

# Secondary Care Placement Handbook (Master's in Physician Associate Studies)



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## Introduction

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Welcome to the Secondary Care Placement Handbook for Supervisors. This resource is designed to support you in your role as a clinical placement supervisor, providing essential information about the current program our students are studying, the significance of clinical placements, your expectations, and the key learning objectives our students aim to achieve.

Our students are engaged in a comprehensive academic program that integrates theoretical knowledge with practical application, specifically tailored to prepare them for the complexities of secondary healthcare. Through their clinical placements, students will have the opportunity to apply their classroom learning in real-world settings, enhancing their skills and competencies in patient care.

As clinical placement supervisor, your role is pivotal in guiding students as they transition from theory to practice. You will help shape their experiences, provide valuable mentorship, and foster their professional growth. This handbook outlines the expectations we have for you in this role, highlighting the importance of creating a supportive learning environment, offering constructive feedback, and encouraging students to reflect on their experiences and learning.

The learning objectives for students during their placements are categorized into three key areas: Knowledge, Skills, and Attitude.

Knowledge: Students will be expected to demonstrate a sound understanding of clinical concepts, patient care protocols, and evidence-based practices relevant to secondary healthcare. This includes the ability to apply theoretical knowledge in practical situations.

Skills: Students will develop essential clinical skills, including effective communication, clinical assessment, and teamwork. They will learn to perform procedures under supervision and engage in critical thinking and problem-solving within a healthcare environment.

Attitude: Students will cultivate a professional attitude characterized by compassion, empathy, and ethical responsibility. They will learn the importance of cultural competence and patient-centred care, fostering positive interactions with patients and colleagues alike.

Your guidance will be instrumental in helping students achieve these objectives, ensuring they are well-prepared for their future careers in healthcare.

Thank you for your commitment to supporting our students in their educational journey. Your involvement is crucial in helping them gain the confidence and competence needed to excel as compassionate healthcare professionals. We look forward to working together to create meaningful and impactful placement experiences for our students.

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## Physician Associate (PA) and their Role

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### What is a Physician Associate?

'Physician associates (PAs) are clinically trained healthcare professionals who work under supervision and provide medical care as an integral part of the multidisciplinary teams, in community, primary or secondary care. They develop their skills through on-the-job experience, under the day to day supervision of appropriately qualified and experienced clinicians.' - GMC

### What can a PA do?

PAs work alongside the multidisciplinary team to provide medical care to patients, via the supervisory authority of a doctor and can:

- formulate a differential diagnosis based on history and physical examination.
- develop and deliver appropriate treatment and management plans in collaboration with the supervising physician.
- perform diagnostic and therapeutic procedures.
- propose medications (prescribe in time subject to the necessary legislation);
- Request and interpret diagnostic tests

PA training is designed to ensure that PAs are:

- aware of the limits of their competence and committed to acting within these limits.
- highly skilled at working in a multi-professional team environment.
- life-long learners who engage in active professional development.

The PA operates under predetermined supervision levels and adheres to nationally agreed-upon guidelines. Their scope of practice is defined in collaboration with their supervising physician and is limited by the physician's own practice boundaries. While there may be situations where the supervising doctor is not physically present, they remain accessible for consultation.

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## Programme Overview

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Physician Associates participate in a two-year postgraduate master's program aligned with the PA national curriculum (The Competence and Curriculum Framework) and in line with GMC regulations. Students typically hold a first degree in a biomedical or healthcare-related field, and some may already have clinical experience. Students divide their time between practical and simulation-based learning as well as academic coursework.

During year 1, student will cover all of theory as well as primary care placement while year 2 will focus on predominantly secondary care placement.

Over the 2 years of the programme students undertake the following modules:

**All7043 General and Adult Medicine as a Physician Associate**

**All7044 Specialist and Acute Medicine as a Physician Associate**

**All7045 Core Clinical Skills and Applied Knowledge as Physician Associate**

**All7046 Evidence-based Practice for the Advanced Practitioner**

**All 7047 Professional, Personal Development and Patient Safety**

**All7048 Applied Pharmacology**

**All7027 Negotiated Major Project**

**ALL7052 Physician Associate Placement 1 (Primary Care)**

**ALL7061 Physician Associate Placement 2 (Secondary Care)**

**All704X Core Clinical Skills and Applied Knowledge as Physician Associate 2**

Throughout both years of the programme students will be subject to a range of formative and summative assessments. These will be written and practical assessments. In clinical placement assessment will be demonstrated through a placement portfolio. Progression on the programme will depend on successful completion of assessments.

