



THE SECRETARY OF EDUCATION
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20202

DEC 4 2003

SENT BY FACSIMILE TRANSMISSION

Mr. Brian V. Lea
Registrar
Comhairle na nDochtúirí Leighis
Medical Council
Portobello Court
Lower Rathmines Road
Dublin 6, Ireland

Dear Mr. Lea:

On September 11-12, 2003, the National Committee on Foreign Medical Education and Accreditation (NCFMEA) met in Washington, D.C., to review materials from 14 countries, including the information and documentation provided by the Irish Medical Council (Medical Council) in order to reassess the comparability of Ireland's medical accreditation standards to those used in the United States. At the meeting, the NCFMEA members also heard testimony from Dr. Gerard Bury, President of the Medical Council. His testimony was most helpful and the NCFMEA members wish to thank him for his participation in the meeting.

I am pleased to inform you that the NCFMEA, based on the materials submitted by the Medical Council and testimony presented by Dr. Bury, reaffirmed its prior determination that the standards and processes used by the Medical Council to accredit medical schools in Ireland are comparable to those used to accredit medical schools 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 processes for accrediting medical schools in Ireland 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.

As a result of the determination of continued comparability by the NCFMEA, any medical school in Ireland that is accredited by the Medical Council 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, students enrolled in the school who are either U.S. citizens or permanent residents of the U.S. may receive FFEL loans to finance their medical education if they meet all other eligibility requirements. Medical schools that wish to participate in the FFEL program may obtain the proper application forms from the Foreign Schools Team by calling (202) 377-3168 or by writing to the address below. Please note, however, 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.

Foreign Schools Team
FSA/Schools Channel/CMO
U.S. Department of Education
Room 73C3
830 First St., N.E.
Washington, DC 20202-5340
U.S.A.

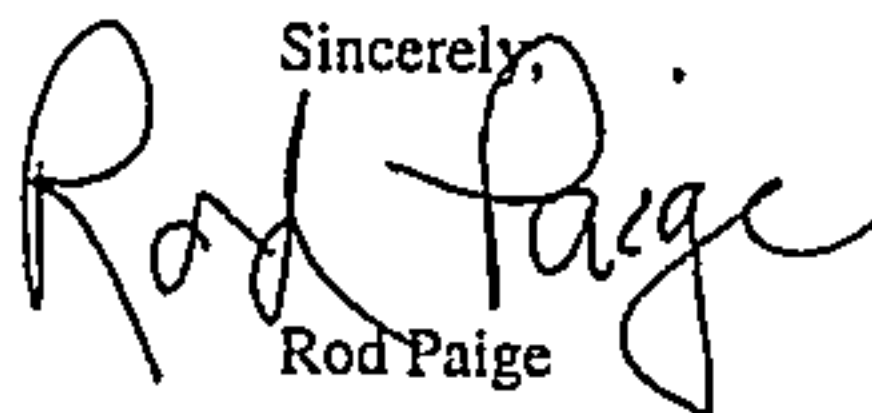
At the September meeting, the NCFMEA also requested that the Medical Council provide (1) a copy of the standards that it uses to accredit M.D. programs in Ireland and (2) a report on its accreditation activities involving Irish medical schools. Please see the enclosure for specific details about the report. The NCFMEA plans to review the standards and the report at its September 2004 meeting. Therefore, please send the requested materials by June 15, 2004, to the U.S. Department of Education at the address below.

Mr. John Barth
Director, Accreditation and State Liaison Staff
U.S. Department of Education
1990 K Street, N.W. – Room 7105
Washington, DC 20006-8509
U.S.A.

If you have any questions regarding the information requested, please feel free to contact Mr. Barth at (202) 219-7011 (telephone), (202) 219-7005 (fax), or john.barth@ed.gov (e-mail).

The Executive Director of the NCFMEA will contact the Medical Council in the late spring or early summer to provide information regarding the September 2004 NCFMEA meeting. In the interim, 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).

Thank you very much for providing information regarding your country's accreditation of its medical schools. The NCFMEA members and I very much appreciate your interest and assistance in this matter.

