

THE SECRETARY OF EDUCATION
WASHINGTON, DC 20202

MAY 14 2004

SENT BY FACSIMILE TRANSMISSION

Ms. Maria van der Hoeven
Minister of Education, Culture, and Science
P.O. Box 25000
2700 LZ Zoetermeer
The Netherlands

Dear Ms. van der Hoeven:

In March 1998, the National Committee on Foreign Medical Education and Accreditation (NCFMEA) determined that the medical accreditation standards used by the Netherlands were comparable to the standards used to evaluate programs leading to the M.D. (Doctor of Medicine) degree in the United States (U.S.). As a result of that determination, any accredited medical school in the Netherlands has the option to apply to the U.S. Department of Education (Department) to participate in the Federal Family Education Loan (FFEL) program. A medical school's participation in the FFEL program allows U.S. students studying medicine at that school to apply for FFEL loan funds to finance their medical education.

The NCFMEA conducts a periodic reassessment of comparability for all countries that are determined to have comparable standards. In order to conduct such a reassessment, in July 2003 the Department wrote to the Ministry of Education, Culture, and Science (Ministry) to request information on the Netherlands' current medical accreditation standards. In response, the Secretary to the Council of Medical Faculties (Council) of the Association of Universities sent a brief e-mail message and several documents (Protocol 2000-2005, Blueprint 2001, Blueprint 2001 Appendix, and the Individual Health Care Professions Act) to the Department in December 2003. On February 12, 2004, the Secretary to the Council sent an e-mail message indicating that although no officials from the Netherlands would be able to attend the March 2004 meeting, the Council and the Ministry were cooperating to prepare the information requested by the Department's Accreditation Staff; however, no additional information was received by the Department prior to the NCFMEA meeting.

On March 8-9, 2004, the NCFMEA met in Washington, D.C. to review, among other things, the information provided by the Netherlands in order to reassess the comparability of the Netherlands' medical accreditation standards to those used in the U.S. The NCFMEA determined it did not have adequate information to make an assessment of the current accreditation process used by the Netherlands for its medical schools and, therefore, voted to defer its redetermination of comparability until its September 2004 meeting in order to provide the Netherlands with additional time to submit sufficient information and supporting documentation on its current standards and processes for accrediting medical programs leading

to the M.D. degree. The NCFMEA requested that Department staff provide technical assistance to officials from the Council and your office so that everyone involved in compiling materials on your country's accreditation system would have a better understanding of the types of information and documentation needed by the NCFMEA in order to make its redetermination of comparability.

Please provide the necessary information and documentation on the Netherlands' medical accreditation standards and processes by June 15, 2004, to the U.S. Department of Education at the address below:

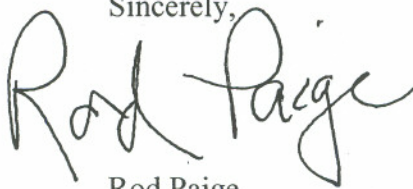
John Barth
Director, Accreditation and State Liaison Staff
U.S. Department of Education
1990 K Street, N.W. – Room 7105
Washington, DC 20006-8509
USA

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 next meeting of the NCFMEA is scheduled for September 16-17, 2004. This summer, Bonnie LeBold, the Executive Director of the NCFMEA, will contact you to provide additional details regarding the meeting. In the interim, if you have any questions about the meeting, please do not hesitate to contact Ms. LeBold at (202) 219-7009 (telephone), (202) 219-7008 (fax), or bonnie.lebold@ed.gov (e-mail).

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. The NCFMEA members and I very much appreciate your assistance in this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rod Paige". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Rod Paige

cc: Ms. Mona Coppens-Wijn
Secretary to the Council of Medical Faculties
Association of Universities