Upon successful completion of all modules and clinical placements students will be eligible to enter the National Physician Associate Examination. This is a two-part assessment comprising a written multiple-choice question single best answer examination and a 14 station OSCE. Candidates must pass both elements to be eligible to enter professional practice. Graduates work in an area of their choosing with a supervising physician, deepening, and refining their professional and clinical skills throughout their professional career.

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### **Expectations from Placement Supervisors**

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As part of our commitment to providing a high-quality learning experience for students, we have established clear expectations for supervisors. These expectations are designed to ensure that students receive the support and guidance they need to develop their skills effectively during their placements. A summary of these expectations is outlined below.

- Ensure a thorough induction is provided to the student and properly documented.
- Conduct an initial interview to assess the student's needs and plan for their development.
- Coordinate with appropriate individuals to work alongside the student, demonstrating and teaching evidence-based practices.

- Oversee the observation and supervision of the student's practice, adhering to the levels of supervision guidelines.
- Provide both verbal and written feedback on the student's progress.
- Document any concerns regarding the student's performance and communicate these with the Secondary Care Placement Lead.

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## **Role of Clinical Placement**

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Clinical placements are essential for preparing Physician Associate (PA) students to address health issues confidently and professionally across diverse healthcare settings. These placements enable students to actively engage with the healthcare team, gaining hands-on experience in patient care rather than simply observing. Supervisors play a crucial role in providing structured learning experiences that enhance students' clinical knowledge, skills, and professional development while fostering a positive and supportive environment.

Supervisors aim to expose students to a variety of medical conditions and patient populations, developing their ability to take comprehensive histories and perform accurate physical examinations. They focus on enhancing students' proficiency in formulating differential diagnoses and management plans while improving their communication skills and understanding of ethical and legal aspects of healthcare. By encouraging critical thinking and professionalism, supervisors help students refine their skills in history-taking, examination, and patient evaluation.

As students progress, their contributions will become increasingly sophisticated, preparing them to confidently take detailed medical histories, conduct thorough exams, and communicate findings effectively. By the end of their placements, they will be equipped to interpret blood results and recommend management strategies, laying a solid foundation for their final exams, the PA National Examination, and safe entry into professional practice.

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## **Placement Dates**

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Students will commence placement in September. This will be full-time for 31 weeks. Monday to Friday 09:00-17:00 unless placement supervisors have indicated otherwise.

We do encourage students to also do their clinical hours during on calls and night shifts to enhance their learning experience but this is not obligatory.

On completion of their 2 year course, with both clinical placement in Primary Care and Secondary care, their total hours should be 1600.

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## Placement Portfolio

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As part of their clinical placements, students will be required to develop and maintain a placement portfolio, which is a vital component of their learning experience. The placement portfolio makes up a significant part of the Physician Associate programme assessment. Continuous assessment is an integral aspect of assessment in practice, and it is expected to show evidence of consistent achievement. It provides a structured format for students to identify their individual learning needs, their assessments, their learning of different skills, direct observation of procedures, their log of their clinical hours and multi-source feedback forms. Overall, the placement portfolio is instrumental in enhancing students' clinical knowledge and skills throughout their placement.

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## Placement Assessments

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During their clinical placements, students will be required to complete a series of assessments to evaluate their progress and competencies. Each placement will involve conducting one initial supervisor meeting to establish expectations and development goals. Students will also engage in one Case-Based Discussion (CBD) to reflect on specific clinical scenarios, as well as complete four Multisource Feedback forms (MSF) to gather input from various members of the healthcare team. Additionally, they will participate in Direct Observations of Procedures (DOPs) to demonstrate their practical skills in real-time and complete one Mini Clinical Evaluation Exercise (CEX) to assess their clinical performance in patient interactions. At the end of the placement, students will undergo a final assessment to summarize their learning outcomes. Throughout this process, they will also maintain an attendance log to document their participation and engagement in the clinical setting. These assessments collectively contribute to their overall development and readiness for professional practice.

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## Learning Outcomes by Specialty

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Overall learning outcomes:

- Perform a range of clinical skills with proficiency, based on contemporary knowledge required for physician associates in a secondary care setting.
- Demonstrate core knowledge, skills, and professional and ethical behaviours necessary to work safely and competently in a secondary care.
- Provide compassionate, patient-centred care in secondary care settings, considering cultural, ethical, and legal aspects while upholding relevant professional standards.
- Demonstrate a critical awareness of interpersonal skills when interacting with patients and other healthcare professionals in secondary care and other professional environments.

