

‘Have Your Expectations Met?’ - Students’ Perceptions on Anatomy ‘Elective Sessions’

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Since 2019 entrant batches, one 15 days ‘elective’ posting session in different parallel modules gets carried out in the Department of Anatomy after each entrant batch completes their 3rd professional MBBS part 1 examination. But, never any feedback from the students has been gathered on whether these sessions meet their expectations or not. So this study was conducted to explore feedback from the participant students on the ‘elective sessions’ in anatomy in a medical college of West Bengal.

Methodology: A cross-sectional study was carried out in the Department of Anatomy amongst the 30 current-year ‘elective’ batch students, with the help of a pre-validated semi-structured questionnaire. On the last day of the session, participants’ responses were gathered, and data was analyzed with SPSS version 16 software.

Result Analysis: Participants were the students who just finished their anatomy elective sessions. They were avg. 22+/- 0.46 age group. Two-thirds were male. On average, more than 98% of students put up their favorable perceptions towards the planning of the sessions. 96% of participants described the scope of hands-on training as satisfactory. Students perceived that the faculty were well prepared for the sessions. 90% of students agreed with the pattern of assessment done during the session. From the thematic analysis of the open-ended question from the students regarding the contact session classes on electives, it was found that students desired the incorporation of a digital learning platform so that on-site lecture sessions more integrated sessions can be added on-line and the on-site sessions can be totally used up for the hands-on practical class.

Discussion: This study for the first time dealt with the perception of students attending electives, which also enlightened recommendations and corrective measures in future days.

Key words: Anatomy Education Teaching Curriculum Outcome Model, Feedback, Competency Based Medical Education, Block 1 elective, Self-directed learning

INTRODUCTION

An elective is a learning experience created in the curriculum to provide an opportunity for the learner to explore, discover and experience areas or streams of interest. The National Medical Commission (NMC) introduced electives in 2019 for medical undergraduates as part of competency-based medical education curriculum after the university examination of Phase III MBBS part 1 students. Since that admission batch, it is running in all medical colleges in phases of two blocks postings. Among that Block 1 covers postings in pre-para departments including Anatomy. So, the 'elective postings' in Anatomy of that Phase III students is in run since last half of the decade. [1-3]

Aligning to the guideline given, in Anatomy department of this institute the 'elective sessions' are get conducted in three parallel batches on-

1. Surface anatomy & dissection
2. Histology slide preparation by routine stains &
3. Cross sectional radiology with CT MRI

Upon counselling, in each batch 10 students are enrolled in each module. Two weeks contact sessions take place with them.

But till date, so far, the literature found, no feedback of the students has been obtained in this state for 'elective postings' of the students in Anatomy.

Away back since 2013, faculties of Anatomy are in search of students' feedback of the Anatomy teaching-learning methodologies [4]. Previous researchers planned a lot for inclusion of topics/ syllabi of the electives in their institutes [5-8]. Even after execution of electives, they have collected students' responses as feedback to explore the lacunae in the process, but specific to elective postings in Anatomy very limited literature was found as has been searched for. [9-20]

So, this study was planned to explore students' perception on 'elective postings' in Anatomy, conducted in a medical college of Kolkata.

METHODOLOGY

With proper permission from institutional authorities (IEC permission letter no. IPGME&R/IEC/2026/0036 dated: 20/01/2026), a cross-sectional study was carried on in Jan-Feb 2026; with the learners attending 'elective' sessions in anatomy. Usually, the passed out 3rd professional part 1 students undergo counselling process for their elective. So, students opt their modules for block 1 & block 2 upon their own wish. In Department of Anatomy, three modules were there for the session in Block 1. A semi-structured questionnaire was made, validated to collect their perceptions at the end of the session. All the 30 students (10 students in each of the three batches), were approached at the last day of the elective session for their consent, and all of them responded with the questionnaire. The questionnaire had three parts- initial part of demographic details, next part of 10 questions in Likert scale and third part of narrative descriptions. It was validated by the voluntary participation from the faculties of the department of Anatomy and MEU/CC of inside & outside our institute. The obtained quantitative data was analysed by descriptive statistics in SPSS version 16 software & qualitative data was thematically analysed.

