Educational Quality Post Grading Guidance – incorporating Confirm and Challenge Meetings

Wessex Deanery

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Policy Statement

This paper outlines the Health Education Wessex approach to:

- the allocation of educational quality grades to postgraduate posts (to the level of same training programme, in a trust)
- an annual ‘Confirm and Challenge’ meeting for each School, where educational quality post grades are discussed and confirmed
- how issues link to educational quality post grades
- how educational quality post grades are reviewed
- the role of the key stakeholders in this process

The educational quality grading of posts is intended to help co-ordinate support for education across the whole Wessex area from local, to Trust, to regional level. It gives an overview of the quality of training taking place within each Trust and School and should be used to help local educators when requesting resources and to highlight and disseminate good practice.

Educational quality post grading produces a clear visual summary of areas of concern or good practice relating to postgraduate medical training, and minimises the need to focus on detail at regional level. It provides a common language and immediate overview of postgraduate medical education within Wessex and facilitates appropriate focus and escalation on areas of concern as well as highlighting examples of good practice for dissemination both of which will be reported to the regulator, the General Medical Council (GMC), as required.

Scope of Policy

This policy links with the following GMC standards and domains, outlined in The Trainee Doctor (2011):

Generic Standards for Training - Domain 2: Quality Management, Review and Evaluation

- Training must be quality managed, monitored, reviewed, evaluated and improved. Postgraduate deaneries, working with others as appropriate, must have processes for local quality management, and for quality control through LEPs. This must include all postgraduate posts, programmes and trainers and ensure that the requirements of the GMC’s standards are met.

Standards for Deaneries – Standard 3

- The postgraduate deanery must have structures and processes that enable the GMC standards to be demonstrated for all foundation and specialty training, and for the trainees, within the sphere of their responsibility.
Quality Post Grading

Annually all training posts will be graded (to the level of the same training programme, same trust). Most posts will be graded as satisfactory (A - Green). The focus of decision for the minority will be whether some posts have issues which are affecting the education of all trainees (B - Yellow, C - Orange), have major concerns (D - Red) or are actually commended as excellent (A* - Purple). All posts will have some issues but it is how these are dealt with that is important. All D, C and A* posts will be reported to the GMC as part of existing reporting requirements.

A draft educational quality grading will be proposed for each post, determined by the number and type of issues that may be pertaining to that post. This calculation is informed by information taken from multiple sources including annual Trust and School reports, the GMC survey, and visit. Schools and Trusts are also given the opportunity to propose a draft grade.

The proposed grade will then be discussed and either agreed or amended at a ‘Confirm and Challenge’ meeting between the Wessex postgraduate Quality team and Head of School (HoS). D and C graded posts will be reviewed by Wessex Quality Management Board throughout the year to ensure progress is being made and posts can be re-graded appropriately.

The basis for the draft educational quality post grades (compiled from the Wessex evidence base) can be summarised as:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Post Grade</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Formal Post Review date</th>
<th>Reported to GMC?</th>
<th>Issues</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A * Purple</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>Annual</td>
<td>Yes – as good practice</td>
<td>All issues are dealt with as they arise AND positive evidence of notable practice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Green</td>
<td>Satisfactory Approved</td>
<td>Annual</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Clear action plan for all issues and no risk to the long term education of all trainees.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B Yellow</td>
<td>Concerns</td>
<td>Annual</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Issues being addressed, but these may affect the education of the all trainees. The impact of difficult to resolve or long term issues have been minimised</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C Orange</td>
<td>Significant Concerns</td>
<td>Six months</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Significant issue(s) being addressed, but which are likely to severely affect the</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Table 1.0 – Post grade definitions**

| D Red | Major Concerns | Three months | Yes | Significant issue(s) not being addressed and affecting the education of all trainees. Post approval will be withdrawn if not addressed within an agreed period |

**‘Confirm and Challenge’ Meetings**

A ‘Confirm and Challenge’ meeting will be held annually with each postgraduate School. These meetings will take place in the autumn so that confirm educational quality post grades be appropriately reported to the GMC in a timely manner.

Standard agenda items for Confirm and Challenge meetings will include:

- Discussion regarding the School’s quality management processes and annual School report
- Discussion regarding the national GMC survey results
- Presentation of the proposed draft educational quality post grades by the Deanery
- Discussion and confirmation of all grades.

The Associate Dean for Quality or their representative will chair the meeting supported by the Quality and Workforce Manager and other colleagues, (including lay input), as required. The HoS should also attend the meeting, supported by their Programme Manager and other colleagues as required/desired. Trust Directors of Medical Education (DME) should be invited to attend by the HoS for posts where further discussion is required or there is potential disagreement over C or D graded posts.

