Reviewer's report

Title: Use of UKCAT scores in student selection by UK medical schools, 2006-2010

Version: 1 Date: 1 September 2011

Reviewer: Miles R Bore

Reviewer's report:

I enjoyed reading this paper. It is well written and the design and outcome of the study is most useful and pertinent. I think medical schools in the UK and elsewhere and the process of selection will benefit from the findings of this study. More detailed comments by section are as follows. These are all discretionary revisions.

Abstract: reads well and provides an appropriate level of information.

Background: gives an outline of the development of UKCAT and a brief history of selection in UK medical schools. My only quibble here is that I think a paragraph or two could be spent on considering selection models or just noting that there are models of selection that are used in areas such as Organisational Psychology, Human Resources and elsewhere. This might usefully make the point that what UK Medical Schools are doing is not without precedence or evidence. Note there is a minor typo at the bottom of page 2 (“medicinal” should be ‘medical’).

Method and Results: well put together and the ‘story’ well told. I think Table 2 could be disposed of and the averages just reported in text (it’s not really much of a Table). Typo in the Rescue Method section “However were data …. Should be “However where data …”

Discussion: Some minor points to consider here are as follows.

The sentence “The strengthened use of the test emerged once schools became confident that admissions outcomes using their traditional methods generally selected those with higher UKCAT scores” is a big statement! Is there a reference for it? Can the source of this evidence be given?

The next paragraph starting “Many schools reported that …”. Could a sentence be added to indicate why the tests were helpful with these groups?

Last paragraph of the Discussion: I think a more explicit statement of the need for evidence of the predictive validity of the UKCAT battery needs to be made. This is an important point – the paper nicely outlines who the tests are being used, yet research into the evidence of the validity of the tests is not yet apparent.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field
**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare I have no competing interests. I have authored some of the non-cognitive tests that have been trialled by UKCAT. However, this paper is about the cognitive tests to which I have no connection.