

Differential Attainment Case Series

Case 2: Exam Performance and Access to Informal Learning Opportunities

A UK-qualified resident doctor from a minority ethnic background successfully passed the written component of a specialty examination but did not pass the clinical component on first attempt.

Workplace performance was satisfactory, and knowledge base was strong. However, further discussion revealed limited access to simulation training, fewer informal bedside practice opportunities, and reduced exposure to peer-led mock clinical exams.

The issue was not lack of knowledge but limited access to experiential rehearsal in exam-style environments.

Strengths:

Successfully passed written exam component

Strong theoretical understanding

Consistent workplace engagement

High motivation to improve

Baseline Risk Signals:

Minority ethnic background

Limited access to simulation-based practice

Fewer informal rehearsal opportunities

Reduced exposure to mock clinical exam conditions

Response by Educational Supervisor and/or Training Programme Director:

Enrolment in structured simulation-based clinical skills sessions

Allocation to peer study groups

Scheduled mock clinical exams with structured faculty feedback

Clear clarification of marking domains and expectations

Outcomes:

Increased participation in clinical simulations

Improved performance in mock assessments

Greater familiarity with exam format and marking style

Passed clinical exam on second attempt

Increased clinical confidence

Reduced anxiety under exam conditions

System Learning

Unequal access to informal learning and simulation opportunities may contribute to differential exam outcomes.

Structured rehearsal and targeted feedback can mitigate risk, but proactive supervisory awareness is required.