

## **The Final-Year Learning Environment at Faculty of Medicine, Peradeniya as Perceived by a Group of High-Achieving Students**

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The educational climate/ environment has a strong influence on effective student learning. A number of instruments are available for measuring the educational environment and Dundee Ready Education Measure, which is known as DREEM is one such instrument that has been used by many medical schools in the world.

This is an attempt to document the perceptions of a group of newly graduated students of the Faculty of Medicine, University of Peradeniya (FOMUP) about their final year learning environment. The original English version of the DREEM with minor modifications enabling better comprehension was administered to a sample of students soon after the final examination, pending results. This version consists of 50 items each scored 0-4 on a 5 point Likert scale; 0 = strongly disagree while 4 = strongly agree, resulting in a maximum score of 200. Nine items (identified to be negative statements) were marked in reverse, so that a low score on any item would indicate negativity. The sample included high achieving students and the total and subscale scores were computed and interpreted according to the DREEM interpretation guide of McAleer and Roff.

The overall mean score turned out to be 121/200 and was higher than those reported by previous Sri Lankan studies. When the item-wise mean scores were considered it was > 3 for the items: 'I am encouraged to participate in class'; 'The teachers are knowledgeable'; 'I have good friends'; 'the teaching helps to develop my competence'; 'my social life is good'; 'I have learned a lot of empathy in my profession'; 'much of what I have to learn seems relevant to a career in healthcare'; and 'my accommodation is pleasant'. The mean scores were < 3 for the following: 'The teachers ridicule the students'; 'the teachers are authoritarian (teacher centered)'; 'the teachers are good at providing feedback to students'; 'the teachers get angry in class'; 'the students irritate the teachers'; 'I am able to memorise all I need'; 'the atmosphere is relaxed during ward teaching'; 'cheating is a problem in this faculty'; 'the enjoyment outweighs the stress of the course'; 'this course is well timetabled'; 'there is a good support system for students who get stressed'; 'I am too tired to enjoy the course'. When the results were combined into subscales, their mean scores and interpretation, according to the DREEM interpretation guide were, 'Students' perception of learning' (31.08/48): A more positive perception, 'Students' perception of teachers' (25.31/44): Moving in the right direction, 'Students' academic self perception' (19.02/32): Feeling more on the positive side, 'Students' perceptions of atmosphere' (27.37/48): A more positive atmosphere and 'Students' social self perceptions' (17.22/28): Not too bad.

It can be concluded that the final year learning environment at Faculty of Medicine, University of Peradeniya, is more positive than negative. The overall mean score as well as the mean scores of most of the inventory scales, although placed one step below the ideal score, were also higher than those reported by the previous Sri Lankan studies. The strengths of the programme are the teachers being knowledgeable and being helpful to develop competence among students. Students also endorsed that they were encouraged to participate in class, and the programme was very relevant. However, students had concerns over the conduct of teachers in relation to student teacher interactions such as giving feedback and providing a relaxed learning environment.