

2b or not 2b? Have you asked the question?

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The 2021 curriculum for anaesthetists in training requires assessors completing work placed based assessments (WPBAs) to record the level of supervision that the trainee would require if they were to do the same case again. Allocation of supervision levels to WPBAs is a particularly contentious issue that is often discussed amongst trainees and can lead to significant frustration. This project aimed to review the understanding of supervision levels from both trainees and trainers as well as to educate trainers regarding the appropriate allocation of supervision levels and to motivate trainees to discuss supervision levels when submitting an assessment.

Methods: A survey was sent to consultants and trainees within our local anaesthetics department assessing current practice and understanding with regard to supervision levels and also asking trainers and trainees to allocate supervision levels to four described scenarios. The survey generated conversation in the department regarding WPBAs and supervision levels. Findings from the survey were presented and discussed in a departmental meeting, raising the profile of the need to discuss supervision levels when sending assessments.

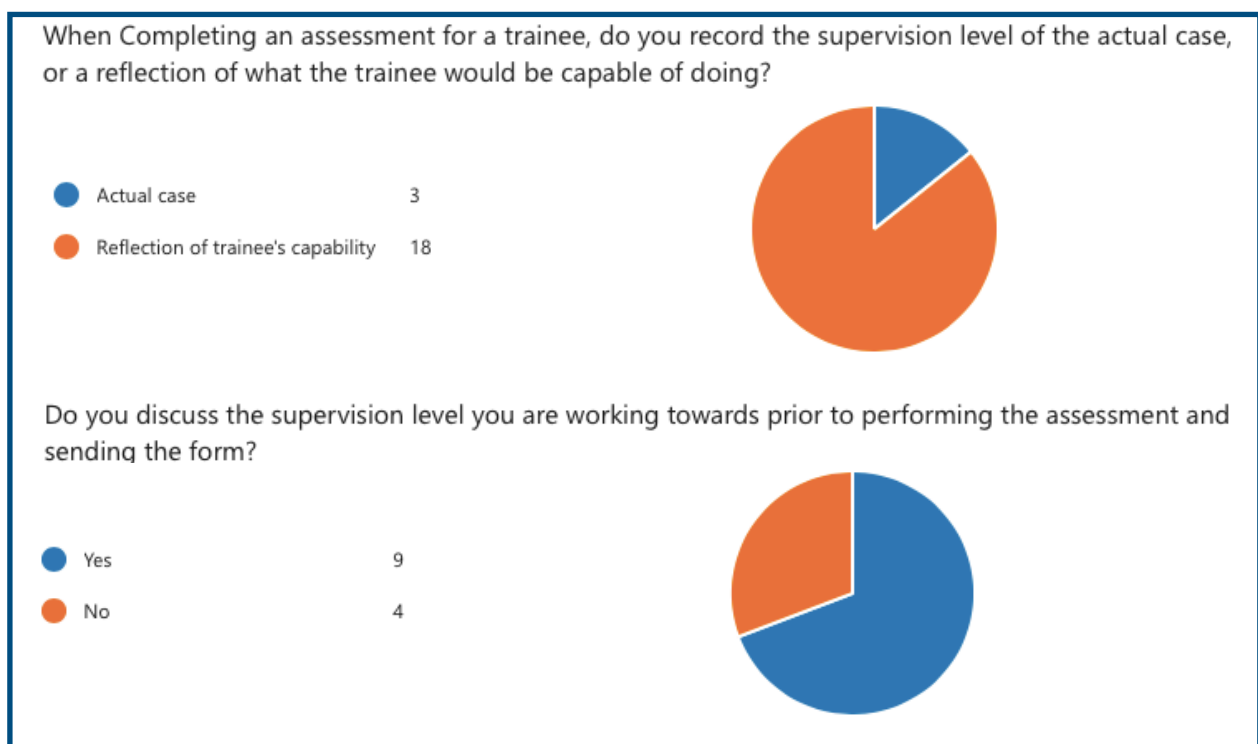


Figure 1. Survey question to supervisors (top) and trainees (bottom)

