

**NEWS RELEASE BY
THE AUSTRALIAN MEDICAL COUNCIL
AND
THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF MEDICINE, THE UNIVERSITY OF QUEENSLAND**

GRADUATE MEDICAL PROGRAM IS ACCREDITED

The Australian Medical Council (AMC) has accredited The University of Queensland's four-year graduate medical course. The process of accrediting the course has included detailed reviews of the plans for the new program by expert teams over the last three years, commencing the year before the course was introduced.

The first group of 230 students, who started the course in 1997, will graduate in the year 2000. The AMC decision means that graduates of the new course can seek provisional registration as medical practitioners in any state or territory of Australia.

The new medical course aims to develop in its graduates: a life-long commitment to continuing education; enhanced critical reasoning and communication skills; awareness of ethical and professional responsibilities to individual patients and to the community; skills to cope with the challenges of medicine; and an ability to contribute to the evolution of medical knowledge. The new course uses a problem-based learning approach in which students work in small groups on a series of patient-centred problems. The course relies heavily on information technology for teaching and learning. The students' clinical training and contact with patients begins from first year. Admission to the course is based on three components: performance in a bachelors degree, a specially designed admissions test, and a semi-structured interview.

Professor Derek Frewin, Dean of Medicine at the University of Adelaide, who chaired the teams that visited the School in 1997 and in 1998 said: "The four-year graduate medical course, which uses a small group, problem-based learning format, is a radical change in the style of medical education offered by the University of Queensland. The University's decision no longer to admit school leaver students to its medical course is also a major change. From the AMC's careful review, it can be confident that the new selection process is choosing capable and motivated students, that the goals and objectives of the new curriculum are appropriate, and that the University has the resources to deliver the course."

All the AMC reviews commented on the strong support provided by Queensland Health. Professor Frewin said: "Medical schools need the support of the local health services to train competent and safe medical practitioners. Years 3 and 4 of the Graduate Medical Course will be delivered in teaching hospitals, general practices and community centres throughout Queensland. Queensland's hospitals, the Queensland Department of Health, and individual practitioners have all shown significant commitment to the University in developing this new course."

The Australian Medical Council has granted accreditation until December 2002 (when two groups of students have graduated from the course). Until then, the Medical School will report annually to the AMC on its experience in implementing the new course.

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