



Quality Assurance visit to Royal Free NHS Trust

Wednesday 21st September 2022

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Introduction

The Royal Free Trust (the Trust) is one of three central sites which provide clinical placements to UCL Medical School (UCLMS) students. The Trust provides placements in medicine, surgery, paediatrics, obstetrics and gynaecology and emergency medicine, for students in years 4 and 5 of the MBBS programme across multiple sites. In addition, the Trust hosts a number of Year 6 students on their student selected components (SSCs) and elective placements.

The visit was undertaken in line with the [UCL Medical School MBBS Visits Policy](#). UCLMS has a responsibility to ensure that the General Medical Council's (GMC) standards for teaching and assessing MBBS students are maintained and the requirements of 'Promoting Excellence' and Health Education England's (HEE) Quality Framework are met. The visit structure followed the NHS Education Contract's Schedule Three 'Quality and Performance's Quality Domains'. The Service Level Agreement (SLA) was referenced to confirm adherence to agreed conditions. The Deputy Postgraduate Dean HEE London joined the visit on behalf of HEE.

The visit consisted of a series of meetings with a broad group of key personnel involved in medical education and representative medical students and foundation doctors. The meetings generated recommended actions listed below. A list of participants has been provided as

Appendix 1. It had been many years since the last UCLMS quality visit to this site, and the visit team would like to thank all of those who participated in these visit meetings, summaries of which have been provided below.

Site Leadership meeting: delivering programmes and curricula

The key points of the discussion were as follows:

Embedding educational PAs in Consultant job plans

- The Trust has a well-established and systematic process to encourage departments to embed education within job plans. Over several years this approach has successfully established a culture wherein the majority of departments and doctors expect teaching to be part of their roles.
- Education forms one of the three core values of the Trust, alongside Research and Service, and is a priority that the Board takes seriously.
- Educational roles within departments are also encouraged through the establishment of Clinical Teaching Fellow posts. These are posts which can provide clinical service for a department alongside a focus on education. Departments apply for funding (top sliced from the UG Tariff) to pilot a CTF post for one year and if they find it valuable they can continue to fund the post from their own budget. There are currently 15 CTF posts at the Trust covering over half of the UG Modules between them. There has been a correlation between positive student feedback and the presence of a CTF.

Transparency of financial information

- £8-9 million is provided to the Trust via Undergraduate Tariff. £1-2 million of this is top-sliced and used for central costs such as administration, assessments and facilities. The remainder is allocated to individual service lines in proportion to student numbers and time. A typical department will get £250,000.
- The funding is clearly linked to educational priorities for the departments, as 20% of it is at risk if they fall short in two areas:
- Departments are given targets for educational PAs, and if they fall short of these targets they lose 10% of their UG Tariff funding.
- Departments are also expected to maintain good student satisfaction scores (gathered via SEQs and reported by the UCLMS Quality Assurance Unit). If a department gets two or more “red” ratings in an academic year, they lose 10% of their funding.
- See also the Finance Meeting on page 5.

Estates

- The Royal Free has a series of Lecture Theatres, a Library, a Clinical Skills Centre, several Tutorial Rooms and the Student Hub. Over recent years increased pressure has been put on the capacity of these facilities, as there has been a dramatic increase in the number of non-MBBS UCL students at the site. There is a particular issue around MBBS Assessments needing to make full use of what is available, clashing with other programmes.
- It can be hard to find teaching spaces within the Tower Block.
- There is an awkward interface between UCL Estates and Royal Free Estates when it comes to management of teaching rooms and the bookings system. Often rooms are empty but locked, which is frustrating to teachers and students.
- There is a project underway to review and re-designate some spaces to “co-operative use” between service and teaching. The pandemic has resulted in a change in the way

that space is used and there is a desire to create more flexible spaces which can be used for multiple purposes. This should eventually help to increase availability of teaching spaces.

- Students currently go to Barnet for some placements which cannot happen at the Royal Free. Barnet and the North Middlesex are on track to become a “co-fourth site” for the MBBS in September 2023, so thought around accommodating the increased numbers in these areas must be had.

Placement Administration

- The UCL EASE project is intended to rationalise administration and work streams. The aims include co-location with everyone under a direct line manager. It will have an impact on how placement administration is organised at the Trust. There is currently a placement office, but some administrators are university funded and sit with their UCL departments and some are Trust funded but managed by the medical school. The NHS Education Contract sets out that placement administration is the responsibility of the placement provider. Further discussions about funding and Trust / University management are planned when the EASE project is further progressed. Tariff income will be taken into account to inform the level of resource required.
- EASE is due to report by Easter 2023 for implementation in September 2023. The Head of Medical Student Administration will liaise with the Undergraduate Site Lead as preparation work progresses.

HEE Doctor Apprenticeships

- UCL will not become a provider for the HEE Doctor Apprenticeship programme in the near future. If the Royal Free wishes to take part in the programme, it will be through a different London Provider.

