



Education alongside research as the mission of a medical school, dental and veterinary school

**ASPIRE RECOGNITION OF EXCELLENCE IN ASSESSMENT  
IN A MEDICAL, DENTAL AND VETERINARY SCHOOL  
CRITERIA**

**EXCELLENCE IN ASSESSMENT**

For an institution to be regarded as achieving excellence in the area of assessment there should be evidence of an outstanding programme of assessment which can be demonstrated to actively promote learning in order to achieve the curriculum objectives, provide a fair assessment of learner achievement, and ensure patient safety by only allowing competent individuals to progress and graduate. The notion of excellence also embodies the active engagement with scholarship and a desire to seek continuous improvement in the area of assessment of competence.

It is recognised that cultural, social and other issues are likely to have an influence on assessment in a school and that how assessment manifests itself will vary from school to school. Excellence may be found in institutions with limited access to resources just as much as in wealthier institutions. The way in which institutions demonstrate cost effectiveness and context appropriateness will be taken into account by the panel when reviewing individual submissions. To aid you in your application we have asked the reviewers to provide some examples of the type of evidence that could be provided. The examples provided by the reviewers are shown below under the respective criteria. These examples are intended to be indicative and not exhaustive. You may have other evidence that would be equally important and which support your case for excellence.

Further guidance relating to the criteria is included in the Application Form <http://www.aspire-to-excellence.org/Application+forms/>

**CRITERION 1**

**The assessment programme serves and supports the mission of the institution and the goal of medical, dental and veterinary education globally in enhancing and improving the health of both populations and individuals.**

Assessors will seek to cover the areas of:

1.1. The assessment programme does not exist in isolation and the institution should demonstrate how assessment fits into its overall context and vision and mission alongside the other aspects of learning and teaching. Examples of evidence that might be provided:

1.1.1. Context, and clear vision and mission statements of the school,

1.1.2. Overall academic program map and its outcomes, showing the alignment to context, vision, and mission, setting out what the School wishes to achieve in its programme, whether it claims any distinctive features and in particular whether it aims to address a particular health need.

1.1.3. A description of the assessment program, a description of how the assessment system fits into the context and vision, anonymous surveys of stakeholders.

1.1.4. Outline where assessment fits into the overall academic programme, its purpose at different parts of the curriculum, and how specific assessment activities are combined to facilitate decision-making/student guidance.

1.1.5. Institutional policy documentation that outlines the assessment philosophy/fit between assessment, and curricular activities.

1.2. The assessment programme is tailored to the needs of the community /purpose the institution has identified in its mission. Examples of evidence that might be provided:

1.2.1. A description of the process to ensure the needs of the community are represented in the assessment program, possibly including anonymous surveys of stakeholders.

1.2.2. Mission statement of the university juxtaposed with map of assessment program

1.2.3. Narrative explanation of ways in which this tailoring takes place.

1.3. The assessment is fit for purpose i.e. is there a clear purpose for the assessment programme and the delivery of the assessment programme supports this purpose. Examples of evidence that might be provided

1.3.1. Copy of policy statements that outline the goals of the assessment programme along with some indication of how/when students are kept informed of these goals.

1.3.2. Justification that the assessments used represent good practice. An example of evidence that might be provided:

1.3.3. Narrative outlining the philosophy used/justifying the approach(es) adopted.

## **CRITERION 2**

### **The assessment programme supports, enhances and creates learning opportunities.**

Assessors will seek evidence of:

2.1. Strong alignment between the programme of assessment and the curriculum, its outcomes, curriculum delivery strategy, and educational philosophy of the institution. Examples of evidence that might be provided:

2.1.1. Any institutional policies or instructions that require strong alignment and examples of that alignment.

2.1.2. Evidence that the outcomes of the course support the aims, that the learning processes enable students to meet the outcomes and that the assessment will make it clear to all whether or not these have been achieved. Blueprints are often helpful here

2.1.3. Evidence that the various assessment methods used are appropriately related to what is being assessed.

2.2. The use of formative assessment to foster learning both at the individual learner level and also at the level of faculty. Examples of evidence that might be provided.

