

Guidance for “Remote” Appraisal

LAST UPDATED DATE: 18/08/2020

LAST UPDATED BY: William Liu

VERSION: 1.1

| VERSION CONTROL TABLE | | | |
|-----------------------|--|--------|------------|
| Version | Purpose/Change | Author | Date |
| 0.1 | Document created | WL | 21/10/2011 |
| 0.2 | Content added | AKT | 16/03/2012 |
| 0.3 | Content added | WL | 10/01/2013 |
| 0.4 | Some changes | IS | 11/01/2013 |
| 0.5 | Updated with SecCare reference | WL | 27/08/2014 |
| 0.6 | Updated and overhauled | WL | 04/03/2019 |
| 1.0 | Added to Alternatives section | WL | 23/03/2020 |
| | Renamed and rewritten to reflect COVID-19 impact | WL | 02/07/2020 |
| 1.1 | Finalised changes | WL | 18/08/2020 |

Since the pandemic lockdown measures were introduced towards the end of March 2020, there has been increased use of online video conferencing tools to facilitate “remote” meetings. This document aims to provide guidance for those seeking to use these online tools for Medical Appraisal meetings (irrespective of COVID-19).

Contents

| | |
|-------------------------------|---|
| Impact of COVID-19 | 3 |
| Key points to consider..... | 3 |
| Setup prior to meeting..... | 3 |
| Online meeting etiquette..... | 4 |
| Online Security..... | 4 |
| Summary and Quick Tips..... | 5 |
| Your Feedback..... | 6 |
| Further support..... | 6 |

Impact of COVID-19

It is anticipated that there will be increased use of online video conferencing tools to facilitate the appraisal meetings as we all migrate to new ways of working in a post-COVID setting. This guidance is provided to help those who wish to use these tools to make the most of the online “remote” appraisals.

Key points to consider

- If in doubt, consult with your Appraisal Lead first;
- All parties must be in agreement before proceeding with the remote appraisal meeting;
- Whichever app or software you decide to use – make sure both appraiser and appraisee are using the same;
- Ensure both parties have all the supporting information available (via SOAR).

Setup prior to meeting

Choose your software

NHS Scotland has a tenancy agreement with Microsoft, making the suite of Microsoft Office applications available for all NHS Scotland staff. **Microsoft Teams** is the main communications tool used to facilitate meetings and webinars. As such, MS Teams is the preferred choice for Medical Appraisal as well since it will be supported via National Services Scotland (NSS)¹.

There are other popular messaging and video conference tools available, for example Skype, Zoom, FaceTime, Google Meet etc. If you chose to use an alternative application to MS Teams, please ensure (where applicable) the meeting organiser sets the appropriate security settings when scheduling and more crucially make sure that both the appraiser and appraisee are happy to use the choice of software.

If you have never used these applications before, you will need to create a new account and depending on the app, you may have to download rather than accessing it through the web browser. If you are using MS Teams, your local health board IT will likely have this installed already on your computer (if not, you can follow this up with them).

Whilst most of these applications are available (freely) as an app on mobile devices, we strongly suggest you access the software via a computer/laptop setup for ease of navigating between the communication tool and the supporting information.

Prepare ahead of time

Having a “remote” appraisal should not be any different than the traditional face-to-face in-person appraisal in terms of preparation.

Whilst appraisal will be intrinsically linked to Medical Revalidation, the purpose of the appraisal meeting should be (and always has been) focused on the appraisee. With any appraisal meeting the meaningfulness of the discussions is only as good as the preparation.

¹ <https://nhsnss.service-now.com/teams>

Ensure you check the Medical Appraisal Scotland website² for the latest updates on appraisal arrangements, but appraisees should continue to prepare their supporting information as appropriate.

You will need to ensure the computer or laptop you are using has a web-cam, speakers and microphone to facilitate the video call.

As with a face-to-face appraisal, preparation is important. The appraisee should submit their SOAR information at least two weeks prior to the meeting to give the appraiser enough time to review it in preparation for the meeting. Agreeing an agenda prior to the meeting will help focus on the key discussion points and allow you to make the most of the time allocated to the appraisal.

