Medical Appraisal Scotland

Annual Report (2021/2022)

**Graphical version:**  
<http://www.appraisal.nes.scot.nhs.uk/resources/AnnualReport-21-22/index.html>

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# Foreword

I am very pleased to introduce this year’s annual report for Medical Appraisal in Scotland.

At a time of challenge and distress, the health and wellbeing of NHS Scotland medical staff has quite rightly been a sharp focus for the Medical Appraisal Team here in NES. The team have been working to ensure that the appraisal process is supportive and person-centred; whilst also embracing the light touch approach as advised by our Chief Medical Officer. One of the key ways of doing this has been to refocus the training of appraisers and to remind them that appraisal is a formative process. As appraisees and appraisers we welcome your feedback on these changes and what more can be done to ease the burden felt by many. To link with the refocus there is an interesting programme of refresher appraiser activities over the coming year too.

Medical appraisal remains an important opportunity for doctors to reflect on their achievements and challenges over the past year and to discuss their development with a colleague. Wellbeing is central to this discussion. Most doctors in Scotland have completed two cycles of revalidation and the time is right for a review of Medical Appraisal in Scotland; the review is being undertaken by a Scottish government led short-life working group and will look at not only medical appraisal but also the SOAR platform. We need to ensure both these meet the needs of doctors across Scotland.

I would like to extend my thanks to the whole appraisal team at NES and to all appraisers working across our system for their tireless hard work supporting others during these new and changing times. I would like to particularly thank Professor Amjad Khan, Dr Christiane Shrimpton and William Liu for their leadership and dedication in ensuring the continued success of medical appraisal in Scotland

**Professor Emma Watson***Medical Director, NES*

# Overview of Medical Appraisal in Scotland

As I am looking back at another year that provided challenges for us all, I want to take a little bit of time to celebrate some of the achievements. We have continued to deliver new appraiser training remotely and have had positive feedback for these courses. They have remained very interactive by keeping the groups small and participants have often commented how much more accessible the courses are, as there is no travel involved. Many of us miss the opportunities for a chat over coffee in the breaks so we will explore face-to-face training options again in the future. The success and advantages of offering training remotely will ensure it remains part of what we offer.

Over the last few months, the new refresher programme has also taken shape. Instead of offering just one specific nationally delivered refresher session, there was wide support for more flexible options that give appraisers a choice. There will continue to be refresher sessions delivered by our excellent team of appraiser course tutors via Teams. To supplement these sessions a series of updated videos of short appraisal scenarios have been recorded that reflect the often-virtual appraisal meetings. The PowerPoint modules developed for the new appraiser training are also a resource as a refresher for established appraisers. Both can be used for self-directed learning and reflection or during local appraiser sessions arranged by the appraisal leads.

Another new development during the past year has been the offer of specific skills sessions delivered by external facilitators. The main focus has been on the use of coaching approaches in appraisal. Many appraisers have found this useful in taking a more wellbeing focussed approach to the appraisal discussions, this is especially appreciated by the appraisees. Going forward we will offer further sessions based on the development needs identified by appraisers and appraisal leads.

One of the highlights for me this year was the Annual Appraiser Conference, once again delivered virtually with the NES Medical Education Conference. The sessions explored the importance and practice of good listening, what leads to conflict and how to recognise and de-escalate it and discuss this in appraisal, feedback with some innovative ideas about collecting patient feedback in a world where consultations are often done by telephone or video calls and discussing various appraisal scenarios. There were far fewer technical issues this year and like the previous year, being able to make recordings available to appraisers who could not attend, gives access to the content to a wider group.

I have valued working with the team at Scottish Government under whose remit appraisal and revalidation comes and look forward to the outcomes of the current short life working group, chaired by Professor Ian Finlay, looking at the future of medical appraisal in Scotland.

We have a group of appraisal leads that it has once again been a pleasure to work with and we look forward to continuing this close collaboration. I also want to recognise the course tutors, who have shown great flexibility and have embraced the very different way of delivering training for appraisers. Without all of you and the appraisal team supporting me at NES we would not have the well-regarded appraisal system we have.

