days, test generation (question selection), standard setting, scoring, results and statistics.

13 To be responsible for the overall quality assurance of the processes listed at (12).

14 To represent the Tests of Competence and Revalidation Panel during external and internal meetings where required.

15 To assist the GMC Operational Team with ad hoc queries.

16 To act as a panel member representing their specialty. A description of the responsibilities of a Tests of Competence and Revalidation Panel member is in Principal responsibilities of the TOC Panel member.

17 To develop a working relationship with the Vice Chair that enhances the Tests of Competence and Revalidation Panel and provides resilience. This will also include sharing Chair responsibilities as necessary.

18 To report on Tests of Competence and Revalidation Panel activities and attend meetings within the appropriate GMC governance structure.

19 Any other duties that may be assigned from time to time.

**Tests of Competence and Revalidation Panel**

**Vice Chair**

**Duties**

20 To be available for at least six days each calendar year to act as Vice Chair at six Tests of Competence and Revalidation Panel meetings.

21 Any preparation and ad hoc days are in addition to the above time commitment.

22 If delegated by the Tests of Competence and Revalidation Panel Chair, to manage the Tests of Competence and Revalidation Panel meeting agenda, leading discussions and facilitating panel members in making decisions; ensuring that decisions are reached by consensus and that decisions are robust and defensible.

23 If delegated by the Tests of Competence and Revalidation Panel Chair, to approve draft agenda and meeting notes.

24 To participate fully in meetings and contribute to policy discussions.
25 To provide constructive feedback on the performance of the other Tests of Competence and Revalidation Panel members and to support the GMC operational lead/Associate Services team in dealing with performance issues of Tests of Competence and Revalidation Panel members and item writers.

26 To support the GMC operational lead when dealing with doctors who appeal their Tests of Competence outcome.

27 Maintain great standing in the field of assessment.

28 To give evidence at Tribunals on the validity/reliability of the process and individual test.

29 To give advice to the GMC as to whether the test methodology is up to date and fit for purpose.

30 To keep abreast of and inform the GMC of relevant developments in the field of assessment.

31 In liaison with the Tests of Competence and Revalidation Panel Chair, to be responsible for the integrity of the Tests of Competence as a whole, overseeing every aspect of the assessment to make sure it is up to date and fit for purpose. This includes involvement, as required, with the following processes: item writing, pilot days, test generation (question selection), standard setting, scoring, results and statistics.

32 To be responsible for the overall quality assurance of the processes listed at (31).

33 To represent the Tests of Competence and Revalidation Panel during external and internal meetings where required.

34 To assist the GMC Operational Team with ad hoc queries.

35 To act as a panel member representing their specialty. A description of the responsibilities of a Tests of Competence and Revalidation Panel member is in Principal responsibilities of the TOC Panel member.

36 To develop a working relationship with the Chair that enhances the Tests of Competence and Revalidation Panel and provides resilience. This will also include sharing Chair responsibilities as necessary.

37 To report on Tests of Competence and Revalidation Panel activities and attend meetings within the appropriate GMC governance structure.

38 Any other duties that may be assigned from time to time.
Tests of Competence and Revalidation Panel Member

Governance responsibilities

39 Recommend changes to the Tests of Competence process.

40 To participate in a review of the process in light of the doctor’s performance statistics, if applicable in our setup.

41 To contribute to discussions on policy issues.

42 To advise on test methodology.

43 Provide assurance that the item bank is up to date and fit for purpose.

Operational responsibilities

44 As one of a team, to participate in the functions of the Tests of Competence and Revalidation Panel. These are:

a Generating and editing new items to maintain the question bank.

b Providing pre-test advice to the GMC operational team and approve question papers compiled by the office.

45 To lead and participate in, as required, standard setting exercises to determine the score for each item in the question paper.

46 To lead and participate, as required, in peer-reviewed item writing and editing workshops, and to lead item writers in this process. This will include the need to be critical of pre-prepared work whilst conveying this in a constructive manner and maintaining a working relationship with the authors. You will be expected to uphold our house-style and format and to maintain standards of consistency.

47 To review and select appropriate items for inclusion in the question papers, constructed by the GMC operational team, providing specialty specific advice where possible.

48 To be on call during the knowledge test.

49 To gather and analyse data to review the validity and reliability of items and examinations.

50 To advise on appropriate stations for inclusion in the OSCE.
To review and approve statistics and outputs from the knowledge tests/OSCEs.

To be involved in the review of serious events to assure the robustness of the process.

**Specific skills and experience**

Applicants will have a thorough knowledge and understanding of the duties and responsibilities of Foundation doctors and trainees and will have regular clinical contact with Foundation doctors and trainees.

The following criteria are desirable for the role of the Tests of Competence and Revalidation Panel member (and will be displayed by the Tests of Competence and Revalidation Panel as a whole):

- Previous experience of item writing (particularly single best answer) in a peer-reviewed setting.
- Previous experience of standard setting medical examinations.
- Previous experience of gathering and analysing data to review the validity and reliability of items and examinations.
- Previous experience of setting computer-marked examinations.
- A knowledge and understanding of the design and implementation of assessment systems.
- Peer-reviewed publications on assessment.
7 - Bringing tests of competence and revalidation assessment in-house

Assessment Unit Structure

Head of Section

Assessment Delivery Team
Operational delivery of PLAB Parts 1 & 2, Revalidation and PLAB examiner pool, Publication of results.

Clinical Assessment Centre Manager

2 x CAC Level 4 roles
4 x CAC Level 5 roles
Level 3 temp

Assessment Development Team
Management of panels, Content and paper development for PLAB 1&2, Revalidation Assessment and ToC
Development of test methodology.

Assessment Development Manager

2 x Assessment Officers (assessment development roles transferred from CAC)

Tests of Competence and Revalidation Assessment Panel

2 x Assessment Officers (New roles created by the project)

Note: roles outlined in red have been created by the project
7- Bringing tests of competence and revalidation assessment in-house

7- Annex C

High Level Timeline and Milestone Plan