



THE SECRETARY OF EDUCATION

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20202

APR 30 2001

SENT BY FACSIMILE TRANSMISSION

Professor Ian Simpson
Chairman, Accreditation Committee
Australian Medical Council
13 Napier Close
Deakin ACT 2600
Australia

Dear Professor Simpson:

In February 1995, the National Committee on Foreign Medical Education and Accreditation (NCFMEA) determined that the medical accreditation standards used by Australia were comparable to the standards used to evaluate programs leading to the M.D. degree in the United States. On March 9, 2001, the NCFMEA reviewed the information recently provided by the Australian Medical Council (AMC) on its current medical accreditation standards to reassess the comparability of those standards.

I am pleased to inform you that the NCFMEA, at its March meeting, determined that the current accreditation standards used by the AMC to evaluate medical schools in Australia and New Zealand are comparable to the standards used to evaluate programs leading to the M.D. degree in the United States. This determination of comparability by the NCFMEA has a maximum duration of six years from the date of this letter, unless the Committee withdraws, extends or renews its determination prior to that date. Before expiration of the six-year period, the NCFMEA will seek to confirm that your standards and procedures for accrediting medical schools in Australia and New Zealand are still comparable to the accreditation standards applied to medical schools in the United States. If so, its previous determination of comparability will be extended for another period.

In an effort to keep apprised of the accreditation activities of the AMC, the NCFMEA has requested that the AMC submit annual reports to the NCFMEA, with the first report scheduled for review at the March 2002 NCFMEA meeting. The purpose of the annual report is to provide the NCFMEA with a summary of accreditation activities, including the following information:

- *Overview of accreditation activities:* A summary of key activities by the AMC during the past year (January 2001-December 2001), such as accreditation reviews conducted, accreditation decisions reached, accreditation conferences or training sessions held.

- *Summary of any changes or developments in the following areas:*
 - *Laws and Regulations:* Any changes in your country's laws or regulations affecting the accreditation of your medical schools.
 - *Standards, Processes and Procedures:* Any changes in the accreditation standards, processes or procedures that the AMC uses to evaluate and accredit medical schools.
- *Schedule of upcoming accreditation activities:* A listing of accreditation meetings and listing of on-site visits to medical schools planned for January 2002 - December 2002.

Please send the annual report by January 7, 2002, to the Executive Director of the NCFMEA at the address below:

Bonnie L. LeBold
Executive Director, NCFMEA
U.S. Department of Education
1990 K Street, NW - Room 7007
Washington, D.C. 20006-7563
U.S.A.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Ms. LeBold at (202) 219-7009 (telephone), (202) 219-7008 (fax), or Bonnie_LeBold@ed.gov (e-mail).

As a result of the determination of continued comparability by the NCFMEA, any medical school in Australia or New Zealand that is accredited or approved by the AMC may apply to the U.S. Department of Education to participate in the Federal Family Education Loan (FFEL) program. If a medical school's application is approved, otherwise eligible students enrolled in the school who are either U.S. citizens or permanent residents of the U.S. may receive loans to finance their medical education through the FFEL program. Medical schools that wish to participate in the FFEL program may obtain the proper application forms from the Foreign Schools Team at the following address:

Foreign Schools Team
U.S. Department of Education
Room 3674, ROB-3
7th & D Streets, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20407
U.S.A.

Please note that it is not necessary for medical schools that are currently participating in the FFEL program to contact the Foreign Schools Team at this time; the status of those schools remains unchanged by the NCFMEA's decision of continued comparability.

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I want to thank you for taking the time to respond to our requests for information about your standards and processes for accreditation of medical schools. I very much appreciate the interest you have taken in this matter.

Sincerely,

Rod Paige

U.S. Department of Education



**Staff Analysis
of the
Standards Used by**

Australia/New Zealand

For the Evaluation of Medical Schools

March 9, 2001

U.S. Department of Education

Staff Analysis
of the Standards Used by
Australia/New Zealand
for the Evaluation of Medical Schools

Prepared February 2001

Background

During its February 1995 meeting, the National Committee on Foreign Medical Education Accreditation (NCFMEA) determined the Australian Medical Council (AMC) accreditation standards and processes to be comparable to the standards of accreditation applied to M.D. programs in the United States. Accordingly, the NCFMEA formally deemed Australia a country whose standards for accreditation were comparable to those in the United States. The NCFMEA reviews the comparability of countries' standards on a periodic basis, and in June 2000, Australia was provided a copy of the NCFMEA's new guidelines and requested to provide information to demonstrate compliance with those guidelines. The information provided by the country in response to that request is the subject of this analysis.

In developing its initial guidelines for accreditation, the AMC relied heavily on the recommendations and conclusions of two Australian groups: the Doherty Committee of Inquiry into Medical Education and Medical Workforce and the Project Panel on General Professional Education of the Physician. It also drew extensively from the recommendations of the Education Committee of the General Medical Council of the United Kingdom and the standards of the Liaison Committee on Medical Education (LCME).

The philosophy of the AMC is that its guidelines should emphasize the general principles it regards as essential requirements for basic medical education. Thus, its objectives for medical education are defined in very general terms, and the curriculum is defined only in broad outline. This is consistent with the belief of the Doherty Committee that "a diversity between medical schools in the approach to undergraduate curriculum is desirable."

Australia's response to this request for information documents certain key events and continued improvements to the AMC accreditation process. By December 1995, the AMC had visited and accredited both New Zealand medical schools. Furthermore, the Medical Council of New Zealand has endorsed the AMC's accreditation reports.

In addition, a special working group, convened by the Accreditation Committee Chair, reviewed the administrative procedures and the educational guidelines of the AMC during 1996-97. The review, which incorporated the views of the various stakeholders in the process, was done "in the light both of the AMC's experience over the last decade and of developments in medical education worldwide." The outcomes of the review were incorporated in the AMC's revised "Guidelines for the Assessment and Accreditation of Medical Schools."

The AMC summarizes the key improvements as follows: an examination of the value of the accreditation process is included in Part I of the "Guidelines;" more explicit and flexible procedures for assessing existing medical courses, major course changes and new medical schools are included in Part 2; and updated educational guidelines for the design and delivery of curricula are included in Part 3.

Summary of Findings

Department staff has reviewed the AMC standards and processes and concludes that they remain comparable to the standards currently used to accredit medical schools in the United States.

Note: As the Australian accreditation standards and processes are used to assess medical schools in both Australia and New Zealand, acceptance of these standards means that medical schools in both countries may qualify as institutions of higher education under 34 CFR 600.55.

Staff Analysis

The National Committee on Foreign Medical Education and Accreditation is charged with determining whether the standards of accreditation used by a foreign country to accredit medical schools offering programs leading to the M.D. (or equivalent) degree are comparable to standards of accreditation applied to M.D. programs in the United States.

In making this determination, the Committee uses the following guidelines which it has determined provide an appropriate framework for the thorough evaluation of medical schools offering programs leading to the M.D. (or equivalent) degree.

The Committee wishes to make it clear that these are in fact guidelines and that a foreign country's review and approval process can differ substantially from these guidelines and still be determined to be comparable to the standards used in the United States, provided the foreign country can demonstrate that its standards and processes of evaluation are effective alternatives to those used in the United States.