The outcome of the meeting will be agreed educational quality grades for all the posts in that School. Action plans will be agreed for all C/D grades to ensure effective action and monitoring, alongside any other issues that require actions following the meeting.

A summary of all post grades will be presented to the Postgraduate Dean and Quality Management Board. Each Trust and School will receive a summary report for all grades outlining clear timescales for action and updates for review.
Issue Levels

A training post may be affected by more than one issue, but only the serious and significant issues for each post require review by Trust, Programme or Health Education Wessex, irrespective of the grading allocated to a post. Less significant issues should be monitored locally. The level of an issue is an indication of its seriousness and impact on education.

Various sources of information may highlight an issue with a training post. These can include visit reports, GMC survey data, annual reports from both Trusts and Schools and direct feedback from trainees or trainers.

Each quality issue that is identified will be allocated a level of severity based on the affect on the training experience and patient care. This exercise will be undertaken annually by the Quality and Workforce Manger to determine the proposed educational quality post grades in preparation for the Wessex Confirm and Challenge meetings. The calculation for post grades can be found in Appendix 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue level</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Tracking progress</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level 1</td>
<td>Least Serious – The education is below the standard expected but issues are unlikely to affect the education of all trainees long term</td>
<td>Department will address and subsequently report on annually. Wessex to track via annual report from Trust and Schools.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 2</td>
<td>Moderately Serious – The education of the trainee is at risk. These issues may affect the education of all trainees long term</td>
<td>Department will address and subsequently report on annually. Wessex to track via annual report from Trust and Schools.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 3</td>
<td>Major Concern – The wellbeing of the trainee or patients is at risk. These are “significant issues” likely to affect the education of all trainees. Sufficient to lead to the withdrawal of posts if not resolved</td>
<td>Department will address and subsequently report on annually. Wessex to track via annual report from Trust and Schools.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1.1 – Issue Levels. For Deanery use to ensure universal application of grading allocation
Examples of the issues that are likely to occur can be found in Appendix 2 together with a suggested level (level 1, 2 or 3). This is used by the quality team to ensure the consistent application of the gradings process.

Any issue which highlights a potential patient safety concern should be raised immediately with the relevant Trust Medical Director by the originator of the issue.

### Resolving Issues

All issues will be reviewed by Schools and Trusts as part of the annual reporting process or more frequently if required. All issues require an action plan, a resolution date and a review of progress.

The timeframe for producing an action plan on all issues should be *four weeks from the point at which the issue was raised*. The issue may be raised in a number of ways including; in writing as part of a visit report or as an identified outlier on the Trainee Survey results (below outlier). All action plans must state who is dealing with the issue, what they will do and when it will be completed. *(IAR.**www** Issue Action Review: who, what, when).*

The timeframe for resolution or resolution date is determined by the issue originator.

The review of an issue may be a re-visit, a written report, an informal meeting or telephone conversation or other form of review, to be determined by the originator. The purpose is to ensure that the issue(s) are resolved so that the originator can advise the Quality Management Board who can then re-grade the post appropriately.

Issues that are no longer regarded as a ‘live’ by the Trust or School they relate to can be classed as resolved if evidence to support this is provided either via a written update or presented at a Confirm and Challenge meeting. To ensure an appropriate audit trail these records will still be held within the Wessex quality team evidence base but be classed as ‘resolved’, not requiring future status updates.

Insoluble Issues – it is recognised that some issues are out of the direct control of a department or Trust or may be “insoluble”. These issues should be logged and an action plan formed to ameliorate the impact however it is acknowledged that a full resolution may not be possible.

### Post Grade Reviews

All D graded posts will be reviewed by the Wessex Quality Management Board after three months, and all C graded posts at six month intervals (or at the nearest Quality Management Board). Schools and Trusts will be requested to provide an update prior
to this meeting on the issues and actions taken so that the Board can make an informed decision on the next steps required and if the post can be regraded.

Visits that take place to review the quality of training may also put forward recommendations of a post grade amendment. Where these recommend a movement to or from C/D, these will be reviewed by the Quality Management Board to decide on the next steps required and whether re-grading is appropriate.

For A*/A/B graded posts, unless specific evidence is presented (for example via a visit report) that the post grade should be downgraded to a C/D, these grades will be reviewed annually at the School Confirm and Challenge meetings.

Disputes/appeals

Educational quality post grades should not normally present difficulty given the protocols in this document and the opportunity for discussion at the Confirm and Challenge meeting. However, if agreement cannot be reached, an appeal to a representative subgroup of the Wessex Quality Management Board can be made. The Quality and Workforce Manager should be contacted in this instance.