Results: The survey was answered by 21 trainers and 13 trainees. Eighty-five percent of trainers understood that supervision levels should represent the trainee's competence and not what actually happened during the case, however only 62% of trainers reported discussing supervision levels when assessments are being completed. Over 75% of trainees report that they do not document the expected supervision level when filling out WPBAs, although the majority of trainees stated that they do discuss supervision levels with their assessor. There was discrepancy between the number of trainers who report giving feedback on WPBAs and trainees who feel that they have received feedback.

Stage 3 trainee (ST6) giving anaesthetic to 4 year old for adenotonsillectomy. You were present as a second pair of hands however did not need to step in. The anaesthetic and surgery occurred without incident and you were confident with the trainee's abilities. Which supervision level would you allocate?

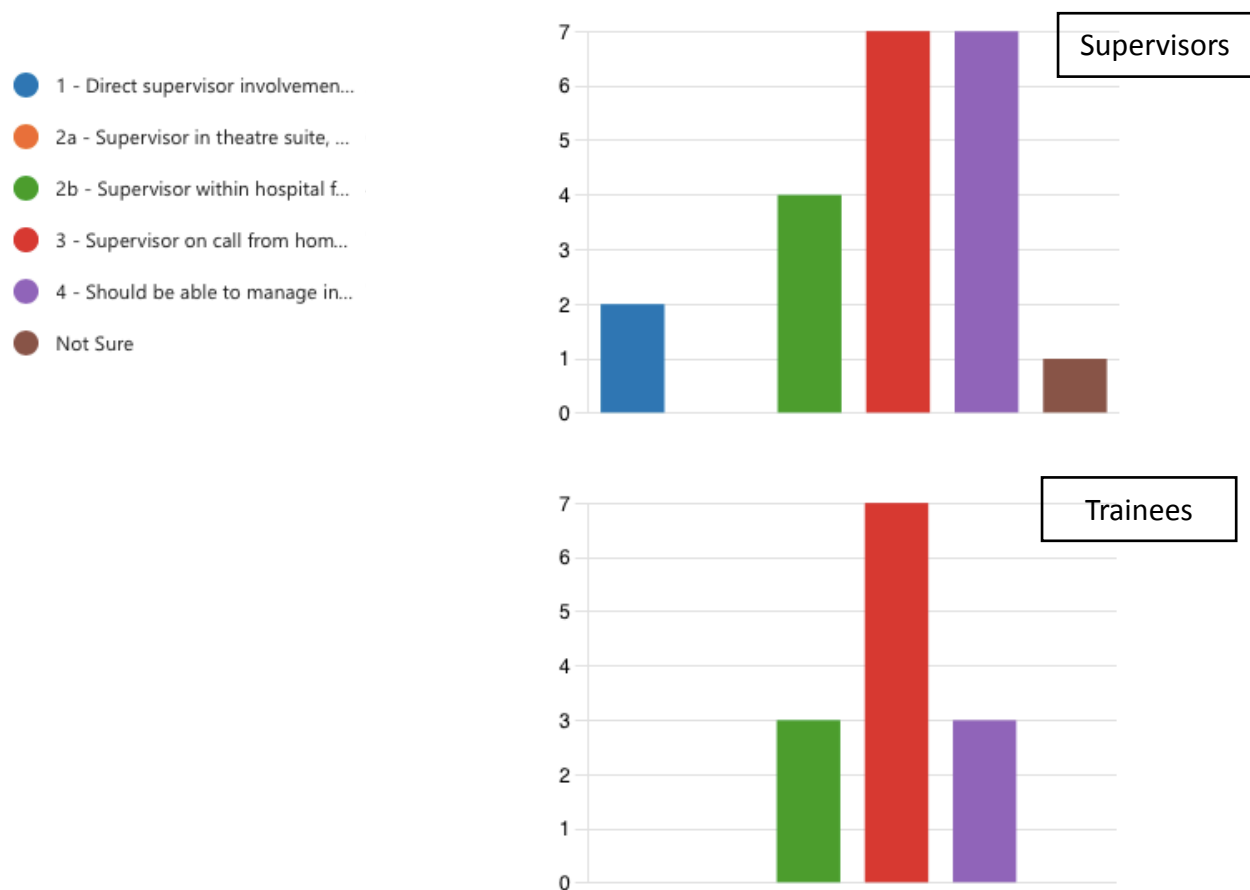


Figure 2. Survey responses to scenario 4

There was general consensus between trainers and trainees when it came to allocating supervision levels to the case scenarios presented in the survey. However, the spread of responses shows the potential for ambiguity and the need to have clear discussions when completing assessments.

Anecdotally, paediatrics is a contentious area, where senior trainees need to evidence independent practice, but trainers are often present as a second anaesthetist. Survey results show this discrepancy with two supervisors marking the case as “Supervision level 1” (Figure 2).

