

Evidence architecture: mapping, triangulation and proportionality

Build a navigable portfolio in which every claim is supported, limitations are visible and the evaluator can find the decisive evidence quickly.

- ✓ 18 min reading
- ✓ Full teaching, practical next steps and reflection
- ✓ Six practice questions with answers and explanations
- ✓ Complete source list and jurisdiction notes

Prepared for SAS, locally employed and other UK doctors

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Using this module

Independent education

This is general professional information, not individual clinical, legal, employment, immigration, regulatory, tax or pensions advice. Current official instructions and the circumstances of the individual case remain controlling. Practice scores do not establish professional competence or accreditation.

The short answer

A strong portfolio is an argument supported by organised evidence, not an archive. Each curriculum claim should identify the most direct evidence, corroboration, date, context, verifier and exact page.

Triangulation increases confidence; repetition and volume do not automatically do so.

Three next actions

- Create a master index linking every outcome to the strongest primary and corroborating evidence.
- Remove duplicates and explain samples, abbreviations, local systems and evidence limitations.
- Ask an independent reviewer to locate and understand a set of claims using only the map.

Learning objectives

- Construct a claim-evidence-outcome chain.
- Use triangulation without unnecessary duplication.
- Apply proportionality and evaluator-centred navigation.

Build a claim-evidence-outcome chain

For each curriculum outcome, write a concise claim about the capability demonstrated. Cite the evidence item and exact page or section, describe the context and level, and state why it supports the outcome. The evidence should allow an evaluator to test the claim rather than accept an assertion.

Where evidence is indirect, say so and add stronger corroboration. Avoid circular evidence, such as a personal statement relying only on another personal summary written by the same applicant.

- State the capability claimed.
- Cite exact evidence and page.
- Explain relevance and limitation.

Triangulate intelligently

Triangulation means different sources support the same capability from different perspectives: direct observation, activity data, outcome review and supervisor synthesis. Three near-identical letters based on the same information add less than independent evidence from different contexts.

Use multiple assessors when appropriate, especially for behaviour and breadth. Explain whether evidence is contemporaneous or retrospective and whether the writer directly observed the work.

- Use different evidence methods.
- Use independent observers where possible.
- Declare retrospective evidence.

Select proportionate evidence

Every item should earn its place. A representative sample can demonstrate scope more clearly than hundreds of repetitive pages. Follow any GMC or specialty page limits, accepted formats and document requirements. Use summaries to describe the denominator, then provide assessable examples.

Remove administrative clutter, duplicate copies and material that does not answer an outcome. Proportionality is not minimalism: a complex or weakly observed capability may need more evidence than a straightforward one.

- Prioritise decisive evidence.
- Explain sampling.
- Use more where risk or complexity justifies it.

Explain unfamiliar context

Evaluators may not know an overseas hospital, local grade, rota, electronic system or governance process. Briefly explain the organisation, service, patient population, supervision, responsibility and how local terminology relates to the UK outcome. Do not assume a title translates directly.

Use neutral factual context and an abbreviation glossary. Where a document uses local scoring, explain the scale and who assessed it. Translation of language is separate from explanation of organisational meaning.

- Translate context, not just words.
- Define abbreviations once.
- Do not overstate equivalence of titles.

Handle limitations and conflicting evidence

Evidence can contain different dates, role descriptions or performance views. Resolve genuine errors where authorised and explain legitimate differences. Never alter an original to create consistency. A transparent account of a limitation is safer than hoping it will not be noticed.

If an adverse event, low score or complaint is relevant, show context, response, learning and current evidence. Do not omit required information or flood the portfolio with defensive material unrelated to the outcome.

- Preserve originals.
- Explain discrepancies.
- Show learning and current position.

Test the portfolio before submission

Use a structured review by someone who understands the current specialty standard but has not built every file. Ask them to sample outcomes, locate evidence, challenge level and identify assumptions. A supporter who knows the applicant well may miss navigational problems.

Record findings, decisions and changes. The review should not promise success; it should test whether the portfolio is complete, coherent, verifiable and proportionate.

- Use an unfamiliar reviewer.
- Sample across all domains.
- Turn feedback into controlled changes.

Common mistake

Avoid this

Uploading everything available can bury decisive evidence, create contradictions and shift the burden of interpretation onto the evaluator.

