

ASPIRE Recognition of Excellence in Curriculum Development in a Medical, Dental, Veterinary School

Introduction and Criteria for Recognition of Excellence in Curriculum Development

Definition

A curriculum is a statement of the intended aims and objectives, experiences, outcomes and processes of an educational programme (*Grant, 2006*).

Curriculum development describes all the ways in which a training or teaching organisation plans and guides learning. This learning can take place in groups or with individual learners. It can take place inside or outside a classroom. It can take place in an institutional setting like a school, college or training centre, or in a village or a field. It is central to the teaching and learning process (*Rogers and Taylor 1998*).

Scope

For the purposes of this application, by “curriculum” we are referring to that which leads to the award of a primary medical, dental or veterinary qualification. An applicant institution or organization may have a single curriculum (e.g. one programme in medicine or dentistry or veterinary medicine) or more than one curriculum (e.g. one programme in medicine *and* one in dentistry or one in veterinary medicine; or two *entirely separate* programmes in medicine e.g. one for school-leavers and one for graduates). A separate submission must be made for each application.

Cultural, geographic, social, fiscal and other issues may influence how healthcare education is developed and delivered at an institution and will vary among institutions. Excellence may be identified and recognized in institutions with limited resources just as much as in “resource-rich” institutions. The way in which institutions demonstrate context appropriateness will be taken into account by the panel when reviewing each submission.

Conceptual Frameworks

Excellence in healthcare curriculum development may be seen as the product of six components:

- Organisational Structure and Curriculum Management
- Underlying Educational Strategy
- Content Specification and Pedagogy
- Teaching and Learning Methods and Environment
- Assessment, Monitoring and Evaluation
- Scholarship

This framework will be used to map the criteria of excellence in healthcare curriculum development to continue to facilitate institutions to “aspire” and achieve excellence.



Criteria

The six criteria, and their respective sub-criteria, are described in more detail on the following pages.

Application process

An application form is provided. This covers information about the submitters and their institution, opportunities for demonstrating excellence for the seven criteria and signatures of the lead submitter and the Head of the Institution. Before addressing the criteria, applicants are asked to provide an outline of the curriculum in diagrammatic form.

The institution's designated programme will constitute "the curriculum" for the ASPIRE program application and the process of development of this curriculum will be assessed using the specified criteria for excellence.

Criteria for the award of excellence in curriculum development

1. Organisational structure and curriculum management

Key to any curriculum development strategy is having the right organisational management structure. Centralised management and committed leadership are both essential for effective change. Decision-making must be clear and effective, while allowing for, and encouraging, the involvement of enthusiastic faculty at all levels. All stakeholders, both internal and external, should have some role in curriculum change.

Evidence of an effective structure for the detailed management of the curriculum and curriculum change

Evidence of the successful involvement of stakeholders in curriculum matters

2. Underlying Educational Strategy

In bringing about curriculum change and renewal, key to its success is having a clear educational strategy, and sound reasons for adopting this strategy.

There are three levels or stages in the development of a well-structured curriculum:

1. the underlying education theory (epistemology) which results in the chosen educational strategy
2. how this has been translated into the content of the programme and the educational approaches (pedagogy) chosen for its delivery
3. the teaching and learning methods and environment in which they are delivered.

Evidence that the educational strategy adopted by the school is appropriate for the school and its region

Evidence that the curriculum is based on sound educational principles, supported by the educational literature, and using clearly defined aims and outcomes appropriate for the school and its region.

3. Content Specification and Pedagogy

It is key to the design of any curriculum to have a clear understanding of what the students will be able to do upon graduation. This will be determined by the content of the programme and the educational approaches used in its delivery.

Evidence of a sound rationale for the selection of programme content, with particular reference to integration, teamwork and student & patient centredness

4. Teaching & learning methods and environment

The teaching and learning methods should be appropriate for the nature of the material to be learnt – knowledge, skills or professional behaviour.

Evidence of a sound rationale for an effective choice of teaching and learning methodology.

Evidence of the provision of an effective and safe learning environment.

5. Assessment, monitoring and evaluation

Assessments must be directly related to learning outcomes, be reliable, be subjected to a rigorous quality assurance process and be accompanied by a timely feedback. The curriculum must also be subject to a quality assurance process, whether or not a new development or innovation has taken place. Feedback should be obtained from all stakeholders, action taken based on the findings and these actions fed back to the stakeholders.

Evidence of an effective, well thought out and defensible assessment strategy

Evidence of rigorous monitoring and regular evaluation of the curriculum and of any curriculum developments which have been introduced.

6. Scholarship

Scholarship is important in any institution's mission. This can take many forms, not just research and publications. To qualify for excellence in curriculum development, there must be evidence of achievement of scholarship.

Evidence that educational scholarship is encouraged, promoted and rewarded in the institution.