RESULT

Out of total 30 participants majority of the students were in 23-25 yrs of age group. Almost two-third were male and rest were female. [Fig 1]

Overall, all students put up with favourable responses. 98% students said that faculties used to discuss the learning objective at the starting of the class. More than 96% participants described that the scope of hands-on training was satisfactory. Students perceived that the faculties were well prepared for the sessions. 100% students agreed that the teaching methods were satisfactory & the teaching content was sufficient to meet the learning objective. 99% students felt happy with the logistics used during the class-sessions. 90% students agreed the pattern of assessment done during

the session. Almost all students described that the feedback was timely and motivating for their future study. [Table 1]

From the thematic analysis of the open-ended question from the students, regarding the contact session classes on elective it was found that students desired for incorporation of digital learning platform, so that on-site lecture sessions can be added on-line and the on-site sessions can be totally used up for the

hands-on practical class. They have suggested for integration with the clinical departments and classes in the clinical settings. Even they have come up with suggestions of the printed booklet/modules for the day-to-day lessons. They also have suggested for provision of certificates/ e-portfolios after completion of their courses. [Table 2]

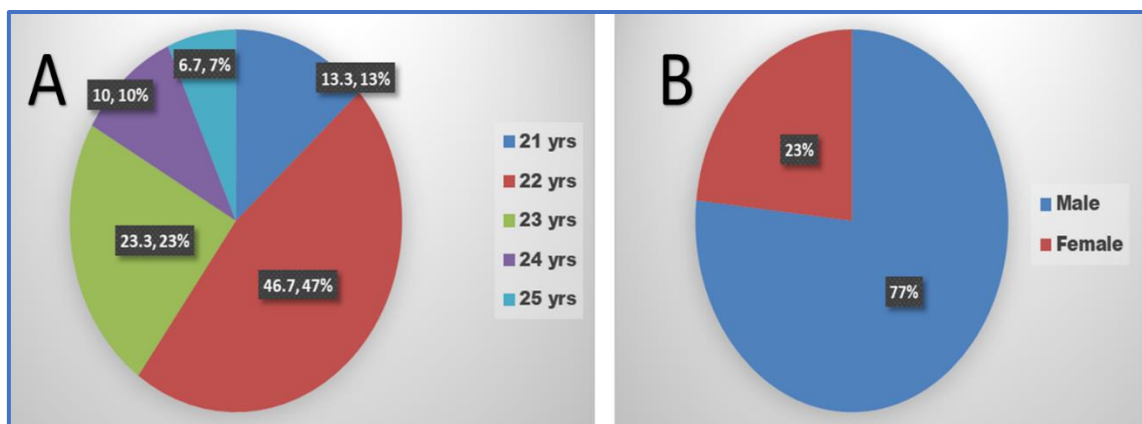


Fig 1. Frequency distribution of participants according to age & gender

Table 1: Frequency distribution table of participants according to their responses (N=30)

Questions	Type of response	No. of students (percentage)
[1] The module based elective session could attain your satisfaction	Strongly agree	23 (76.6)
	Agree	7 (23.3)
	Cannot comment	0
	Disagree	0
	Strongly disagree	0
[2] During the session, every day the mentor has described the learning objective of the day	Strongly agree	20 (66.6)
	Agree	5 (16.6)
	Cannot comment	2 (6.7)
	Disagree	0
	Strongly disagree	0
[3] During every session, there was scope of interaction with the faculty	Strongly agree	28
	Agree	2
	Cannot comment	0
	Disagree	0
	Strongly disagree	0
[4] There was no scope of hands-on training during each session	Strongly agree	0
	Agree	0
	Cannot comment	0
	Disagree	10 (33.34)

		Strongly disagree	20 (66.67)
[5]	The faculty was well-prepared for the session	Strongly agree	25 (83.33)
		Agree	5 (16.6)
		Cannot comment	0
		Disagree	0
		Strongly disagree	0
[6]	The teaching-content was very much appropriate to the session	Strongly agree	28 (93.33)
		Agree	2 (6.67)
		Cannot comment	0
		Disagree	0
		Strongly disagree	0
[7]	The teaching method was satisfactory	Strongly agree	21 (70)
		Agree	9 (30)
		Cannot comment	0
		Disagree	0
		Strongly disagree	0
[8]	The logistics used was sufficient enough for the sessions	Strongly agree	26 (86.67)
		Agree	3 (10)
		Cannot comment	1 (3.33)
		Disagree	0
		Strongly disagree	0
[9]	Assessment was done in appropriately	Strongly agree	23 (76.67)
		Agree	6 (20)
		Cannot comment	3 (10)
		Disagree	0
		Strongly disagree	0
[10]	The faculty has provided feedback timely for your scope of rectification	Strongly agree	28 (93.33)
		Agree	2 (6.66)
		Cannot comment	0
		Disagree	0
		Strongly disagree	0

Table 2.: Thematic analysis of the narrative responses from the students
 “What were the shortfalls of the elective sessions to meet up your expectations?”

