



Physician Associate National Examination – development group

Terms of reference

Background

The Royal College of Physicians (RCP), within which the Faculty of Physician Associates (FPA) is nested, is responsible for the Physician Associate national certification and recertification examinations (PANE).

The PA National Examinations currently take place in three assessment periods annually. The certification examinations consist of a 200-question single best answer written examination and a 14 station OSCE. The recertification examination is a 200-question single best answer written examination.

The RCP Assessment Unit contributes professional advice regarding the development of assessments and their operational delivery. It coordinates the operational delivery of a range of assessments, including the PA National Examinations, and provides administrative support for examination development groups. It passes PA National Examination outcomes to the FPA for use as part of the management of the Physician Associate Managed Voluntary Register. The Examining Board has the responsibility to ensure that the PA national certification and recertification examinations are conducted appropriately and in line with the approved regulations for these examinations, wider regulatory frameworks (e.g. Equality Act, GDPR) and applicable RCP procedures throughout the lifecycle of the assessment process, including for example:

- Setting and delivery of the examination
- Review of candidate performance and sign-off of results
- Recruitment and management of examiners

The RCP Education Board, which reports to the RCP Board of Trustees, oversees the activities of the RCP Education Directorate, including the Assessment Unit. It delegates some of its assessment-related responsibilities to the Assessment Unit Steering Group¹.

Remit of the development group

The development group will act as an advisory group to the Assessment Unit Steering Group¹, making recommendations in respect of the development of the PA national examination to ensure it remains robust and fit for purpose.

The work of the development group will be informed by, for example:

- reports from the Examining Board
- the professional advice of the Assessment Unit and, as appropriate, external assessment experts
- guidance from regulators, professional bodies, government, NHS, etc.

¹ Not yet established. Education Board will oversee the activities of the Development Groups in the meantime.

The development group will scrutinise the examinations, as appropriate, to ensure that the certification examination remains a fit for purpose national assessment for newly graduated Physician Associates and that the recertification examination remains a fit for purpose revalidation tool for existing Physician Associates.

This will include, but is not limited to:

- review of assessment methodology
- review of examination regulations and associated processes
- consideration of proposed changes to the delivery of any components of the examination
- horizon scanning for barriers and opportunities in the Physician Associate landscape

Membership

- Independent/lay facilitator chair
- Faculty of Physician Associates representative
- RCP Assessment Unit Chief Examiner
- PANE Senior Examiner
- PANE Lead Written Examiner
- PANE Lead Clinical Examiner
- Patient/carer representative
- Physician Associate x2
- PA Schools' Council representative
- RCP Head of Assessment Unit
- RCP Senior Exams Coordinator (Statistics, data analysis and technology-enhanced assessment)
- External assessment advisors x2

Members of the development group may nominate an alternative individual to act as their representative if they are unable to attend a meeting.

The chair may wish to invite individuals not listed above to attend meetings as observers and to provide guidance as appropriate (for example external psychometricians or individuals from the RCP's marketing, finance or education departments).

Members whose participation in the development group is *ex officio* (e.g. senior and lead examiners) or linked to associated roles (e.g. member of the PA Schools' Council) will automatically demit upon ceasing the associated role. All other members of the development group will be appointed for a two-year tenure, with the potential for extension as appropriate.

Governance

The development group will act in an advisory capacity. It will make its recommendations to the Assessment Unit Steering Group², which in turn reports to the RCP Education Board.

Frequency of meetings

Biannually, or as required

Quorum

Not required as this is an advisory group

² See note 1