



AMC accreditation requirements for primary medical programs in 2020 in response to COVID-19

This statement provides advice on AMC actions to apply flexible accreditation requirements while medical schools are dealing with the impacts of COVID-19 on their operations, staff and students and health services are dealing with the impact on patients, clinicians and systems.

The AMC accredits programs under the *Health Practitioner Regulation National Law Act 2009* (the National Law) which requires it to assess whether medical programs and their providers meet approved accreditation standards and the graduates have the knowledge, skills and professional attributes to practise the profession and then to monitor whether accredited programs continue to meet standards. The AMC is proposing to vary its processes in 2020 as set out below.

Accreditation assessments

Medical programs whose accreditation expires in March 2021 will already have dates in 2020 for accreditation assessments by an AMC team or, where relevant, submission of a comprehensive report for a paper based accreditation assessment. The AMC is open to varying accreditation processes already begun (e.g. no or limited visits). The AMC will also consider postponing accreditation assessments for medical schools that meet the accreditation standards or substantially meet the standards with few accreditation conditions. AMC staff will contact schools to discuss options.

Monitoring of accredited programs through progress reports

A few schools have already submitted progress reports for 2020. The AMC will consider and respond to these. The AMC is open to waiving progress reports from schools with routine reports due later in the year. The AMC staff will contact schools to confirm intentions.

Expectation of program changes

The AMC recognises medical schools may need to vary approaches in areas relevant to the accreditation standards including: teaching and learning approaches (e.g. large scale online learning programs); assessment including replacing large scale clinical exams with other methods; location and availability of elective placements; clinical teaching and placements – availability, content, location; student selection; resourcing. The AMC's focus is on being assured that medical program graduates are able to meet the AMC graduate outcome statements and prepared to practise as interns.

Advising the AMC of program changes

Normally medical schools advise the AMC of changes through specific notices of intent or progress reports. The AMC Medical School Accreditation Committee reviews the school's proposals and decides on the monitoring of the changes. If the change has a significant impact on the accredited program, the Committee decides on a process to assess the changes.

In the context of the COVID-19 response, the AMC will focus on prospective assessment of material changes on the final year of medical programs. This will allow the AMC to continue to report to the Medical Board that programs will meet the accreditation standards for the graduating class of 2020. The AMC acknowledges that medical schools will necessarily make changes to other years of their program, but these need only be recorded internally for reporting to the AMC in 2021 along with any necessary adjustment to compensate for these adjustments.

The AMC requests that medical schools advise of material changes¹ to programs for 2020 in response to COVID 19 using the attached proforma.

¹ See definition on the next page.

Note: If the school decides on a longer-term innovation, the AMC will need to consider its impact. The AMC plans to modify the processes for medical schools to notify it of changes beyond 2020, and will discuss these with medical schools later in the year.

Notifying the AMC of short-term material changes to an accredited medical program in response to COVID 19

When to use this form

When you are making a material change to the final year of your AMC-accredited program in response to COVID 19 developments, you need to inform the AMC. The form attached provides spaces to detail changes that the AMC needs information about.

This form is not for advising the AMC about long term material changes to accredited programs.

The AMC defines a material change as “a change in the length or format of the program, including the introduction of new distinct streams; a significant change in educational outcomes; a substantial change in educational philosophy, emphasis or institutional setting; and/or a substantial change in student numbers relative to resources. Significant changes resulting from a major reduction in resources leading to an inability to achieve the purpose and/or outcomes of the program are also material changes.”

Prospective information: The AMC’s focus is on the final year of the medical program for 2020, and on assurance that medical programs will produce graduates prepared to practise as interns. Medical schools should advise the AMC prospectively of changes planned to the final year. The AMC accepts that plans and changes will evolve, and is open to receiving multiple forms across the year.

Note: While the AMC recognises that the experience available may be different in 2020, the AMC considers that a substantial period of supervised clinical experience, including time spent in contact with patients is an essential part of a medical program.

Retrospective information: Medical schools will need to inform the AMC in 2021 of changes made to other years of the program in response to COVID 19 and of relevant opportunities to make up learning in later years of the course if necessary.

AMC process for consideration of changes

The AMC will consider notifications of changes in the following way:

- Provider lodges *Notification of changes* form and AMC acknowledges receipt.
- AMC staff review the information provided and decide whether the change meets the threshold for a material change. If additional information is necessary, staff will contact the provider.
- Staff will provide the form and a summary for the Medical School Accreditation Committee:
 - Current accreditation status of the program
 - Standards related to the change and whether the program and provider currently meet the relevant standards related to the change proposed
 - Impact of the change to the final year program)
 - Additional quality assurance measures planned by the School in response to the change

The AMC will assess changes as a desktop exercise. The response to the change(s) will depend on the type of change and impact.

- The AMC will advise the provider of the outcome.

Instructions for form submission

Complete the form, providing detail of the change, the impact on the program, and the impact on students. Send the completed form to medsac@amc.org.au

Questions/advice?

If you have questions or need advice, you are welcome to contact the Medical School Assessment section via the above email, or by phoning the AMC on 02 6270 9777.