- Demonstrate advanced skills in history taking, clinical examination and relevant procedures in secondary care settings, while adhering to recognised standards of their own and others' safety.

During placement, students will come to learn more about conditions that they have already covered during Year 1. They have been divided by specialty in the next few pages of this guide.

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## General Medicine

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### Acute Medicine

#### Knowledge

Upon completion of Secondary Care placement, PA students should know:

- Common acute medical presentations include, but are not limited to, anaemia or blood loss, collapse, cough, falls or fainting, fever, frailty, headache, oedema, pain, shortness of breath, substance withdrawal or overdose, and weight loss.
- Employ a systematic approach to understand the causes of these common presentations, such as classifying breathlessness based on the speed of onset (acute, sub-acute, or chronic).
- Explain and discuss how to differentiate between acute and sub-acute causes of breathlessness through patient history and physical examination.
- Be able to connect the symptoms and signs with the underlying pathophysiological mechanisms.
- Describe the investigations typically used to evaluate acute breathlessness and demonstrate the ability to interpret the results.
- Have a general understanding of the first-line initial management for conditions such as acute severe asthma, COPD exacerbations, acute heart failure, pneumonia, pneumothorax, and pulmonary embolism (PE).
- Describe and apply scoring systems used to assess the likelihood and severity of specific conditions.
- Recognize presenting signs and symptoms that indicate serious conditions requiring immediate attention.
- Understand how patients typically present their issues and the pathways they take to access acute healthcare services.

#### Skills

Upon completion of Secondary Care placement, PA students can do:

- Gathers comprehensive patient histories and conducts examinations for individuals experiencing shortness of breath.
- Works towards developing an appropriate differential diagnosis and establishes a list of problems, accurately summarizing and documenting key aspects of the patient's history, active and potential issues, investigations, and management plans.
- Understands how to prescribe (or transcribe) medications and fluids accurately and clearly.
- Knows how to appropriately prescribe (or transcribe) oxygen, particularly for patients at risk of carbon dioxide retention.
- Identifies situations where arterial blood gas sampling is necessary, recognizes abnormal results, and interprets these findings accurately.

- Conducts peak flow assessments.
- Performs pulse oximetry and understands its limitations.
- Interprets and verbally communicates chest X-ray findings, distinguishing between serious and minor illnesses.
- Able to collect data from multiple family members or other collateral information sources.
- Familiar with techniques to explain illness to patients.
- Provides reassurance and safety nets using evidence-based approaches and structured methods.

## Attitudes

Upon completion of Secondary Care placement, PA students are aware of:

- Understand the process and significance of triage and prioritization.
- Recognize the importance of creating a structured management plan within a specified timeframe.
- Appreciate the significance of maintaining patient flow.
- Acknowledge the critical role of handover and communication, both within and between departments.
- Understand that an acute illness may represent an exacerbation of a chronic condition.
- Recognize the importance of treatment escalation plans and the decision-making process for resuscitation.
- Be familiar with an approach to delivering bad news to patients.
- Understand the reasons why individuals seek healthcare and the triggers and thresholds for consultation.
- Be aware of the pressures facing acute healthcare services and how these impact teamwork and interprofessional collaboration.
- Recognize how a "Physician-PA" team can operate effectively in practice and how PAs can contribute within multidisciplinary teams.
- Understand the professional and clinical competence boundaries of PAs to work most effectively under supervision while ensuring patient safety.

## Cardiology

### Knowledge

Upon completion of Secondary Care placement, PA students should know:

- Understand the management pathway for Acute Coronary Syndrome (ACS), including clinical assessment and routine investigations for chest pain.
- Have knowledge of coronary anatomy.
- Understand the indications for and the pathway leading to Percutaneous Coronary Intervention (PCI).
- Be aware of bradyarrhythmia and the principles of pacing.
- Have a basic understanding of cardiac conduction disorders.

### Skills

Upon completion of Secondary Care placement, PA students can do:

- Record and interpret ECGs.
- Take a history from patients presenting with chest pain.
- Conduct a cardiovascular examination.
- Perform peripheral venous cannulation.

### Attitudes

Upon completion of Secondary Care placement, PA students are aware of:

- Adopt a multidisciplinary approach to the care of patients with Acute Coronary Syndrome (ACS).
- Recognise the importance of prioritising patients based on urgency for investigation and discussing any concerns promptly with a senior.
- Communicate effectively with anxious patients regarding their diagnosis, investigations, and the necessity for long-term medication.
- Understand how a 'Physician-PA' team operates in practice and the role of PAs within multi-professional teams.
- Recognise the professional and clinical competence boundaries of PAs to ensure effective supervision and maximum patient safety.
- Understand how workload, time management, and organisational skills impact performance and patient care.

