



Recognition, Support and Development

A Charter for SAS Doctors and Dentists in Scotland



Introduction

This Charter has been prepared jointly by the British Medical Association (BMA) Scotland, and Management Steering Group (MSG), which includes both NHS Scotland employers and the Scottish Government Health and Social Care Directorate (SGHSCD). It demonstrates a commitment to supporting and developing the role of the SAS doctor or SAS dentist as a valued and vital part of the medical workforce in Scotland. The aim of this Charter is to recognise the valuable role that SAS doctors and SAS dentists play in improving patient care in Scotland, valuing and empowering them to work to the best of their ability.

This Charter is in recognition of the fundamental role that SAS doctors and dentists hold in the delivery of high quality, safe medical care for patients in Scotland.

It sets out both the rights and responsibilities of SAS doctors and dentists and their employers, with a commitment to support and enable SAS doctors and dentists to realise their full clinical potential to deliver the best patient care.

With around 1,300 SAS doctors and dentists working across the NHS in Scotland in a wide range of secondary care specialties and roles, they make up a significant proportion of the senior medical workforce. While most are specialty doctors, specialists, associate specialists, or staff grades, a number of GPs also work, often part time, as SAS doctors in secondary care roles.

As senior clinicians, SAS doctors and dentists bring experienced and specialist care, possessing individual and often highly specialised skills. As they gain experience, they develop the ability to work independently and to also take broader roles through other activities such as teaching and audit. Many SAS doctors and dentists hold roles in training as Clinical and Educational Supervisors, and as NES trained medical appraisers for their colleagues including consultants.

SAS doctors and dentists must be supported in their ongoing career development and progression, with recognition and support of their continuing educational and training developmental needs. It must be recognised that adequate supervision, training, appraisal and mentoring of all doctors and dentists is essential and should not be restricted to those in formal training programmes or to individual groups of doctors or dentists.

Recognition and value

SAS doctors and dentists as senior clinicians are often members of multidisciplinary teams involved in the management of clinical services and patients. They are leaders, managers, appraisers, and Clinical and Educational Supervisors.

- SAS doctors/dentists must be fully recognised, respected and valued by their employers and colleagues for their diverse roles and their vital contribution to patient care and the wider NHS.
- Where SAS doctors and dentists have overall responsibility for patients this must be recorded accurately under an individual SAS doctors/dentists' name to ensure accuracy and transparency in patient coding. NHS Boards, Medical Directors and other relevant staff should be aware of the need for appropriate and correct patient coding.
- SAS doctors/dentists should be given the opportunity to apply for roles in medical management as appropriate to their knowledge, experience and expertise.

Professional and career development

SAS doctors/dentists should be fully supported in their ongoing career and professional development

- All SAS doctors, their employers, Directors of Medical Education, Training Programme Directors and SAS Local Educational Advisers must recognise and be committed to the requirement of ongoing Continuing Professional Development (CPD) and career long education and development.¹
- Employers must recognise the range of educational requirements of SAS doctors/dentists and support flexible CPD to ensure recognition of the varying learning needs and special interests of SAS doctors/dentists.
- SAS doctors/dentists and their employers must recognise that service and educational needs must be balanced and considered in parallel.
- There should be protected time for training and other professional activities for SAS doctors/dentists so that they can meet their individual professional, educational and career developmental needs.²
- The Job Plan must include a SPA allocation that is sufficient to enable the doctor/dentist to undertake job planning and to meet the requirements for appraisal and revalidation. This allocation must be clearly identified in the Job Plan separately from any other agreed SPA. The minimum allocation for these purposes will be as set out in the Table below for Speciality doctors/dentists and Specialists on the [2022 contracts](#)³

Total Job Plan PAs (Including EPAs)	Minimum SPA allocation for job planning, appraisal and revalidation
5 or more	1.0 PA
More than 2 but fewer than 5	0.5 PA
Fewer than 2	0.25 PA

- For doctors/dentists on the Specialty Doctor or Associate Specialist (2008) contract this should be a minimum of one Programmed Activity (PA), and equivalent arrangements should also apply to other SAS doctors/dentists. Job plans for SAS doctors/dentists must be agreed on an annual basis as a minimum, and all SAS doctors/dentists should have a named medical/dental line manager with whom they should meet to develop and review their personal job plan.
- Teams should meet regularly throughout the year to promote engagement between employers and their medical staff so that team service plans are developed and owned by the teams who provide service. Neither team services plans nor doctor/dentist's individual job plans can be drawn up in isolation; each informs the other.