2.2.1. A description of the mechanisms used to provide feedback and an anonymous survey of students.

2.2.2. Student testimonials/surveys (ideally collected/submitted by third party).

2.2.3. Evidence that the results of formative assessments are available in a timely fashion both to students to inform their study and to faculty to inform their teaching and course design.

2.3. How performance in assessment is used to guide an individual's future learning i.e. what feedback and advice/support do learners receive. Examples of evidence that might be provided:

- 2.3.1. A description of the ways advice/support is given to students and an anonymous survey of students.
  - 2.3.2. Evidence that feedback is not only timely but descriptive and specific, allowing students to identify strengths and weaknesses and act upon them.
  - 2.3.3. Sample copy of documentation/feedback given to learners in response to each assessment activity.
- 2.4. How cohort performance data influence the curriculum content and development, and staff development. Examples of evidence that might be provided:
- 2.4.1. Any institutional policies or instructions that require the use of performance data in curriculum and staff development supported by surveys of students and faculty.
  - 2.4.2. Description of work/information flow of assessment data/analyses.
  - 2.4.3. Evidence that students' performance is collected, analysed and fed back to teachers and those responsible for curriculum development.
  - 2.4.4. Examples of how data has been used first to modify the course and then to measure any change will often be helpful to the panel.
- 2.5. Strategic use of timing and amount of assessment. Examples of evidence that might be provided:
- 2.5.1. Anonymous survey of faculty regarding the timing and amount of feedback they provide.
  - 2.5.2. See map described above.
  - 2.5.3. Evidence that the timing of assessments supports the learning so that not only are assessments related to recent learning but that subsequent assessment builds on prior learning and assessment to reinforce integration of knowledge into practice
  - 2.5.4. Evidence that the amount of assessment achieves its purpose/the outcomes.
  - 2.5.5. Assessment is not overwhelming for students and faculty (anonymous faculty and student surveys).
- 2.6. A process of remediation and support, which is individually designed for individuals who require it; Examples of evidence that might be provided:
- 2.6.1. A description of the remediation process and an anonymous survey of students who have required remediation and faculty who have been engaged with it. An evaluation report on the nature and effectiveness of the remediation program.
  - 2.6.2. Policy statements, governance structure, and indication of how the process takes place, how many students are involved, and evidence that the support is effective.
  - 2.6.3. Evidence of a clear process which is easily available to students and staff.
  - 2.6.4. Evidence of any proactive methods in identifying students with difficulties.
  - 2.6.5. Evidence of clear responsibility within the School and appropriate training for those individuals.

### **CRITERION 3**

**The assessment programme ensures the competence of students as they progress.**

Assessors will seek evidence of:

3.1. Clear guidelines and processes detailing how assessment relates to student progression which are available and transparent to regulatory bodies, the institution's faculty, teachers, clinicians, employers, students, patients and carers. Examples of evidence that might be provided.

3.1.1. Copies of the guidelines which are shared with each group of stakeholders as well as an indication of when, where, and how they are shared; any evaluation reports from regulatory bodies or other internal/external groups.

3.1.2. Policy documentation already mentioned above.

3.1.3. Evidence that those few students who are judged unsuitable for a medical career are correctly identified and appropriate action taken.

3.2. Documentation demonstrating that the assessments are robust in their measurement of competence and that the assessment programme is comprehensive i.e. does it cover the range of competences required? Examples of evidence that might be provided:

3.2.1 Description of the assessment program (above), description of the competencies that are valued, alignment of the two with details about the measures.

3.2.2. Explicit blueprint documenting how the assessment program has been built to cover variety of competencies of interest/levels of Miller's pyramid, etc.

