

University of Bristol

MBChB Programme Policies and Procedures

PROTOCOL FOR PEER CLINICAL EXAMINATION

Policy and guidelines for Peer clinical examination for undergraduate teaching purposes.

1. The University of Bristol and Bristol Medical School are committed to providing a caring and inclusive environment. We are a diverse and welcoming community, respectful in our interactions with others and with our environment.
2. As a newly qualified doctor you will be expected to perform a confident, competent physical examination.
3. As a student of Bristol Medical School you are expected to comply with University, General Medical Council and other national guidelines regarding conduct.
4. Mandatory Guidance
 - a. Before beginning any peer clinical examination, medical students must read the General Medical Council (GMC) Guidance on Good Medical Practice which can be found [here](#)
 - b. Students must also read the GMC guidance which explains how medical students should apply the principles of Good Medical Practice, which can be found [here](#)
 - c. When practicing clinical examination skills on each other you should be guided by the GMC principles at all times. You must treat your colleagues fairly, with dignity and respect. You should be honest, act with integrity and work within your level of competency. You should be willing to provide and receive feedback if you participate in peer clinical skills practice.
 - d. Students must not examine breast, inguinal, genital or rectal areas and should not undertake any invasive examinations. This applies to all genders.
 - e. Students must only practice peer clinical examination independently once the examination has been properly demonstrated and practiced in a supervised simulated setting.
 - f. The examining student does not hold any clinical responsibilities if a potentially abnormal finding is identified. The student simulated patient (the student being examined) is responsible for seeking formal clinical assessment through their own GP.

5. Why Peer clinical examination?

- a. Peer clinical examination is an educational method used in many medical schools in the UK and abroad to improve clinical skills training. The benefits of Peer clinical examination are supported by the medical education literature.
- b. Peer clinical examination:
 - i. helps you appreciate the patient perspective as a student simulated patient: what it feels like to be examined, the importance of consent and clear communication throughout, and the value of maintaining dignity and autonomy.
 - ii. enables you to receive feedback on your physical examination skills, and allows you to practice the same examination multiple times.
 - iii. allows you to develop confidence and skill in a safe environment
 - iv. fosters a culture of respect and understanding of professional behaviours including obtaining consent.
 - v. enables you to appreciate the variety of normal physical examination

6. Principles of Students as simulated patients in peer clinical examination

- a. Student participation in peer clinical examination (as a student simulated patient) must be voluntary. Students' individual cultural and social circumstances must be respected and supported at all times.
- b. Students must not be subjected to pressure from peers or tutors to participate as a student simulated patient.
- c. Students do not have to provide a reason for their unwillingness or inability to participate in a particular examination as a student simulated patient.
- d. Students should not be penalized for any unwillingness or inability to participate as student simulated patients.
- e. Students can withdraw their consent and participation as a student simulated patient at any time.
- f. Students should be able to select peer practice partners where possible.
- g. Adjustments should be made to ensure student simulated patients are provided with privacy (for example screens / exposure of body parts for shortest duration possible / keep clothing on for practice purposes.) This should include culturally competent examination practices, informed by the student simulated patient
- h. Students should demonstrate respect for peers at all times.

7. When will I be involved in peer clinical examination?

- a. In year 1 and 2 this may take place in your Effective Consulting labs, clinical contact in primary and secondary care, and during specific clinical and practical skills teaching sessions.
- b. In years 3-5 peer clinical examination will depend on the Academy at which you are based.
- c. You may use peer clinical examination for self-directed learning as long as the principles of this policy are adhered to. Please practice examination under supervision before undertaking self-directed learning.

8. Consent to participate in peer clinical examination

- a. In teaching sessions:
 - i. Tutors should be present in the class and available for support and discussion during peer practice.
 - ii. Tutors should explain and demonstrate the examination, including:
 - 1. The requirement to maintain confidentiality
 - 2. The importance of respectful working
 - 3. How to respond to abnormal clinical findings (see below)
 - iii. Tutors should take steps to ensure that students are supported to practice in an environment where **all** students feel safe. Adjustments should be made / advised where appropriate to accommodate for different bodies and cultural requirements. Alternative learning activities offered or signposted.
 - iv. Requests for volunteer student simulated patients (for demonstration purposes) should be directed to the whole group not to individual students.
 - v. Students should be able to select peer practice partners where possible.
 - vi. Examining students should explain to the student simulated patient the purpose and process of the peer clinical examination they would like to undertake.
 - vii. Examining students should maintain the privacy, dignity and confidentiality of their student simulated patient peers at all times (both during and after the session).
 - viii. Examining students must explicitly ask if the student simulated patient consents to be examined.
 - ix. Examining students must ask if the student simulated patient consents to being told any abnormal findings (see below). If the answer is no, students should not proceed. Consent can be withdrawn at any time during the examination.

