

10 Top Tips

... for getting the most out of your appraisal in a pandemic

Some helpful advice from our Regional Director (and the RCGP Medical Director for Revalidation), Dr Susi Caesar

1 Take control of your appraisal and your own wellbeing

Think about how you want to use your protected time. Focus on what is most important to you, including maintaining and improving your wellbeing. COVID-19 will have impacted you personally and professionally so your appraisal should reflect that. We all deserve a chance to review our achievements and challenges, and to plan. Make your appraisal work for you.

2 Ask to keep your previous appraiser if it would help you

In Wessex, there is a low threshold for allowing you to have the same appraiser once more, over and above the usual three times. If you already have a good rapport, it should reduce nervousness about doing an appraisal remotely and help make this appraisal the great opportunity to reflect that it should be.

3 Keep your preparation proportionate and present what you wish to discuss

There is a reduced documentary requirement in the context of the pandemic. Try not to spend more than 30 minutes on your focused written reflection. You should still include any GMC Significant Events or Complaints and anything you have been individually asked to bring to your appraisal. Apart from those, it is recognised that you may not have been able to collect

your usual written supporting information at this time. Verbal reflection during the appraisal will carry the same weight as written reflection pre-appraisal. Of course, you can still present any written information that you have collected that you want to include or discuss.



4 Agree your appraisal date and video-conferencing tool in good time

If your RO is still offering GP appraisals and you are well enough to be working, you should be able to clear 2-3 hours of protected time for yourself. If you need to postpone or alter the details of your appraisal because of local pressures, eg due to COVID-19, just rearrange it with your appraiser. Remember they are doctors too, so do be courteous and give as much notice as you can. There is no documentation required - unless you need to miss your appraisal altogether, in which case the appraisal team will need to understand why, for the record, and in order to ensure you are offered alternative timely support if appropriate.

5 Make sure your videoconferencing tool will work

Ensure that you have the privacy to create a safe space to talk, and sufficient bandwidth for a good internet connection. Exchange mobile phone numbers so you can communicate if something goes wrong.

6 Make the most of your appraiser's knowledge and support

Use your appraiser's skills and expertise to facilitate your reflection. Their detailed knowledge about the GMC requirements should reassure you that you are meeting them. Their coaching and mentoring skills should support your development. If you want or need any other form of support, discuss your options. Appraisers are trained to signpost resources for you to consider and include in your PDP if appropriate.

7 Write your own Personal Development Plan (PDP) goals

Make sure your PDP reflects your goals. Take time to discuss your plans in detail and work out how they will have a positive impact - on your wellbeing, your working relationships or your patient care. Do include things that are 'must do' as well as things that stimulate and stretch you. Be realistic about what is achievable. You 'cannot pour from an empty cup', so consider including a goal about maintaining (or improving) how you look after yourself.

8 Check and edit your summary

Appraisers should produce a professional summary that summarises the key information you presented, verbally or in writing, to demonstrate your continued fitness to practise. They should not make a verbatim record of the discussion or record personal sensitive information that is not relevant to revalidation. If there is an error or something you are uncomfortable with, do not sign off the appraisal. Discuss it with your appraiser to find a mutually-agreed wording.



No, this one's not Covid. It's GP wellbeing since appraisal restarted.

9 Give feedback

Your feedback is essential. Nothing can improve without accurate and meaningful feedback. Post-appraisal feedback is anonymous (except when stated otherwise) so be truthful. Your appraiser, and those who are trying to work out what the future appraisal process should look like, after appraisal 2020, need to understand what works and what does not.

10 Change your appraiser if you need to

Especially if your appraisal has not met your needs; give feedback and consider asking for a different appraiser. Poor appraisers cannot be identified for additional training or be stopped from doing harm (consciously or unconsciously) unless their appraisees give feedback that explains what has gone wrong. Even if the problem is a simple mismatch of preferences, give feedback so that you get a more valuable appraisal next time.

**You deserve an appraisal that is worthwhile...
You have the power to make sure it is.**