

NCFMEA Meeting March 30, 2009

Cayman Islands

Type of Review: Redetermination 14

Department Staff:

Ms. Joyce Jones

Country Representatives:

Dr. Anthony Peacock

Dr. Ian Temperley

At this time we'll go ahead then and start our business, and we will ask for the review of Cayman Islands, and I believe Dr. Jones. Just remind you in terms of the process, when we hear a country's application, we will review first of all the staff analyst, and then we will invite any guests who are in the audience to appear at the discussion table for any preliminary questions by members of the Committee, after which we will go into Executive Session to discuss the application and the concerns of the Committee.

The reason that we go into Executive Session is because these deliberations are confidential until the Secretary notifies the country of those deliberations, so even when we have the representatives of a country that is under discussion for consideration,

we ask that those decisions that are made in Executive Session likewise not be communicated until the official letter from the Secretary is received.

Are there any questions about the procedures before we begin? Dr. Jones, good morning.

MS. JONES: Good morning, Dr. Dockery and to the Committee Members. I'm pleased to present you with a summary of the petition for redetermination of comparability submitted by the Cayman Islands.

In September 2002, this Committee initially determined that the accrediting system used by the Cayman Islands to evaluate medical schools was comparable to the system used in the United States.

Before you made your comparability determination, the Government of the Cayman Islands officially designated the Accreditation Commission on Colleges of Medicine, which I will refer to as the ACCM or the Commission.

It was designated as the agent to evaluate the medical education program offered at the St. Matthew's University School of Medicine, which I will refer to as SMU or the College.

SMU is the country's only medical school. The ACCM members representing the Cayman Islands are present pursuant to the country's designation. There are no schools in the Cayman Islands that participate in the Federal Family Education Loan Program. According to the ACCM, SMU has applied to participate in the FFEO Program and awaits the Department's approval.

Since 2002 the ACCM has presented summaries of its past, present, and future accrediting activities in the Caymans as are related to SMU.

At your March 2008 meeting the ACCM reported on the accrediting activities it conducted through November 2007. This Committee accepted the report and invited the country to reapply for a comparability redetermination for review at this meeting.

Therefore, this presentation summarizes the current application. The standards and processes used by ACCM apply to its evaluation of medical education programs and remain substantially comparable to the guidelines established by this Committee.

However, the Department's staff analysis disclosed three areas of concern that the Committee may

want to discuss with the ACCM, and they are: (1) Whether inconsistent laboratory experiences within the basic science curricula at different sites affects the quality of the educational program and impacts student learning; (2) whether the ACCM policy limiting medical student access to their medical school records is consistent with the NCFMEA guidelines; and (3) the ACCM does not have written policies or protocol regarding the impact of its assessment of School B when the inspection team visits a clerkship site during its evaluation of School A, and the team also interviews students from School B who have a valid affiliation agreement to perform clerkships at the same clinic site.

First a variance exists between the ACCM laboratory course requirement and the basic science curriculum which was reported in the SMU self-study and the information provided in the application narrative.

The ACCM does not have an accreditation standard regarding laboratory requirements for specific courses in the basic science curriculum.

In addition, the ACCM has not demonstrated how not having a standard impacts the basic science

curriculum. Department staff is uncertain if, in the absence of a defined practice, the ACCM can show a pattern of consistency that will not impact student achievement.

The ACCM protocol allows an inspection team to report on the content instruction of the curriculum, whether the school meets its educational goals, and the role of the curriculum committee in overseeing the curriculum.

The ACCM admits that it does not have an element or standard of accreditation that specifies the laboratory courses required in the basic science program.

To remedy this concern, the Agency indicates that it will look at the clinical science disciplines to ensure support in -- I'm sorry, for clinical pathologies in its elements or standards of accreditation.

The Department staff remains concerned about the laboratory requirements for specific courses in the basic curriculum under Section 4.2 of your guidelines and not under 4.4 as referred to in the Agency response, and that specifically is the difference between the

requirements for the basic science curriculum and that for the clinical curriculum.

