

Annual Quality Assurance Summary

This summary provides an overview of how an organisation is meeting our standards for medical education and training as detailed in [Promoting excellence: standards for medical education and training](#) and [Assuring readiness for practice: a framework for the MLA](#). It provides an overview of the QA activities undertaken over the course of a year and an overview of findings including any areas of notable practice or requirements and recommendations we have set. The summary is published.

Organisation	Aston Medical School
Review period	December 2024 – December 2025 (Year 2 of cycle)

Overview of findings

Overall findings statement
<p>From the SAQ submission, and the clarification of some points during the SAQ meeting, we consider that Aston Medical School is meeting the standards set out in the GMC's <i>Promoting excellence: standards for medical education and training</i>.</p> <p>The QA activities that we have carried out in this annual cycle have provided opportunities to observe how Aston Medical School meets our standards in theme 1 (Learning environment and culture) theme 3 (Supporting learners), theme 4 (Supporting educators) and theme 5 (Developing and implementing curricula and assessments) of <i>Promoting excellence</i> and demonstrates continued compliance with <i>Assuring readiness for practice: a framework for the MLA</i> (the 'MLA Framework').</p> <p>We can set recommendations where our standards are not being met, and have identified areas working well or of notable practice. Of note, we have identified three recommendations against theme 4 (Supporting educators) following a clinical educators Q&A session.</p>

Quality Activity undertaken

	Activity	Date	Summary
1	SAQ submission	14 February 2025	<p>The SAQ was submitted on time and covered all five themes of <i>Promoting excellence</i>. The submission included a list of planned Aston Medical School activities that we could observe for quality assurance purposes.</p> <p>We are satisfied that where further information and/or clarification is still required that this can be provided in the next SAQ submission.</p>
2	SAQ feedback meeting	12 March 2025	<p>This meeting was held to provide feedback to Aston Medical School on its 2024/2025 SAQ submission, and to seek clarification and additional information on the submission where required.</p> <p>We also discussed potential QA activities we could undertake in this annual cycle. These activities were selected to improve our understanding of Aston Medical School processes.</p> <p>We did not identify areas of risk during the SAQ meeting.</p> <p>Following this meeting, Aston Medical School was provided with written feedback on the SAQ submission.</p>
3	Activity: In person observation of simulated ward round for small groups of year 2 students designed by clinical teaching fellows (CTFs) employed by the medical school.	20 May 2025	<p>This activity was listed on the SAQ by Aston Medical School against technology enhanced and simulation-based learning opportunities (LEC1-05)</p> <p>Before the observation the school shared; a pre-task introduction for students, an overview of the scenarios including scripts for the patients and staff actors, notes for educators and a marking rubric.</p> <p>The activity involved a pre-meeting with educators who outlined the task before groups of students participated in simulated hospital-based scenarios. These included, patient history taking and examination tasks and was followed by a staff led debrief for participants.</p>

			<p>From our observation, we feel Aston Medical School clearly demonstrates a commitment to providing learners in phase one with opportunities to access simulation-based activities, which includes experience of the clinical and professional skills required for hospital placements in year 3. These activities are well planned to enhance teaching of the 2 curriculum and support students' engagement in their own learning.</p> <p>We were encouraged to see that clear aims and objectives were included in the documentation for educators and shared with student participants. We are confident that activities include constructive and meaningful feedback for students. In addition, we were pleased to see that facilitators considered the wellbeing of students during the activity and the debrief session allowed students to express concerns about upcoming hospital placements.</p>
4	Activity: Virtual Q&A session with clinical educators	26 November 2025	<p>During the four-year declaration cycle, the GMC is required to meet with educators without the presence of the medical school. The information shared by educators helps us triangulate findings from the school's SAQ submission and other quality activities. It provides educators with a forum to share their experiences, provide feedback on a variety of topics and discuss any issues.</p> <p>During the session, we sought feedback on a range of topics related to the programme. Educators were encouraged to participate verbally, and/or via the chat function. A GMC associate was present at this activity. Overall, clinical educators find working with the school positive. Communication to and from the school is effective, particularly regarding capacity, and the school has clear strengths in examination and student support. Attendees spoke very highly of the educator masterclass throughout the session, which is run online by the medical school twice a year. This event was highlighted as an opportunity for training and development, collaboration and assessment discussion.</p> <p>We have identified three areas of focus to help improve the programme which relate to collaborative learning, appraisals and student support. We have set a recommendation in each of these areas, three in total.</p>

			<p>Following the Q&A session, Aston University was provided with written feedback.</p> <p>We will continue to work with the school on all the areas raised through out QA processes.</p>
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Quality Reporting System (QRS)

We use the QRS to monitor concerns raised by organisation when they identify that our standards are not being met in an education and training environment. Concerns are managed locally by the responsible organisation until resolution. We also use the QRS to monitor requirements and recommendations from GMC led QA activity.

Activity	Date	Summary
Quality Reporting System (QRS)	Ongoing	<p>Aston Medical School have seven open items on the QRS.</p> <p>Aston Medical School is engaged with the QRS system and continue to provide frequent and detailed updates. We are assured that our thresholds for reporting via the QRS are embedded and adhered to.</p>

Medical Licensing Assessment (MLA)

We published a compliance report for the MLA applied knowledge test (AKT) in June 2024 and the clinical and professional skills assessment (CPSA) in November 2023: [Medical School - A to L - GMC](#).

We are monitoring our findings from these reports to check on progress at medical schools

Activity	Date	Summary
MLA compliance	Ongoing	<p>Aston Medical School had seven recommendations from the MLA compliance reports, five of which were resolved following updates from the school in the 2024-25 cycle.</p> <p>Aston Medical School has two remaining recommendations which are being monitored through the QRS.</p> <p>We will continue to work with Aston Medical School to ensure MLA compliance is embedded and adhered to.</p>

Medical Licensing Assessment recommendations

We set recommendations where we have found areas for improvement related to our standards. They highlight areas an organisation should address to improve, in line with best practice.

