Reviewer’s report

Title: Comparative Attainment of 5-Year Undergraduate and 4-Year Graduate Entry Medical Students moving into Foundation Training

Version: 1 Date: 16 November 2009

Reviewer: Michele Groves

Reviewer's report:

The paper reports a small study comparing the academic achievement of parallel streams of undergraduate and graduate entry medical students. Graduate-entry medical programs are well-established in the US and Australia and becoming more popular in the UK - as such the study will be of interest to all universities and schools contemplating major curriculum reform.

By and large, the paper is well-written and clear. I believe it should be published subject to the following:

Major Compulsory Revisions:
in my view, the authors misinterpret the results of the study. The fact is that the data analysis fails to show any consistent differences between undergraduate and graduate-entry cohorts - related either to stage of progress through their degree or to type of assessment (written vs clinical assessment, etc). This in itself is a valid finding and deserves discussion - there is no need to create differences between cohorts where no consistent pattern exists. The discussion needs to be re-written to more accurately reflect the findings.

Related comments:
1. what is the evidence for the statement in the 4th para of the Discussion "represents a genuine trend that reflects weaker prior educational attainment"? There is no data or references provided to support this statement. If the data relates to these students specifically, then it should be included. If it relates to a general finding about GE students, then the reference should be included.
2. para 5 of the Discussion: the 'first cohort' effect is well described in the literature and a reference related to it would not go astray

Minor Essential Revisions:
Abstract: "Aim" is missing and the aim of the study is incorporated into the Background
Methods: The first sentence is too long and would be more readable if broken up into 3 shorter sentences.
Results" para 3: what is meant by 'significant interaction between graduation year and GEM vs UG...."?
Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published

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

Declaration of competing interests:

'I declare that I have no competing interests'