

## **Response letter by Scottish students to the RCR position statement: The radiology crisis in Scotland: sustainable solutions are needed now.**

We are graduating at a time when the National Health Service (NHS) is under more pressure than ever before. Changing demographics have led to caring for a population with increasingly complex care requirements whilst facing staffing shortages. We find ourselves struggling to maximise the efficiency of overstretched resources which has left us facing increased patient waiting times and an overall lower public opinion of the service<sup>[1]</sup>. We are the future of the radiography workforce in Scotland. We graduate aware of the drivers and barriers of modern health and social care delivery, with a desire to improve service provision to our patients where possible.

During our studies, the potential routes we can take in advancing practice in radiography and how we can improve the quality of service we provide to our patients by doing so becomes incredibly clear. We have been inspired by the work of advanced practitioner radiographers, policy makers and our own professional body in researching and piloting new methods of approaching care delivery and the challenges facing our service. The second annual Scottish Inter-University Conference focused on advancing practice and the developing role of the consultant radiographer, a concept which is hugely exciting to us. Throughout our training, we are taught the importance of collaboration with other professionals in order to tackle issues and be prepared to extend our scope of practice as we learn and grow within the profession. It is therefore disappointing when we find ourselves in the final stages of preparing to enter clinical practice that the Royal College of Radiologists (RCR) February 2017<sup>[12]</sup> suggest that use of radiographer's skills and experience in extended reporting roles is of little value to the service.

This is somewhat disappointing as seven years earlier in 2010 a similar situation arose. The subsequent time-consuming debate and discussion led to the Society and College of Radiographers (SCoR) and the RCR joint document entitled *Team Working in Clinical Imaging* which launched in September 2012. This joint publication set the tone for what was meant to be more acceptable and amicable future practices and defined the key components of team working as essential for high quality, effective clinical imaging services. It was hoped this would pave the way for positive future working as team working was deemed to be at the heart of clinical practice and imaging was pivotal to modern health care and an essential component for many patient journeys. The RCR & SCoR<sup>[15]</sup> documentation identified that the complementary and combined skills of radiologists and radiographers was vital to the delivery of imaging services within the UK. In an attempt to ensure fitness for purpose the SCoR specified that practitioners engaged in clinical reporting must have acquired, **without exception**, a SCoR approved postgraduate qualification in the fields of clinical reporting which included skills development and competence assessment.

In concordance the World Health Organisation (WHO) released a publication<sup>[2]</sup> recognising the current global health workforce crisis, and highlighted the need for collaborative working amongst professionals to integrate services. WHO stated that interprofessional working strengthens healthcare systems and improves patient outcomes. This was contextualised by the Scottish Government, who responded with the 2020 Vision<sup>[3]</sup> emphasising the importance of integration of services and appropriating the use of skills within each profession to benefit the service.

Radiographers are equally as capable of providing accurate and timely reports as radiologists which has been found in several studies<sup>[4,5,6,7]</sup>. NHS trusts in England have been more accepting of the change, and the benefits of reporting radiographers are well recognised<sup>[8]</sup>. The initiative is reported to be cost effective, with an average saving of £23.40 being made per radiographer report in Accident and Emergency<sup>[9]</sup>. This allows radiologists to concentrate on complex diagnoses and interventions rather than being delayed by the extensive backlog of unreported conventional images which can be reported just as competently by radiographers. In 2007, 85% of radiologists in Scotland supported advancing practice<sup>[10]</sup> yet a lack of support from radiologists was found to be a major barrier in the implementation of reporting radiographers in 2016<sup>[11]</sup>. This resistance to change which has presented again in the RCR statement<sup>[12]</sup> is detrimental to the working relationship in radiology and instigative of tension between the two professions. Ultimately, radiologists must use their knowledge and expertise to develop and trial new procedures and focus on complex cases, such as interventional oncology and advancing acute stroke treatments as stated by the RCR<sup>[12]</sup>. Therefore it is only logical that radiographers advance to reporting roles in order to pick up the backlog and assist in improving timely diagnosis for patients.

