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A STUDY OF THE AGREEMENT BETWEEN STUDENT SELF-ASSESSMENT
AND INSTRUCTOR RATINGS

by

SHEILA B. COCHRAN

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Approved by:

Marian C. Spears
Major Professor

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	ii
LIST OF TABLES	iv
CHAPTER	
I. INTRODUCTION	1
II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE	5
III. METHODOLOGY	10
Population	11
Current Study	12
IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS	16
First Evaluation Period	16
Second Evaluation Period	22
Third Evaluation Period	22
V. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS	24
REFERENCES	26
APPENDIX	28

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1. Definition of close agreement	14
2. Degree of agreement between students and instructors on the level of student performance in each activity category for the three evalua- tion periods	17
3. Comparison of instructor and student assessment of performance level within each category for the three evaluation periods	19

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Dietitians as health care professionals are becoming increasingly aware of the need for self-assessment to assure quality in the delivery of nutritional care. This awareness was evidenced in 1973 by the action of the Executive Board of The American Dietetic Association in appointing a Professional Standards Review Committee (1). Among the important charges to this committee was that of developing guidelines for self-evaluation. In the guidelines the standards for dietetic practice which govern professional performance of dietitians were delineated. Subsequently, in the Essentials for Coordinated Undergraduate Programs in Dietetics the following statement has been added: "there is a plan for student evaluation, including self and peer evaluation" (2).

Concern by professionals about the performance of fellow practitioners has led to an emphasis on competency-based dietetic education programs. Competency is defined as the minimum knowledge, skills, affective behavior, and judgment which an individual is certified to possess on a set of criteria and level of expectation (3). As indicated in the definition, competency includes knowledge which is in the cognitive domain, skill in the psychomotor, and

attitude or judgment in the affective domain. Measurement of the cognitive domain is not a reliable indicator of competency in the total practice of a profession (4). Evaluation of competency can best be made by observation of a person's performance when confronted with situations requiring the exercise of the essential knowledge, skills, and judgment of a professional (5).

Hart (6), in her advocacy that the dietetic educators apply concepts of competency based education to dietetic curricula, introduced the unique thought that the learner expects to be held accountable for meeting the established criteria. A further support of this concept is attributed to Hepner and Hepner (7) cited in *The Dynamics of Clinical Dietetics* by Mason, Wenberg and Welsch (8). The citation is that there must be a "marriage" of the educational process and the professional environment, inferring that accountability for the future practitioner is extended to include current practitioners. It is the latter who serve as role models and participate in providing the real-world environment for learners to demonstrate competency for entry into beginning practice and professional qualifications.

The problem of the academician has been how to evaluate student development in a competency-based education program. The clinical component and to a lesser degree the didactic in a coordinated undergraduate program in dietetics approximates professional practice and thus