

**NEWS RELEASE BY  
THE AUSTRALIAN MEDICAL COUNCIL  
AND  
THE SCHOOL OF MEDICINE, THE UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE  
  
MELBOURNE'S NEW MEDICAL COURSE IS ACCREDITED**

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Australia's national standards body for basic medical education, the Australian Medical Council (AMC), has accredited the University of Melbourne's new medical course. The decision means that graduates of the new course can apply for registration as medical practitioners in any State or Territory of Australia.

The new course begins in 1999 with an intake of 120 school leaver students. Students are selected on a combination of performance in the VCE (or equivalent) and in an Undergraduate Medicine and Health Sciences Admission Test, which assesses logical reasoning, problem solving and critical thinking. From the year 2000, there will also be an annual intake of 60 graduate-entry students. These students will be selected on a combination of results in undergraduate studies, performance in the Graduate Australian Medical Schools Admission Test and an interview. Graduate-entry students complete a four and a half year course, starting from the second semester of the course. School leaver students complete a six-year course that includes an Advanced Medical Science year, in which they explore a medically related topic in depth to gain an understanding of how research evidence is gathered, evaluated and applied.

The new curriculum aims to give students a balance of medical knowledge, an insight into the social aspects of medicine, and the skills and attitudes necessary for the practice of medicine well into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Four themes underpin teaching and assessment: the scientific basis of medicine; health and society; clinical skills; and professional attitudes and development. Teaching emphasis will shift from lectures to problem-based learning, self-directed learning and computer-assisted learning. Students will start clinical skills training and exposure to health practice settings and patients from Year 1.

The AMC's decision to accredit the course is based on the report of an expert team that considered the School's plans, and then in June 1998 visited the School for a week.

The Chair of the AMC team, Professor Ann Sefton, who is Associate Dean (Curriculum Development) of the University of Sydney's Faculty of Medicine, said: "In designing the new program, the University of Melbourne's School of Medicine has built on its many strengths, such as the quality of its staff and of its teaching resources, and its strong basic science and clinical specialty departments. The School is to be congratulated on its achievements to date."

The team's report commends a number of the School's innovations including its high-quality, interactive multimedia learning packages and the diversification of the methods for selecting students. The report describes the Advanced Medical Science year as an exciting innovation, building on the high research profile and research excellence of the Medical School, that will offer students opportunities for high quality research experiences.

In addition to the strengths of the new curriculum, the report also identifies areas where further work is required. Professor Sefton said: "The University of Melbourne's School of Medicine is making major changes to how it selects students and the ways in which it teaches and assesses them. The AMC has asked for reports on the School's experience in implementing these changes. Since it was too early for the School to present detailed plans for the last five semesters of the course, another AMC team will return to the School before these semesters begin."

In response to the report, the Dean of the Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences, Professor Richard Larkins said: "The University of Melbourne is delighted to have received such an enthusiastic endorsement of its new medical course. It is looking forward to the commencement of the new program in 1999. We are sure that the students will find the new curriculum very exciting as well as educational and it will prepare them ideally to meet the many challenges of medical practice in the 21<sup>st</sup> century".

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November 1998