Thank you all and I look forward to another year of working with you.

**Dr Christiane Shrimpton***Associate Postgraduate Dean for Appraisal and Revalidation*

# Medical Appraisers Training and Recruitment

## Appraiser training courses in 2021/2022

There was a full schedule of New Appraiser training courses in 2021/22 following the disruption of the previous year. Following on from the success of our new remote delivery format for New Appraiser Training courses, Refresher training courses have been revised in a similar format and will be running in the coming year.

## New Medical Appraiser Training Courses

The new format consisted of two half-days’ attendance of remote training with smaller groups of learners (max 8), with completion of seven online modules a mandatory requirement prior to attending. The modules and other pre-course materials is available on the [Medical Appraisal Scotland website](https://www.appraisal.nes.scot.nhs.uk/appraiser-training/new-appraiser/pre-course-modules/).

We successfully ran 15 New Appraiser events from April to December 2021. 3 scheduled courses were cancelled due to insufficient applications. A further 5 New Appraiser courses were delivered in January to March 2022. During this period 1 course was cancelled due to lack of interest.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Course** | **Course capacity** | **Attendance** | | | | **Unfilled slots** |
| **Primary Care** | **Secondary Care** | **Total** | *DNAs* |
| **N77A - 20 & 24 April 2021** | **8** | **3** | **5** | **8** | *0* | **0** |
| **N77P - 20 & 24 April 2021 [CANCELLED]** | **-** | **-** | **-** | **-** | *-* | **-** |
| **N78A - 5 & 12 May 2021** | **8** | **2** | **6** | **8** | *0* | **0** |
| **N78P - 5 & 12 May 2021** | **8** | **0** | **7** | **7** | *0* | **1** |
| **N79A - 19 & 25 May 2021** | **8** | **2** | **5** | **7** | *0* | **1** |
| **N79P - 19 & 25 May 2021** | **8** | **1** | **7** | **8** | *0* | **0** |
| **N80A - 9 & 17 June 2021** | **8** | **2** | **5** | **7** | *1* | **0** |
| **N80P - 9 & 17 June 2021** | **8** | **3** | **4** | **7** | *1* | **0** |
| **N81A - 19 & 26 Aug 2021** | **8** | **4** | **4** | **8** | *0* | **0** |
| **N81P - 19 & 26 Aug 2021** | **8** | **1** | **7** | **8** | *0* | **0** |
| **N82A - 28 Sept & 5 Oct 2021** | **8** | **2** | **6** | **8** | *0* | **0** |
| **N82P - 28 Sept & 5 Oct 2021** | **8** | **2** | **6** | **8** | *0* | **0** |
| **N83A - 28 Oct & 4 Nov 2021** | **8** | **0** | **8** | **8** | *0* | **0** |
| **N83P - 28 Oct & 4 Nov 2021 [CANCELLED]** | **-** | **-** | **-** | **-** | *-* | **-** |
| **N84A - 16 & 23 Nov 2021** | **8** | **2** | **5** | **7** | *0* | **1** |
| **N84P - 16 & 23 Nov 2021 [CANCELLED]** | **-** | **-** | **-** | **-** | *-* | **-** |
| **N85A - 1 & 8 Dec 2021** | **8** | **2** | **4** | **6** | *0* | **2** |
| **N85P - 1 & 8 Dec 2021** | **8** | **1** | **5** | **6** | *1* | **1** |
| **N86A - 18 & 26 Jan 2022** | **8** | **2** | **6** | **8** | *0* | **0** |
| **N86P - 18 & 26 Jan 2022 [CANCELLED]** | **-** | **-** | **-** | **-** | *-* | **-** |
| **N87A - 3 & 10 Feb 2022** | **8** | **0** | **8** | **8** | *0* | **0** |
| **N87P - 3 & 10 Feb 2022** | **8** | **1** | **6** | **7** | *1* | **0** |
| **N88A - 3 & 10 March 2022** | **8** | **0** | **8** | **8** | *0* | **0** |
| **N88P - 3 & 10 March 2022** | **8** | **0** | **8** | **8** | *0* | **0** |
| **TOTAL** | **160** | **30** | **120** | **150** | *4* | **6** |

150 participants attended the 20 New Appraiser training courses held, with 147 recommended by the tutor panels as ready to take up the role of medical appraiser. There were 4 participants who either did not attend on the day or opted out after partially attending their course. Overall, only 6 out of 160 spaces were not taken up, which is a significant decrease compared to pre-pandemic courses.

