



MEDIA RELEASE

AMC Strong and Poised for National Registration and Accreditation Scheme in 2010

27 November 2009

The Australian Medical Council (AMC) is strong, flexible and ready for the introduction of the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme (NRAS) in July 2010.

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.

After the November meeting of AMC Directors and the AMC AGM held in Melbourne on 20 November 2009, AMC President Professor Richard Smallwood AO said the AMC had worked tirelessly during the year to contribute to the development of the national scheme while managing an increased work-load.

"The AMC is now seeing the benefit of the strategic structural changes made in recent years and is well placed to continue to meet its national and international responsibilities in the years ahead," Professor Smallwood said.

"The AMC continues to be grateful to the numerous wise and thoughtful members of the medical profession and the community who participate in our accreditation and examination processes. Their expertise and experience enables the AMC to perform its functions with vigour, clarity and integrity," he said.

Throughout the year, the AMC worked hard to support the development of the NRAS.

"We are continuing to address the governance and structural implications of the changed relationship between the AMC and medical boards through the establishment of the Medical Board of Australia," he said.

Professor Smallwood said that the 2009-year was marked by a significant increase in productivity across the AMC's operations.

Examination and assessment highlights include:

- AMC MCQ Examination:
 - A significant increase (from 2695 in 2008 to 4652 in 2009) in the number of candidates sitting the AMC MCQ Examination, as a result of the introduction of nationally consistent assessment of international medical graduates (IMGs) before they are registered to practise medicine in Australia;

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- New IT capacity to enable online candidate scheduling, with 75% of candidates now using this facility to register for an MCQ Examination;
- The development and trial of a computer-adapted MCQ Examination aimed at streamlining the administration of the examination, now scheduled for introduction in 2010;
- The AMC conducted nine on-shore MCQ Examinations and 12 off-shore MCQ Examinations during the year;
- Revision of the AMC publication – *The Handbook of Multiple Choice Questions* – to be launched in December 2009 as a comprehensive guide to the format, scope and standard of the AMC MCQ Examination.
- AMC Clinical Examination:
 - Demand continues to be high with the AMC conducting 18 clinical examination sessions in the last 12 months. To increase capacity in 2010, the AMC will schedule examinations simultaneously in multiple interstate centres, as trialled successfully in 2009.
- Consistently high demand for Primary Source Verification of the qualifications of the IMGs seeking recognition in Australia. Since 2006, the AMC has made 20,589 requests for Primary Source Verification from the Educational Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates (ECFMG).
- National uniform assessment of IMGs:
 - Successful implementation of the *Competent Authority Pathway*, a 'fast-track' assessment pathway for candidates who have completed specified training or assessment through approved overseas Competent Authorities. From 1 January – 10 November 2009, the AMC processed 1510 applications through this pathway, with 1196 candidates qualifying for Advanced Standing and 768 applicants being granted the AMC Certificate;
 - Continued work towards the introduction of Workplace-based Assessment within the *Standard Pathway* for IMGs, to complement the existing AMC MCQ Examination. The AMC noted that renewed commitment by all stakeholders to workplace-based assessment would be necessary to enable national implementation of this Assessment Pathway;
 - Assessment of Overseas Trained Specialists, with the AMC processing 1771 applications for specialist assessment.

In relation to its medical school accreditation program, the AMC Directors:

- Extended the accreditation of the University of Notre Dame Australia School of Medicine Fremantle to December 2013, subject to satisfactory periodic reports. This successful result follows the work of an expert accreditation advisory group which, in 2008, gave guidance to the school on addressing issues raised in previous AMC accreditation visits. The AMC is pleased that its commitment to collaboration to ensure high standards, in this case through the use of an advisory group, continues to be constructive;
- Confirmed the accreditation until December 2014, subject to satisfactory reports, of the Joint Medical Program (JMP) of the Universities of Newcastle and New England. The JMP is unique in Australian medical education and is a single medical course run jointly by two universities in collaboration with three Area Health Service partners;
- Confirmed the accreditation of the new Deakin University School of Medicine until December 2013, subject to satisfactory periodic reports. The AMC first accredited the four-year, graduate-entry course in 2007 and in a follow-up visit in 2009, confirmed the school's success in implementing the course;

- Confirmed the accreditation until December 2013, subject to satisfactory periodic reports, of the Faculty of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences, Monash University. The Monash University offers a five-year undergraduate medical course which was first accredited in 2001. The University subsequently made two major changes to the five-year course, expanding the delivery settings and format. The Monash program is based on one curriculum, one assessment regime and one degree award. The 2009 assessment was a follow up visit to the Gippsland Medical School to review the implementation of the four-year graduate-entry stream offered at this campus.

Executive summaries of these reports are available on the AMC website.

Earlier in 2009 the Directors:

- Approved the extension of the accreditation for the Bond University Medical Program to 31 December 2011, subject to satisfactory periodic reports;
- Approved the accreditation of the University of Notre Dame Australia School of Medicine Sydney until December 2013, subject to satisfactory periodic reports;
- Approved the Stage One submission from the University of Melbourne School of Medicine for a major course change (to provide Australia's first-ever master's level basic medical course). The school will now progress to a Stage Two accreditation assessment in 2010;
- Accepted the revised Stage One submission from the University of Queensland for a proposal for a major course change to its accredited medical course, subject to a range of conditions.

Professor Smallwood said the AMC's busy accreditation schedule for 2009 was expected to settle by 2010, as the cycle of assessments of the new Australian medical schools was now complete.

"However, continuing innovation in medical education in Australia means that the AMC will have a full program reviewing some interesting developments in the years ahead," he said.

In its specialist education accreditation program, the Directors:

- Granted accreditation of the radiology and radiation oncology education, training and continuing professional development programs of the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Radiologists until December 2014, subject to the implementation of the College's new programs and satisfactory annual reports. The executive summary of this report is available on the AMC website;
- Granted initial accreditation to the College of Intensive Care Medicine of Australia and New Zealand as the provider of specialist education in Intensive Care Medicine from 1 January 2010, subject to satisfactory annual reports. The new College has developed from the Joint Faculty of Intensive Care Medicine of the Royal Australasian College of Physicians and the Australian and New Zealand College of Anaesthetists;
- Noted the AMC's joint review with the Australian Dental Council of the oral and maxillofacial education and training program of the Royal Australasian College of Dental Surgeons. A recommendation on accreditation will be made to the December 2009 meeting of AMC Directors.

In the recognition of medical specialties program, during the year:

- The AMC advised the Commonwealth Minister for Health and Ageing that the established training programs in sexual health medicine and addiction medicine met the AMC standards for accreditation of the Chapters of the Royal Australasian College of Physicians, as did the training program for sport and exercise medicine of the Australasian College of Sports Physicians;
- The Minister has not yet released a decision in relation to the recognition of addiction medicine and sexual health medicine as specialties. In November 2009, the Minister recognised sport and exercise medicine as a specialty, for the purpose of inclusion in the *AMC List of Australian Recognised Medical Specialties*;
- The AMC continued to manage the process to assess an application from the Australasian College of Cosmetic Surgery for recognition of cosmetic medical practice as a medical specialty.

Professor Smallwood said in addition to its work in Australia, the AMC maintained its focus on international developments in medical education during 2009.

"During the year the AMC worked with medical accreditation authorities in the People's Republic of China to help develop and strengthen China's emerging accreditation processes and share the AMC's experience and expertise in this area," he said.

The AMC has also begun to consider issues raised by competency-based training in medical education and, supported by an expert reference group, in 2010 will develop a policy on this issue.

Ends.

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