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Developing an Advanced Practice Sonographer Role...and beyond...

Presented by : Cat Lee



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Ms Catherine Lee



Trainee Consultant Radiographer Sonographer
Royal Devon University Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust

MSc, MSc, BSc (Hons)

Disclaimer

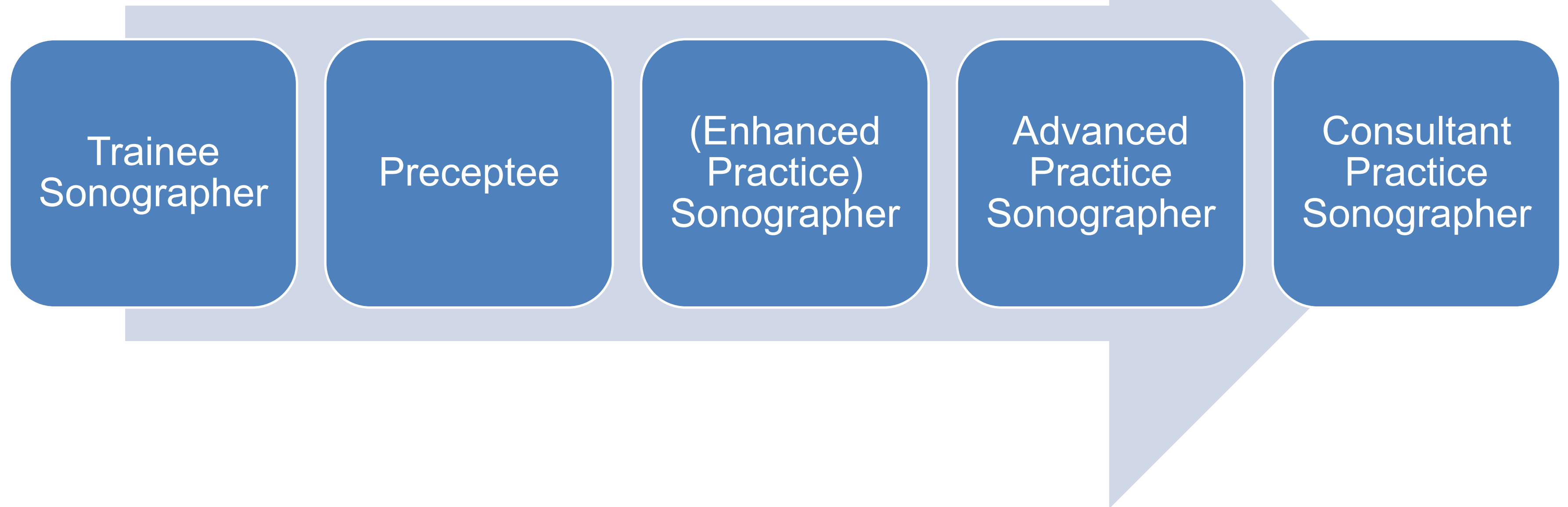
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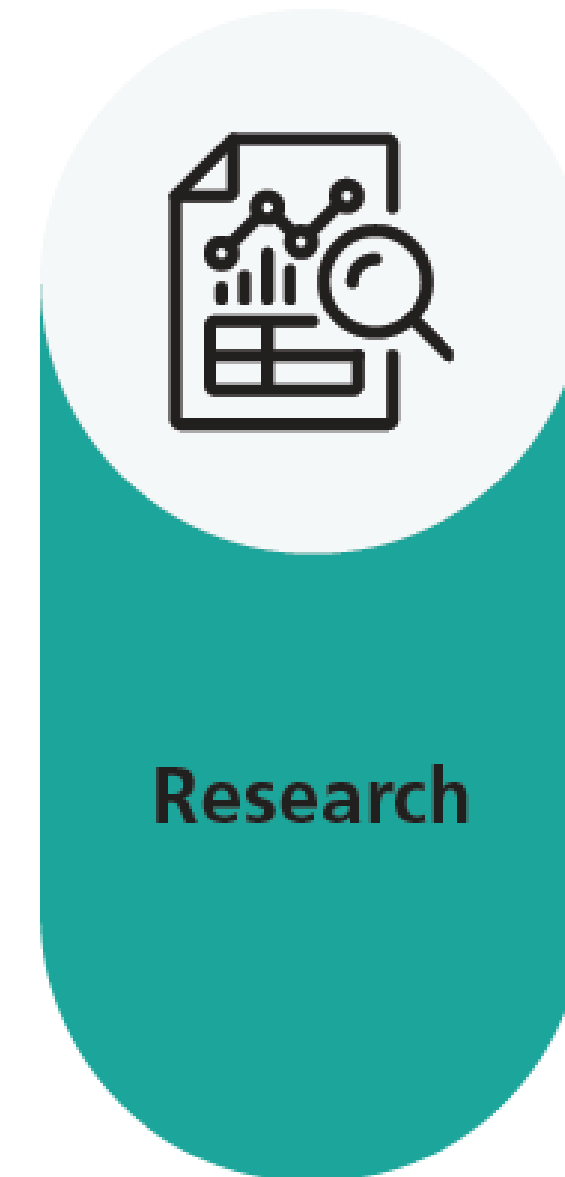
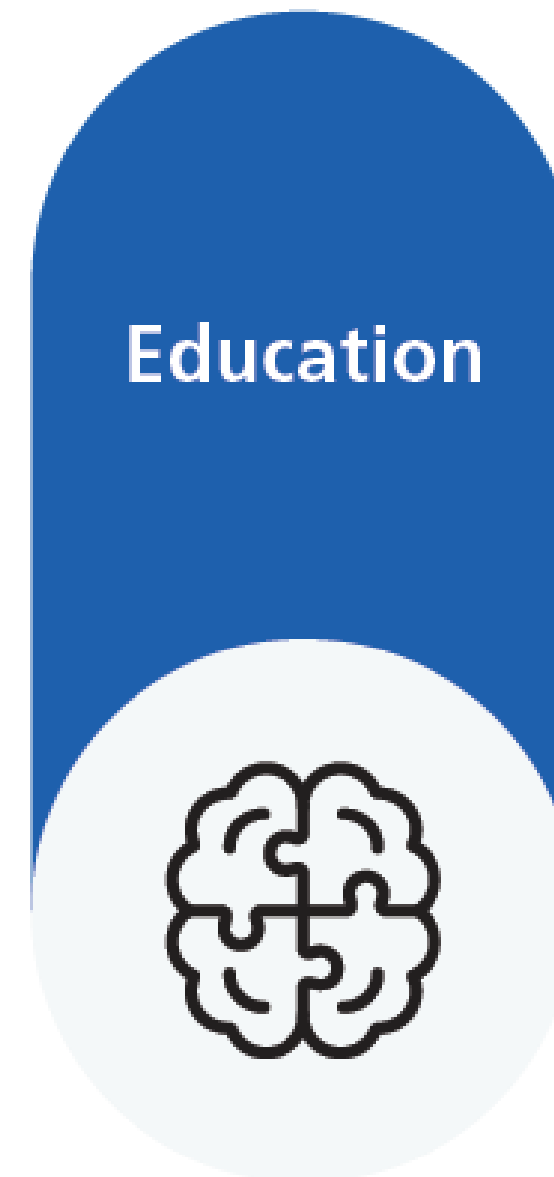
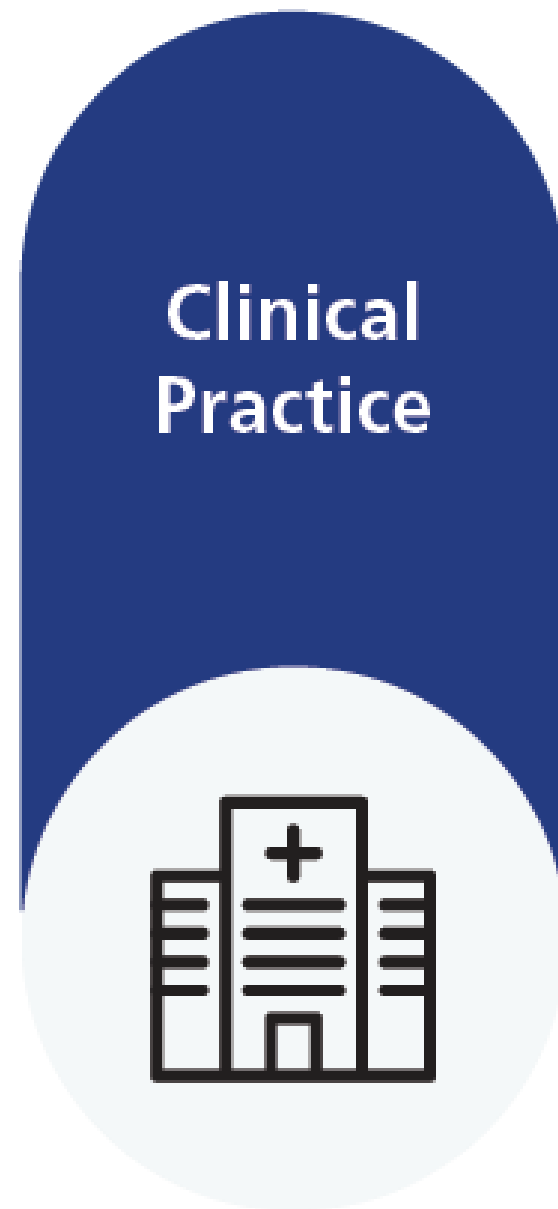
What I will be covering...

