

## COVID-19 pandemic and assessment

The AMC report *Changes in assessment in specialist medical programs – opportunities for system improvements*, discusses the opportunities the COVID-19 pandemic provided to longstanding assessment practices including, new thinking, agility, and resilience of individuals and organisations.

Some opportunities arising from COVID-19 were innovative, some were challenging at the scale required, and some were constrained by technology issues.



### Moving some assessment from examination to workplace

It was recognised that WBA could replace aspects of clinical practice usually assessed in barrier examinations. Particularly for clinical skills assessment and diagnostic technical skills. Direct observation in the workplace was employed in formalised assessments to determine competence in place of assessment as part of barrier examinations.



### Distributed administration of clinical assessments

Restrictions to domestic travel resulted in many education providers implementing distributed, regional clinical examination events and/or written examination administration at regional hubs. These solutions allowed learners the opportunity to progress.



### Use of online assessment technology

Many education providers responded with rapid development of on-line delivery of assessments. For some providers this was an acceleration of planned developments, however for others this was completely new. The success of moving to online assessment was mixed and technology failure significantly impacted some examinations.

The lessons which have emerged from the experience of undertaking assessment in medical training during the pandemic are relevant to the ongoing development of assessments.

***The importance of clear, frequent, consistent and targeted communication cannot be underestimated.***

Risks are inherent in the current reliance on high stakes barrier examinations to determine trainee progression, and education providers will need to pay greater attention to considering these risks and the mitigation of them in the future.

Mitigation may well include moving away from reliance on large barrier assessments towards programs of assessment. Additionally, there has been demonstrated allowance for greater flexibility of assessment milestones. There were examples of education providers adjusting sequencing and/or timing of assessments 'out of step' with normal progression resulting in a flexible approach in the pandemic circumstances without a reduction in overall training standards. Reliance on technology is also inherently risky and contingencies for technological failure are important implementation considerations.

***More positively, education providers have the capacity to adapt rapidly to changed circumstances and creatively address challenges in assessment, which may lead to ongoing development rather than reversion to previous assessment practices.***

**The changes in assessment in specialist medical programs – opportunities for system improvements report can be found on the AMC Assessment Website**