



MEDIA RELEASE
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James Cook University Medical School is successfully reviewed

The James Cook University School of Medicine has been reviewed successfully in the first year of its new course by the Australian Medical Council (AMC), the national standards body for undergraduate medical education.

The first new Australian medical school in 24 years was accredited last year by the AMC to start its undergraduate course this year. As part of the accreditation process, a review of progress implementing year 1 of the new course and of plans for years 2 and 3 was scheduled.

A four-member team of experts from Australian and New Zealand medical schools spent four days at James Cook University in September, meeting with students, staff, clinicians, general practitioners, hospital managers and community members. Following the visit, the University was presented with a detailed report.

The Dean of the School of Medicine at James Cook, Professor Richard Hays, said he welcomed the AMC's further endorsement of the course.

'Our course will produce doctors who have a special understanding of the issues facing rural and remote communities,' Professor Hays said. 'This fulfils a long-term dream of the local medical profession and the University.'

'The AMC's endorsement is important to our success,' he said.

The James Cook course is a six-year medical degree which offers training in North Queensland's health and community service system. Clinical and basic sciences are provided in an integrated environment that encourages student-directed and group learning.

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Students will be based on campus in Townsville for their first four years, with assignments in local communities. In the last two years, students will be based in hospitals in Cairns, Townsville, Mt Isa and Mackay, with assignments in surrounding centres.

Students were selected on the basis of academic achievement and personal qualities. Half of the first intake of 64 comes from rural or remote areas. There are five Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander students.

Chair of the AMC review team, the University of Auckland's Professor Ian Simpson, said there was energy and enthusiasm for the new medical course. 'Local communities are heavily involved in course planning and delivery,' Professor Simpson said. 'Already, students spend time in clinical and community settings.'

Professor Simpson said the course was proceeding according to plan. 'The School is well-placed to move to years 2 and 3,' he said.

Professor Simpson said the new medical course responds to important needs in medical education and that the focus on indigenous health was particularly commendable.

The AMC Team sat in on a number of interactive learning sessions with students and discussed their outcomes. The Team also toured the new School of Medicine building, a 'first-class facility for medical education,' Professor Simpson said.

A further review in 2002 will examine detailed plans for years 4 to 6.

Further information:

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