We continued to ask all our course participants for feedback following the courses. Out of the 150 participants, 121 provided their feedback (80.7%). When asked to rate their level of overall satisfaction with the training, 53 replied “Extremely satisfied” (43.8%) and 67 replied “Very Satisfied” (55.4%).

*“Overall it was good to go through and consolidate knowledge gained from pre course prep.  Enjoyed the opportunity to practice the mini appraisals”.* **N80A Participant**

“*I was really impressed - training was more "involved" that I was expecting but this was no bad thing!“* **N81A Participant**

“*Excellent format and very well organised*” **N83A Participant**

*“The 2 day course was excellent.  Well structured and flowing well.  I particularly enjoyed taking different roles in the mini appraisals.  It allowed you to see what works well and what doesn’t work and how your appraisal could be improved.  Coaching was challenging without being in this situation in the context of a real ‘appraisal’, and enough background reading was referenced to allow you to develop your skills*”. **N84A Participant**

“*Loved the format.  Strongly recommend to my colleagues*”. **N85A Participant**

## Refresher Medical Appraiser Training

The course content and delivery for Refresher Medical Appraiser Training was comprehensively reviewed during 2021/22 and as such no courses were offered. The redevelopment of the course is now complete, and a schedule of courses will begin in June 2022.

As with our New Appraiser Training courses, participants will be asked to complete an online module and watch 2 preparatory videos ahead of attending the course. The course will be run over three and a half hours in either a morning or afternoon session. There will be a maximum of 8 participants in each course.

In addition to the Refresher training days, self-directed modules have also been made available to appraisers for working through at their own pace. We intend also to organise further webinars and short-term sessions to complement the training programme. All information on the [Refresher Appraiser programme of activities can be found on our website](https://www.appraisal.nes.scot.nhs.uk/appraiser-training/refresher-programme/).

## Distribution of trained Appraisers across Health Boards

Across the 20 New Appraiser training, 147 new appraisers were recommended to their respective health boards as ready to take up the role of medical appraisers.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Health Board** | **New Appraisers** | | |
| **Primary Care** | **Secondary Care** | **Total** |
| **Ayrshire & Arran** | **3** | **7** | **10** |
| **Dumfries & Galloway** | **2** | **7** | **9** |
| **Fife** | **0** | **8** | **8** |
| **Forth Valley** | **4** | **3** | **7** |
| **Greater Glasgow & Clyde** | **6** | **22** | **28** |
| **National Waiting Times Centre (Golden Jubilee Hospital)** | **0** | **3** | **3** |
| **Grampian** | **3** | **11** | **14** |
| **Highland** | **2** | **10** | **12** |
| **Lanarkshire** | **1** | **6** | **7** |
| **Lothian** | **8** | **28** | **36** |
| **Orkney** | **0** | **1** | **1** |
| **Public Health Scotland** | **0** | **2** | **2** |
| **Shetland** | **1** | **0** | **1** |
| **Tayside** | **3** | **6** | **9** |
| **TOTAL** | **33** | **114** | **147** |

## Becoming an Appraiser

The need for medical appraisal – a safe and protected environment for colleagues to discuss and reflect on their work and wellbeing – will play a vital role to support the workforce recovery post pandemic.

If you are interested in becoming an appraiser, you can find further details via the Medical Appraisal Scotland website:

<https://www.appraisal.nes.scot.nhs.uk/>

Training course details available under the “Appraiser Training” link in the menu.

Please discuss further with your local Appraisal Lead as the first port of call. Appraisal management processes (and vacancies) vary across the health boards in Scotland and it is important that you understand the requirements of your health board, and that they can guide and support you in the appraiser role.

