

PRACTICAL WORKBOOK 02

Specialist progression: panel & interview workbook

Prepare concise, evidence-based answers to the questions most likely to test scope, judgement, service need and credibility.

Independent educational
resource

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How to use it

Write in this workbook before completing the official form or preparing for the panel. The prompts help organise your own evidence; they are not model answers and do not determine eligibility.

Important

The current official all-Wales policy and application form take precedence. Do not include patient-identifiable information or material you are not authorised to share. Seek individual employment, professional, union or legal advice when needed.

What the panel conversation is for

A discussion or interview allows the panel to clarify the written case. It should not become a memory test or a competition to sound senior.

- Know the exact scope for which progression is sought.
- Know the strongest evidence for each major capability claim.
- Keep capability and service need separate.
- Answer within your real boundaries and explain safe escalation.
- Acknowledge missing evidence honestly and identify a route to verification.
- Use non-identifiable examples and maintain professional confidentiality.

Policy safeguard

The all-Wales policy says no doctor should be rejected without an interview, although an interview is not required where the written application already demonstrates acceptance.

Prepare six to eight reusable evidence stories

Story	Capability	Decision / action	Impact / learning	Evidence ID
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				

The two-minute answer

A measured answer lets the panel hear the judgement without being forced to interrupt. Use four parts and stop when the question is answered.

Part	Purpose	Useful phrase
1. Scope	Set the exact context and your responsibility.	"Within my defined role, I am responsible for..."
2. Evidence	State the action and where it is verified.	"This is shown in E04 and E09, covering..."
3. Judgement	Explain risk, decision, boundary and escalation.	"I decided... because...; I escalated when..."
4. Impact	Give the result, learning and limitation.	"The effect was...; the limitation is...; next I..."

Answer-control checklist

- Listen to the whole question.
- Give the conclusion first.
- Use one strong example unless asked for more.
- Name your own contribution in team work.
- Avoid absolute claims such as never, always or fully autonomous.
- Pause after the answer. Do not fill silence with new material.

PRACTISE ONE TWO-MINUTE ANSWER

Question

—

Scope

—

Evidence

—

Judgement and boundaries

—

Impact, learning and limitation

—

Autonomy, scope and consultant distinction

Panel question	What a strong answer should do	Avoid
You work under a named consultant. How is this autonomous?	Separate named oversight from routine case-by-case permission. Define independent decisions, evidence and appropriate escalation.	Claiming never to seek advice.
Only part of your week appears Specialist level.	Quantify the recurring work, responsibility, duration and evidence. Refer to the policy treatment of partial Specialist-level work.	Inflating all duties to the same level.
Your scope is narrow.	Explain depth, continuity and boundaries within the actual role.	Claiming the whole specialty.
Is this consultant equivalence?	Define the Specialist scope and acknowledge potentially wider consultant accountability.	Comparing yourself with named colleagues.

YOUR SCOPE ANSWERS

Two independent decisions and their evidence

-
-

One appropriate escalation showing safe judgement

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-

The precise boundary of the proposed Specialist scope

-
-

A one-sentence distinction from consultant equivalence

-
-

Service need and manager concerns

Challenge	Response structure
There is no service need.	Ask what is disputed: requirement, level, duration or evidence. Then give the objective work, responsibility, frequency, consequence and source.
There is no funded post.	Remain focused on the policy tests. Budget alone is not a refusal reason, but still evidence the service work and need.
The manager did not support the application.	State the written reasons fairly. Respond to each criterion with evidence or acknowledge a genuine development action. Avoid personal allegations.
The work could be done at Specialty Doctor level.	Explain the clinical responsibility, judgement, complexity, governance and service consequence that make the defined work Specialist level.
SERVICE-NEED RESPONSE	
The service activity and responsibility — —	
Frequency, duration and operational consequence — —	
Objective evidence IDs — —	
The exact disputed point and your concise response — —	

Leadership, QI, governance and education

Topic	Evidence story structure
Leadership	Problem or goal; your responsibility; how you influenced others; action; result or learning.
Quality improvement	Aim; baseline; intervention; measures; result; sustainability; honest limitations.
Audit	Standard; baseline; action; remeasurement; learning; individual contribution.
Governance / risk	Signal; immediate safety action; communication; escalation; system learning.
Education	Learner or service need; your responsibility; delivery; feedback; change and impact.
Publication / research	Full output; your contribution; relevance to capability; application or impact.

PREPARE THREE EVIDENCE STORIES

Leadership example

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Safety, governance or improvement example

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Education, scholarship or wider-contribution example

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—

—

Missing evidence and difficult moments

If a document is missing

- Acknowledge the gap accurately.
- State what evidence was submitted and what it does or does not establish.
- Identify an authorised source that could corroborate the claim.
- Offer to supply further information if the panel permits.
- Do not invent a reference, exaggerate or disclose confidential material.