Use of different sites within the Trust

- Chase Farm is a very modern facility which specialises in high volume, low complexity surgery. It could be a desirable location to send students for surgery placements. However, infrastructure and timetabling will need to be addressed as it is a long journey and it is not currently set up for student teaching.

Quality Domains and Service Level Agreement discussion

The key points of the discussion were as follows:

Learning environment and culture

Current student/library/hub space

- Room bookings are currently not agile enough. Tutorial rooms need to be booked far in advance through UCL’s system, but on the day staff and students can see that rooms are empty but locked. They are told that they cannot use the empty rooms.
- There is very little teaching space near the wards. This has been reduced over the years and impacts on how bedside teaching can be effectively used. Ad hoc use of other spaces, such as doctors offices, is common but relies upon small student groups.
- Online teaching has solved some of the space issues, but around exam times the Hub gets very busy and it is difficult for students to find places to sign into their online sessions.

Eduroam and IT

- Access to the Electronic Patient Record system (EPR) has been difficult for students, with continuing problems onboarding students and their use day to day remains problematic. Wifi connectivity can be patchy.

Teaching Culture

- There is some variability between departments, but on the whole teaching is fully embedded within the culture with most clinicians expecting to be involved in teaching. Some departments find success by supporting the educational PAs with protected teaching time on consultant's schedules.
- The use of CTF posts is largely seen as a positive by the departments who have tried them. Only two departments have not continued the funding for a CTF after the initial pilot year. For one, it was interrupted by covid and they are working towards reinstating the position now. For the other, the CTF was not able to take clinical work in that specialty so there was no synergy to the post and it did not work out. This lesson to ensure that CTF appointments are given to people within the specialty who can also be incorporated into the clinical rota has been carried forward in subsequent recruitment.
- There is some desire for more recognition of good teachers. UCLMS encourages people to make nominations through the [Name and Proclaim](#) system, which is run by the QAEU.

Timetabling and Curriculum

- The Medical Licensing Exam (MLA) will be implemented in 2024-25 for all graduating medical students. The written paper will be outsourced to the GMC and OSCE style exams will be run in house, but quality assured by the GMC. UCL has matched our curriculum to the GMC map.

Learning Surveys

- The SEQs run by UCLMS are being replaced for 2022/23 with Learning Surveys. Learning Surveys are intended to give immediate feedback to Leads (no waits for lengthy reports to be created and circulated), be transparent for students, and to enable more agile responses to negative feedback. Leads will have more control to directly encourage students to complete them. They are also much shorter, with only one quantitative question and one text field. It is hoped that response rates will improve with these changes.

Year 4 & 5 students, FY1 and FY2 UCLMS graduates, CTFs

The key points of the discussion were as follows:

- Students and doctors were generally positive about their experiences at the Trust. They feel a good sense of belonging and are particularly proud of the Hub.

Learning Experience

- Students find that experiences are variable between specialties. Some are very well organised and welcoming. Others have lots of cancelled sessions and it can feel as though the students are in the way, or not a focus for the consultants.
- In general students feel that they get more useful teaching from registrars than consultants.
- Twilight teaching is very dependent on the tutor.

- Timetables can come late, sometimes the Sunday evening before Monday teaching, which is a source of confusion and frustration.

Facilities

- After some teething problems, students can access the EPR and other IT facilities. There was an induction which was helpful.
- Students love the Hub, but sometimes find it hard to find space to work in groups or quietly.
- The social spaces and availability of showers on site are very popular. The Hub also enables group OSCE practice which is not possible at other sites.
- Students are concerned about the need to travel between sites. The preference would be for a week long attachment so that they have a chance to settle in and get to know it. Shorter sessions, particularly those for a day or less, are much less appealing and students are reluctant to attend them unless they hear from peers that it is a worthwhile session.

FY1 & FY2

- UCL Graduates in attendance at this visit felt well prepared to work as doctors, particularly in areas of clinical skills and communication skills.
- It can be hard to find time for teaching during the F1 year as it is so busy, but there is more possibility in F2. Erratic and busy rotas are a barrier to volunteering for teaching.

CTFs

- The role of CTFs is not just to do all the teaching, but to encourage and co-ordinate others in the department to teach. Students feel welcomed and that they have an easy point of contact. The role is satisfying for the CTF.
- Students do not always recognise that they are interacting with a CTF.

Finance meeting

The key points of the discussion were as follows:

Mapping Tariff Income

- UG Tariff income is used as a lever to improve quality.
- Although suspended over covid, the process has been in place for the last 6 years. The aim is to increase the transparency around UG medical income and demonstrate to clinical service lines the financial benefit of undertaking UG educational activities.
- The forecast information for the coming year is received from UCL in January. Around 15% is top sliced to cover central spending such as administration, library and senior faculty. The remainder is mapped to individual clinical services lines and coded according to student activity. The statement goes to the service lines and is used to set job planning targets.
- 10% of the income coded to each service line is linked to the SEQ feedback, and 10% to the job planning target. See the Site Leadership meeting on page 2 for details.
- This information should be on all quarterly divisional and local executive board meetings. This has not always happened in practice, but be part of the structure going forward.
- This all relies on the credibility of SEQ results and is a potential weakness in the system as response rates have been falling over the years. UCLMS is bringing in a new Learning

Surveys system to replace the SEQs, see the Quality Domains and Service Level Agreement discussion on page 3.