- **Benefits to department**
- **Benefits to sonographers**
- **Role development**
- **Moving towards Consultant Practice**

Sonographer career pathway



4 Pillars



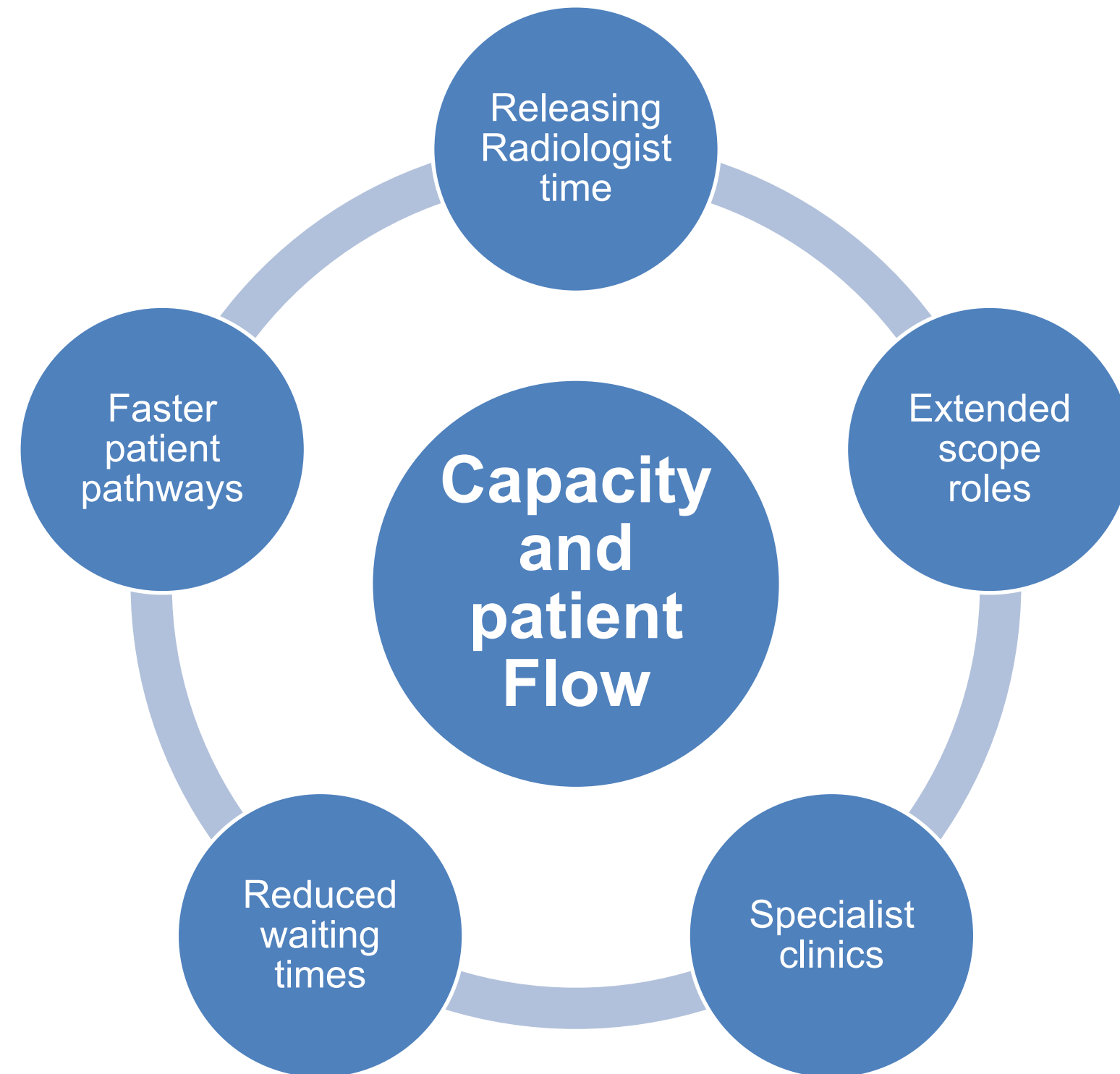
Why does Advanced Practice Matter?

