Author's response to reviews

Title: Integrated online formative assessments in the biomedical sciences for medical students: benefits for learning

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Version: 3 Date: 13 November 2008

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MS: 1167842244213887 - Integrated online formative assessments in the biomedical sciences for medical students: benefits for learning

General:

In response to both reviewers’ concerns, we have modified the sentence “Our data clearly demonstrate that the online formative assessments in Phase 1 of our undergraduate Medicine program have been effective in promoting learning by students.” The words “clearly demonstrate” have been replaced by “indicate”.

Responses to Reviewers’ Comments:

Reviewer 1

• The formatting error on page 6 has been corrected.

• As suggested, figures quoted in the text (e.g. page 9) and Tables have been rounded to one decimal place, except where two decimal places are required for the data to be meaningful (Table 3).

Reviewer 2

• In response to the reviewer’s concerns, the following passage (referring to a recent review of student evaluation survey response rates) has been added to the Results section under the subheading Perceptions on page 10:

“Student response rates for annual online evaluation surveys from 2005-2007 were 52.1%, 51.5% and 48.5% (n=237, 238 and 246) respectively. Our response rates (which are underestimates, because they are calculated based on the entire cohort, rather than the number of students who completed the online formative assessment from which the survey was linked) are substantially higher than
usually achieved in online course evaluation surveys, and approach those for paper-based surveys [22]."

• Whilst acknowledging the reviewer’s concerns, we would like to point out that our response rates are higher than those typically achieved for online surveys of students, and are comparable to response rates achieved in directly administered paper-based surveys. In the case of our large student cohort, this sample represents a substantial amount of data, which is likely to be representative of the entire cohort.