## Respiratory

### Knowledge

Upon completion of Secondary Care placement, PA students should know:

- Familiarity with common lung diseases and their primary presenting symptoms.
- Important questions to differentiate the causes of breathlessness.
- Basic investigations used to assess breathlessness.
- Understand the limitations of pulse oximetry.
- Management strategies for both acute and chronic COPD
- Management strategies for both acute and chronic asthma.
- Understand the role of non-invasive ventilation in the management of COPD.

### Skills

Upon completion of Secondary Care placement, PA students can do:

- Systematic interpretation of chest X-rays and identification of common abnormalities.
- Elicit and differentiate between common clinical signs of respiratory disease, such as crackles, consolidation, pleural effusion, and pneumothorax.
- Describe and conduct basic interpretation of spirometry results.
- Understand how to manage hypoxemic patients with oxygen therapy, including controlled oxygen therapy for COPD.
- Determine the most likely differential diagnosis of breathlessness for an individual patient based on their history, examination findings, and investigations.

### Attitudes

Upon completion of Secondary Care placement, PA students are aware of:

- Employ a multidisciplinary approach to respiratory care.
- Recognise the importance of prioritising patients, including initial management and promptly discussing any concerns with a senior colleague.
- Appreciate the psychological and social impacts of chronic respiratory disease.
- Understand the palliative aspects of managing severe lung disease and lung cancer.
- Be aware of the professional and clinical competence boundaries of PAs to ensure effective supervision and optimal patient safety.

## Gastrointestinal

### Knowledge

Upon completion of Secondary Care placement, PA students should know:

- Familiarity with the anatomy of the gastrointestinal (GI) tract and the hepatobiliary system.
- Knowledge of common GI diseases encountered in secondary care.
- Understand the causes, diagnosis, and initial management of an acute gastrointestinal bleed.
- Grasp the diagnostic and management principles for iron-deficiency anaemia.
- Comprehend the causes, diagnosis, and management principles of acute inflammatory bowel disease.
- Understand the causes, diagnosis, and management principles related to acute liver disease.

### Skills

Upon completion of Secondary Care placement, PA students can do:

- Taking a thorough gastrointestinal (GI) history.
- Conducting a proficient GI examination, including a per rectal (PR) examination.
- Effectively assessing the severity of diseases such as gastrointestinal bleeding, inflammatory bowel disease (IBD), and liver disease.
- Providing competent immediate resuscitation and understanding the long-term management principles for patients with gastrointestinal and hepatobiliary conditions.

### Attitudes

Upon completion of Secondary Care placement, PA students are aware of:

- Adopting a multidisciplinary approach to gastroenterology care.
- Recognising the importance of prioritisation, including initial management and timely discussions with a senior clinician.
- Understanding the psychological and social impacts of chronic gastrointestinal conditions.
- Maintaining a non-judgmental and empathetic attitude towards patients and their families.
- Understanding the professional and clinical competence boundaries of PAs to ensure effective supervision and the utmost safety for patients.

## Neurology

### Knowledge

Upon completion of Secondary Care placement, PA students should know:

- Acquire knowledge of the essential clinically relevant anatomy of the nervous system and its connection to the pathophysiology of neurological disorders.
- Understand common neurological conditions and their clinical presentations (including stroke, transient ischaemic attack (TIA), Bell's palsy, tremors, migraines, subarachnoid haemorrhage, meningitis (both bacterial and viral), and seizures). Develop an approach to distinguish between these neurological conditions through patient history, examination, and investigations.
- Appreciate the principles of diagnosis and management for these conditions.
- Be aware of other important but less common neurological disorders, such as central nervous system inflammatory diseases, acute polyneuropathies, neuromuscular disorders, and motor neurone disease.

### Skills

Upon completion of Secondary Care placement, PA students can do:

- Gather a thorough history and conduct a proficient neurological examination, concentrating on identifying the clinical features of various conditions.