Expenditure

- It is currently difficult to provide full transparency of expenditure on education. This is a risk to the financial sustainability of UG Education and makes it hard to plan for future spending and investment. The Trust is keen to understand the cost base that underpins UG Education, the cost drivers in it, and how the cost base matches up with the income base.
- HEE have requested an Accountability Report which was not submitted last year but is currently in process. Some parts, such as admin, library and central faculty costs, are simple to trace. Others, such as teaching costs incurred in or near the clinical area and activities, are not.
- The first draft of the Accountability Report will be an estimate with a more rigorous investigation to follow.
- It is noted that the Royal Free is not the only Trust struggling with this. These are difficult costs to quantify.

Walkaround

Students took the UCL visit team to visit the following areas:

- The Student Hub
- The Clinical Skills Centre
- The Tutorial Room Corridor

Summary

The visit team would like to thank the Trust for hosting a useful and comprehensive visit, and for making us feel very welcome. Thanks to the Undergraduate Site Lead in particular for their help in arranging everything, and to the Deputy Director of Education for their explanations surrounding finances. It was good to see so many senior consultants involved in teaching and the evident priority that teaching holds within the culture of the Trust.

It is evident that good progress has been made through transparent financial accounting, and that there is a clear commitment to continue this trend and further expand the transparency through the investigation into expenditure. Other sites may learn from the good practice exhibited here.

Students are clearly happy to be at this site. They are particularly proud of the Hub and feel that it provides an essential social and studying space that is not available at other sites. There are some identified issues with the increased use of phone clinics, as students cannot hear both sides of the conversation if there are no speaker phones, and the thin partitions are not sound proof.

There is also some frustration around the practical use of the UCL owned teaching rooms. Although advance bookings must go through UCL, and UCL policy is in place to manage the rooms, there is a lack of agility in the on-site arrangements which prevents students and staff

from making use of clearly empty rooms on the day. This is an area that will require a joint solution from UCLMS and the Trust. Although there are a number of UCL managed teaching rooms, pressure on these is increasing with the larger numbers of other UCL students based at this site. And there is a lack of teaching space near clinical areas.

CTFs stood out as an asset within the Trust, both the process by which they are introduced to departments and the use that those departments make of them. In general, the attitude towards teaching is positive amongst leadership and those on the ground.

Teaching opportunities at Chase Farm are intriguing, but will need careful planning to ensure that students are willing and prepared for the commute.

Key recommendations that have arisen out of this visit are listed below. We will arrange a follow-up meeting with the Undergraduate Site Lead within the next few months, and anticipate the next in person visit to take place in two years with smaller check-in meetings in the meantime.

Action Plan

Actions	Person(s) responsible	Completion Date
Recommended actions for Royal Free		
Complete the project of expenditure tracing so as to provide transparency of where UG Educational spending takes place.	Finance Director / Deputy Director of Education	Provide updates as project progresses
Improve the ability for clinicians and MBBS administrators to book Trust learning spaces near clinical areas	Undergraduate Site Lead / MBBS Royal Free Trust Liaison and Project Manager	Sept 2023
Ensure that an effective room booking system for UCL space remains on the agenda for the Hampstead Campus Master Plan	Undergraduate Site Lead	Provide updates as project progresses
Investigate ways to enable staff to make use of empty teaching rooms	Undergraduate Site Lead / MBBS Royal Free Trust Liaison and Project Manager	Sept 2023
Update UCLMS QAEU on the status of the Hampstead Campus Master Plan at progress check-ins.	Undergraduate Site Lead	Provide updates as project progresses

Appendix 1

List of participants

UCLMS Visit team

Director UCL Medical School
Academic Lead for Quality Assurance
Deputy Lead for MBBS Programme (Year 4-6)
Head of Medical Student Administration
MBBS Placements Manager
Head of MBBS Management (Year 4-6)
UCLMS NHS Tariff Manager
Head of Management QAE and CPP

HEE Representative

Deputy Postgraduate Dean HEE London

Royal Free UGME Senior Management team

Group Chief Executive
Medical Director
Undergraduate Site Lead
Deputy Director of Education
Finance Director
MBBS Royal Free Trust Liaison and Project Manager

Royal Free Specialty Leads

Neurology – Oncology – HIV – Trauma and Orthopaedics (also deputy site sub dean) –
Renal – Anaesthetics – Urology – Gastroenterology – Hepatology – Acute Medicine –
Obstetrics & Gynaecology – Vascular Surgery – Haematology

Royal Free CTFs

UG CTF
UG/PG CTF
AFP FY2

UCLMS students

RUMS President
4x medical students