

Improving the Improvement of Assessment: A Workshop on Quality Assurance

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Abstract

1. Background: For assessment systems to continually improve efforts in achieving desired aims and fulfilling medical education's social accountability, quality assurance is indispensable. However, there is lack of agreement among stakeholders regarding definitions of quality and how best to embed ongoing improvements. Such heterogeneity highlights the need for clear, coherent, and plausible definitions of quality with the chosen processes and underlying rationale/evidence in a given context.

2. Why is the topic important for research and / or practice? Evaluation of assessment practice and processes often focuses on externally driven quality assurance (QA), such as through accreditation. QA of exams has received more attention than QA of other types of assessment or of programmes of assessment. However, continuous quality improvement has the potential to be more internally driven and collaborative. How best to define quality and how best to develop and implement quality improvement processes has not been well described. It is essential to develop robust, evidence-based assessment processes that are informed by both available evidence and sound theory to guide health professions institutions in developing internal monitoring processes for ongoing improvement of the health professions education they provide. Translation into sustainable assessment practice requires that internal stakeholders are aligned on the purpose of QA.

3. Workshop format, including participant engagement methods: This workshop seeks to bring together health professions educators from around the world to learn, share and discuss experiences and best practices in quality assurance and quality improvement of assessment systems. The workshop will facilitate dialogue on the variety of international approaches by presenting literature-informed principles and analysing real-life case studies, derived from the authors/ presenters' recently published book on quality assurance in health professions education and provide participants with resources to engage in QA of assessment at their institutions. The focus of the workshop will be on sharing practice among the participants and aligning staff development and training with internal and external quality assurance processes for written, performance and workplace-based assessments.

4. Who should participate? This workshop is intended for all health professions educators and professional staff who engage in quality assurance of assessment processes and wish to share their experiences and gain insight into how to foster ongoing improvement of their assessment systems.

5. Level of workshop: Intermediate and advanced. Familiarity with the quality assurance of assessment paradigm is a pre-requisite for this workshop.

6. Take-home messages / workshop outcomes / implications for further research or practice: It is imperative that assessments conducted in health professions education across institutions globally are not only bench-marked against set standards and criteria but also driven by collaborative processes for ongoing improvement. By utilising an improvement-based approach, these criteria and standards can be evaluated to ensure consistent and reliable outcomes across various professional bodies and institutions, regardless of geographical location.

References (maximum three)

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