Author’s response to reviews

Title: Medical School Clinical Placements - The optimal method for assessing the clinical educational environment. A graduate entry perspective.

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Editor Comments:
Please report the basic sociodemographics of your study population, i.e. for the student population included in the analysis (n=154, Results paragraph 1): male/ female ratio, mean age, standard deviation and range, percentage of students with higher qualification than an honours degree, percentage students from EU-countries and Non-EU-countries.,

Response: Students are not asked for their demographic details when filling in feedback. The reasons for this is that some of the placements have quite low numbers – for example 8 students in one of the hospital sites – if students filled in their age, sex, EU/non-EU status etc then it would be very easy to deduce their individual identities. It is feared that students would be less likely to provide honest feedback if there was a high risk of their anonymity being compromised.

We have no reason to believe that the responding students were unrepresentative of the population, and therefore their sociodemographic information is likely to be the same as the overall populations, which was described in the methods section. However if it would be helpful, this sociodemographic information could be summarised in table format in the results section. Alternatively, a sentence to clarify that demographic information was not sought on the questionnaire could be added – for example ‘participants were not asked to provide demographic information as it was felt that this may risk deductive disclosure of student identities in placements will small numbers of students’