

SAS Doctors and Dentists – Getting the Most from Your Appraisal

Appraisal, as described by the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges on their [Medical appraisal](#) webpage, is to support the professional and personal development of the doctor.

All career grade doctors – SAS, Consultants and Clinical Fellows – are required to engage in annual Appraisal towards renewal of their Licence to Practice every 5 years via Revalidation. In Scotland, this is managed via the [Scottish Online Appraisal Resource \(SOAR\) website](#); some SAS Dentists also use this Appraisal process.

On the SOAR website, there is a wealth of information and guidance about general preparation for Appraisal and Revalidation, including advice on what sort of supporting evidence to collect and relevant timescales. Guidance has also been provided by the AoMRC SAS committee to help improve the Appraisal process for SAS – see the AoMRC document [Supporting appraisal for the SAS workforce](#).

In addition to this general advice, SAS Doctors and Dentists may wish to discuss other areas of their role or their own development needs at their Appraisal meeting, relevant to their own career development and progression, which the SAS doctor may wish to potentially include as part of their Personal Development Plan (PDP).

A [survey of SAS in Scotland on Appraisal 2021](#) by the NES SAS Development Programme highlighted that 67% of respondents found the Appraisal process to be helpful. Although this illustrates the majority found appraisal a positive experience, there is scope to improve this further, with preparation being key. This survey showed no difference in satisfaction with appraisal between those appraised by a Consultant compared to a those who had a SAS Appraiser; whilst 85% had no preference, 9% of SAS expressed a preference to be appraised by a SAS Doctor, 6% by a Consultant. SAS may request that they are appraised by another SAS doctor.

Key development areas which SAS may wish to discuss at Appraisal include career options including both short-term and longer-term career aims. These may include SAS who wish to develop aspects of their current Specialty Doctor role, explore potential opportunities to develop skills or upskill for their current clinical role, or take on extended roles. Longer term, some SAS may wish to aim towards Specialist posts or consider alternative options including applying for training posts or, for a small proportion of SAS, applying for Specialist Registration through the Portfolio Pathway route (previously CESR). Although Appraisers may already have some knowledge of these areas, individual SAS Doctors may wish to prepare relevant, current information to share with their Appraiser in advance for discussion at their Appraisal meeting, to optimise this opportunity for development planning. The particular discussion area will depend on the career stage and development needs of the individual SAS Doctor.

Following discussion with their Appraiser, it is important that SAS Doctors and Dentists record all agreed development plans in their PDP, as these can then be included in Job Planning discussions. It may be that certain PDP goals will not be supported by standard Study Leave, however these may be eligible for funding by the [SAS Development Fund](#). Again, some Appraisers may be aware of this Fund, but others may not – do share this information with them.

Below we have provided website links where SAS Doctors and Dentists can find information on the key areas highlighted in the SAS Appraisal Survey which may be discussed at Appraisal.

Career development

Appraisal is an ideal time to reflect on our own career goals and consider potential development opportunities.

Whether you wish to extend your skillset to develop in your current role, learn a new skill or consolidate your knowledge, the SAS Development Programme website provides extensive information for SAS Doctors and Dentists on career development options to consider. There is also guidance for those that are considering Portfolio or moving from the SAS grade to re-enter training.

- Scotland Deanery : [Career Planning - Scotland Deanery](#) including some helpful previous webinars
- [SAS skills audit](#) This worksheet will help you to relate your skills to your ability and experience and identify what skills you could develop further.
- [SAS pros and cons of change](#) model is one method for helping you towards making a decision about a possible change in your career.
- [SAS value cards](#) To make a good career choice, you ideally need to be clear about and incorporate your values, along with other factors. This worksheet will help you to clarify your values and what you want out of work.

SAS Doctors and Dentists can discuss their career development goals with their Appraiser and include additional learning plans in their PDP.

Entry or Re-entry to Training

SAS Doctors who wish to enter or re-enter Specialty Training including via the Combined Programme should review the information on the SAS Development Programme webpage [Developing Your Career](#).

After considering the Combined Programme application process information, SAS Doctors may identify that additional training or experience is required to support their application.

They can discuss what “training gaps” they have identified and options for funding to address these e.g. via the SAS Development Fund - at Appraisal.

Specialist registration via the Portfolio Pathway (previously CESR)

This may be a career progression goal which some SAS Doctors consider. Information is available on the NES SAS Development Programme website on how to approach the [Portfolio Pathway for SAS](#) and what resources are potentially available for applicants.

After considering the Portfolio application process, SAS Doctors may have identified that specific additional training or experience is required to support gaps in their application. They can discuss such “training gaps” and potential ways to achieve these at Appraisal e.g. via the SAS Development Fund.

Extended Roles

In addition to their Clinical Roles, some SAS Doctors and Dentists will adopt extended roles, developing their career to take on new / more senior roles which may not necessarily be carried out by all Doctors and Dentists. The SAS Development Programme document [Extended Roles for SAS](#) discusses wider roles which can be delivered by a SAS Doctor or Dentist which do not involve direct clinical care, but instead draw on skills and strengths to develop and support the wider NHS.

These roles include:

- Teaching
- Training
- Appraiser
- Medical Education
- Management / Leadership
- Royal College roles
- BMA roles

SAS Doctors and Dentists who wish to train for and adopt extended roles should initially explore whether there is a vacancy/ local need for someone to take on the role/ requirement in the team, discuss this at their Appraisal, and add this aim with details of the required training to their PDP.

There will be some experienced SAS who may be able to progress to Specialist roles in future; what would you need to do? Do you need Leadership training, skills training, or further development in other areas? Reflect on your gaps and aim to progress these through your PDP.

Top Tips for creating an effective PDP

Taking time to develop your PDP is crucial for helping you to identify your personal and professional development objectives and inform your learning and professional development needs. Start by thinking:

- What do you want to achieve in the next year? In the next five years?
- How can you achieve this?
- What are the barriers and what training/resources/support might you need to achieve this?
- Prepare your ideas and share relevant documents with your Appraiser in advance e.g. course links, SAS Development fund application information
- Think of SMART Objectives (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Timely)

In addition to helping you explore general ideas regarding career and development opportunities you may have, remember that you can speak to your [SAS Education Adviser](#) to discuss potential funding for experiential training /courses, if your team needs you to learn a new skill to enhance or extend your role.