

Additional File 1

Focus group guide

1) Introductory question:

“When you think about your medical studies, how does that make you feel? ...

I would like to learn how you experience your studies on a day-to-day basis. What had been challenging? What had been helpful?”

“What comes to your mind when you think about stress and academic studies?”

Note to facilitator: enable everyone to speak, but not necessarily in a fixed order. Ensure that discussions do not wander off to a general discussion of study conditions or evaluation of specific courses

2) Key questions regarding stress and coping:

- a) When you think about the last time you have felt under pressure due to your studies, what happened that day?
- b) How did that happen?
- c) How did you deal with it?
- d) What are your suggestions to avoid or reduce stress related to your academic study? What would you like to change?
 - I. Regarding study conditions
 - II. Regarding medical students
- e) Do you also experience positive aspects related to your medical studies? What are these positive aspects?

3) Key questions regarding stress and private life

- a) How do you experience the combination of academic life and private life?
- b) Is there any conflict between the two?
- c) What type(s) of conflict(s)?
- d) How do they come about?
- e) How did you deal with it?

Note to facilitator: please ensure that both directions of conflict are discussed, i.e. studies → private life and private life → studies

4) Outlook

- f) How do you view the topics “work stress” and “work stress versus private life” when you envision your future career, e.g. working as a medical doctor?

5) Summary

- g) What do you personally regard as most important related to stress due to academic studies and its interrelatedness with one’s private life? / What are your take home messages for us?

6) End

- h) Is there anything else that is important for you and has not been discussed so far?
- i) Thank you for this good discussion