If you do not understand the question

Ask the panel to repeat or clarify it. A short clarifying question is better than answering a different issue. If the premise appears incorrect, state your understanding respectfully and refer to the evidence or policy.

If the question feels challenging

Pause, separate the issue from its tone, and answer the criterion. Keep the response factual. Do not criticise colleagues or speculate about motives.

DIFFICULT QUESTION PRACTICE

The question I find most difficult

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—
—

The factual issue behind it

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—
—

My concise evidence-based answer

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—
—

What I should avoid saying

—
—
—

Mock panel question bank 1-5

#	Question	Answer plan
1	Why are you applying for Specialist progression now?	Scope / evidence / judgement / impact:
2	Define the exact scope in which you say you practise at Specialist level.	Scope / evidence / judgement / impact:
3	Which decisions do you make autonomously, and how are they evidenced?	Scope / evidence / judgement / impact:
4	Give an example of appropriate escalation and why it supports, rather than weakens, autonomous practice.	Scope / evidence / judgement / impact:
5	How is the proposed Specialist role distinct from a consultant role?	Scope / evidence / judgement / impact:

Mock panel question bank 6-10

#	Question	Answer plan
6	What evidence shows the practice is sustained rather than occasional acting up?	Scope / evidence / judgement / impact:
7	What Specialist-level work does the service need?	Scope / evidence / judgement / impact:
8	How would you respond to a finding that only part of your work is at Specialist level?	Scope / evidence / judgement / impact:
9	What is the strongest evidence of leadership in your application?	Scope / evidence / judgement / impact:
10	Describe a disagreement where you influenced a safe multidisciplinary decision.	Scope / evidence / judgement / impact:

Mock panel question bank 11-15

#	Question	Answer plan
11	Describe an audit or improvement project, including its limitations.	Scope / evidence / judgement / impact:
12	Tell us about recognising and managing a clinical risk.	Scope / evidence / judgement / impact:
13	How have you contributed to education or supervision, and what changed?	Scope / evidence / judgement / impact:
14	How is a publication or presentation relevant to the capability framework?	Scope / evidence / judgement / impact:
15	Which capability was hardest to evidence and why?	Scope / evidence / judgement / impact:

Mock panel question bank 16-20

#	Question	Answer plan
16	What would you do if a key corroborating document could not be supplied?	Scope / evidence / judgement / impact:
17	Your manager did not support the application. Respond to the reasons.	Scope / evidence / judgement / impact:
18	What difference has your role made to patients or the service?	Scope / evidence / judgement / impact:
19	What do you still need to develop and how is it managed safely?	Scope / evidence / judgement / impact:
20	What single point should the panel retain from your application?	Scope / evidence / judgement / impact:

Interview-day and follow-up checklist

Before	During	After
Confirm format and access. Review the submitted version. Bring indexed policy and evidence notes. Test connection if online. Arrange a quiet, confidential place. If unavoidable clinical duty affects the setting, explain this promptly and professionally.	Listen; answer directly; use non-identifiable examples; state boundaries; ask for clarification; avoid slang, blame and overlong answers. Record any information the panel requests.	Write a factual note. Supply permitted information promptly. When the decision arrives, check capability and service need separately, reasons, feedback, dates and next steps.

Professional presentation

Choose clean, professional clothing appropriate to the setting and your own identity. For an online panel, place the camera at eye level, use clear sound, check lighting and remove avoidable interruptions. If joining while on duty because no reasonable alternative was possible, explain the circumstances briefly without disclosing patient information.

FINAL PREPARATION
My 90-second opening
My 45-second closing
The three documents I need immediately available
Questions or clarifications I may need from the panel

Official sources and disclaimer

All-Wales Specialty to Specialist progression policy

<https://nhs-alliance.uksouth01.umbra.co.io/media/ka0nx4bj/policy-for-the-management-of-speciality-to-specialist-career-progression-regrading.pdf>

NHS Wales Employers SAS resources and current forms

<https://thenhsalliance.org/resources/specialty-specialist-and-associate-specialist-sas-doctors-wales>

NHS Employers generic capabilities framework

<https://www.nhsemployers.org/system/files/2022-09/Generic-capabilities-framework-for-new-specialist-grade.pdf>

NHS Employers Specialist grade appointment guidance

<https://www.nhsemployers.org/publications/specialist-grade-appointment-guidance>

HEIW SAS education and development support

<https://heiw.nhs.wales/education-and-training/sas-doctors/>

BMA Cymru Wales SAS Charter

https://www.bma.org.uk/media/7796/bma-2023_11_06-sas-charter-for-wales.pdf

Independent practice aid

This workbook does not predict the panel's questions or decision. The multiple-choice exercise on the website and these prompts are educational. Use the current policy and your own evidence, and obtain individual support where appropriate.