### Attitudes

Upon completion of Secondary Care placement, PA students are aware of:

- Employ a mental framework for approaching neurological cases, structuring thought processes around the following aspects:
  - Where is the lesion? Distinguishing between upper and lower motor neurone involvement.
  - What is the mechanism behind the problem? For example, applying a surgical sieve.
  - What is the lesion? Considering factors like speed of onset and the lesion's location.
- Recognise the challenges in assessing patients with language or cognitive difficulties resulting from neurological conditions.
- Understand the role and significance of multidisciplinary teams (MDTs) in the acute and chronic management of neurological disorders.
- Acknowledge the broader social and familial implications of neurological diseases.
- Appreciate the uncertain nature of many neurological conditions.
- Recognise the professional and clinical competence boundaries of PAs to work effectively under supervision and ensure patient safety.
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## Endocrinology

### Knowledge

Upon completion of Secondary Care placement, PA students should know:

- Familiarity with common endocrine disorders and their primary presenting symptoms (e.g., diabetes mellitus, thyroid disorders, adrenal insufficiency).
- Important questions to differentiate between types of hormonal imbalances.
- Basic investigations used to assess endocrine function, including blood tests for hormone levels.
- Understand the implications of common metabolic disorders, such as hyperglycaemia and hypoglycaemia.
- Management strategies for both acute and chronic endocrine conditions.
- The role of patient education in managing chronic endocrine diseases, particularly regarding lifestyle modifications and medication adherence.

### Skills

Upon completion of Secondary Care placement, PA students can do:

- Conduct a thorough endocrine history and perform a competent physical examination, focusing on signs of hormonal dysfunction (e.g., signs of hyperthyroidism or Cushing's syndrome).
- Interpret basic laboratory results related to endocrine function, including thyroid function tests and glucose levels.
- Develop and implement initial management plans for patients with common endocrine disorders, including medication adjustments and lifestyle recommendations.
- Recognise and manage acute endocrine emergencies (e.g., diabetic ketoacidosis, adrenal crisis).
- Communicate effectively with patients regarding their conditions, treatment plans, and the importance of follow-up care.

### Attitudes

Upon completion of Secondary Care placement, PA students are aware of:

- The importance of a multidisciplinary approach to endocrinology care.
- The need for prioritisation in patient management and timely communication with seniors.
- The psychological and social impacts of chronic endocrine disorders.
- The significance of patient education in promoting self-management.
- The professional and clinical competence boundaries of PAs for effective supervision and patient safety.

### Emergency Medicine

#### Knowledge

Upon completion of Secondary Care placement, PA students should know:

- Understand the structure and operational processes of an emergency department.
- Familiarise yourself with key principles of resuscitation, symptom relief, and the identification of life-threatening conditions in the ED.
- Recall the prioritised approach to resuscitation in cases of life-threatening illness.
- Learn about pain relief techniques in the ED, including the analgesic ladder and non-pharmacological methods.
- Elicit and interpret symptoms and signs indicative of acute illness.
- Know how to access and apply common ED guidelines, tools, and algorithms.

#### Skills

Upon completion of Secondary Care placement, PA students can do:

- Prioritise acutely unwell patients with guidance from senior staff.
- Conduct an A to E assessment as a fundamental skill.
- Take a thorough patient history to inform clinical decisions.
- Recognise the variety of practical procedures conducted in the ED, including:
  - Venepuncture and IV cannulation
  - Performing and interpreting blood gas analyses
  - Performing and interpreting ECGs
  - Inserting a urinary catheter
  - Observing and performing wound care and closure (using glue or sutures)

#### Attitudes

Upon completion of Secondary Care placement, PA students are aware of:

- Understand the significance of ED triage and observe its implementation.
- Recognise the importance of multi-professional teamwork and the role of effective communication within the ED and across other specialties.
- Explain the reasons why patients seek care in the ED for primary care issues.
- Discuss various radiological modalities relevant to the ED, including their indications, limitations, and potential risks.
- Acknowledge that excluding serious or life-threatening conditions takes precedence over uncertainty in the ED.

- Understand the importance of timely referrals to the appropriate specialty, even in cases where the diagnosis remains unclear.
- Recognise the principles of safety netting upon discharge home.
- Be aware of personal learning needs and commit to lifelong learning.
- Understand how a MDT team operates in practice and the role of PAs within multi-professional teams.
- Recognise the professional and clinical competence boundaries of PAs.

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## General Surgery

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### Knowledge

Upon completion of Secondary Care placement, PA students should know:

- Understand the range of acute and planned general surgical conditions.
- Have a foundational knowledge of common surgical conditions and their respective investigations.
- Understand the physiology of fluid and cardiovascular homeostasis.
- Gain a comprehensive understanding of the various types of shock.
- Develop an approach to managing the acutely unwell surgical patient, including blood and fluid management during resuscitation, analgesic requirements, appropriate use of antibiotics, early senior involvement, and the necessity for surgery.
- Understand preventive measures and monitoring strategies as required.