Theme	Responses	Code
Teaching learning method	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Less theoretical discussions” • “More practical sessions could make our active participation” • “More hands-on sessions could improve our learning” • “Incorporation of project” 	More hands-on exposure
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Use of digital learning could involve us in free time in hostel” • “More use of Artificial intelligence can be planned” • “On-line tasks/lectures can be given instead of classroom lectures” • “Contact sessions may be used for hands-on classes” • “Online port-folio can be encouraged” 	More use of AI/ digital learning platform

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I came here to make my clinical eye sharp. So class would be better done in clinical setting.” • “It would be more interesting if done with real cases”. • “I missed the clinics” • “How to use the knowledge in clinics, could be more emphasised” • “Can be integrated with medicine department” 	Class in bed-side (in clinical setting)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Day to day assessment can be done” • “More frequent informal assessment could make the environment felt-smooth” • “This can be added with the university exam” • “Certificate of course completion can be given by college” 	Informal assessment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I missed book” • “It would be better if a book got provided” • “A printed module can be provided” • “Syllabus of elective sessions can be fixed” 	Provision of booklet

DISCUSSION

Although ‘elective’ sessions are getting conducted every year in Anatomy department for Phase III Part 1 passed students, since last five years, but never was it attempted to collect students’ feedback for the teaching learning method of elective. So, this endeavor was to explore the ‘elective’ from our learner’s view point, whether it is in right track or not. On analysis it was found that almost all students were in positive agreement with the methods of teaching the electives, although they have suggested few new ideas to incorporate in the methods of teaching.

Since the inception of idea of electives by NMC (erstwhile MCI), many researchers have described its positive role to support the knack of the medical students in their studies. In earlier phases even researchers had though designed of the electives for their implementations by the help and ideas of the medical education experts. [2, 3, 5-8]

After the implementation of electives in many times in many places researchers came out with their studies as students’ perception of that new element as ‘elective’. Study in 2020, feedback of 229 students in an institute were obtained for the perception of elective modules, where students all through agreed upon the necessity of the topics allocated and assessment method deployed during their elective postings. [9]

Vidja K, Patel J, Patidar H, Akhani P, Patel P in their study (2023) with 63 students came

out with opinion that the objectives of the elective module were largely met and the faculty members were very helpful and responsive, and that they actively participated in the electives. Majority of them agreed that it was a very good academic activity, the time duration was appropriate, and it provided an opportunity to show creativity and for teamwork. [10]

In 2024, an online study from Haryana in 243 MBBS students on their perceptions, experiences, and suggestions for further improvement on electives, conducted after their postings explored positive feedback about the course. [11]

In subsequent year study in Maharashtra, among 15 undergraduate medical students conducted during their elective training program on newly developed elective module on sexual assault, explored students feedback of usefulness of the module. [12]

In recent years, study among all 96 respondents of elective-posted students 51% agreed that the postings were useful, and 46.9% felt that it was necessary for both clinical and non-clinical postings to be included in the study. In contemporary other studies, students expressed the elective postings as were in their help not only to learning some skills, but also helped them to work in a team. Approximately 70% of the students reported that having in depth knowledge about the issue or problem have improved their understanding of it. Over half of them recommended lengthening the time

and adding more themes for students to choose from. [13-16]

Study from Karnataka explored positive repercussions from all 240 students regarding their subjects of elective postings and they all expressed it as the first step for their knack to superspeciality subjects. Study from Mysore in 197 students, who have undergone elective postings in different disciplines suggested although positive responses from students on conduction of the process. Very recent work published this year among all elective-underwent students from Jaipur, Rajasthan explored overall positive perception of recently implemented there. [17-19]

So far searched for, only one article was found from outside India, where the authors explored students' perception on elective posting sessions in Anatomy. [20] From India, literature on 'elective posting in Anatomy' was not found in spite of a vigilant search.

Although this study was done only in 30 participants, in very short time, but the strength of the study lies in fact, that it may be considered as one of the pioneer works in students' feedback on Anatomy-elective sessions. Further expansion of it may be planned in multicentric norm in future years.

CONCLUSION

The practice of giving positive feedback is solely with the ambition for improvement of the teaching-learning program, but whether it has been practiced effectively needs the analysis of the perception of students. Although, for different situations, the ideal scenario of feedback could not be perceived by the students, their responses give us the scope for improvement for the 'elective sessions' in the future.

Declaration by Authors

Ethical Approval: Approved

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