Author's response to reviews

Title: Learning to Mark: a qualitative study of the experiences and concerns of medical markers.

Authors:

Kamila Hawthorne (HawthorneK@cardiff.ac.uk)
Fiona Wood (wood@cardiff.ac.uk)
Kerenza Hood (HoodK1@cardiff.ac.uk)
Rebecca Cannings-John (CanningsRL@cardiff.ac.uk)
Helen Houston (Houston@cardiff.ac.uk)

Version: 3 Date: 24 March 2006

Author's response to reviews: see over
This paper is in response to further comments on version 2 of the paper, by Sarah Peters (the first reviewer, Brian McKinstry, has accepted the revisions made to date)

There were two outstanding issues from Sarah Peters’ report:

1. The theoretical approach used in the analysis.

   The theoretical approach to the whole methodology and analysis of data has now been extensively revised in the paper. This was not a piece of Grounded Theory research, and cannot be described as such, but an exploratory descriptive study of a small sample of GP markers. It was part of a larger study looking at the feasibility and benefits of peer review of marking.
   Semi-structured interviews and a qualitative approach were chosen as the most appropriate way to allow flexibility and reflection in the participants. This approach has now been explored and expanded in the ‘Background’ and ‘Methods’ sections of the paper (main discussion is on pgs 4 & 5, with some further discussion on pg 7 on the development of a thematic framework for the analysis itself.)

2. The small sample size, therefore there should be a discussion of this weakness in the study and its implications.

   We accept that this is a weakness of the study, and have amplified this further in the discussion on pg 19. In particular reference has been made to the small sample size and the fact the sample only consisted of GP tutors. We have said that this means assumptions cannot be made for all marker types, but that our results may give some insight into the needs of markers of subjective pieces of work.

We hope that these revisions to the manuscript will be acceptable to our reviewers, who we thank for their helpful comments.

Kamila Hawthorne, 23/03/2006