### Skills

Upon completion of Secondary Care placement, PA students can do:

- Take a comprehensive history related to an abdominal or general surgical complaint, as well as a perioperative history.
- Conduct a thorough general and gastrointestinal examination, including assessment of the tender abdomen, identification of peritonitis, and additional tests such as urinalysis and pregnancy tests.
- Develop a differential diagnosis for abdominal pain or acute abdomen.
- Create an initial management plan that includes necessary investigations and perioperative fluid requirements and management.
- Demonstrate the ability to recognise common perioperative issues and identify acutely unwell patients, knowing when to seek assistance.
- Understand the significance of accurate documentation.

### Attitudes

Upon completion of Secondary Care placement, PA students are aware of:

- Demonstrate attention to detail along with a systematic and thorough approach to addressing surgical complaints and managing perioperative patients.
- Recognise the limitations and competence boundaries of the PA role, seeking senior support when dealing with acutely unwell or complex patients.
- Understand the principles of safety netting upon discharge home.
- Be aware of personal learning needs and embrace lifelong learning principles.
- Recognise the professional and clinical competence boundaries of PAs.

### Knowledge

Upon completion of Secondary Care placement, PA students should know:

- Understand the normal developmental milestones in childhood to identify any abnormalities.
- Be familiar with the normal values for heart rate, respiratory rate, and blood pressure across different age groups in children.
- Know the appropriate steps to take if there are any safeguarding concerns.
- Recognise the normal fluid requirements for children and understand feeding issues, such as intolerances and absorption difficulties.
- Identify and comprehend the approach to and initial management of children presenting with common acute and chronic conditions (e.g., fever and febrile convulsions, vomiting, gastroenteritis, urinary tract infections, rashes, abdominal pain, constipation, common neonatal issues, asthma, diabetes mellitus, epilepsy, and mental health concerns).
- Appreciate the roles of other professionals, including health visitors, psychiatrists, midwives (during the neonatal period), childcare services, and community paediatricians.

### Skills

Upon completion of Secondary Care placement, PA students can do:

- Understand how to take a comprehensive paediatric history
- Learn how to approach and engage with a child to facilitate a useful examination.
- Familiarise with the examination process for new-borns and the six-week check-up.
- Recognise acutely unwell patients and know when to seek assistance.
- Accurately document the findings from a paediatric history, examination, investigations, and ongoing management plans.
- Determine the appropriate investigations for children presenting with common acute illnesses.

### Attitudes

Upon completion of Secondary Care placement, PA students are aware of:

- Demonstrate attention to detail along with a systematic and thorough approach to assessing and managing paediatric patients.
- Recognise effective communication strategies with patients, parents, and healthcare professionals within a multidisciplinary team context.
- Appreciate the importance of patient confidentiality and rights.
- Be aware of the professional and clinical competence boundaries of PAs to work effectively under supervision while ensuring patient safety.

Obstetrics

**Knowledge**

Upon completion of Secondary Care placement, PA students should know:

**Early Pregnancy Care (Early Pregnancy Clinic):**

- Understand the principles involved in managing first-trimester miscarriages.
- Recognize the risk factors associated with ectopic pregnancy and the identification and management of a woman suspected of having an ectopic pregnancy.
- Recall safe prescribing practices throughout pregnancy.

**Antenatal Care (Antenatal Clinic, Obstetric Ultrasound, and Obstetric Wards):**

- Comprehend the principles of routine antenatal care for low-risk pregnancies.
- Identify factors during pregnancy or in the pregnant woman's medical history that are associated with an increased risk of complications during the antenatal, intrapartum, or postnatal periods.
- Understand the recognition and management principles for ectopic pregnancy and the acute recognition and management of a ruptured ectopic pregnancy.
- Recognize how common pre-existing medical conditions affect pregnant women and the foetus, as well as how pregnancy can influence these medical conditions (including heart disease, diabetes, hypertension, asthma, epilepsy, inflammatory bowel disease, and obesity).
- Define the routine ultrasound screening tests offered to all pregnant women.
- Outline the indications for non-routine obstetric ultrasound.

**Intrapartum Care (Central Delivery Suite, Caesarean Section Triage):**

- Define the stages of labour and understand how to manage low-risk labour.
- Recognize the clinical features and understand the management principles for pre-eclampsia, small-for-gestational-age foetuses, and obstetric cholestasis.
- Understand the aetiology and clinical recognition of common labour complications, including antepartum haemorrhage, placental abruption, prolonged rupture of membranes, premature labour, slow progress, breech presentation, and foetal distress, and be aware of their management principles.