Discussion: Following discussion at the departmental meeting, it was clear that although some consultants were unfamiliar with supervision levels, the majority who were actively involved in training had a good understanding. Whilst trainees wanted to receive more feedback, frequently they do not have direct conversations about the supervision level they are hoping to achieve for a specific capability with their supervisor prior to sending assessments. It is also not always clear from an assessment precisely which skill the supervisor is assessing and therefore what the supervision level should refer to.

This project has been followed up with a poster encouraging trainees to “ask the question” and to discuss the supervision level they are aiming for at the time of sending the assessment (Figure 3). This will be associated with a summary sheet with descriptors of supervision levels and common levels expected throughout the different stages of anaesthetics training.

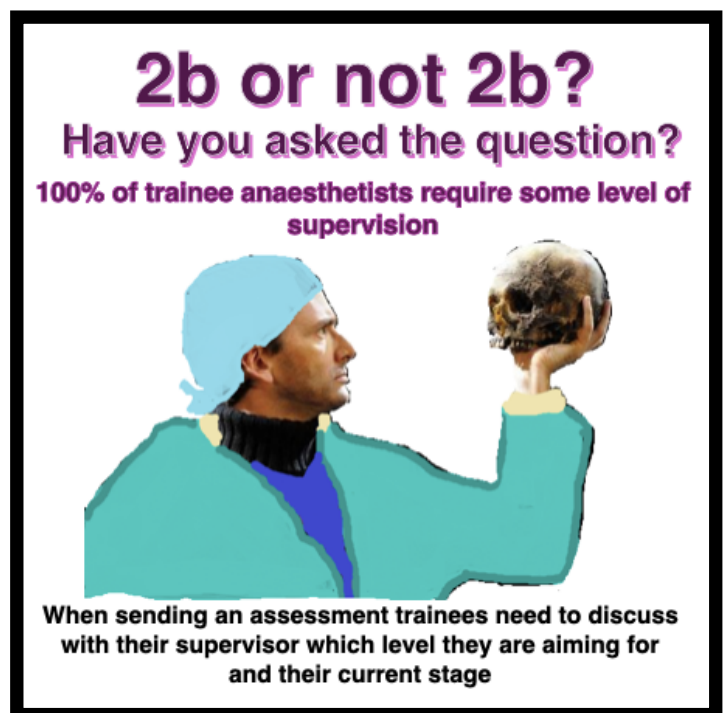


Figure 3. Poster prompting trainees and trainers to discuss supervision levels

Conclusion: Both trainers and trainees are responsible for engaging in discussion regarding supervision levels when completing assessments. However, trainees are most aware of the competencies that they are working towards and the supervision levels they are currently targeting. Departmental updates are important to ensure that those completing WPBAs understand the current curriculum and that trainees feel able to discuss their level of competency when completing assessments.