

An Exploration of the Variability in Clinical Assessment Scores of Students on an Allied Health Professional Degree Programme in the UK

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Abstract

Background - Allied health professionals are required by professional and regulatory bodies to be able to demonstrate that, upon qualification from their degree programmes, they are 'competent to practice' in their profession. There are many different assessment tools for demonstrating this. This paper will describe one such tool in the context of a BSc (Hons) Diagnostic Radiography degree programme.

Aim - The aim of this paper was to explore the variability in the clinical assessment marks awarded to students on an allied health professional programme for the clinical assessment component of their degree programme.

Methods - This was an observational study which evaluated a clinical assessment tool used across 10 different clinical placement sites (hospitals) and consisting of seven different discrete clinical assessments applied across the three years of the programme. A statistical analysis of three years' worth of data was undertaken using an ANOVA and a post hoc pair testing exploring the variability of 192 students each doing 7 clinical assessments.

Results and discussion - The results demonstrated that there was statistically significant variation in clinical assessment scores across clinical placement site and across the seven clinical assessments used. Student marks could be affected by their placement choice and the type of clinical assessment tool used. No evidence was found of possible variability due to cohort variation.

Discussion of the variability demonstrated and possible causes of this will be presented along with some suggested methods to help reduce variability in clinical assessment schemes in the future.

Keywords: Clinical assessment, variability, allied health professions, BSc (hons) degree, evaluation