



## MEDIA RELEASE

# AMC standards now embedded in National Registration and Accreditation Scheme

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6 December 2010

The Australian Medical Council (AMC) has effectively transitioned its internationally recognised accreditation and assessment programs into Australia's national registration and accreditation scheme.

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 Sydney on 26 November 2010, AMC President Professor Richard Smallwood AO said the AMC had worked hard to ensure its core strengths in assessment (of international medical graduates) and accreditation (of undergraduate and specialist medical education and continuing professional development phase of medical training) were retained as key strengths of the national scheme.

"The internationally recognised AMC accreditation and assessment systems in place until June 2010 are now embedded in the new regulatory framework and the AMC is confident that its standards and the integrity of its programs will be maintained," Professor Smallwood said.

Throughout the transition to national regulation in 2010 the AMC had continued to increase its productivity, he said.

Highlights of the year include:

- Conducting an offshore accreditation of an Australian medical course. In August and September 2010, an AMC accreditation team assessed the University of Queensland's medical program. Changes proposed to the program mean that this is now a large medical school even by international standards, with widely dispersed clinical training opportunities, including clinical schools in Brunei and in New Orleans, through the Ochsner Health System. The AMC has completed a comprehensive and wide ranging review of the Schools medical program.
- Working with the Medical Board of Australia to review the implementation of the assessment pathways for IMGs introduced nationally in 2008
- Planning for the expansion and improvement of its Multiple Choice Question (MCQ) and Clinical Examinations for IMGs.

"The AMC continues to value the contribution of the many wise and thoughtful members of the medical profession and the community who participate in our accreditation and examination processes," Professor Smallwood said.

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“There is no question that the skill, experience and insight of these people enables the AMC to provide a responsible, fair and effective service to the Australian community through the assessment and accreditation of medical education,” he said.

In June 2010, on the eve of the introduction of the national scheme, the AMC was proud to launch *Assuring Medical Standards* – the 25 year history of the AMC from 1985.

## **Examination and assessment update**

Highlights in the AMC’s examination and assessment programs include:

- AMC MCQ Examination:
  - A stabilisation in the number of candidates (4466 in 2009/10 sitting the AMC MCQ Examination, after the sharp increase in candidate numbers that followed the introduction of nationally consistent assessment of international medical graduates before they are registered to practise medicine in Australia)
  - The continued development and trial of a computer-adapted MCQ Examination aimed at streamlining the administration of the examination, scheduled for introduction in February 2011. The revised examination will significantly increase the AMC’s capacity to deliver a reliable and secure written examination
- AMC Clinical Examination:
  - The AMC significantly increased the clinical examination capacity, with 1258 candidates able to sit the clinical examination during the year. The capacity to deliver clinical examinations is limited by the availability of suitable clinical examination venues, numbers of examiners and role-playing and real patients. At present the AMC is conducting clinical examinations every two weeks throughout the year.
  - The AMC recognises there continues to be unmet demand for places to sit the Clinical Exam. In an effort to meet this need, the AMC has expanded capacity, is investigating opportunities to further increase available places and developing innovative examination methodology while maintaining the integrity of the assessment
- National uniform assessment of IMGs:
  - The continued 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. For the 2009/10 year, the AMC processed 1398 applications through this pathway, with 1308 candidates granted Advanced Standing and 637 applicants granted the AMC Certificate
  - The AMC is currently trialling four Workplace-based Assessment programs as potential alternatives to the AMC Clinical Examination
  - the AMC processed 1,523 applications for specialist assessment, including 547 new applications for assessment. In this period 378 overseas trained specialists were assessed as “Partially Comparable” (requiring further training and assessment) and 368 were assessed as “Substantially Comparable” and were eligible to apply for registration to undertake specialist practice.

## **Accreditation update**

The AMC carried a full load in its medical school accreditation program in 2010. The introduction of the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme on 1 July 2010 also changed the approval and accreditation process slightly from previous years.