1 The GMC has produced [CPD guidance](#) for all doctors, emphasising the importance of planning for career progression, patient safety and revalidation: <https://www.gmc-uk.org/education/standards-guidance-and-curricula/guidance/continuing-professional-development>

2 Joint job planning guidance was agreed on a UK-wide basis in November 2012 and can be found on the MSG and BMA websites: <http://www.msg.scot.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/SAS-job-planning-guide.pdf>

3 <https://www.bma.org.uk/pay-and-contracts/contracts/sas-doctor-contract/new-scottish-sas-contracts>

- All SAS doctors/dentists are eligible for an average of 30 days funded study leave over a 3-year period.
- SAS doctors/dentists and NHS Boards may also seek and promote opportunities for professional development through the SAS Professional Development Fund, funded through NHS Education for Scotland (NES).⁴ SAS doctors/dentists should have ready access to the support of a dedicated SAS Educational Adviser who will assist with application criteria. Information and funding application arrangements are co-ordinated by NES. Any funding allocated is additional to local NHS Board study leave budgets and routine CPD.
- All SAS doctors and their employers must fully engage in the appraisal and revalidation processes in line with GMC guidance⁵ and agreed local arrangements. SAS doctors/dentists should have an annual appraisal with a named NES-trained appraiser. Appraisals must address ongoing educational development which should result in a Personal Development Plan (PDP). The appraisal process is separate from any Job Plan Review but the PDP will inform the job plan review of any educational or developmental requirements for the following year. Employers should facilitate access to the resources (including the time to learn) to support PDPs and SAS doctors' job plans must also allow sufficient time for appraisal training, appraisal preparation and the appraisal itself.
- It is essential that NHS Boards ensure that those SAS doctors wishing to apply for Portfolio Pathway to Specialist Registration (PPSR)⁶ [previously CESR (Certificate of Eligibility for Specialist Registration)] related training placements are properly supported to identify and meet their needs and competencies. This may include the requirement for secondment for top up training and the possible application to the SAS Professional Development Fund for funding for backfill.
- There are currently no formal dental equivalents to the medical Portfolio Pathway to Specialist registration programmes. However, SAS dentists may be able to apply for specialist list inclusion via a specialist list assessed application (SLAA).⁷ This varies by specialty and any SAS dentist considering this should firstly be familiar with what is expected; information is available on the GDC website.⁸ It is therefore essential that NHS Boards allocate the equivalent of PPSR support to SAS dentists taking an SLAA route, including but not exclusively: funding for salient courses; time for academic and research work; backfill for a relevant clinical secondment.”

4 Further details of the SAS Professional Development Fund and the role of the Educational Advisers can be found on the NES website: <https://www.scotlanddeanery.nhs.scot/your-development/specialist-and-associate-specialist-doctors-and-dentists/>

5 More information is available on the GMC website: <http://www.gmc-uk.org/doctors/revalidation.asp>

6 <https://www.gmc-uk.org/registration-and-licensing/join-the-register/registration-applications/specialist-application-guides/specialist-registration-portfolio>

7 [https://www.gdc-uk.org/news-blogs/blog/detail/blogs/2023/02/02/the-way-forward-on-specialist-list-assessed-applications-\(SLAA\)](https://www.gdc-uk.org/news-blogs/blog/detail/blogs/2023/02/02/the-way-forward-on-specialist-list-assessed-applications-(SLAA))

8 <https://www.gdc-uk.org/registration/your-registration/specialist-lists/specialist-list-application-pack>