Roles and Responsibilities

Issue Originator

This is the person originally raising the issue or the source of the data. It may be a DME, HoS, Training Programme Director (TPD), Departmental Lead for Education, trainee, via the GMC or other surveys or some other source.

The issue originator (or in the case of issues identified via a trainee or the survey, the Deanery Quality and Workforce Manager) is the named person who will receive the action plan. They will usually be a DME or TPD or HoS or Quality and Workforce Manager.

Departmental Lead for Education

Each Trust should identify departmental leads for education (DLE’s). DLE’s should focus on, and have a plan, to resolve all issues identified within their department as soon as possible after the issue is identified. The DLE should pass this information to their Trust DME for their annual report to the on postgraduate medical education or more frequently if indicated in the action plan.

Directors of Medical Education

DME’s/Clinical Tutors should maintain an overview of the posts they are responsible for and will report on the issues within their Trust in their annual report on postgraduate
medical education for Wessex. As part of this annual return all Trusts are also requested to provide information on educational quality post gradings they feel are appropriate. DME’s may be asked by the HoS to attend such meetings if required. DME updates on posts being reviewed by the Quality Management Board may be requested throughout the year.

**Heads of Schools**

HoS should maintain an overview the posts they are responsible for on an annual basis. They will report on the issues within their School in their annual report for the quality team and Dean. As part of this annual return all Schools are also requested to provide post gradings they feel are appropriate to feed into the provisional gradings exercise prior to the Confirm and Challenge meetings. HoS should ensure robust quality management processes are in place in their School. They will represent the School at the Confirm and Challenge meeting, agreeing final post grades or presenting robust evidence to challenge a proposed grade. HoS are also responsible for inviting DME’s and TPD’s to their Confirm and Challenge meeting. HoS updates on posts being reviewed by the Quality Management Board may be requested throughout the year.

**Training Programme Directors**

TPD’s should maintain an overview the posts they are responsible. They will report on the issues within their programme to their HoS to feed into the annual School report or more frequently if indicated in the action plan. HoS may also invite TPD’s to their annual Confirm and Challenge meeting.

**Deanery Staff**

Deanery staff are involved in the quality management of education and training. The **Quality team** ensures each issue is being monitored through to resolution on behalf of all the educators and leads involved; is responsible for the educational quality grading process including triangulating and analysing all quality intelligence held and determining a provisional grading for all training posts; and ensures all grades are reviewed at appropriate times in line with the Wessex quality monitoring cycle and that a ‘live’ grading tracker is developed and maintained to directly inform the Quality Management Board.

The Quality team reviews the GMC national survey and provides analysis and reports of the published survey results, producing summary reports and accompanying guidance to key stakeholders and identifying and reporting any trends to the GMC via the Deanery reporting cycle. Trusts and Schools provide an update on below outliers identified; confirming to the Quality team those which are considered to be issues and so should be recorded and tracked through to resolution.
The Quality team is responsible for the Deanery Confirm and Challenge meetings cycle with each School, determining provisional grading for all training posts, presenting and finalising these with each Head of School on an annual basis. These meetings are chaired by the Associate Dean for Quality. They also ensure appropriate communication of all grades to Trust Medical Directors and education leads and follow up on any action points.

The Quality team is responsible for managing any appeals to post grades and setting up the sub group of the Quality Management Board to review these.

The Associate Dean for Quality chairs the Quality Management Board and takes an overview on quality management for the Deanery.

The Programme Managers work closely with the HoS and the Quality and Workforce Manager to support the completion of annual School reports, the Confirm and Challenge Meeting and requested updates for the Quality Management Board.

**The Quality Management Board**

The Board meets on a quarterly basis and reviews those educational quality post grades that have serious and significant issues and the subsequent actions taken to resolve these. Where it is deemed that insufficient progress is being made the Board will make recommendations to the Postgraduate Dean on the next steps to be taken.

The Board will receive and review applications for triggered visit requests.

**Guidance Review**

This policy was originally on September 2011 and revised in September 2012 and August 2013. The policy will be reviewed on an annual basis.

