

## What is the role of the centre for educational scholarship?

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### Abstract

The role of the Centre for Educational Scholarship is to promote scholarship, in terms of teacher education, teacher accreditation, and teacher collaboration. The strategy adopted by the University of Glasgow, Scotland, UK, is outlined, and a way of estimating effectiveness is suggested.

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Many medical schools have a centre for medical Education as part of their institutional structure, but their purpose and role is rarely discussed or justified in the literature. In this paper, the assertion is that the role of such centres should be to promote scholarship, in terms of teacher education, teacher accreditation, and teacher collaboration.

### Why are teachers at the centre of scholarship?

The responsibility and governance of teaching medicine has to lie with the medical profession itself. Students, at whatever stage in their career, can only pass along the novice to expert shift if they are immersed in the culture of clinical practice and inculcated into it by respected authorities.

Most countries have a diverse and varied set of respected authorities. In the UK, for example, a student (at whatever stage) is influenced by five kinds of respected authorities. Those dealing with national professional standards (such as the General Medical Council and the Postgraduate Medical Education Board), those dealing with clinical standards (the Academy of Royal Medical Colleges has at least 20 specialist colleges), those accrediting the primary medical qualification (over 30 medical schools), those delivering patient care (National Health Service with a workforce of over one million) and last but not least, the membership organisations (for example the Association for the Study of Medical Education and the Association of Medical Education in Europe). The consequence is an educational environment that is characterised by complexity that is manifest by diverse curricula, teaching cultures and assessment regimes.

Although the student experiences the consequences of the decisions made by such authorities, it is the teacher who normally puts the policy into operation. However, the teacher is much more than a mere executor. Indeed,

the role of the teacher is a very complex one, and it is the very nature of this complexity that should be of concern for Centres for Educational Scholarship (CES)<sup>1</sup>.

The CES at the Faculty of Medicine, Glasgow, defines educational scholarship as *engagement with, and/or contribution to the evidence base of teaching, learning and assessment, in order to enhance students' learning experience and their subsequent clinical practice*<sup>2</sup>.

The process of 'engagement' is the key to promoting good scholarship and thereby maximising the quality of the student learning experience.

### Commitment to action

How might this be done? In Glasgow, in 2007, the strategy adopted for engagement was through identifying the priorities of both the Faculty and the individuals in the teaching community. The Faculty priorities were determined by the medical education committee, and a needs analysis of the teachers was established by a survey. This information was transposed into a programme of activities that included a series of half day events. Topics included 'giving feedback to students taking a history', 'research methods', and 'tips for clinical teaching'. This programme attracted over 250 participants during the academic year 2008-09.

One other significant action was the introduction of an accredited programme in Health-professions Education<sup>2</sup>, which will be offered from September 2009. The syllabus includes conventional topics, such as teaching, learning, assessment, curriculum,

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leadership and management. The core philosophy is evidence-based. The students will consider the evidence in the literature within the context of their own professional situation. This is inquiry-led and the student applies some commonly used educational methods to explore some key questions, such as, “is this assessment fit for purpose?”. Here, the student chooses an assessment event within their professional situation and completes an evaluation. The first stage requires the student to establish the characteristics of a good quality assessment (including reliability, validity, utility, relevance, structure, enjoyment, scoring and standardisation). Having established the parameters that define a high quality assessment, the student then examines the chosen assessment event and determines how far it is fit for purpose. The analysis is written up as a course assignment, used to improve the assessment mechanism itself, and may also be shared with the wider clinical community at conferences, or submitted for publication.

Web-based technology allows face-to-face teaching and members of groups to learn together, in real-time, without the need for students to travel from home. This is a particular advantage in a large region, such as Glasgow.

The Faculty’s strategy for encouraging collaboration, includes one-day conferences for particular interest groups, that features the scholarship of the participants. Whilst this regional focus is highly relevant, the international dimension is also very important. In this respect the Faculty is promoting international collaboration and has already signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Medical Education Development Centre, in Gifu, Japan. This partnership rests upon shared values and interests between the two institutions and members of staff have already enjoyed exchange visits and published co-authored papers.

## Evaluation

The events are too recent for any evaluation of effective to be made. However, some measure of the merit of the strategy can be made over time from the general response from the clinical community. The response may be measured in terms of numbers of people who participate, and report their work in conferences and publications.

## Summary

By focusing on the interests and needs of members of the teaching community, centres of educational scholarship can improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, and enrich the ethos of education within its region. Success may be achieved if centres focus attention upon teacher education, teacher accreditation, and teacher collaboration. By responding to the needs of both the institution and its associated teachers, the centre can engage with the complexity that defines the role of the teacher, and enhance it. By doing so, the teachers will be better equipped to deliver a high quality educational experience for the benefit of the students.

## References

1. University of Glasgow[homepage on Internet]. UK: University of Glasgow; [cited 2009]. Centre for Educational Scholarship. Available from: <http://vale-web-dev.med-school.gla.ac.uk/>
2. University of Glasgow[homepage on Internet]. UK: University of Glasgow; [cited 2009]. Faculty of Medicine. Available from: <http://www.gla.ac.uk/medicine/healthprofessionseducationprogramme/>