



Alternatives to the use of emotional intelligence tests via work stations in the values based recruitment of nursing students

Project background

The University of Huddersfield introduced a range of recruitment and selection tools that could be used alongside more traditional methods of recruiting student nurses. This reflected concern that the current process was unable to identify candidates with appropriate values or predict future performance. Emotional Intelligence Tests (trait test used across all nursing fields and ability test piloted in mental health field) introduced alongside the use of work stations with service user/clinical practitioner involvement to obtain insights into the process used.

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Project aims

The Project's initial aim was to consider the value of Emotional Intelligence Tests and Work Stations as a process for identifying candidates with the appropriate value base and whether this was a suitable alternative to more traditional face to face interviews.

Process

The University of Huddersfield utilised work stations as part of the recruitment and selection of nursing students. This allowed candidates to be scrutinised by a range of academic staff, clinical staff and service users for appropriate values and qualities. Work stations allow candidates to move through a series of stations which present them with a challenging situation/dilemma and ask them to describe how they would respond, as well as traditional question and answer stations. Staff involved use criterion based assessment methods to arrive at a mark for each candidate. At the end, panel members arrive at decisions through a collaborative process when scores are discussed. On-going evaluation of the method is underway to explore how this is helping to select appropriate candidates. Trait and ability Emotional Intelligence Tests were used as additional information and as a means of comparing performance on both tests and at work stations.

The introduction of a Group Based Situational Judgment Test allowed staff to observe and rate performance within a group and according to a set of pre-specified set of values.

In addition, the design of a simple checklist for auditing progress with the development of best practice in values based recruitment and selection was also completed. Admission tutors can use this as a method of evaluating where they are in implementing values based section methods.

Key challenges

The use of Emotional Intelligence Tests proved difficult especially with candidates whose first language wasn't English. This was taken into account when discussing an applicant's performance across a range of tasks with greater weighting being applied to the work stations.

Impact

The use of Emotional Intelligence Tests have been phased out due to their inability to predict performance on other aspects of the interview process. Scores on the tests were not replicated during other tasks involved in the selection process and suggested weak validity and undermined confidence in their use.

The admissions team are more confident in the selection process and believe it is helping us select candidates with the appropriate value base.

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Although too early to be sure, it would seem that many of the students selected for the programme, using values based selection tools, have a greater degree of self-awareness and sensitivity in interpersonal situations and this is being reflected in their feedback from clinical settings.

Next steps and sustainability

We have made some changes to the forms in order that we increase the bank of questions that we will be using with students.

Continued scrutiny of the selection process to better understand its impact and to consider potential developments will be maintained.

Key Tips

- Do not rely on a few selection tools to inform your decision making.
- Value the discussion phase following selection activities and do not abbreviate this by arriving at early judgements

This case study has been produced by the University of Huddersfield, for further information please contact:

Name: Steve Lyon

Role: Admissions Tutor and Senior Lecturer (Mental Health)

Email address: s.r.lyon@hud.ac.uk