**Stacey Lucas & Hannah Asrih***Administrative Officer (Medical Appraisal)*

# 2022 Scottish Medical Appraisers Annual Conference

NES ran the 2022 Scottish Medical Education Conference (SMEC) via remote technology following a positive response from last year, of which the Scottish Medical Appraisers Conference was a part of on 28 April 2022. Improvements were made following user suggestions, and this was reflected by the feedback received. Many users complimented on the flexibility and engagement the remote sessions offered, as well as the improved platform and format from last year.

There were near 1600 delegates who attended the two-day SMEC. There was an average of around 200 people attending the Appraisers conference sessions. Back when we ran in-person conferences at the EICC, our conference workshops usually averaged 30-40 max per session.

“Wellbeing” was a welcomed theme threaded throughout the workshops and plenary session. Brigid Russell (Coach and Leadership Consultant) and Emma Murphy (NHS Dumfries & Galloway - Patient Feedback Manager) were the guest speakers at the plenary, who spoke on and presented webinars on “Making Space for listening” and “Dispute Resolution: Managing Conflicts” respectively.

Drs Christiane Shrimpton and Mimi Cogliano (Deputy Primary Care Appraisal Lead in NHS Borders and NHS Lothian) ran a webinar titled “Feedback in Medical Appraisal” with particular focus on feedback giving, and Dr Cogliano described the trailblazing work she had been doing in NHS Lothian with regards to Patient Satisfaction Questionnaire (PSQ).

Dr Grecy Bell (Primary Care Appraisal Lead in NHS Dumfries & Galloway) presented a session on the different appraisal scenarios that appraisers might come across and invited the participants to discuss how they might approach each one.

All webinars and the plenary were recorded and the videos, along with slides used and resource/reference materials, are all available from the Medical Appraisal Scotland website:

<https://www.appraisal.nes.scot.nhs.uk/our-work/appraiser-conferences/2022-2023/>

## 2023 standalone Medical Appraisers Conference

Following feedback from appraisers from this and previous years, we have made a decision to run the next Scottish Medical Appraisers Conference independently from SMEC which will allow those appraisers with educational roles to fully engage with the medical education sessions.

Plans are still be finalised on when the next Medical Appraisers conference will take place, but it is likely to continue in the remote platform as it helps ensure no one is disadvantaged geographically or at the expense of travel (although we will explore other options also).

Confirmation of plans for next year’s conference will be announced later in the year.

# News and Events

Being mindful of the clinical pressures on our NHS colleagues, some of our pre-pandemic business-as-usual activities were paused to allow them to focus on patient care. The Scottish government sponsored MARQA (Medical Appraisal and Revalidation Quality Assurance) review was postponed as the review period would have coincided with the pausing of activities. It is likely to be postponed next year as well to allow for workforce recovery. Similarly, there were no Responsible Officers development day organised this year.

Below are some of the activities we were able to engage in.

## Support for Appraisal Leads and Appraisal Admins

NES organised two National Appraisal Leads meeting via MS Teams on 20 April and 30 November 2021 respectively. Both meetings were very well attended and received.

The meeting in April focused on the “light touch” approach to appraisal that has been adopted in the boards following [CMO communication re systems flexibility](https://www.appraisal.nes.scot.nhs.uk/news/cmo-letter-update-re-sys-flexibility/). In the November meeting, the Appraisal Leads discussed the wellbeing aspects of appraisal and considered its challenges and how best to facilitate this.

For the Appraisal Admin teams group, NES organised two “coffee morning” style catch up meetings on 6 October 2021 and 8 March 2022. There have been numerous team changes locally at the health boards, so these meetings proved a useful platform for new members to network with others and allowed us to explain NES’ role in supporting the group. In the March meeting we ran a demo on SOAR based on some of the more common queries received on the helpdesk and this was well received.

## Team Changes

**Eilidh Henderson** joined the team in October 2021 and took up the new role of Senior Officer to support and deputise for the Training Manager where appropriate and increase the team’s capacity in the running of the training courses as well as SOAR user support. Eilidh joins us from the NES Training Programme Management team in the deanery and her experience and knowledge will complement our work very well going forward.