- **Sonographer shortages**
- **Demand growth**
- **Retention concerns**
- **Quality of services and patient care**
- **Patient safety**

Benefits to department

- **Capacity**
- **Quality**
- **Sustainability**
- **Leadership**
- **Innovation**

Benefits to department



Benefits to department



Benefits to department



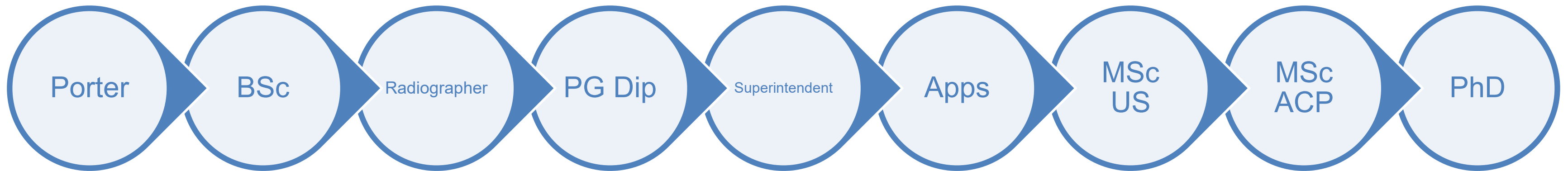
Benefits to department



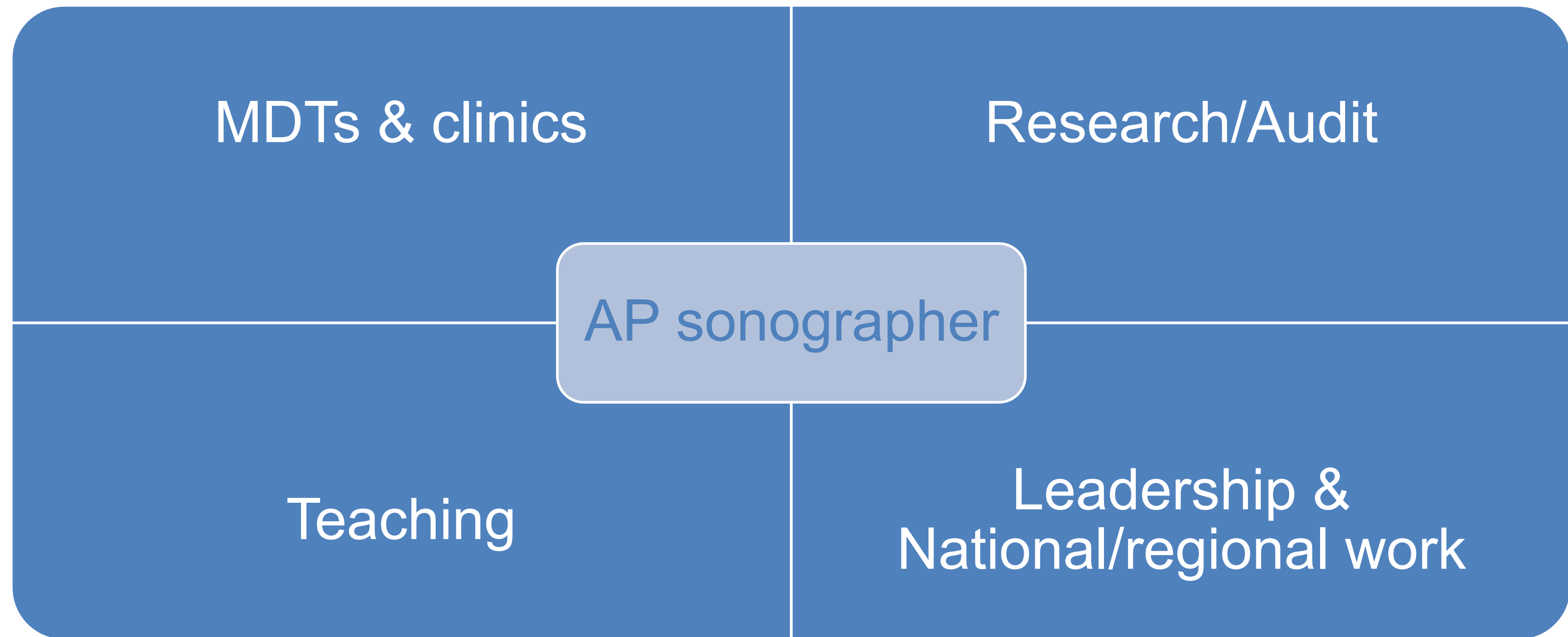
Benefits to sonographers

- **Recognition**
- **Autonomy**
- **Progression**
- **Job satisfaction**
- **Influence**

My journey



A week in the life of an AP Sonographer









Education and Career Framework for the Radiography Workforce (4th edition)

Preceptorship and Capability Development Framework for Sonographers

Capability	Sonographer (preceptee)	Enhanced practice sonographer	Advanced practice sonographer	Consultant sonographer
			complex clinical, managerial or educational pathways	• Work with others to pioneer new methods and patient pathways
Research and Audit	• Undertake self-audit • May be involved in collection of research data • Can differentiate between research, audit and service evaluation	• Able to organise and engage with audit and peer-review • Contribute to research projects and service evaluation • Has a working knowledge of research within their area of practice • May identify service improvements • May disseminate audit and service evaluation results locally	• Engage with research and adhere to good practice research guidance. • Critically analyse audit and peer-review findings and implement change accordingly • Identify gaps in the evidence base and alert appropriate individuals or organisations • Design and contribute to research projects and service evaluation • Manage risk in the conduct of research to maintain and improve research quality • Able to comply with ethical considerations associated with research • Disseminate results at a local and/or regional level	• Lead research and act as a role model • Identify gaps in the evidence base and seek methods to address them • Obtain funding for research • Work in partnership with others to develop, take forward and evaluate direction, policies and strategies • Able to apply research knowledge and skill in unpredictable and complex research areas and contexts • Provide research leadership and take overall responsibility, making judgements in complex environments • Disseminate results widely using a range of methods including publications and presentations

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Preceptorship and Capability Development Framework for Sonographers

Produced by the British Medical Ultrasound Society

Commissioned by Health Education England

July 2022

Updated March 2023 with revised Career and Progression Framework (appendix A)



The Centre for Advancing Practice

Multi-professional framework for advanced practice in England

2025



Publication reference: PRN01679



Advanced practice accreditation

Two routes to NHS England advanced practice accreditation: the sonographer's perspective

Cat Lee, Nicki Davidson

Advanced practitioners (APs) are now well established in the National Health Service (NHS) as part of workforce development in response to service need. This initiative presents significant opportunities for professional progression and is anticipated to support the retention of skilled, experienced staff who add immense value to patient care within multi-disciplinary teams.

