Does the UKCAT Situational Judgement Test Predict Performance in Medical and Dental School?

**Brief**

Work Psychology Group (WPG) were commissioned to undertake a validation study to assess the relationship between the UK Clinical Aptitude Test (UKCAT) Situational Judgement Test (SJT) and medical/dental students’ in-training performance.

Approximately 25,000 medical and dental school applicants sit the UKCAT each year. The UKCAT consists of a number of cognitive tests and an SJT which is used to assess important non-academic attributes that have been identified as important for the medical and dental students. The UKCAT SJT was introduced in 2013 in response to increasing emphasis on values-based recruitment in healthcare globally, in addition to the need to assess non-academic attributes as part of selection processes. The SJT was developed by WPG in collaboration with key stakeholders and allows medical and dental schools’ admissions teams to examine applicants’ situational judgements in the context of the core competencies that are important during their training.

The UKCAT SJT was first used operationally in 2013, with this cohort entering training in 2014. There was therefore, an opportunity for the SJT’s predictive validity to be longitudinally assessed in 2015. WPG were commissioned to undertake this important validation phase of the UKCAT due to our extensive experience within healthcare selection (and the UKCAT in particular) and our renowned psychometric expertise.

**WPG’s Approach**

In order to obtain tutor ratings of student performance, we developed a bespoke validation questionnaire which was cascaded to educational tutors from four participating medical and dental schools. Tutors were asked to rank each student under their tutelage, on the three non-academic attributes assessed in the SJT (Integrity, Perspective Taking and Team Involvement), when comparing the student to the entire first year cohort. An average tutor rank was then calculated for each student. In addition, we also asked tutors to provide an overall judgement as to whether the student was “Particularly Promising”, “Average” or “Likely to Struggle”.

**Outcomes**

Our analysis demonstrated that student SJT scores were positively correlated to all measures of in-training performance (tutor rankings on the three individual attributes, average tutor rankings and overall judgement regarding potential). When students were grouped into bands based on their SJT scores, (Band 1 consisting of the highest scores and Band 4 the lowest), students in Band 1 received significantly higher tutor ratings than all other students, thus demonstrating that the SJT is a valid predictor of future ratings of medical and dental school performance. In addition, students who were identified by tutors as “Likely to Struggle” generally received lower scores on the SJT which again demonstrates the predictive validity of SJT scores.

These findings provide positive evidence of the UKCAT SJT’s predictive validity and supports its implementation as a cost-effective method to screen out lower performing applicants in future years. We will continue to partner with UKCAT in assessing the longitudinal relationship between SJT scores and in-training performance, as students continue to progress through medical and dental training.