HIGH STAKES ONLINE OSCES IN A PANDEMIC

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Background:
Objective Structured Clinical Examinations (OSCEs) are utilised at Aston University to ensure students possess the core competencies to enter into foundation pharmacy training. Traditionally live face-to-face assessments, an alternative online format was required due to the impact of COVID-19.

Objective/Aim:
The aim was to run an eight station OSCE online for final year Master of Pharmacy (MPharm) and Overseas Pharmacists' Assessment Programme (OSPAP) students.

Design:
Multiple delivery methods and platforms were trailed by staff and volunteer students before a team led the design stages blueprinting, approving and standard setting of eight 10minute OSCE stations:
- three oral synchronous interactive using Blackboard Collaborate
- one asynchronous interactive and four asynchronous independent tasks delivered as Blackboard tests.

Learning from a previous study (Kakadia et al. 2020), staff were given preparation in a practice environment, multiple streams were used to reduce student traffic in the live assessment, clear lines of staff communication were signposted and additional staff were on standby. Additional time was built into the design to allow for flexibility. Students were orientated with practice stations employing the same format and given required resources in advance. Multiple matched versions of stations were written to ensure assessment integrity.

Results:
MPharm students undertook an exemption assessment and were eligible for two further attempts, the results can be seen in Table 1 (right).
Only two students had technical issues that resulted in their attempt being deferred to week 26. Other technical issues did not affect the assessment outcome for the students. Overall, 158 MPharm and 19 OSPAP students completed the OSCEs by week 28 with pass rates of 99.4% and 100% respectively. No complaints were received from staff or students, and all sittings ran to time. Initial positive comments from staff and students highlighted: clarity of instruction, preparation provided and general organisation.

Discussion:
Extensive planning and preparation with staff and students ensured smooth delivery of OSCEs with minimal technical issues. This format will be considered as part of a blended approach moving forwards due to the efficacy and acceptability to both staff and students.

Week	Number of Students engaging	Number of staff employed	Number of parallel streams	Number of technical issues reported	Number of students passing
24	152	60	7	6	127 (83.6%)
26	31	26	3	3	27 (87%)
28	4	11	1	0	3 (75%)

Table 1. Outcomes of the OSCE assessments

References:
Kakadia, R, Chen, E, Ohyama, H. Implementing an online OSCE during the COVID-19 pandemic. *J Dent Educ*. 2020; 1– 3. https://doi.org/10.1002/jdd.12323

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