

ENTRUSTABLE PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITY (EPA) FAST FACTS

Medical Educators have asked us for a guide to EPAs. This document has been created to provide a brief overview of EPAs and how they are used in Medical Education. The Fast Facts below are further explained in the short video “Understanding EPAs.”

EPAs – Key tasks of a discipline

An Entrustable Professional Activity is a **key task of a discipline** (i.e. specialty or subspecialty) that an individual can be trusted to perform in a given health care context, once sufficient competence has been demonstrated.² EPAs are a common approach to CBME³ around the world.

A milestone, by comparison, is an **observable marker of an individual’s ability**.

The **key difference** between EPAs and milestones are that EPAs are the tasks or activities that must be accomplished, whereas milestones are the abilities of the individual.

EPAs – for teaching, coaching and assessment

EPAs are a clever and manageable way of doing a small number of assessments that encompass a large number of milestones, or abilities. Some people think of an EPA as a basket or a funnel that aggregates or integrates a bunch of milestones.

Each specialty or subspecialty will define the EPA’s that are best suited to ensure their trainees progress through training appropriately. As a supervisor, you may observe a resident’s progress on an EPA multiple times, initially for coaching purposes and later to record performance.

EPAs and milestones provide you and your resident with clear expectations of the skills and abilities they need at each stage of training. This will help you to plan teaching and coaching opportunities. Based on your observations of your resident’s ability to perform the EPA you will assess if they can be entrusted to perform this EPA in the future.



EPAs – for medical educators

Competence by Design aims to make it easier for medical educators to:

- identify abilities of individual learners at different stages of training
- provide guidance to address identified gaps in learning
- employ better standards for assessment.

Going forward you’ll start to think of yourself as a coach, someone who works with your residents to help them develop their skills. You will incorporate direct or indirect observation into your work on a regular basis and in a way that is practical for the reality for you and your work team. You will start to give short focused feedback to your learners and complete brief records of the observed performance.

The observations you make as a resident’s supervisor will be reviewed regularly by a Competence Committee, along with other reports of your resident’s performance. When the Competence Committee has enough information on your resident’s performance, they will identify that the resident can be “entrusted” with the EPA, signifying progression through training.



EPAs – how to use them

EPAs are linked to a specific stage of the Competence Continuum³ and integrate multiple CanMEDS milestones from various CanMEDS Roles. As residents progress through the stages of the continuum, the Royal College EPAs become progressively more complex reflecting the residents' achievement of more sophisticated milestones.

As a supervisor, you will observe residents as they perform an EPA multiple times and each time you will coach the residents to improve their performance. You may initially refer to the milestones associated with an EPA to inform your feedback on specific elements of the task, but as you become familiar with the EPAs and milestones, you may find that you 'unpack' an EPA (i.e. look at all of the milestones) only to plan your teaching or to help a resident who is struggling to progress.

Other Key Royal College Resources for Medical Educators

Introduction to CBME and Competence by Design ([video](#))⁴

Competence by Design [Cheat Sheet](#)³

Understanding EPAs ([video](#))¹

Competence by Design Frequently Asked Questions⁵

- [Part 1: Rationale](#)
- [Part 2: Implementing CBD](#)
- [Part 3: Terms and their Uses](#)

For more information about CBD, please visit our website www.royalcollege.ca, or send us an email at cbd@royalcollege.ca.



References:

1. Video Understanding EPAs <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sjWIZigz1bM>
2. Ten Cate O. Entrustability of professional activities and competency-based training. Medical Education. 2005 Dec;39(12): 1176-7.
3. Cheat Sheet <http://www.royalcollege.ca/rcsite/documents/cbd/cbd-cheat-sheet-e.pdf>
4. Video Introduction to CBME and Competence by Design <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Drdo8pUhOPM>
5. Competency by Design Frequently Asked Questions
Part 1: Rationale <http://www.royalcollege.ca/rcsite/documents/cbd/cbd-handout-faq-part-1-rationale-april-27-e.pdf>
Part 2: Implementing <http://www.royalcollege.ca/rcsite/documents/cbd/cbd-handout-faq-part-2-april-27-e.pdf>
Part 3: Terms and their Uses <http://www.royalcollege.ca/rcsite/documents/cbd/cbd-handout-glossary-april-27-e.pdf>
6. For more resources <http://www.royalcollege.ca/rcsite/cbd/cbd-tools-resources-e>