**Further Reading**

*Quality Management Board Terms of Reference (Wessex Deanery June 2012)*  
*Confirm and Challenge Meetings – A Guidance Document (Wessex Deanery September 2013)*  
*The Trainee Doctor (GMC, 2011)*
## Issue Levels – for Deanery use when provisionally grading posts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level 1</th>
<th>Level 2</th>
<th>Level 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Minor – The education is below the standard expected but issues are unlikely to affect the education of all trainees long term.</td>
<td>Moderate – The education of the trainees is at risk. These issues may affect the education of all trainees long term.</td>
<td>Major concern – The wellbeing of the trainee or patients is at risk. These are ‘significant issues’ likely to affect the education of all trainees. May lead to the withdrawal of posts if not resolved.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Provisional Grading Calculation

**Post Grade**

1. **A** (Purple) 
   - **Definition**: Excellent 
   - **Review**: Annually at Confirm and Challenge meeting 
   - **Issues**: All issues dealt with as they arise AND positive evidence of notable practice. 
   - **Calculation**: Posts meets all training standards, reviews its own practice and resolves issues as they arise AND demonstrates positive evidence of notable practice.

2. **A** (Green) 
   - **Definition**: Satisfactory 
   - **Review**: Annually at Confirm and Challenge meeting 
   - **Issues**: Clear action plan for all issues and no risk to the long term education of all trainees. 
   - **Calculation**: May have up to three Level 1 (Minor) issues which are being actively addressed (evidenced by a robust action plan).

3. **B** (Yellow) 
   - **Definition**: Concerns 
   - **Review**: Annually at Confirm and Challenge meeting 
   - **Issues**: Issues being addressed, but these may affect the education of the majority of trainees. The impact of difficult to resolve issues have been minimised. 
   - **Calculation**: May have a single Level 2 (Moderate) issue AND/OR up to five Level 1 (Minor) issues.

4. **C** (Orange) 
   - **Definition**: Significant Concerns 
   - **Review**: Six months (or nearest meeting) by Quality Management Board 
   - **Issues**: Significant issue(s) being addressed, but which are likely to affect the education of all trainees. 
   - **Calculation**: Either up to five Level 2 (Moderate issues) AND/OR more than five Level 1 (Minor) issues AND/OR one Level 3 (Major concern) issue.

5. **D** (Red) 
   - **Definition**: Major Concerns 
   - **Review**: Three months (or nearest meeting) by Quality Management Board 
   - **Issues**: Significant issue(s) not being addressed and affecting the education of all trainees. Training will be withdrawn if not addressed within an agreed period. 
   - **Calculation**: EITHER a mixture of the above with no action plan or evidence of attempt to resolve OR more than five Level 2 (Moderate) issues (with or without an action plan) OR two or more Level 3 (Major concern) issues (with or without an action plan).
Appendix 2 – Issue Level Categories

These are used by the Wessex Quality team to ensure consistent application of the provisional gradings process on an annual basis.

**Level 3 Major Concern Issues**

Issues in this category are of sufficient concern which may lead to the withdrawal of posts.

*The wellbeing of the trainee or patients is at risk.* These are significant issues likely to affect the education of all trainees.

**Examples**

- No educational supervisor
- Absence of clinical or educational supervision
- Overwhelming workload, working hours or work intensity
- High risk of clinical errors
- Clear evidence of bullying, harassment or discrimination
- Absence of handover, leading to risk to patients
- Trainee(s) taking consent beyond their experience
- Large parts of the curriculum not being delivered
- No access to occupational health or counselling services
- Continued non compliance with the European Working Time Regulations

**Level 2 Moderate Issues**

*The education of the trainee is at risk.* Issues may affect the education of all trainees long term

**Examples**

- Absence of induction
- Absence of appraisal
- Ongoing Inadequate supervision
- Absence of teaching
- Absence of study leave
- Work intensity or workload significantly affects education
- Poor RITA/ARCP outcomes for majority of trainees
- Several aspects of curriculum not being met
- No access to weekly hour of education
- Trainees not released for educational events
- Consistently poor handover
- Inadequate learning opportunities
- No access to career advice
- No opportunity for clinical audit
- Educational supervisor not qualified for role
- Deficiency in consent training
- Difficulty in maintaining compliance with European Working Time Regulations
- Indications or reports of bullying/harassment or discrimination that require further investigation
- GMC survey below outliers evident in three or more concurrent surveys
- Delayed or incomplete transfer of information from medical school (Foundation training only)

**Level 1 Minor Issues**

Education is below the standard expected, but issues are unlikely to affect the education of all trainees long term

**Examples**

Not reaching the expected standard for:
- Learning resources including access to library facilities, information resources, internet, clinical skills facilities, wet labs, meeting rooms or AV equipment required
- Learning opportunities and curriculum coverage
- Induction
- Appraisal
- Teaching
- Supervision – educational or clinical
- Attendance at weekly hour of education
- Release to attend educational events
- Difficulty in obtaining study leave
- Lack of simulation opportunities
- GMC Survey Outliers
We are the Local Education and Training Board for Wessex