

# What happens to emotional intelligence when medical students go to a clinical setting?



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## BACKGROUND

Emotional Intelligence (EI) is the ability to:

- recognize one's own and other people's emotions
- discriminate and label feelings appropriately
- use emotional information to guide thinking and behavior <sup>1</sup>

EI is important for successful physicians and patient satisfaction. <sup>2</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Studies have observed changes in emotional intelligence as medical students progress through their curriculum. <sup>4-11</sup>

## METHODS

- We compared the EI of students in two different curricula
  - Traditional two plus two curriculum with later clinical placement
  - Integrated curriculum with clinical placement throughout M1-M4
- EI was measured using the Emotional Quotient Inventory (EQ-i 2.0), a validated self-reporting instrument
- Data were collected at matriculation and then at entry to M3 for each cohort
- Correlation of changes in EQ-i characteristics in the two student cohorts was used to determine the strength of the relationship
- Continuous variables were compared using t-tests

## RESULTS

- EI for students in the traditional curriculum dropped in three categories and rose in one
- EI for students in the integrated curriculum dropped in ten categories
- See Figure 1 (table) for actual data
- See Figures 2 and 3 (graphs) for statistically significant differences

## CONCLUSIONS

- Greater EI reduction among students in the integrated curriculum may support the view that placement in a clinical environment can change EI.
- This may suggest a need for attention to the effects of curricular change on EI as medical schools introduce earlier clinical experiences.

## LIMITATIONS

- Multiple curricular variables changed at the same time
- Different definitions of EI exist: we focused on EI as a trait
- Student cohorts were small
  - 24% of Class of 2019 (46/189)
  - 37% of Class of 2020 (68/184)

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Figure 1  
Class of 2019: Traditional Two-Plus-Two Curriculum N=46

EQ-i 2.0	Mean Score at Matriculation	Mean Score Entering Year 3	Significance
Self-Actualization	111	108	p<.05
Emotional Expression	100	104	p<.05
Empathy	111	108	p<.05
Happiness	109	105	p<.05

Class of 2020: New Integrated Curriculum N=68

EQ-i 2.0	Mean Score at Matriculation	Mean Score Entering Year 3	Significance
Total Emotional Intelligence	110	107	p<.05
Self-Perception composite	111	107	p<.05
Self-Regard	112	102	p<.001
Self-Actualization	112	109	p<.05
Self-Expression composite	103	101	p<.05
Interpersonal composite	112	110	p<.05
Interpersonal Relationships	106	103	p<.05
Stress Management composite	106	104	p<.05
Optimism	108	104	p<.001
Happiness	110	104	p<.001

