**#3EE09 (136157)**

**Attaining Competence and Developing Capability in a new UK Postgraduate Physician Associate Programme – The Evolutionary Challenges and Solutions.**

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**Background**: Physician Associates (PAs) are established in the USA and Australia. UK population growth places unprecedented demands on the healthcare system. The appetite to train PAs comes from a shortage of some medical specialties. The regional commissioner invited this University to develop/deliver a 2-year Postgraduate Diploma (PGD) expeditiously, using a medical education model.

**Summary of Work:** Deconstruction of the Faculty of PA’s (FPA) non-modularised core documents was undertaken by a multi-professional expert group. Programme design was complicated since ‘students’ were full-time employees of the healthcare system; consequently compliance with employment law was integrated into curriculum design.

**Summary of Results:** Analysis identified 3 principal themes, subsequently embedded. An integrated, modular clinical curriculum compliant with legal, QAA and FPA requirements was constructed, using a spiral, systems-based approach with emphasis on the ‘learning community’ (Lave and Wenger 1991). The PGD met the complex requirements of many external influences, whilst retaining academic rigour.

**Discussion**: The PAs sit a national exam (NE), OSCE/MCQ, before employment; both criticised. We developed a domain-based assessment (DBA). Standard MCex was reconstructed, 34 domains; satisfactory achievement mandatory in each. Competence is first post. An academic obligation exists to build capability through scaffolding, experiential learning and critical reflection, to prepare PAs for their challenge. Evidence is captured in a dynamic e-portfolio.

**Conclusion**: Modularised curricula can be established mapped to non-modular professional frameworks. University curricula must ensure students are adequately prepared for the NE. NE currently does not include work-based assessment and as such assessment of competence is only addressed through the University e-portfolio Completion of defined core competencies provides some reassurance that exiting P.A.s have attained an acceptable level for their first post. However, engendering additional skills which will allow them to further develop their capability to operate safely and effectively in a multi-disciplinary health care team is essential.Beyond competence is capacity and capability. Modularised curricula, although challenging, can be designed to map to complex, non-modular professional frameworks, further complicated by external

**Take Home Messages:** Competence is first post. Beyond competence is capability