

Using a Comprehensive Program Evaluation System to Facilitate Planning and Decision-making in an Innovative College of Medicine

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Background

King Saud bin Abdulaziz University College of Medicine in Riyadh is a third year, hybrid PBL program using lecture and demonstrations with tutorial groups, and an integrated, web-based curriculum. It currently enrolls 110 students in its first three batches and supports its progressive philosophy with a large, experienced Department of Medical Education housing an extensive Program Evaluation Unit. The Unit has developed a systematic evaluation program to serve both formative and summative needs.

Summary of Work

A wide variety of data-gathering strategies, both systematic and ad hoc, is employed. This variety encompasses considerable mixed-methods approaches with a diverse array of instrumentation, multiple data sources, varied program foci, with simultaneous concern for stakeholder priorities, decision-maker needs and utilization feasibility. Methods include questionnaires, interviews, focus groups, and group meetings. All are geared, through various report mechanisms to respond to emergent program needs in a timely fashion. An overview of each - data source, method, content focus, and audience - is presented.

Summary of Results

Results are presented in categorical fashion, organized according to program components addressed as part of the overall plan. In the College, findings are used to form the core of a formal report presented to the Curriculum Committee approximately one month after conclusion of each Block. The Block Coordinator(s) is (are) present, and key issues and suggestions for remediation are discussed. Several changes already discussed will be briefly noted.

Conclusions and Take Home Message

The process involves many faculty, administrators, and students, and its demand on institutional resources is considerable. Thus its pros and cons, especially with regard to utility, feasibility, and decision needs, are assessed for other institutions similarly interested in effective, data-based decision-making. This may help in ascertaining whether, and how much of, an evaluation program should be adopted.