Online meeting etiquette

To help you get the most out of the appraisal meeting we suggest you consider the below:

1. Agree the agenda beforehand and ensure all documents are submitted and available (on SOAR);
2. Call in from a quiet, well-lit location: you should be able to see and hear each other clearly.
3. If you are meeting from home and on slower broadband, you may need to ask other members of your household to stay off the internet during your online meeting to ensure a stable connection and to avoid interruptions;
4. Arrive on time – if not a little early – so you can iron out any audio/visual issues before starting.
5. Close down other programmes on your computer to avoid distractions.
6. Use a headset or earphones where possible to minimize echo and background noise,
7. When speaking, do so slowly and clearly.
8. Barring technical difficulties, please ensure the webcam is on where possible: the point of the video call is to substitute the face-to-face aspect of appraisal and an important part of the communication is picking up on the facial expressions and body language of the appraisee.

Also consider a plan B if the technology fails for whatever reason. Exchange phone numbers for a telephone call if necessary. Based on feedback received, “telephone appraisals” should only be considered as a very last resort.

Online Security

Anti-virus software

Make sure your computer is protected against viruses by means of **having an anti-virus software on your computer and ensure it is kept up-to-date**. These are common good IT practices in everyday use.

If you are using workplace computers/laptops, this is generally managed by corporate IT; but if you are using your own devices, it is your responsibility to ensure your devices are secure and protected with the latest anti-virus software.

² <http://www.appraisal.nes.scot.nhs.uk>

Passwords

As with every other online system that requires a password, it is your responsibility to ensure your password is secure and that you are the only one who knows it; don't make it easy for someone to guess. DON'T include things like names of loved ones, pets, sports team, hometown etc. Try and include a mix of upper and lowercase characters, as well as symbols and numbers.

If you think your work or NHS Office365 account³ has been hacked, please contact your Health Board's IT urgently for further assistance. If you suspect your personal accounts have been hacked, login and change your passwords just to be on the safe side. Remember – it is your responsibility to keep your online accounts safe and secure.

Depending on the software you use to arrange the meeting you should set up a password when creating the meeting (e.g. Zoom). MS Teams meetings usually don't require a password as only authorised people can gain access.

Sharing of documents

It is NOT recommended for you share appraisal (or any) documents via external video conferencing tools. Use SOAR so that all appraisal documents are retained and stored in one place.

MS Teams alternatives

MS Teams is the recommended application to use because it is a supported tool for NHS Scotland staff. There are alternatives to Teams but they are unlikely to be supported by your health board.

The main thing is to ensure that whatever tool you use, you are both using it (e.g. you wouldn't be able to FaceTime someone who is using Skype, and vice versa etc).

Check with your health boards in the first instance to see what video call facilities are available locally. For example, GPs in Dumfries & Galloway use a software called LYNC which is used in all of its surgeries.

Summary and Quick Tips

Even though the appraisal is carried out remotely, all privacy and confidentiality protocols still need to be adhered to:

- Make sure you both have protected and uninterrupted time and both are in private rooms throughout the appraisal (e.g. no patients or colleagues, or children or animals running in the background etc);
- Appraisal documents should be submitted via SOAR so they can be shared and accessed ahead of the appraisal.

You don't have to be IT-savvy to have an online meeting, just be mindful:

- That both appraiser and appraisee are agreed on the software to use;
- Login to meeting ahead of time to iron out any possible technical issues;
- Ensure you are both in shot of the camera and speak up (if you are not using a headset);
- If audio quality becomes an issue, consider the use of a headset or shutting down other devices taking up bandwidth if possible, to help ensure a stable connection.

³ It is envisaged that all NHS Scotland staff will have access to Office365 by end of September 2020. Please liaise with your health board IT for updates.

Consider using “remote” appraisals if face-to-face meeting is difficult to arrange (e.g. if geography / travel becomes an issue, or due to pandemic lockdown measures etc).

If in doubt, consult your Appraisal Lead.

Your Feedback

For most, remote appraisal is a new experience. We have heard many positive experiences from Appraisal Leads and their appraisers and would be keen to hear from you if you have suggestions or experienced a particularly successful (or otherwise) remote appraisal for others to learn from.

Please email the helpdesk with your feedback: SOAR@nes.scot.nhs.uk

Further support

The Medical Appraisal Scotland team do not have the capacity to provide IT support of this level. If you run into any technical problems:

- Contact your Health Board’s IT support if you are using a workplace provided computer.
- Contact NSS⁴ if you have issues with MS Teams.

⁴ <https://nhsnss.service-now.com/teams>