Within the world of imaging, the *Richards Report*¹ identified a significant shortage of radiologists and suggested a valuable opportunity for radiographers to help expand services' capacity through advanced practice (AP) roles. AP is one solution to addressing the increasing demand in diagnostic imaging services.

More recently, the widely published debate² regarding physician associates has highlighted the need for robust professional regulation of non-medical practitioners. Such regulation reassures the public of practitioners' capabilities and competencies, using standardised qualifications and governance structures. One approach by NHS England (NHS-E)³ has been the introduction of digital badges for APs, serving as a visible marker of quality-assured practice and education⁴.

In England, practitioners can use various national frameworks to uphold consistent standards across the professions and organisations delivering patient care. *The Multi-Professional Framework for Advanced Practice in England*⁵ is typically most applicable to Diagnostic Radiographers (DRADs), while the Society and College of Radiographers' *Education and Career Framework*⁶ provides more profession-specific guidance. Equivalent frameworks exist for other UK nations and the *Career Framework* is applicable to the whole of the UK⁶⁻⁸.

These two frameworks divide workplace activities into four pillars – clinical practice, leadership and management, education and research – with a defined standard of

capability or skill that a practitioner must demonstrate in each pillar in order to be operating at AP level.

This personal reflection from two sonographers will explore two different routes available to radiographers for replication to allow a successful application for an accredited NHS-E digital badge.

MSc Advanced Clinical Practice (degree apprenticeship) route

Cat Lee: Practitioners who are newly appointed or currently in trainee AP roles may choose to complete an academic qualification in Advanced Clinical Practice. Ensuring the programme is accredited by an NHS-E approved higher education institution is important. The list of accredited courses is held and regularly updated by NHS-E⁹.

The degree apprenticeship route offers the benefit of protected study time for the student and financial efficiency for the employer through use of the apprenticeship levy¹⁰. Additional funding may also be available to support both the student and their clinical mentor. The Advanced Clinical Practice (ACP) MSc course is usually spread over three years on a part-time basis.

However, some downsides of the apprenticeship route include the requirement to undertake the national end-point assessment and there are typically fewer elective module options compared with a standard MSc programme. Generally, the MSc will incorporate combinations of modules (requiring 180 credits at Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ) level 7), which assess students' understanding of the principles of AP, such as educational theory, leadership models and research skills. This is alongside more bespoke modules of clinical practice, dependent on the clinical role the practitioner will occupy in practice. In this personal reflection, the following modules were mandated for the award to provide an example, but different institutes will have other options on their courses (Table 1).

Table 1. Example of modules and credits

Year	Module	Credits
1, 2, 3	Principles of transitioning to advanced clinical practice	55
1	Advanced clinical assessment and decision-making skills	30
2	Advanced skill development	45
3	Advanced clinical practice improvement project	30
3	End-point assessment	20
TOTAL		180

Prerequisites and requirements

Prerequisites will vary between each institute and it is important to check with

“With accreditation we can represent ourselves as safe, cost-effective and excellent healthcare professionals”

the course provider websites. Applicants will generally require BSc at 2.2 or above in a relevant healthcare subject, with a minimum of three years post-registration experience¹¹⁻¹⁴. Registration with the appropriate professional statutory registration body, such as the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC), is usually required, which is a limitation for those sonographers who do not have statutory registration.

Applicants also need support from their employer in the form of a statement of individual capability, ongoing financial support and dedicated study time. In addition, a suitable clinical mentor, who is either a qualified AP or doctor registered with the General Medical Council, is needed to ensure clinical competency is safely assessed in-house. For applicants who take the degree apprenticeship route, level 2 English and Maths will need to be achieved (if they do not already have them) before they take the end-point assessment at the end of the award¹⁵.