- b. In self-directed learning:
 - i. Examining students should only practice examination skills which have previously been demonstrated and practiced under supervision
 - ii. Examining students should explain to the student simulated patient the purpose and process of the peer clinical examination they would like to undertake.
 - iii. Examining students should maintain the privacy, dignity and confidentiality of their student simulated patient peers at all times (both during and after the session).
 - iv. Examining students must explicitly ask if the student simulated patient consents to be examined.
 - v. Examining students must ask if the student simulated patient consents to being told any abnormal findings (see below). If the answer is no, examining students should not proceed. Consent can be withdrawn at any time during the examination.
 - i. Any self-directed learning outside of the university or clinical spaces (such as at home with friends) must follow the same principles of Good Medical Practice and adhere to the guidance within this document.

9. What should I do if I am concerned during peer clinical examination?

a. Identification of unexpected abnormal clinical findings

When practising on a peer, students are essentially screening healthy, volunteer, individuals for the presence or absence of an abnormality. There is a small but real chance that students could pick up something pathological e.g. a previously unrecognised heart murmur or a lump. It may be in the student simulated patient's interest to know this. However, examining students could create a false sense of anxiety by thinking there is something wrong when there isn't (a false positive test result). Conversely, some students will know they have an underlying finding that lies outside of the "typical". There is no expectation to share medical information with your peers but it may reassure the examining student if you feel able to do so.

- i. Firstly, before examining anyone, students should ask if the student simulated patient would like to be told if the examining student finds anything wrong. If the student simulated patient says no, then students should not examine them (this may be system specific). In this way, students examining will not have the emotional burden of wondering if there is something wrong with their peer and not being able to tell them.

- ii. If the student simulated patient says yes (they are happy to be told if a clinical finding is identified), students may proceed with examination if the student simulated patient has consented to the purpose and process of examination.
 - iii. If students identify an unexpected clinical finding they should describe the finding to the student simulated patient. They should not attempt any clinical reasoning or diagnosis.
 - iv. If students are undertaking peer clinical examination practice in a facilitated session they may ask their clinical facilitator to confirm the finding. However, the clinical facilitator is working in the capacity of educator NOT clinician and should not take clinical responsibility, they should not make a clinical diagnosis or provide clinical management beyond that required in an emergency.
 - v. The student in whom the finding was identified should be advised to go to their own GP to have it checked out in case this is something that needs further investigation.
 - vi. No data should be held about clinical findings in student simulated patients, either by the peer practice student, or the clinical facilitator.
 - vii. Confidentiality must be maintained if a potential abnormal clinical finding is identified: This includes not sharing with other peers in the group. You must only tell the student simulated patient and (if present) the clinical facilitator if you are seeking confirmation.
- b. Concern about professional behaviour during peer clinical examination
- i. Students are expected to abide by university and GMC regulations at all times. Peer clinical examination practice should be conducted in a professional manner.
 - ii. If you have concerns about the professional behaviour of your peers you can speak to any of the following to raise the issues and discuss them further:
 - 1. Clinical Skills teaching facilitators
 - 2. Clinical Teaching Fellows
 - 3. Academic Year leads
 - 4. Speak up guardians
 - 5. Senior tutors
 - 6. Professional mentor
 - iii. You may also want to consider using the links below:
 - a. Report and Support Tool
 - b. Fitness to Practice Referral

If you are unwilling/unable to participate in any form of peer clinical examination, despite adequate adjustments, and this is affecting your learning, please discuss this with your academic year leads.

10. Wellbeing

Some students find Peer Clinical Examination difficult. If you have a wellbeing concern (which includes but is not limited to anxiety, stress, low mood, self-harm, previous trauma) please do speak to the wellbeing team or a member of academic staff who will signpost you to support services.

11. Non Peer clinical examination practice

Some students may practice on friends and family who are not medical student peers. The same principles outlined in this document should apply.