Under the *Health Practitioner Regulation National Law Act 2009* (the National Law) as adopted in each state and territory, the AMC may grant accreditation if it is reasonably

satisfied that a program of study and the education provider that provides it meet an approved accreditation standard. The AMC may also grant accreditation if it is reasonably satisfied that the provider and the program of study substantially meet an approved accreditation standard, and the imposition of conditions on the approval will ensure the program meets the standard within a reasonable time. Having made a decision, the AMC reports its accreditation decision to the Medical Board of Australia to enable the Board to make a decision on the approval of the program of study for registration purposes.

The executive summaries of the AMC accreditation reports are published on the [AMC website](#). In recognition of the new requirements of the National Law, the AMC has revised the way it presents information in these summaries, to provide an assessment of the training provider and the program of study against the accreditation standards overall and against individual standards. AMC President Professor Richard Smallwood said: "Accreditation is a strong quality assurance and quality improvement process when it begins with honest self assessment of strengths and weakness by the training provider and is followed by rigorous external review. An AMC accreditation report, even of a strong training program, may recommend a number of quality improvements to address areas of relative weakness, ideally building on the training provider's own assessment and existing plans to address its weaknesses."

In October and November 2010 the AMC Directors:

- found that the medical program of the University of Notre Dame Australia (UNDA) School of Medicine, Sydney substantially meets the AMC Accreditation Standards. The AMC accreditation for the program is due to expire on 31 December 2011. The AMC has set conditions on the accreditation, and will require regular reports from the School demonstrating that it is continuing to take the actions necessary to meet the accreditation standards. AMC President Professor Richard Smallwood said "The AMC recognises the progress already made by the School, but it has identified significant work necessary to ensure that the School will meet the accreditation standards into the future. The AMC considers that the conditions it has imposed on the accreditation are achievable, and acknowledges the School's commitment to meet these conditions". The AMC will conduct a follow-up review in May 2011.
- following a re-accreditation assessment, granted accreditation until 31 December 2016 to the Bachelor of Medicine Bachelor of Surgery course of the Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences at the University of Western Australia
- approved a major change proposed to the Flinders University graduate entry medical program – to introduce Years 1 and 2 of the program in Darwin from 2011 and to introduce a school-leaver pathway to the medical course in Adelaide and in Darwin and extended the program's accreditation by four years until 31 December 2014.

All these accreditations are subject to satisfactory progress reports to the AMC from the accredited medical school.

These AMC accreditation decisions were referred to the Medical Board of Australia (MBA), to make a decision on the approval of the programs of study for registration purposes. The Medical Board of Australia details its decisions about accredited programs of study in Communiqués published on the Board's [website](#) after each meeting.

The decisions on three other medical schools are currently going through approval processes: the University of Queensland, the University of Melbourne and James Cook University to the Medical Board.

The AMC has been consulting extensively over proposed minor changes to the medical school accreditation standards and the standards for accreditation of specialist medical

education and training programs. These changes are intended to improve the clarity of some standards, to ensure alignment with the registration requirements of the Medical Board of Australia and also to ensure the standards in place before June 30 have transitioned effectively into the national scheme. The AMC will refer the proposed changes to the MBA for consideration in December.

In its specialist education accreditation program, the accreditation decision on the education and training and professional development programs of the Royal College of Pathologists of Australasia is going through the approval processes.

The AMC has also extended the accreditation of the education and training programs and the continuing professional development programs of the Royal Australasian College of Physicians and the Divisions (Adult Medicine Division and Paediatrics & Child Health Division) the Faculties (Australasian Faculties of Public Health Medicine, Rehabilitation Medicine and Environmental and Occupational Medicine), and the Chapters (Australasian Chapters of Addiction Medicine, Palliative Medicine, and Sexual Health Medicine) from December 2010 to December 2014 on the basis of a satisfactory comprehensive report by the College. In a comprehensive report the training provider must provide assurance and, where possible, evidence that the programs of study and the provider have maintained the standard of education and of resources, and continue to meet accreditation standards.

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.

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