Figure 2

## Class of 2019: Traditional Two-Plus-Two Curriculum

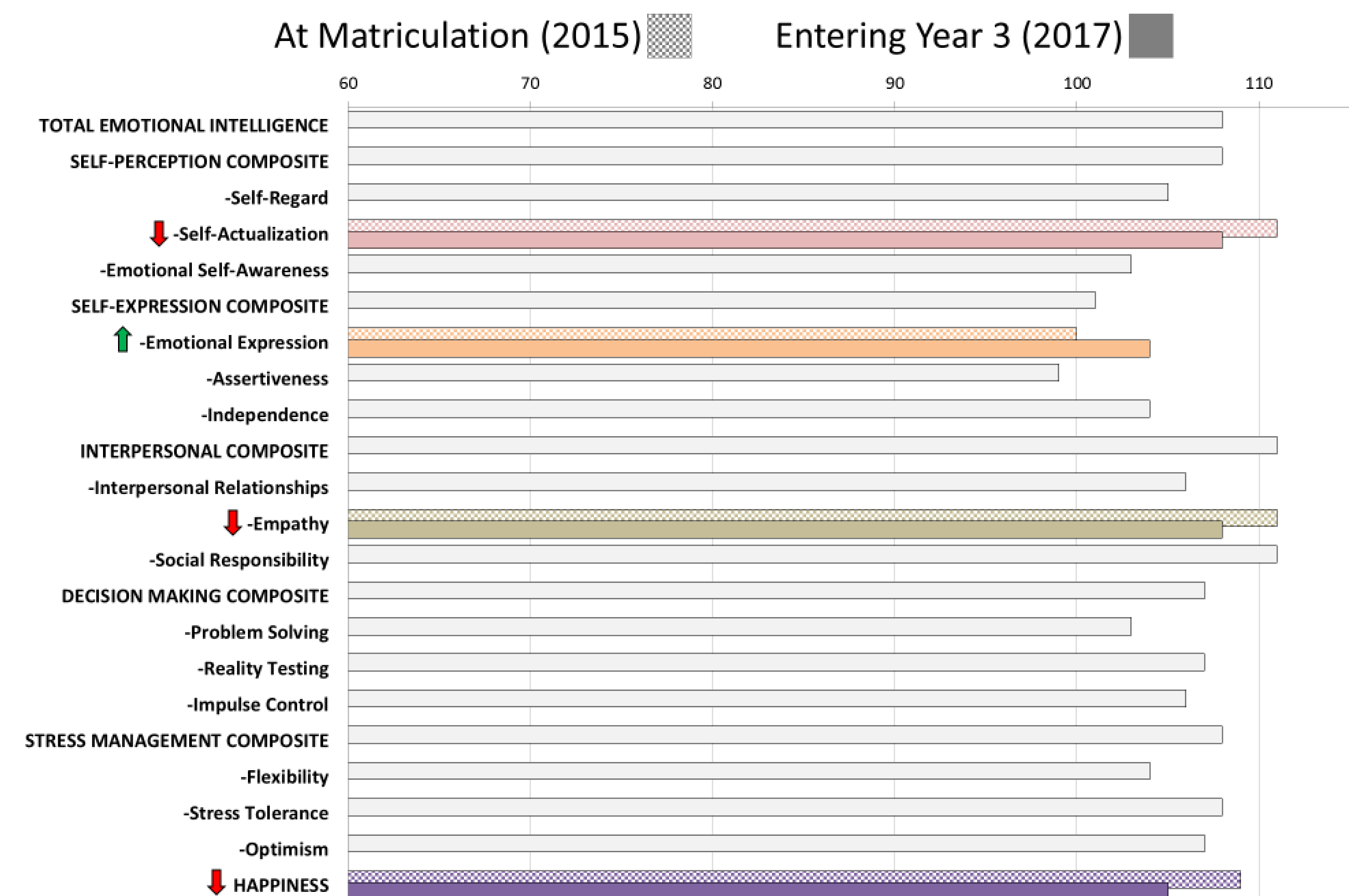
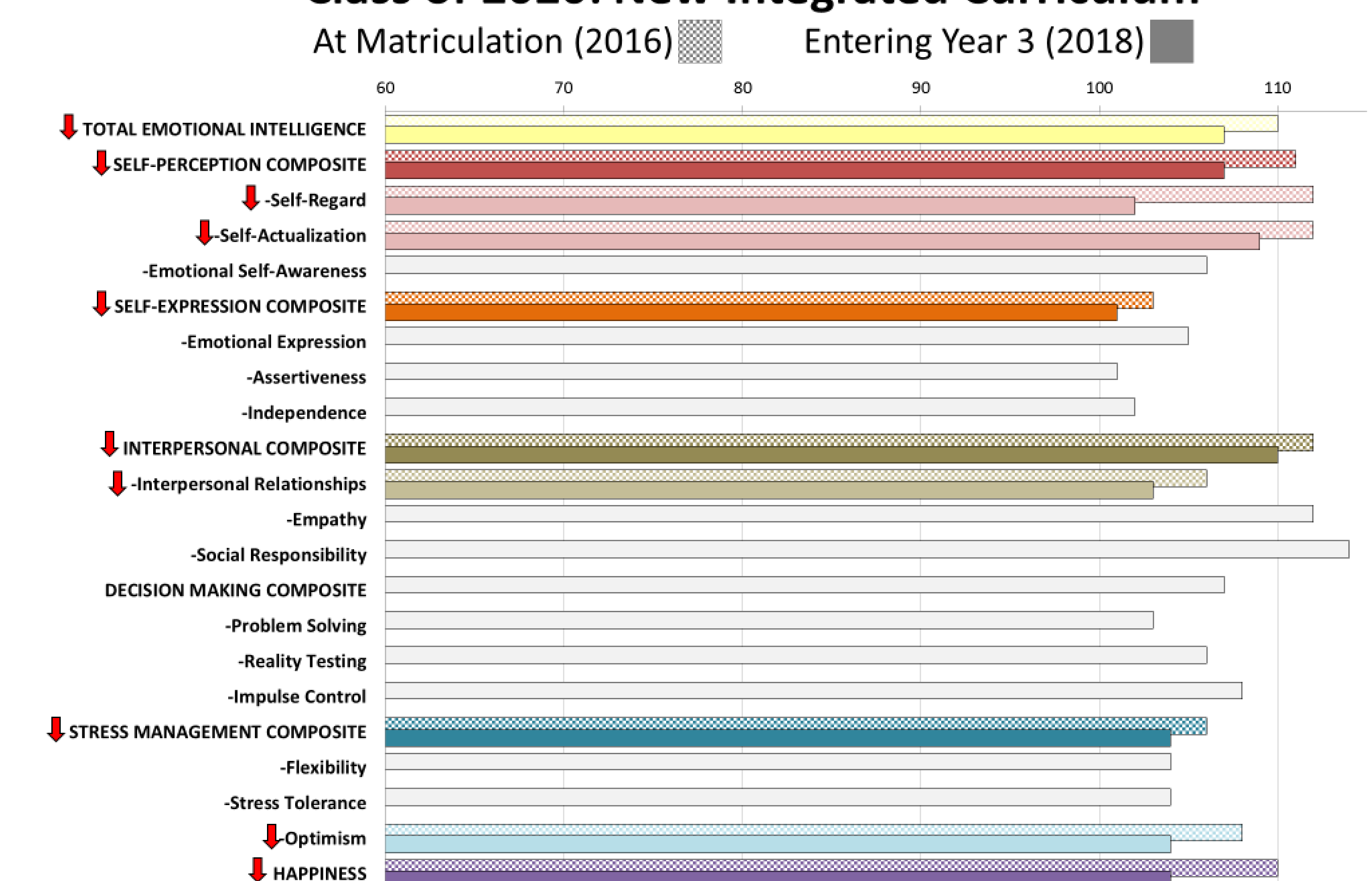


Figure 3

## Class of 2020: New Integrated Curriculum



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