



MEDIA RELEASE

AMC to Review Proposed Medical Course Changes

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The Directors of the Australian Medical Council (AMC) have given the go-ahead for two universities to seek accreditation of major changes to their medical courses. The universities may now proceed to develop full accreditation submissions for consideration by the AMC.

The AMC has advised the University of Queensland that because of the range of changes being made to its medical program, the AMC would need to complete a comprehensive assessment of the program.

Proposed changes include the introduction of an offshore clinical program and the introduction of a medical course from the university's Ipswich campus. The offshore change would involve up to 120 University of Queensland students (who are US citizens) having the opportunity to do the bulk of their clinical training with the Ochsner Health Facility in New Orleans. If accredited, this proposal would involve a major increase in student enrolments relative to resources.

The AMC's policy on offshore courses provides that the AMC will accredit courses that prepare medical graduates to work in the Australia and New Zealand health systems.

AMC Directors also agreed to the University of Melbourne's application to seek accreditation of a major change to its medical course, which would see it become an entirely graduate-entry course at Masters degree level. The course is currently offered in two streams, a six-year, undergraduate medical program and a 4.5 year graduate entry stream. If successfully accredited, the new University of Melbourne medical course will be the first Masters level basic medical course in Australia. An assessment process, involving a detailed submission from the university and a visit by an AMC expert team, will take place in 2010.

AMC President, Professor Richard Smallwood AO, said the proposals from Melbourne and Queensland universities signalled that medical education in Australia continued to experience significant change, with universities seeking creative options for providing medical education.

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“The University of Queensland’s proposed off-shore, US-based clinical course is an example of innovation in university medical education. At the same time, it raises significant questions for both the university and the AMC, including the very important consideration of the extent to which Australian healthcare resources should be used to train students to work in other countries,” Professor Smallwood said.

Professor Smallwood said the University of Queensland offshore proposal may have implications for the recognition by US authorities of AMC accreditation procedures for medical courses in Australia and the AMC would liaise with the US accreditation authorities about its assessment of the proposal.

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AMC Background

The AMC is an independent national standards body for medical education and training. It aims to ensure that standards of education, training and assessment of the medical profession promote and protect the health of the Australian community.

One of the AMC’s core roles is to accredit basic university medical courses in Australia and New Zealand. It has a two-stage process for considering major changes to accredited courses. In Stage 1, the AMC Directors assess whether a proposal is likely to meet AMC standards for basic medical education, based on advice from the Medical School Accreditation Committee.