

Project Title	Technical support to the BSc degree in Medical Laboratory Technology at the Malawi College of Medicine, Malawi
Client	College of Medicine, Malawi
Year(s)	2007-2009

Context

LATH/LSTM has been involved in providing support to the Essential Health Package (EHP) in Malawi since 1997. Laboratory diagnostics are an important component of the EHP but there is a critical shortage of skilled laboratory managers in the public sector which limits the ability of districts to provide a reliable diagnostic service. Prior to the start of the BSc, training for laboratory personnel in Malawi was only available to Diploma level. More advanced training had to be undertaken outside Malawi with the risk that technicians may not return. The Malawi College of Medicine (CoM) was chosen to run the first Malawian BSc in Medical Laboratory Technology (MLT) to train a new generation of district laboratory managers.

Programme Objectives

In partnership with the BSc team in Malawi, LATH/LSTM supports the development and delivery of clear model teaching plans with learning outcomes, activities, resources and assignments for years 3 and 4 of the course. We are also developing educational capacity at the CoM by assisting in regular monitoring and annual evaluation of the course.

Approach

Each module is based on clear learning objectives which are discussed and agreed with students and designed to equip them with laboratory management skills. Module activities and assignments are explicitly focused on achieving these learning outcomes. Each semester in the third and fourth year of the course the students spend a few weeks in the CoM preparing for when they are attached to district laboratories to undertake their assignments. This work-based learning approach ensures that what students learn is relevant to them taking up positions as managers of district hospital laboratories.

Expected Outcomes

This course will generate laboratory scientists capable of managing district laboratories to a high standard. Students will have skills in total quality management of the laboratory, modern learning and teaching methods, research methodology and a detailed technical understanding of the essential health tests to support the EHP as well as a strong background in the basic sciences.

Results to Date

LATH/LSTM have so far helped design, implement and review the first set of Year 3 and 4 modules for the BSc, assisted in the marking of assignments and also mentored individuals within the CoM BSc team.