Resistance to change from medical governing bodies has been famously seen before. During the conception of the NHS, Aneurin “Nye” Bevan was barraged by scrutiny from the British Medical Association (BMA) with an overwhelming attempt to stop the bill from enabling the creation of such a service. The NHS has gone on to become the most innovative health care system on the planet<sup>[13]</sup>, benefitting millions of patients every year. How fortunate that those with this vision for improved service provision did not give up despite the overwhelming opposition, and we must echo their determination.

We as Scottish final year students believe that in order to maintain effective and safe service provision we must work closely with our colleagues in radiology to develop this service by making best use of our skills and partaking in the development of radiographer reporting roles. Our journey has already begun as a result of the Society and College of Radiographers<sup>[14]</sup> challenging all educational institutions delivering undergraduate radiography programmes to ‘firmly embed image interpretation and reporting into the undergraduate syllabus by 2010’. Despite the current barriers, we will continue to strive towards radiographers attaining advanced practice roles, ensuring a safe and sustainable service to patients.



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This statement, signed by the above representatives of all diagnostic radiography training centres, has been written with contribution from students and staff of Glasgow Caledonian University, Queen Margaret University and Robert Gordon University.

## References

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## **Acknowledgement of support in writing and disseminating our statement**

The letter was opened to petition and the names of **95** students and staff from all diagnostic radiography training institutions are given in support of the writing and dissemination of the above statement.

## **Appendix: Pledge of support in writing and disseminating our statement**

The names of the following people are given in support of the writing and dissemination of the above statement:

<b><u>No.</u></b>	<b><u>Name</u></b>	<b><u>Institution</u></b>	<b><u>Position</u></b>
1	Amy Wareing	Robert Gordon University	Lecturer
2	Gary Murphy	Robert Gordon University	Final year student
3	Anita McMahon	Robert Gordon University	Final year student
4	Gemma MacKenzie	Robert Gordon University	Final year Student
5	Beth Rendall	Robert Gordon University	Final year student
6	Erin Duncan	Robert Gordon University	Final year student
7	Erin Davidson	Robert Gordon University	Final year student
8	Rachel O'Shaughnessy	Robert Gordon University	Final year student
9	Melissa Wilson	Robert Gordon University	Final year student
10	Alana Stewart	Robert Gordon University	Final year student
11	Nikki Holt	Robert Gordon University	Final year student
12	Rohanne de Verteuil	Robert Gordon University	Final year student
13	Nicola Ross	Robert Gordon University	Final year student
14	Iona Mullins	Robert Gordon University	Final year student
15	Eilidh Davidson	Robert Gordon University	Final year student
16	Eilidh Higgins	Robert Gordon University	Final year student
17	Ellen Liggat	Robert Gordon University	Final year student
18	Emily Anderson	Robert Gordon University	Final year student
19	Ciara Minihan	Robert Gordon University	Final year student
20	Kendall Deans	Robert Gordon University	Final year student
21	Emma Maders	Robert Gordon University	Final year student
22	Eilidh Kordula	Robert Gordon University	Final year student
23	Charlotte Roe	Robert Gordon University	Final year student
24	Alison Scott	Robert Gordon University	Final year student