It is with sadness we announce that **Stacey Lucas** left the team at the end of June 2022 for a 12-month secondment with the NES NMAHP team. Since joining in October 2016 Stacey has been an integral part of the team, assisting with the SOAR helpdesk and running admin on countless appraiser training courses over the years. Her can-do attitude and positivity will be greatly missed but this is a wonderful opportunity for Stacey and there is no doubt she will be a great asset to NMAHP. From all of us at Medical Appraisal, we wish her every success in her new role.

We are delighted to welcome **Pamela Curran** to the team, who joins us from mid-August on a 12-month secondment taking up the role of Senior Officer to assist with the increased workload for 2022/2023. Pamela joins us from NHS Ayrshire & Arran where she was the appraisal administrator and her knowledge and experience will be invaluable to the team.

## Meet the Team

**Professor Amjad Khan**  
NES Revalidation Lead

**Dr Christiane Shrimpton**Associate Postgraduate Dean for Appraisal and Revalidation

**William Liu**Training Manager (Medical Appraisal)

**Eilidh Henderson**Senior Officer (Medical Appraisal)

**Pamela Curran**Senior Officer (Medical Appraisal)

**Stacey Lucas**Administrative Officer (Medical Appraisal)

**Hannah Asrih**Administrative Officer (Medical Appraisal)

**Michael Teasdale**  
Analyst Business Partner (Digital)

# SOAR Update

## What is SOAR?

Scottish Online Appraisal & Revalidation (SOAR) is the national IT system used by medics working in NHS Scotland for managing their appraisal processes. SOAR plays an integral role in Scottish government’s common pathway approach to medical appraisal and revalidation; and is developed and maintained by NES in collaboration with health board teams.

## Supporting SOAR Users

## From April 2021 to March 2022, we can provide a breakdown of the different types of queries logged on the Jira Helpdesk including the numerical data also. The data shows that a total of 5587 tickets were resolved, 51.2% of which coming from secondary care users and 30.8% from primary care. A considerable difference between primary and secondary care users requiring assistance from the helpdesk. Other users who got in touch included trainees, admin teams, clinical development fellows, Directors of Medical Education (DMEs) and others.

## When analysing the ‘Query type’ data it was found that the highest number of queries were around MSF (40%). This was followed by log in queries which were substantially lower at 23%. The other query types that logged a considerable number of tickets were related to incorrect details which needed updating (12%) and appraisal form queries (submission, uploading, Form 4 etc) tallied at 10%. Other ticket types that were logged with far lower numbers included trainee queries, CPD log/PDP, performance issues, PSQ and ROT log queries. This data provided the central SOAR team with a detailed insight into the most common query types and how we can continue to improve our service to accommodate all users.

## We will continue to support our users via the helpdesk, accessed either via the website directly or via email to [SOAR@nes.scot.nhs.uk](mailto:SOAR@nes.scot.nhs.uk).

## SOAR development

There has been very little development on SOAR in the past year as staff remain under pressure to prioritise various COVID related projects. We did update SOAR to reflect a new change to assist the Recognition of Trainer process and this was done by an external provider following a short tender process. The work only impacts DMEs and Educational Organisations and does not change the existing processes for trainers/appraisees; and was completed at the end of March 2022.

## SOAR Options Review

Following feedback from national stakeholders, the Scottish Government has sponsored a review of SOAR to consider the scale and scope of development needed to ensure the system is up to date.

Plans are in place to appoint an external provider to carry out the review, which is due to take place in the summer of 2022.

## Continued Review of MSF Options

SOAR continues the provision of MSF via our 3rd party provider, WASP Software. This arrangement has been extended through to the end of March 2023, covering the 2022/2023 period.

The longer-term plan of an inhouse multi-disciplinary one-MSF tool is still a desired aim however discussions with NES Digital continues to be on hold due to the pandemic.

## New Medical Appraisal Scotland website

We have spent the latter part of 2021/22 redesigning the Medical Appraisal Scotland website and this was finally launched in April this year.

