Strategic Plan for the MB ChB Programme of Assessment of Students

Aim
The aim of this strategy is to outline the purposes of the MB ChB assessment programme and to use this information to identify areas of good practice and areas that require development.

It is envisaged that this document should be regarded as a vision for the future akin to the Curriculum Masterplan. That is, we are not expecting all these changes to occur immediately, or simultaneously, or that all will ultimately occur. However, where changes are being made to parts of the programme of assessment we hope that they would be consistent with, or towards, this vision. Just as the Curriculum Masterplan offers an overview to guide development of the curriculum, we see a need for a similar overview and shared vision of the programme of assessment within the course.

Preamble
The MB ChB Assessment Sub-Committee (MASC) recognises that:

- The information gained from assessment processes can be put to many purposes;
- Any one assessment process on its own is unlikely to meet all of the purposes of assessment;
- Resource efficiency and practicality requires that compromises will be made in the delivery of assessment. These compromises should be considered, in keeping with policy (e.g. by MASC), clearly documented, and apparent to those responsible for implementing assessment (e.g. implementation committees) and those making decisions (e.g. Boards of Censors).

In this document the term programmatic assessment refers to a deliberately constructed and organised, longitudinal programme of assessment, using a variety of methods to meet the intended purposes. This programmatic assessment, which contains multiple assessment points and intermittent decision points, will run throughout the course of the medical students’ undergraduate degree (Van der Vleuten et al., 2012).

Strategic direction
There are three important aims in our strategic direction for assessment:
1. Ensuring that the MB ChB programme of assessment is appropriate and meets necessary standards for the purposes intended; and
2. Ensuring alignment of the MB ChB programme of assessment with the Curriculum Map; and
3. Identifying areas for educational assessment research and quality improvement.

Purposes of Assessment
The Otago Medical School, staff, students, and the wider community may perceive different purposes from any assessment process. The information gained from assessment processes may be put to different purposes by different stakeholders.
The three main purposes of assessment should be:

1. **Guiding student learning** – enabling students to understand their progress relative to standards, identifying their strengths and weaknesses, evaluating their self-assessment, directing and motivating their future learning, identifying areas they may aspire to improve and achieving personal excellence;

2. **Ensuring that individual students are satisfactory to progress** – ensuring that students during the course are performing above satisfactory standards to progress, and that students at the completion of the course have the necessary knowledge, skills and attitudes/behaviour that lead to safe, fit-for-purpose practice;

3. **Evaluating the degree course (student learning)** – assessment results should be used as part of the quality improvement process of the degree course.

Any developments in assessment should be aimed at improvements in achieving at least one of these purposes.

Evaluation of any assessment or assessment programme should include measuring it against appropriate criteria to ensure it meets the intended purpose(s).

**Programmatic assessment alignment to the curriculum map**

**Alignment with Curriculum Map**

Within the Curriculum Map it should be possible to demonstrate what content and level of learning is covered by any particular assessment item, process, and/or programme. Equally, it should be possible to demonstrate where attributes specified within the Curriculum Map are assessed or could be assessed. In the latter instances, the compromise of sampling what could be assessed against what can practically be achieved, should be considered. There should be alignment between the terminology used within assessment documentation and the Curriculum Map regarding descriptions of the content and levels of learning, so enabling a move towards longitudinal assessment and decision-making.

**Programmatic Assessment Template**

A template outlining the MB ChB programme of assessment is required, including a timeline of assessment points and decision points. This will include assessments that occur during the year, within modules, and those at the end of year. Each of these assessments and decision points should be mapped against one, or more, of the purposes of assessment and the attributes specified in the Curriculum Map (eg domains and sub-domains). There should be decision points relevant to each of the three purposes.

**Research & Quality Improvement of Assessment**

Research and quality improvement activities in relation to assessment should be planned and undertaken in conjunction with the MB ChB Educational Research & Quality Improvement (MEREC) Sub-Committee.

Priorities to inform an assessment research and quality improvement agenda are:

- Identifying areas for improvement in assessment practice with a focus on areas that do not as yet meet standards of quality and responding to areas of perceived need which have already been identified by staff looking to improve assessment
- Promoting dissemination, both internally and externally, of healthcare education assessment research that is occurring within modules, years, campuses, the Medical School and Division
- Enhancing communication between researchers in order to increase collaboration
Requirements to progress this strategic plan

1. Agreeing the strategic direction
2. Developing and agreeing on a common taxonomy and attributes in conjunction with the Curriculum Map group
3. Developing and populating the programme template (Medical School and Module)
4. Identifying strengths, areas for improvement and developing research themes and trends in conjunction with MEREC
5. Ensuring that the required academic, administrative and IT resources are available to undertake this plan

References