25	Sian Lindsey	Robert Gordon University	Final year student
26	Abbie Robertson	Robert Gordon University	Final year student
27	Kirsty Allan	Robert Gordon University	Final year student
28	Morag Howard	Robert Gordon University	Lecturer
29	Louise Mifsud	Robert Gordon University	Lecturer
30	Daniella Dambach	Queen Margaret University	Final year student
31	Grace Greaves	Queen Margaret University	Final year student
32	Adil Al Abri	Queen Margaret University	Final year student
33	Emma Cadogan	Queen Margaret University	Final year student
34	Kayleigh Crowe	Queen Margaret University	Final year student
35	Shannon Murray	Queen Margaret University	Final year student
36	Eilidh Fordyce	Queen Margaret University	Final year student
37	Kara Low	Queen Margaret University	Final year student
38	Lauren Morgan	Queen Margaret University	Final year student
39	Sarah Fairgrieve	Queen Margaret University	Final year student
40	Mafi Simmonds-Sharkey	Queen Margaret University	Final year student
41	Paul Joyce	Queen Margaret University	Final year student
42	Eailis Marks	Queen Margaret University	Final year student
43	Catherine McClintick	Queen Margaret University	Lecturer
44	Alanah Kirby	Queen Margaret University	Lecturer
45	Simon Holmes	Queen Margaret University	Lecturer
46	Laura Welsh	Glasgow Caledonian University	Final year student
47	Mandy McGarrell	Glasgow Caledonian University	Final year student
48	Rachel Irvine	Glasgow Caledonian University	Final year student
49	Alison Purdie	Glasgow Caledonian University	Final year student
50	Katy Mcsporrان	Glasgow Caledonian University	Final year student
51	Anna Ledger	Glasgow Caledonian University	Final year student
52	Sarah Doyle	Glasgow Caledonian University	Final year student
53	Sarah Zycinski	Glasgow Caledonian University	Final year student

54	Marianne Mulholland	Glasgow Caledonian University	Final year student
55	Emma Allan	Glasgow Caledonian University	Final year student
56	David McKenna	Glasgow Caledonian University	Final year student
57	Laura Fitzpatrick	Glasgow Caledonian University	Final year student
58	Lyndsay Wight	Glasgow Caledonian University	Final year student
59	Stephanie Robertson	Glasgow Caledonian University	Final year student
60	Leona Winters	Glasgow Caledonian University	Final year student
61	Rebecca McGowan	Glasgow Caledonian University	Final year student
62	Ashley Mcleavy	Glasgow Caledonian University	Final year student
63	Bereket Tesfai	Glasgow Caledonian University	Final year student
64	Lynn Cuthbertson PhD	Glasgow Caledonian University	Lecturer
65	Yvonne Watt	Glasgow Caledonian University	Lecturer
66	Sharon Stewart	Glasgow Caledonian University	Lecturer
67	Lorna Nimmo	Glasgow Caledonian University	Lecturer
68	Cara Duguid	Glasgow Caledonian University	Lecturer
69	Morgyn Sneddon	Glasgow Caledonian University	Lecturer
70	Ayesha Ali	Glasgow Caledonian University	Final year student
71	Rachel Martin	Glasgow Caledonian University	Final year student
72	Aileen Byron	Glasgow Caledonian University	Final year student
73	Louise Mitchell	Glasgow Caledonian University	Final year student
74	Lisa Copland	Glasgow Caledonian University	Final year student
75	Jodie Wallace	Glasgow Caledonian University	Final year student
76	Kendall Oberg	Glasgow Caledonian University	Final year student
77	Kirsty Lawrie	Glasgow Caledonian University	Final year student
78	Michelle Mary Higgins	Glasgow Caledonian University	Final year student
79	Ailidh McGregor	Glasgow Caledonian University	Final year student
80	Rachel Stuart	Glasgow Caledonian University	Final year student
81	Kieran Gaughan	Glasgow Caledonian University	Final year student
82	Ashvine Birla	Glasgow Caledonian University	Final year student

83	Claire Halstead	Glasgow Caledonian University	Final year student
84	Francesca Rogers	Glasgow Caledonian University	Final year student
85	Sarah Huda	Glasgow Caledonian University	Final year student
86	Poppy McManus	Glasgow Caledonian University	Final year student
87	Julie Ross	Glasgow Caledonian University	Final year student
88	Erin Glasgow	Glasgow Caledonian University	Final year student
89	Caroline Matimbe	Glasgow Caledonian University	Final year student
90	Karol Zalewski	Glasgow Caledonian University	Final year student
91	Yolante Koslosnic	Glasgow Caledonian University	Final year student
92	Siobhan Carter	Glasgow Caledonian University	Final year student
93	Rebecca McGowan	Glasgow Caledonian University	Final year student
94	Hood Al Balushi	Queen Margaret University	Final year student
95	Ahmed Al Shukaili	Queen Margaret University	Final year student