Sincerely,

Rod Paige

Enclosure

cc: Dr. Gerard Bury
President, Medical Council

**Report Requested from IRELAND by the
National Committee on Foreign Medical Education and Accreditation (NCFMEA)**

Accrediting Agency: Irish Medical Council

Due Date: June 15, 2004

Submit to: John Barth, Director
Accreditation and State Liaison Staff
U.S. Department of Education
1990 K Street, NW – Room 7105
Washington, DC 20006-8509
U.S.A.

Phone: (202) 219-7011
Fax: (202) 219-7005
E-mail: john.barth@ed.gov

Content: The purpose of the report is to provide the NCFMEA with a summary of the accreditation activities involving the medical schools in Ireland, including the following information (and any applicable supporting documents):

- *Current status of medical schools:* A list of the medical schools currently operating in Ireland, indicating the most recent date the school has gone through the accreditation review process and the school's current accreditation status (such as fully accredited, provisionally accredited, etc.).
- *Overview of accreditation activities:* A summary of key activities by the Medical Council during the period covering September 2003 – May 2004, such as a list of accreditation reviews conducted, meetings held and accreditation decisions reached, and accreditation conferences or training sessions held.
- *Laws and regulations:* An indication as to whether there have been any changes since September 2003 in your country's laws or regulations that affect the accreditation of your medical schools, and if so, what those changes were.
- *Standards:* An indication as to whether there have been any changes since September 2003 in the accreditation standards that the Medical Council uses to evaluate and accredit medical schools in the areas listed below, and if so, what those changes were:
 - administration,
 - faculty,
 - curriculum,
 - admissions procedures,
 - student services,
 - methods for evaluating student achievement, and
 - facilities.

- *Processes and procedures:* An indication as to whether there have been any changes since September 2003 in the accreditation processes and procedures used by the Medical Council for the following:
 - conducting site visits.
 - selecting and training individuals who conduct site evaluations or who make accreditation decisions.
 - periodically reevaluating and regularly monitoring medical schools.
 - reviewing substantive changes reported by medical schools.
 - ensuring the Medical Council has effective controls against conflicts of interest and the inconsistent application of accreditation standards, and
 - ensuring that accreditation decisions are based, in part, on the evaluation of student performance after graduation from medical school.

- *Schedule of upcoming accreditation activities:* A listing of upcoming accreditation meetings and on-site visits to medical schools and clinical clerkship sites for the period covering July 2004 through June 2005.

U.S. Department of Education



Staff Analysis

Ireland

**For the September 11-12, 2003 Meeting
of the
National Committee on Foreign Medical
Education and Accreditation**

U.S. Department of Education

Staff Analysis
of the Standards Used by
Ireland
For the Evaluation of Medical Schools

Prepared July 2003

Background

Ireland was first reviewed at the September 1996 meeting of the National Committee on Foreign Medical Education and Accreditation. At that time, the Committee recommended to defer action on whether the country's accreditation/approval standards were comparable to those used to evaluate medical schools in the United States until Department staff could review additional materials from the country that arrived just before the meeting. Ireland was then considered at the March 1997 Committee meeting and it was determined that their accreditation/approval standards were comparable to those used in the United States.

At the time that Ireland was last reviewed by the NCFMEA, Irish law stated that the statutory authority for ensuring the quality of medical education at the five medical schools in Ireland rested with the Medical Council.

Ireland's application for reconsideration of comparability was to be reviewed at the March 2003 meeting of the Committee. However, Ireland's response to the NCFMEA's questionnaire was a compilation of responses from three of the five medical schools in the country. While these responses were helpful in understanding the medical practices at each institution, the responses were not adequate to determine if Ireland's accreditation/approval standards continue to be comparable to those used to evaluate medical schools in the United States. Therefore, the NCFMEA voted to defer a decision on Ireland's accreditation process until the September 2003 meeting.

Summary of Findings

Based on the information provided by Ireland, it appears that the country has a system of evaluation that, in many respects, is comparable to that used in the United States. However, the country did not provide sufficient information on several of the sections of the questionnaire. Specifically, in many sections of the questionnaire, the Medical Council referred to practices found in its medical schools but did not provide a discussion of the Medical Council's standards or policies on the issues.

The country has written several "statements" on medical education that Ireland considers its standards for medical schools. These statements are broad guidelines that medical schools are expected to follow but do not provide any specificity regarding