

Working with shifting goalposts: the challenge of developing a program evaluation for a program that isn't sitting still!

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Introduction/background:

Considerable investment occurs when modernising the design of health professional education programs, often with years expended redesigning and implementing programs. The literature suggests design and implementation approaches must flex in response to unforeseen and unavoidable issues that require problem solving along the way. At the same time program evaluation design needs to flex in response to changing education program design and implementation plans. This can present challenges for both program designers and evaluators.

Purpose/objectives:

Drawing from a case study of the Royal Australasian College of Physicians renewed Basic Training program, we will present the challenges of planning for long-term, dynamic program evaluation and collectively explore how these can be approached. Together we will:

- Hear how other groups have developed their program evaluations
- Consider a rapid peer review of our programmatic evaluation strategy
- Consider different perspectives on how to undertake complex multi year program evaluation.

Issues/ questions for exploration or ideas for discussion:

- What theoretical frameworks are others using for program evaluation?
- How can the work be distributed to make the evaluation manageable?
- What are the merits of using different methodologies?
- How can different evaluation needs (eg exploring short term implementation fidelity and long term program outcomes) be reconciled?
- How are competing priorities with participants / stakeholders effectively managed?
- How can quality evaluation plans be made when the program keeps getting tweaked and the timelines keep changing?