

The Impact of the pandemic on student learning and assessment performance

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Introduction/background:

The COVID-19 pandemic had a major impact on medical education, with face-to-face teaching and practical exposure in clinical settings substantially reduced for the majority of medical students across Australia. This also necessitated the need for online delivery of assessments which was almost universally implemented by Australian medical schools, with subsequent changes to the types and methods of assessment that were available to broadly evaluate student's competencies. Interestingly, anecdotal evidence shared between the medical school assessment leads indicated that these changes did not significantly affect the average performance on assessments compared to previous years.

The University of Sydney Medical School adopted an online delivery of assessments for Year 1 and 2 of the Program through the learning management system with an artificial intelligence method of invigilation. Consistent with the findings from other medical schools, there was no significant difference in the average score, passing standard or item statistics for the 2020 cohorts relative to previous years. However, qualitatively, across various high-stake assessments conducted in 2020, there was a notable negative skew in the distribution of student's performance which was greater than in previous years, suggesting that weaker ability students were more negatively impacted by the changes introduced by the pandemic.

Purpose:

The purpose of this PeARLs session is to share similar data and observations from other medical schools (we invite you to bring one slide along) and to discuss why the impact from the pandemic on learning and/or assessment performance seems to have only affected weaker students.

Issues/ questions for exploration or ideas for discussion:

The following issues and questions will be explored:

- What impact did you observe with your students?
- Why has the affect been greater for weaker students?
- What changes should we introduce to support these students better during a (potential) third wave?