

When is an attempt not an attempt? Establishing what constitutes a valid attempt in assessment

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Abstract

1. Background

The Medical Schools Council (MSC) is working with UK medical schools to introduce a national applied knowledge test (AKT) that will form part of the Medical Licencing Assessment regulated by the General Medical Council (GMC). A voluntary Policy Framework has been put in place that covers issues such as the suggested number of permitted attempts students will have to pass the test.

1. Summary of work

For the purposes of the voluntary policy it was agreed that students should be granted up to four valid attempts to pass the AKT. MSC seeks to monitor the number of attempts offered across UK medical schools.

1. Results

Results will be shared from the 2023 survey of UK medical schools about implementation of the AKT Policy Framework.

1. Discussion

When schools are asked the number of attempts permitted the results are very different from when they are given models of first sit and resit cycles to choose from.

When asked how many valid attempts are your students currently allowed to pass final assessments 9 schools responded saying four attempts but when given this scenario – ‘Where a student fails their first attempt they are offered a second sit in the same academic year and if they fail again they must repeat the academic year. They will then have two further attempts in their repeat year which they must pass or the degree will not be awarded.’ 14 schools said this matched their process.

1. Conclusions

The term valid attempt is not well understood by medical schools and care must be taken to define exactly what is meant when seeking to define practice within institutions.

1. Take-home messages / implications for further research or practice

Researchers seeking to understand medical school practice must be as precise as possible when asking questions. Even when the question appears straightforward!

References (maximum three)

MSC website <https://www.medschools.ac.uk/our-work/medical-licensing-assessment> accessed August 2023