

Inclusivity in GEM: What More Can We Do?

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Background

We conducted research as part of The University of St Andrews (UoStA) Global Challenges Programme. The aim was to formulate a proposal on how to make the university a beacon of inclusivity. We envisaged a four-domain solution that encompasses improvements under the headings: a) Regional Inclusivity; b) Culture and Belief; c) Disability and Mental Health; and, d) Celebrating Diversity. Our findings revealed that there are many areas in which GEM students feel inclusivity can be improved.

Methods

We received 36 responses to our student survey, which was designed to elicit attitudes towards inclusivity under our domains. 24 of these responses were from Scottish Graduate Entry Medicine (ScotGEM) students, 9 from BSc medicine, and 3 from other programs. The survey was anonymous, and participants were asked to consent to their responses being used in our report.

Results

All respondents agreed that UoStA has a reputation for prohibitively high accommodation costs, meaning that students must often seek affordable housing that is far away from campus. 88% of respondents expressed that they would like to know more about other cultures – highlighting the need for general cultural learning as well as focused medical teaching on pathological presentations in patients from different backgrounds. Peer support services do not allow 1st year students to become peer supporters, highlighting a perceived lack of awareness surrounding GEM students' potential as valuable assets to the university: 63.9% were open to this rule being changed.

Key Messages

Our research reveals concerns being expressed by GEM students within our four domains, showing that work needs to be done to make the medical school and greater university more inclusive. We suspect many of the same inclusivity issues will resonate in GEM cohorts beyond UoStA.