This coincided with the roll out of the Refresher Appraiser “programme of activities” materials which can be found on the website, along with new resources to support appraisers in their ongoing development.

## Future projects

Depending on the outcome from the SOAR Options Review, we hope to further develop SOAR to improve the functionality for both the team and users to ultimately make the system more user friendly.

**Eilidh Henderson***Senior Officer (Medical Appraisal)*

# Plans for 2022/2023

2022/2023 promises to be an exciting year for medical appraisal with many of the planned activities finally being scheduled. The full year’s training programme has now been published following a successful tutor recruitment run in April and May of 2022; when we also piloted two one-day remote training on “using coaching skills to improve the appraisal conversation”.

We will also be launching the revamped Refresher Appraiser in June 2022; and as part of Refresher programme of activities, we also intend to schedule more short-term training sessions on using coaching and mentoring approaches to appraisal.

None of these additional training is designed to train appraisers into coaches or mentors, it is simply to help appraisers consider a different technique to approaching appraisal discussions.

The remote delivery of our training events has helped me identify enough savings in my non-pay budget to fund an additional Senior Officer on a fixed-term 12-month contract to help with the workload and busy schedule ahead (interview scheduled for June 2022). Additionally, I was given permission to recruit a full-time replacement for Stacey (who was part-time) during her 12-month secondment.

The additional recruitment to increase our overall team capacity and the delivery of additional training resources for appraisers were made possible by the flexibility offered by utilising online platforms to deliver our training. Whilst online will remain our delivery of choice, we are actively exploring possibilities in a return to in-person courses. Tentatively we are looking to trial this in March 2023, but plans are ongoing in ensuring there’s equity in the learners’ experience and outcome in both delivery format.

And there’s also the Scottish Government sponsored review of SOAR already mentioned elsewhere in the report, which will be looking at the current system functionality and what improvements and changes are required to bring SOAR up to date. The review will be conducted by an external provider and will involve a system-wide user survey and some focus group meetings. A final report into the review will be produced and presented to the Revalidation Delivery Board Scotland in November 2022 for further discussion re next steps.

Wellbeing approach to appraisal conversations has been a big theme in the past 12 months. Not just for appraisees, but we also recognise the need to support appraisers and Appraisal Leads alike and we hope to develop resources for this in the coming year.

It has been 20 years since the introduction of medical appraisal, and I have been privileged enough to contribute to its development in Scotland for the past 15 years. The training courses have changed from the initial format of a 3-day residential to the remote delivery of today. Whilst the formal roll-out of revalidation 10 years ago has added requirements to the appraisal discussions, the ethos and intention of appraisal has not changed: **it was designed as a formative supporting tool to help doctors reflect on their achievements, challenges and their developmental needs – and now more than ever, it is important to recognise that it still is**.

## Thank you

I’d like to share an observation… I wrote in last year’s report that I believed appraisal was the tool for workforce recovery. Since the restarting of appraisal activities in October 2020, one of the biggest challenges we’ve faced is the recruitment of appraisers, with many giving up their role in the past 2 years. There are many reasons why appraisers become appraisers but a growing trend in the past year or so has seen people coming forward to take on the role because they had been recipients of such supportive appraisals during the most challenging times of our careers thus far. So rewarding was their experience they felt a strong desire to be a part of the appraiser workforce to pay it forward – and that is a tribute to all of you for being the brilliant appraisers that you are and doing the incredible work you do. The power and impact of a good supportive, reflective appraisal in a confidential protected environment cannot be underestimated. Thank you for your continued perseverance and hard work.

On a personal note, I want to thank you for the work you do as NHS doctors looking after all of us whilst we were sick during the pandemic. Daily news updates only tell you how many people passed but never how many survived. Had it not been for the dedication and lifesaving interventions of the hardworking doctors and nurses who looked after us, myself and my wife would have been a number in these news updates last year. Words are not enough to describe our gratitude but, since I can’t afford to buy everyone a round, a humble thank you is all I can offer.

Thank you.

**William Liu***Training Manager (Medical Appraisal)*