Pause and reflect

Could a reviewer unfamiliar with your workplace find the best evidence for a sampled outcome in under two minutes?

Takeaways

- Every curriculum claim needs a traceable evidence chain.
- Triangulation uses different perspectives, not repeated assertions.
- Proportionate, explained and independently tested evidence is easier to evaluate.

Knowledge check

Choose one best answer. These practice questions support reflection; they do not assess a real case or confer accreditation. Answer positions match the browser edition.

1. What makes an evidence-map row useful?

- A. A precise claim, exact reference and explanation of relevance
- B. A list of certificates
- C. A broad claim that evidence exists somewhere
- D. A filename alone

2. Which set provides stronger triangulation for clinical judgement?

- A. Three copied testimonials
- B. Three attendance certificates
- C. Observed assessments, case outcomes and a longitudinal supervisor report
- D. A long unverified case list

3. Why might fewer documents be stronger?

- A. The GMC rewards short applications regardless of content
- B. A shorter bundle removes the need to follow the specialty's submission requirements
- C. References replace evidence
- D. If they are representative, assessed and clearly mapped, they reduce noise without losing proof

4. An overseas assessment says 'senior registrar level' without explanation. What should be added?

- A. A longer job title
- B. A claim it equals UK CCT
- C. Nothing
- D. The actual scope, responsibility, supervision and assessment standard

5. Two documents describe different levels of supervision. What should the applicant do?

- A. Ask referees to use identical wording
- B. Investigate and explain the difference with reliable evidence
- C. Omit both without explanation
- D. Edit one document

6. What is the best question for a pre-submission reviewer?

- A. Can you sign every file?
- B. Can you verify this outcome from the cited evidence without relying on what you know about me?
- C. Do you think I deserve registration?
- D. Is the portfolio impressive?

Answers and explanations

1. A — A precise claim, exact reference and explanation of relevance

A precise claim, exact reference and explanation of relevance This follows the principle explained in “Build a claim-evidence-outcome chain”.

Re-read “Build a claim-evidence-outcome chain” and write down the evidence or decision you would need before acting.

2. C — Observed assessments, case outcomes and a longitudinal supervisor report

Observed assessments, case outcomes and a longitudinal supervisor report This follows the principle explained in “Triangulate intelligently”.

Re-read “Triangulate intelligently” and write down the evidence or decision you would need before acting.

3. D — If they are representative, assessed and clearly mapped, they reduce noise without losing proof

If they are representative, assessed and clearly mapped, they reduce noise without losing proof This follows the principle explained in “Select proportionate evidence”.

Re-read “Select proportionate evidence” and write down the evidence or decision you would need before acting.

4. D — The actual scope, responsibility, supervision and assessment standard

The actual scope, responsibility, supervision and assessment standard This follows the principle explained in “Explain unfamiliar context”.

Re-read “Explain unfamiliar context” and write down the evidence or decision you would need before acting.

5. B — Investigate and explain the difference with reliable evidence

Investigate and explain the difference with reliable evidence This follows the principle explained in “Handle limitations and conflicting evidence”.

Re-read “Handle limitations and conflicting evidence” and write down the evidence or decision you would need before acting.

6. B — Can you verify this outcome from the cited evidence without relying on what you know about me?

Can you verify this outcome from the cited evidence without relying on what you know about me? This follows the principle explained in “Test the portfolio before submission”.

Re-read “Test the portfolio before submission” and write down the evidence or decision you would need before acting.

Official and professional sources

Confirm the current source version and applicable nation, contract, scheme or specialty. A source list is not a statement that every rule applies to every reader.

GMC: [specialist/GP registration overview and application route finder](#)

UK · <https://www.gmc-uk.org/registration-and-licensing/join-our-registers/applying-for-specialist-or-gp-registration>

GMC: [Information for Responsible Officers and supporters](#)

UK · https://www.gmc-uk.org/cdn/documents/portfolio-pathway-applications---information-for-responsible-officers---dc21350_pdf-104695809.pdf

BMA: [Portfolio pathway programme](#)

UK · <https://www.bma.org.uk/media/s0gpek3u/bma-february-2025-portfolio-pathway-programme.pdf>

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