- Comprehend the indications for and the processes involved in induced labour and caesarean delivery.
- Identify the clinical features and understand the management principles for common obstetric emergencies, such as shoulder dystocia, eclampsia, postpartum haemorrhage, and cord prolapse.

#### **Postnatal Care (Central Delivery Suite, Obstetric Wards, and Urogynaecology Clinic):**

- Understand the principles of common postnatal care, including perineal care, bladder care, pelvic floor exercises, and care following a caesarean section.
- Recognize the types of trauma affecting pelvic floor organs and the associated short- and long-term complications.
- Understand the normal and pathological aspects of the puerperium, including lochia, lactation, and sepsis.
- Recognize and understand the management principles for long-term complications of obstetric trauma to the pelvic organs, including utero-vaginal prolapse, urinary and faecal incontinence, and perineal pain.

#### **Skills**

Upon completion of Secondary Care placement, PA students can do:

- Identify the critically ill pregnant patient and initiate resuscitation measures while promptly consulting with a senior doctor and obstetrician.
- Obtain a thorough history from a pregnant patient and conduct a competent examination.
- Generate a valid list of differential diagnoses and initiate treatment if appropriate.
- Understand and implement an appropriate safety netting plan upon discharge.

#### **Attitudes**

Upon completion of Secondary Care placement, PA students are aware of:

- Acknowledge the significance of thromboembolic complications during pregnancy and maintain communication with obstetric teams throughout the diagnostic and management processes.
- Promptly discuss patient care with a senior clinician.
- Understand how a MDT team operates in practice and how PAs can contribute within multidisciplinary teams.
- Be aware of the professional and clinical competence boundaries of PAs to work effectively under supervision while ensuring the utmost safety for patients.
- Recognise the importance of workload management, time management, and organisation.

## Gynaecology

### Knowledge

Upon completion of Secondary Care placement, PA students should know:

- Understand the aetiology, risk factors, clinical recognition, and management of common gynaecological issues.
- Recognise, understand, and be able to provide initial management (including appropriate referral) for common 'red flag' presentations in significant gynaecological conditions. Be familiar with the principles of managing premenstrual syndrome.
- Recognise and understand the management principles for common conditions affecting the uterus such as fibroids, endometriosis, and polyps.
- Recognise and understand the management principles for common conditions affecting the cervix such as dysplasia, cervicitis, and cervical cancer.
- Recognise and understand the management principles for common conditions affecting the vagina and vulva.

### Skills

Upon completion of Secondary Care placement, PA students can do:

- Gather a thorough gynaecological history.
- Conduct a competent gynaecological examination, including a speculum examination.
- Generate a comprehensive list of differential diagnoses.
- Initiate treatment and make referrals when necessary.
- Understand and implement an appropriate safety netting plan upon discharge.

### Attitudes

Upon completion of Secondary Care placement, PA students are aware of:

- Acknowledge the significance of preserving privacy and dignity in all patient interactions within a gynaecology setting.
- Communicate clearly and thoroughly with gynaecological teams throughout the diagnostic and management processes.
- Be aware of the professional and clinical competence boundaries of PAs to work effectively under supervision while ensuring the highest level of patient safety.
- Recognise how workload, time management, and organisational skills impact performance and patient care.
- Understand and identify personal strengths and learning challenges based on clinical experiences.

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## Mental Health

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### Knowledge

Upon completion of Secondary Care placement, PA students should know:

- Understand the prevalence, clinical presentation, progression, and prognosis of common psychiatric conditions.
- Learn how to diagnose and treat or refer individuals with common mental health disorders, including depression, bipolar disorder, generalized anxiety disorder, schizophrenia, phobias, panic disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder, eating disorders, substance use disorders, and behavioural/emotional issues (such as acute stress reactions, bereavement, deliberate self-harm, domestic violence, and vulnerable abuse).
- Be knowledgeable about the epidemiology of prevalent mental health disorders.
- Familiarise with the multifactorial model that considers biological, psychological, social, and cultural factors contributing to the aetiology of common mental disorders.
- Understand the current standard treatments for psychiatric conditions, which include medications, electroconvulsive therapy (ECT), counselling/psychotherapy, and lifestyle interventions.
- Know the responsibilities of mental health practitioners and the rights of patients under mental health and mental capacity legislation.
- Summarise the primary categories of psychiatric disorders as classified in ICD-10.
- Describe the range of services and professionals involved in the care of individuals with mental illness.