One of the most critical, yet often overlooked, elements in developing a successful AP role is a clearly defined job description, scope of practice and role objectives. This ensures professional protection, promotes patient safety and justifies workforce investment. This governance framework helps to set expectations both for the employee and employer. The importance of clear objectives for an AP role was discovered through personal experience during the course of this award but had, in fact, already been identified as a key recommendation after a national study into AP roles¹⁶ in 2021. This demonstrates how important it is to use the existing evidence base for lessons already learned, not only for clinical techniques but also for workforce development.

There are several publications available to support the development of AP roles. The Society of Radiographers has recently released guidance¹⁷ to ensure compliance with legislation. A job planning toolkit from the College of Radiographers and

NHS-E¹⁸ and national job descriptions from NHS Employers¹⁹ are useful resources to reference for reviewing or creating AP roles. It is worth exploring procedures locally as many NHS trusts now have their own internal AP document libraries with standardised job descriptions and processes for developing roles, alongside frameworks for evidence of ongoing competency.

Challenges of this route

A personal difficulty, which other sonographers who are considering this route may also face, was the prospect of completing an additional MSc while one was already held in Medical Ultrasound. This situation is applicable to any radiographer who has completed postgraduate study in their area of clinical speciality. It seemed unnecessary and this stipulation felt frustrating when there was existing evidence of FHEQ level 7 study from an award that included most, if not all, of the knowledge, skills and behaviours (KSBs) required to meet the multi-professional framework for AP. This opinion is echoed in the literature²⁰⁻²². A full MSc is a big personal commitment over a significant period of time and should be a consideration for aspiring APs.

In addition, as a DRAD, I found the course was not particularly well aligned to daily clinical practice when compared with the registrant professions (paramedics and primary care nurses) of the other students in the cohort. This meant completing some assessments not relevant to an AP sonographer role, and left a potential gap in the development of clinical competency specific to radiography/sonography. This was identified by Woznitza et al. in their 2017 national survey of AP in radiography²³. For those who feel this would be a significant downside, there are now specific AP radiography postgraduate awards available, which can be found via the College of Radiographers²⁴. Some AP courses also offer bespoke radiography modules.

Despite these drawbacks and challenges, the completion of the generic AP award has enabled an enrichment of knowledge

Governance Matters

- **Scope of Practice**
- **Competencies**
- **Supervision**
- **Risk Assessments**
- **Job Planning**

Regional academies/other Trusts

MSc

Courses/conferences

Make phantoms and practice

eLFH/YouTube/Webinars

Clinical

Regional AP networks

Reflective accounts

Shadow lists

Trust clinical skills labs

Case study presentation

Edward Jenner course

PDRs for
RDAs

Trust courses

Non-NHS activities

Offer to help with other projects

Leadership

Get involved with
QSI

Regional/national networks or councils

Offer to help write
SOPs

Offer to deputise/step up in absences

Education of other staff groups

Preceptor

Opportunities with local HEIs

Student assessor

Education

RDA competencies

Set up CPD sessions

Teaching Radiography students

Elsevier Researcher Academy

Participate in other projects

Write up a poster and submit

Peer Reviewer

Research/audit

Start small!

