

**NEWS RELEASE BY  
THE AUSTRALIAN MEDICAL COUNCIL  
AND  
THE FACULTY OF MEDICINE, THE UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY  
SYDNEY'S GRADUATE MEDICAL PROGRAM IS ACCREDITED**

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Australia's national accreditation and standards body for basic medical education, the Australian Medical Council (AMC), has accredited the new four-year graduate entry medical program to be offered from 1997 by the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Sydney.

The decision is based on the findings of an AMC assessment team which spent a week at the Faculty in March 1996, considering the Faculty's plans and talking to the curriculum planners, teaching staff, and students of the present six-year course about the changes.

In announcing the decision, AMC President Professor John Horvath said: "In the case of a new development such as this, the AMC may either grant conditional accreditation to the course or decide not to accredit. The report on the University of Sydney's Graduate Medical Program is very complimentary, and the AMC has given conditional accreditation. As the planning for Years 3 and 4 of the course is still at a fairly early stage, the AMC wishes to assess the final plans for these years before they commence."

In order to obtain entry to the course, students will need to hold a primary degree in any area of study, sit the Graduate Australian Medical Schools Admission Test (which tests problem-solving, writing and verbal reasoning, and knowledge of the physical and biological sciences), and participate in a semi-structured interview. Small-group, student-directed learning will be the major learning approach, and the course will focus on: the skills of acquiring and applying knowledge and understanding for a lifetime of learning; a critical understanding of the scientific basis of medicine; skills of critical appraisal in the practice of evidence-based medicine; competence in interpretation, analysis and resolution of clinical problems; interviewing and counselling skills; an understanding of people in health and illness, in families and in society; the capacity to analyse critically social and ethical issues; high standards of personal and professional behaviour.

The Chair of the AMC assessment team, Professor R Porter who is Dean of the Faculty of Medicine at Monash University, said: "The Sydney Medical Faculty is well prepared for the commencement of its Graduate Medical Program in 1997. The team found strong leadership and clear plans underpinning the development, and a high level of support and enthusiasm for the new course. In designing the Graduate Medical Program, the Faculty has built on its many strengths, such as the quality of its staff, its highly successful basic science and clinical specialty departments, and its strengths in research. Students in the new course will have contact with patients from Year 1, and an enormous amount of work has been done in preparation for these experiences. The range and depth of resources available in the teaching hospital network is first class, and the new course has the clear support of the hospital staff members who will contribute to the teaching, as well as hospital management and the Health Department."

The delivery of course material to the Faculty's many teaching sites, and the central management of the course will rely on a highly sophisticated system of linked computers. The AMC Report commends the Faculty's initiatives in information management and computer-aided learning and comments that: "When this program is in place, the University will be a national leader in the use of computers for education in medical schools."

In preparation for the new program, the Faculty has been trialing new learning methods in its current undergraduate medical course, and the AMC assessment team found current medical students to be uniformly positive about these new approaches. The team has also commended the Faculty's attention to training staff in the new teaching methodologies.

In addition to the Faculty's strengths, the Report also identifies areas where further work is required. Professor Porter said: "The Graduate Medical Program represents a major change in the way the Sydney University Medical Faculty selects students and delivers medical education. While the plans for the educational program itself are well advanced, there are some areas, such as the arrangements for assessment of students and the detail of the student selection interviews, where additional work is required. As with all accredited medical schools, the Sydney University Medical Faculty will be asked to report annually to the AMC on its progress in relations to these and other issues raised in the Report."

The AMC's detailed report on the assessment of the program has been presented to the Vice-Chancellor of the University, Professor Gavin Brown, and the Dean of the Faculty of Medicine, Professor J A Young.

In response to the Report, Professor Young said: "It is to state the obvious to say that the Faculty of Medicine is delighted with the outcome of the assessment of the new Graduate Medical Program. The AMC's Report could scarcely have been more favourable. The assessment process itself contributed significantly to the development of the new course and the Faculty benefited enormously from its interaction with the AMC's assessment team.

The Faculty was, of course, aware at the time of the assessment visit that further work was needed in the development of the admissions interview process and in finalising details of its assessment procedures. In the period between the assessment team's visit to the Faculty in March this year and the release of the Report, the Faculty has completed its work on admissions and assessment.

Work is now continuing on the more detailed design of the third and fourth years of the Program. The Faculty looks forward to welcoming the AMC assessors back to the University in early 1998 to show them the full details of the final two years of the Graduate Medical Program (to be first implemented in 1999 and 2000)."

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