### Skills

Upon completion of Secondary Care placement, PA students can do:

- Take a comprehensive psychiatric history, conduct a mental state examination (including assessments for suicidal risk and cognitive function), document the case (covering aetiological factors, differential diagnoses, and a management plan), and present this information concisely to a senior clinician.
- Provide immediate care in psychiatric emergencies that may arise in psychiatric units, general hospitals, primary care, or other environments.
- Empathetically screen for common mental illnesses in non-psychiatric settings and identify situations where medically unexplained symptoms may have psychological origins. Communicate effectively and compassionately with patients, families, and colleagues.
- Assess the impact of mental illness on the individual, their family, and those around them. Evaluate a patient's mental capacity to make decisions in accordance with GMC guidelines.

## Attitudes

Upon completion of Secondary Care placement, PA students are aware of:

- Adhere to ethical and legal principles, including but not limited to those established by the Faculty of Physician Associates within the Royal College of Physicians and the GMC.
- Ensure patient and personal safety, recognizing the limits of one's own and the PA profession's competencies and seeking assistance when needed.
- Acknowledge that mental health conditions are as important as physical illnesses.
- Treat psychiatric patients with the same high standards of care as other patients, being aware of stigma and prepared to raise concerns as necessary.
- Recognize the value of a multidisciplinary team (MDT) approach in all clinical settings.
- Be aware of personal learning needs and embrace the principles of lifelong learning.
- Understand how a "Physician-PA" team can operate effectively in practice and how PAs can contribute within multidisciplinary teams.
- Recognize the professional and clinical competence boundaries of PAs

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## Supervising Students on Placement

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Upon entering the hospital practice setting, Physician Associate (PA) students have already gained foundational knowledge and experience during their first year. This placement in year two is designed to build their confidence, enhance their clinical skills, and encourage professional growth. Although they possess theoretical knowledge, they will still require support and guidance as they apply this knowledge in a practical environment.

Key Points for Supervisors and Clinical Teams Working with PA Students:

### 1. Supervision and Integration:

- Assign an overall GP supervisor or designated consultant for each PA student.
- PA students should collaborate with the entire multidisciplinary team within the hospital setting.
- The initial days involve familiarizing students with various clinical staff, administrative teams, and the hospital's operational structure.

### 2. Clinical Supervisor:

- A named clinician (Clinical Supervisor) will coordinate clinical supervision and learning experiences.
- A deputy supervisor should be available to cover for any leave or absences.

### 3. Shadowing and Learning:

- Initially, PA students will shadow and observe different members of the clinical team across various departments.
- Gradually, they will transition to taking patient histories, conducting examinations, and presenting their findings to their supervisors.
- Early presentations should focus on straightforward cases to help build their confidence and refine their consultation skills.

### 4. Skill Development:

- PA students should only perform examinations and procedures they have been taught and assessed on during their first year.
- Over time, they will progress to fully clerking patients, formulating differential diagnoses, discussing medication options, suggesting management plans, and interpreting investigations.

### 5. Challenges and Growth:

- Encourage critical thinking by challenging their patient presentations and management plans.
- While their theoretical knowledge originates from university, clinical skills will develop through real patient interactions and active participation in the hospital setting.

By the end of the hospital placement, PA students should be able to conduct patient assessments confidently, demonstrate effective diagnostic skills, and contribute meaningfully to patient care, bridging the gap between theory and practice. This training is essential for their professional competence and highlights the hospital's crucial role in preparing future healthcare professionals for the workforce. Throughout the placement, students will engage with a diverse range of patients across various settings, including inpatient wards, outpatient clinics, and emergency departments. They will perform appropriate examinations, present their findings to supervisors, and develop differential diagnoses and management plans as they progress.

Students in the hospital setting should have opportunities to:

- Take comprehensive histories (including virtual, telephone, and face-to-face)
- Perform examinations under supervision and, as their confidence grows, independently
- Present their findings to consultants or other healthcare professionals
- Discuss differential diagnoses and management plans, including medications and referrals
- Engage in health promotion and disease prevention activities
- Complete DOPs and acquire experience in specific conditions as required
- Receive on-site teaching and mentorship, if available
- Benefit from appropriate supervision throughout their clinical activities
- Bring necessary forms and documentation for completion
- Be proactive in seeking out learning opportunities

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### Key Contact Details

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### In the event of student concerns

Occasionally, staff members—including clinical, academic, support, and administrative personnel—may have concerns regarding individual students. These concerns can range from students appearing withdrawn, which may raise worries for a staff member, to instances of inappropriate attitudes or behaviours. Placement providers are encouraged to reach out to the program team as soon as possible to report any concerns.

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