SoR research webinar series

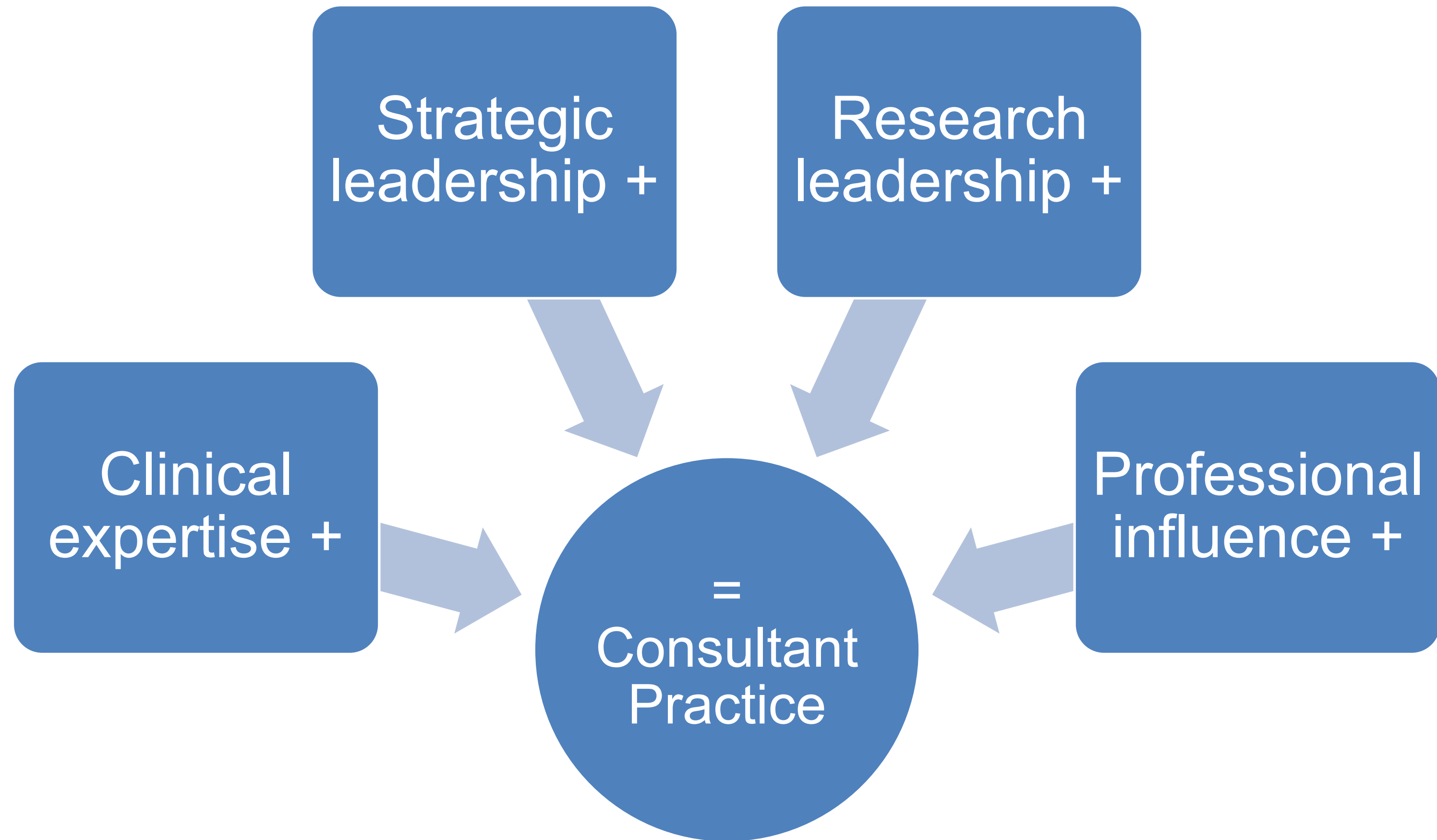
Image and report QA

Departmental audit

Set up a journal club

Moving towards Consultant Practice

Advanced Practice	Consultant Practice
Service Influence	Organisational influence
Local Leadership	Regional/National leadership
Participates in research	Leads research
Education delivery	Education strategy
Clinical Expert	Clinical authority



Multi-professional consultant-level practice capability and impact framework



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My Consultant Practice Journey

- **MSc ACP**
- **PhD**
- **National UAG Chair**
- **QSI assessor**
- **Expert Witness**
- **Regional Leadership**
- **Trust Consultant Practice Steering Group**

Discussion point (if time)

**? What is the biggest opportunity for
Advanced Practice in your department?**

Advanced Practice:

- ✓ Improves patient care
- ✓ Supports departments
- ✓ Improves recruitment and retention
- ✓ Develops future leaders
- ✓ Creates a pathway to Consultant Practice

Thank you and any questions?
cleee8@nhs.net