



MEDICAL EDUCATION  
SCHOLARSHIP CENTRE

## Medical Education Scholarship Forum Proceedings

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### What are faculty members' expectations for writing competence in medical students?

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**Purpose:** The purpose of this presentation is to present key themes in the medical education literature about faculty members' expectations of the writing competence of medical students. Every year, talented and clever students from a variety of disciplinary backgrounds enter medical school and graduate programs in the Faculty of Medicine excited to begin another part of their academic and professional journeys. Some of these students struggle to communicate their ideas in writing in ways that faculty members expect. My observation is that remarkably few students are prepared for the rigour of academic writing. This observation is echoed by my colleagues during water cooler conversation. Scholarly writing is a skill like any other that must be learned and continually developed. To be successful in medical school and graduate programs, students must achieve a higher standard of writing competence than was previously expected of them. Studies show an established link between writing competency and degree/program completion rates and this is especially evident in professional schools such as medicine.

**Methods:** The question driving the literature review was: What are faculty members' expectations of the writing competence of medical students? After consulting with a health sciences librarian, we identified and searched four subject-specific electronic databases most suited for our purposes: PubMed, CINAHL, ERIC and MLA. Search terms varied depending on the database but are grouped under three categories: writing competence, faculty perspective, and medical education. English language articles published in peer-reviewed journals in the last 20 years were included. An initial review of title and abstract established if the article was relevant for an in-depth review for key concepts, underlying theoretical and ideological presuppositions, main themes, and critiques or gaps. Content was organized thematically to address the question.

**Results:** Very few journal articles address faculty perspectives on writing competence with very few focused on medical students or health sciences. Key themes will be listed.

**Conclusions:** This literature review reveals the lack of attention to faculty members' expectations for writing competence among students in undergraduate and graduate programs in medicine. Data about the writing competence that faculty members expect is an essential piece of the puzzle that must also include understanding what students want and need and are motivated to achieve, and what role a Faculty of Medicine might play in supporting student writing competence and ultimately their programmatic success.

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