3.2.3. How does the school set the 'cutpoint?' Details of how the School deals with the uncertainty around the 'cut point'

3.2.4. Utility indicators (i.e., evidence of quality assurance analyses and continuous quality improvement efforts – reliability/validity/feasibility/acceptability/educational impact) for individual measures where appropriate as well as overall program (and accompanied by some explicit statement about where/when/why compromises are made to prioritize different aspects of utility in different aspects of the assessment program.

3.2.5. Specific evidence that as far as possible the assessments are passing the competent and failing the not yet competent.

3.3. Clear rules and effective processes to address learner appeals against assessment outcomes. Examples of evidence that might be provided:

3.3.1 Description of the appeals policies and process; summary of appeals over a period of time; data on recent outcomes.

3.3.2. Should be in policy documents alluded to above.

3.3.3. Evidence that the process of appeal is independent of the original decision.

3.3.4. The use of exemplars could be used to strengthen this section.

#### **CRITERION 4**

##### **The assessment programme is subject to a rigorous and continuous quality control process**

Assessors will seek a sound rationale and evidence of:

4.1. Robust and continuous internal evaluation for quality control. Examples of evidence which might be provided:

4.1.1. Description of the process; examples of quality control output; evaluation reports; description of actions taken, any policies.

4.1.2. Evidence of a clear system for quality control and enhancement

- 4.1.3. Evidence of how utility indicators improved with quality control.
- 4.2. A process of external review of the assessment programme. Examples of evidence that might be provided:
  - 4.3.1. Description of all external reviews and copies of all external review reports.
  - 4.3.2. Provision of reports conducted by external reviewers along with dates/description of process used.
- 4.4. The institution being receptive and responsive to constructive advice from external review. Examples of evidence that might be provided:
  - 4.4.1. A list of all external reviews, the recommendations emanating from each, the responses to each, evaluation report after change.
  - 4.4.2. Narrative indicating how process was changed in response to 4.3.1 (ideally with indication of whether or not changes were effective).
  - 4.4.3. Evidence of feedback leading to change and further review.
- 4.5. A cohesive institutional programme to train faculty on assessment with regular planned opportunities for appropriate staff development. Examples of evidence that might be provided:
  - 4.5.1. A curriculum for the faculty training on assessment, a list of available faculty development workshops/educational experiences, the number of faculty participants, the intensity of faculty participation, the requirement for faculty participation.
  - 4.5.2. Description of faculty development offerings that focus on assessment along with indication of number/proportion of faculty who have taken advantage of their availability.
  - 4.5.3. Evidence of training programmes which are congruent with the assessment processes.
  - 4.5.4. Evidence of the take up of such programmes particularly by staff that have assessment responsibilities.
- 4.6. Appropriate and available assessment expertise within the institution.
  - 4.6.1. List of contributors to assessment, their relevant backgrounds, their roles, and their contributions.

## **CRITERIA 5**

### **The assessment programme demonstrates a commitment to continuous scholarship and innovation.**

Assessors will seek evidence of:

- 5.1. Innovation in assessments and evaluation of how these innovations improved the assessment process. Examples of evidence which might be provided:
  - 5.1.1. List of innovations in assessment with associated evaluation reports and/or publications.
  - 5.1.2. Description of what is new, different, unique about the institution's approach to assessment. Explanation and evidence for these claims.
  - 5.1.3. Evidence of the adoption of newer, evidenced-based assessment methods to replace older traditional methods
  - 5.1.4. Evidence that assessment methods are generally well supported by the assessment literature either as practical and effective processes or by good theoretical justification.

5.2. Scholarly activity including dissemination of innovation to ensure continuous commitment to improving assessment locally, nationally and internationally. Examples of evidence that might be provided:

5.2.1. List of publications, presentations, and innovation projects that have led to local or regional implementation along with associated evaluation reports.

5.2.2. Academic publications; conference presentations; evidence of uptake at other institutions; testimonials of influence; grant funding for work in assessment; indications that the work described in these outlets has been implemented locally.

5.2.3. Evidence that a School is sufficiently confident in its processes as to be willing to share and debate them with others.

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