Use of iPads for Objective Structured Practical Examination (OSPE) to assess clinically-related science skills

Prof Alison Jenkinson (a.jenkinson@abdn.ac.uk), Medi-CAL Unit (medical@abdn.ac.uk) & Dr Derek Scott (d.scott@abdn.ac.uk) University of Aberdeen, College of Life Sciences and Medicine, Forresterhill, Aberdeen, AB25 2ZD

OSPE – assess theoretical, practical and problem-solving skills at multiple stations

Phlebotomy station - assess communication skills when undertaking a complex task. Paper-based system time consuming to collate and feedback to students

Could iPad technology be used to optimise quality and speed of feedback to students and minimise variation between examiners?

Marking criteria structured and published in advance

Students receive the same test and interaction with different examiners

Outcomes & Conclusions

• Examiner marks were reviewed showing greater consistency between examiners.
• Overall student performance on questions can now be evaluated to assess whether particular aspects are more challenging or particular questions more difficult.
• Numerical and text based feedback returned within 2 days of the final assessment in comparison with 2 weeks the year before.

The App

• Subjective scoring replaced with clearly defined marking criteria.
• Questions structured – improved consistency between examiners.
• Marking scheme (positive and negative marks) not visible to examiners
• Comments added manually in final section
• Different styles of assessment and feedback utilised
• Marks and comments quickly downloaded to spreadsheets after examination

Phlebotomy station - assess communication skills when undertaking a complex task. Paper-based system time consuming to collate and feedback to students

• Speed of feedback and detail of comments was reported to be useful for preparation for research projects and other practical classes.
• Further developments of the app are planned to ease navigation, automatically time the station and also include common feedback statements which will enhance the quality of examiners comments.