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Accreditation extended for Western Australia's medical faculty

The Australian Medical Council (AMC) has extended the accreditation of the University of Western Australia's medical faculty, following reviews by a visiting AMC team of both the Faculty's new medical course and its existing medical course. Accreditation is undertaken to assure the medical registration boards that a medical school is producing safe and competent medical practitioners. Accreditation means that graduates of the medical course can be registered as medical practitioners in any Australian State or Territory.

The University of Western Australia introduced its new medical course this year. The course emphasises student participation in the education process, allows students to study optional areas in depth, and gives students experience in a wide range of hospital and community health settings. The AMC accredited the course before it was introduced and in August 2000 a visiting AMC team reviewed the Faculty experience in implementing the course.

The AMC has accredited the new medical course until 2007 subject to the Faculty responding to two areas of concern raised in the team's report: a review of the Faculty's plans for assessing the medical students, and the mechanisms for coordinating teaching and student support at the major sites of clinical teaching.

Strengths highlighted in the report include:

- The Rural Week in Year 1. Half way through the first semester, all students spent one week in a rural town in Western Australia, exploring health issues. The visits have been very successful, giving medical students an insight into the strengths of and problems confronting rural communities, and improving students' communication and interviewing skills and their abilities to work in groups.
- The new Centre for Medical and Surgical Skills (CTEC), which is training facility equipped with state of the art surgical and anaesthetic equipment as well as simulation and virtual reality models. The Centre will play a role in training surgeons, anaesthetists and other

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health care professionals, as well as providing clinical skills training and assessment for medical students. It is a collaborative venture between the WA Health Department, the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons, the Royal College of Surgeons of England, the Hills Surgical Trust and the University of Western Australia.

- The use of a wide range of public and private hospitals for clinical teaching and the support for teaching particularly from the three major associated general hospitals, the Royal Perth, Sir Charles Gairdner, and Fremantle Hospitals.

The visiting team also reported on the Faculty's current medical course, which is being phased out. The team met students of all years of the course and reported that the Faculty was adequately maintaining the components of the existing course.

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