

## Peer Assessment Without the Panic: Using DOPS, Mini-CEX and ESLE with Confidence



We've all been there. You're asked to assess a colleague—maybe a junior staff member or a newly qualified nurse—and you suddenly feel the pressure. What if they take it the wrong way? What if you don't feel qualified to assess? What if you miss something?

Here's the good news: peer assessment doesn't have to be stressful. In fact, when done right, it can be one of the most empowering, constructive tools for both the assessor and the person being assessed. And at the Faculty of Emergency Nursing (FEN), we've designed tools that make peer assessment feel natural, credible, and confidence-boosting.

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### The Tools That Take the Pressure Off

FEN offers a range of quality-assured assessment tools that help structure the conversation, observation, and feedback process:

- **Mini-CEX** (Mini Clinical Evaluation Exercise): For short, real-world clinical encounters. It provides a structured way to assess things like communication, clinical reasoning, and professionalism.
- **DOPS** (Direct Observation of Procedural Skills): For observed procedural tasks—like applying a sling, recording an ECG, or cleaning and closing a wound. Clear, repeatable, and focused.
- **ESLE** (Extended Supervised Learning Event): For more complex clinical activity. It offers a deeper lens on prioritisation, decision-making, and coordination of care.

Each proforma guides the assessor step-by-step, reducing ambiguity and giving both parties a clear focus.

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### Why Peer Assessment Matters

Emergency nurses learn in the flow of practice. With limited time for formal training, peer assessment offers a way to:

- Embed reflection and growth into everyday tasks
- Offer real-time, relevant feedback
- Recognise and reinforce what's going well
- Support career development and revalidation

Most importantly, it builds trust and culture. It tells your team: we believe in learning from each other.

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### Build Confidence in Assessors

One reason peer assessment causes anxiety? People feel underprepared. That's why FEN offers:

- **Resources for assessors:** Including how-to guides, case review templates, and reflection prompts
- **Recorded webinars:** Showing how to use tools in context
- **Open access:** All proformas are free to use, regardless of subscription status

When peer assessment becomes a conversation, not a critique, it elevates everyone involved.

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## Creating a Consistent Culture

One of the hidden benefits of using FEN's Mini-CEX, DOPS, and ESLE tools across your department? Consistency.

When everyone uses the same language of competence, development becomes transferable. That means less duplication, smoother transitions between teams, and a shared standard of quality. Reassessments still happen as part of best practice, but confidence in prior competence increases.

FEN's tools remove the guesswork. And when the tools are embedded into team culture, they become part of the rhythm of care.

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So if peer assessment has ever felt awkward, uncertain or time-consuming—it doesn't have to. Let the structure do the heavy lifting and focus on what matters: growing together.

**Explore the assessment tools free on the FEN website and start building a culture of capable, confident peer development.**

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