No.	Theme	Recommendation	Date set
1	MLA CPSA R18: Production of results	As the assessment provider becomes familiar with the properties of the CPSA, they should begin developing threshold criteria for moderation of marks and cut score adjustments	19 February 2024
2	MLA CPSA R12: Simulated/real patients	As they recruit more simulated patients to cover multiple sites, the assessment provider should consider how they ensure that they recruit a diverse range of SPs. At the same time, they should give an update on their progress in building up a pool of real patients for use in the CPSA.	19 February 2024

Recommendations

We set recommendations where we have found areas for improvement related to our standards. They highlight areas an organisation should address to improve, in line with best practice.

No.	Theme	Recommendation	Date set
1	Theme 4: Supporting educators (R4.5)	Aston Medical School should provide greater opportunities for collaboration and liaison between educators.	26 November 2025
2	Theme 4: Supporting educators (R4.1)	Aston Medical School should make sure that educators receive appropriate appraisals and opportunities for formal feedback.	26 November 2025
3	Theme 4: Supporting educators (R4.4)	Aston Medical School should supply student support information when needed in a timely fashion.	26 November 2025

Next steps

The GMC's written feedback on the SAQ submitted in February 2025 lists any areas that we require an update on in the next SAQ submission. These include:

Theme 1

We would be interested to learn how the on-site simulation suite has continued to be used and if there are any new developments and lessons to share. (LEC1-05)

We would be interested in hearing about examples where the school has closed the feedback loop for educators. (LEC1-06)

We would be interested to learn about the role of educators and LEPs to quality assure teaching of skills and supervision. (LEC1-13)

Theme 2

We would like to hear about specific examples of improvements that have been made to the clinical learning environments based on the school's QA visits to LEPs. We would also be interested in hearing about any challenges around capacity within the region. It was agreed that information on these points this should be provided in the next SAQ. (EGL1-01)

We would be interested to hear if the school's plans to include students as part of the QA visits to LEPs went ahead and if so, the lessons learnt from this process. (EGL2-03)

We would be interested in hearing more about the anonymous concerns process and how students and educators are made aware of it. In addition, we would be interested to hear how actions taken in response to concerns are shared with educators. (EGL2-09)

We would be interested in hearing about any updates on the curriculum review and how ED&I considerations are included. In addition, we would be interested in hearing how students and educators contribute to the curriculum review. (EGL3-01)

We would be interested to hear about any changes to the student selection process as the school expands, in particular around widening participation. (EGL3-02)

Theme 3

We would be interested in hearing how students are supported after returning to the programme following a break, including through intercalation. (SUL1-03)

We would be interested in hearing about how feedback from a range of clinical professionals and patients and families support student learning. (SUL1-04)

We would be interested in hearing more about examples where feedback from clinical educators influences CPD provided at training days and masterclasses. (SUE1-02)

We would be interested in hearing more about the plan to run in-house programmes and the outcome of the needs analysis. (SUE1-03)

Theme 4

We would be interested in hearing more about any plans within the curriculum review to change students' experience of early contact with patients. (DCA1-01)

We would be interested in hearing more about any areas of opportunities around patient diversity that the school feels it has not yet fully met, including around the pool of simulated patient actors. (DCA1-03)

We would be interested in hearing more about how professionalism is taught throughout the programme. (DCA1-04)

In addition to these updates, we also require updates on areas we highlighted in quality activity feedback forms. These include:

- sign-off for clinical skills procedures
- steps taken to mitigate and address capacity issues
- steps taken to address low student feedback rates
- how EDI is embedded into their curriculum and training, as it was felt to be good but unclear and could be more proactive
- what training and development opportunities are offered to educators
- the outcomes from student feedback and reflections and how this will influence any changes to this activity in the future
- how the school builds on the areas of development and improvement in phase two
- opportunities for multiprofessional simulation scenarios throughout the programme.

We would also like to improve our understanding of the following MLA related areas via QRS updates:

- The assessment provider should confirm the training and briefings received by invigilators, other than the chief invigilator, including in respect of the MS AKT.
- The assessment provider should provide an update on how the scoring worked in the CPSA, as well as any changes they've made to the scoring domains after reviewing the exam.

Organisation's response

The organisation has the right to reply to the AQAS; if they have responded it will be included below.

Organisation's response

Aston Medical School expresses appreciation to the GMC Education team for the quality assurance findings from the December 2024–2025 review cycle. The school is meeting GMC standards for medical education and remains compliant with the Medical Licensing Assessment (MLA) framework. Ongoing quality assurance is demonstrated through the Self-Assessment Questionnaire (SAQ), feedback meetings, simulation-based teaching observations, and engagement with clinical educators, evidencing strong processes across the learning environment, student support, educator support, and curriculum delivery.

The SAQ was comprehensive, submitted on time, and raised no risks. Simulation-based teaching was highlighted as well-structured and engaging, with clear objectives, effective feedback, and attention to student wellbeing. Educators reported positive experiences, strong communication, and valuable training opportunities. The school also actively engages with the Quality Reporting System and has addressed most MLA-related recommendations, with remaining items to be progressed in the next academic cycle.

Three recommendations were made to enhance educator support, focusing on improving collaboration, ensuring regular appraisals and formal feedback, and providing timely student support information. These have been addressed through the 2025 SAQ and ongoing evaluation.

The school acknowledges further areas for development across key themes: learning environment, educational governance, supporting learners, and curriculum. Additional priorities include capacity challenges, embedding equality, diversity and inclusion, educator development, and continued refinement of MLA-related assessment processes.