In addition, ACCM requirements regarding the laboratory curriculum in the basic science courses are not reflected in the SMU self-study. The SMU self-study offers several different courses other than those published in the ACCM basic science requirements.

Department staff anticipates that the ACCM will discuss this concern today and offer a plan to revise the elements at its own meeting in May 2009.

Next, Section 5.1 of the guidelines requires medical schools to make student records available for review and give the student an opportunity to challenge their accuracy. The ACCM Element 5 addresses a student's access to review the current -- the accuracy of his or her records.

However, the ACCM appears to limit student access only to seeking redress from an adverse action.

The intent of the guidelines is to ensure that students have access to the records at any time and not only when adverse issues arise.

In response to the staff analysis, the ACCM acquiesces that the elements of accreditation limit a student's access to the school records. ACCM reports that during its May meeting it will revise the elements of accreditation to ensure that students may access their school records at any time.

Finally, Part 3 of the guidelines allows an accrediting agency that accredits multiple schools that use a common core clinical clerkship site have -- and has a single coordinator responsible for the educational experience of the students from each school, and the team interviews the students from all schools at the common site at least once during the accreditation period.

The ACCM conducts accrediting activities for the countries of Saba and St. Maarten in addition to the Cayman Islands. The accredited medical schools located in these countries often use the same facilities for their clinical clerkships.

The ACCM does not have a protocol to address the impact of a site visit to a clinical clerkship serving students from several schools that it accredits.

Also the ACCM elements or protocol fail to indicate that the ACCM will conduct an on-site review within 12 months of the placement of students at sites never visited by the Agency. It would be helpful if ACCM developed a protocol addressing this process or the process it uses to review a clinical site that hosts students from more than one of the medical schools it accredits.

In its response, the ACCM notes that it does not have a written protocol or element to inform countries with common clinical facilities of its practices. Therefore, it will ratify these elements and the protocol when its commission meets in May 2009.

The ACCM written response clearly indicates its desire to make the changes suggested when it meets in May, and this concludes my presentation, and I am prepared to respond to any questions you may have about the staff analysis. Thank you.

DR. DOCKERY: Thank you, Dr. Jones. Are there any questions from members of the Committee before we ask the representatives from the ACCM to join us at

the table? Dr. Temperley and Dr. Peacock, good morning.

Is Dr. Bresnihan -- is he going to be joining you also?

Dr. Jones vacated, so he's permitted.

DR. TEMPERLEY: Thank you. First of all it's very nice to meet you and meet Ms. Lewis, and I thought I would probably try and speak to this discussion group if I can because I have just a small difficulty in sort of getting extemporaneous words out clearly.

The report to the NCFMEA on the Cayman Islands Government, there is only one medical school in the jurisdiction of Government of Cayman Islands, Saint Matthew's University School of Medicine. The Educational Council grants approval for the school to be registered in Cayman Islands in April 2002.

Prior to this, the school was located in Belize. There have been no changes in the laws of the Cayman Islands Government affecting the accreditation of Saint Matthew's since 2003 report -- 2007 report.

The Government continues to recognize ACCM as the official body to evaluate and accredit Saint Matthew's. There have been no changes in the accreditation standards, processes, and procedures used

to evaluate Saint Matthew's. The ACCM has accredited the medical school for a six-year period to June 2013.

For four years leading up to 2007/ 2008, the enrollment matriculating applicants have reached 425 per annum. The mean pre-medical GPA in 2007/2008 was 3.1.

Due to prevailing financial circumstances in the U.S., matriculating students are expected to fall to 320 in 2008/2009. One of the most significant changes has been that students entering fifth semester subsequent to August 2007 are required to pass USMLE Step 1 prior to entering clinical science semesters.

At its meeting in March 2008, the NCFMEA heard testimony from Drs. Tony Peacock and Clive Lee of the ACCM. Among the issues raised was the high standard of a first-time pass rate from students in the USMLE Step 1 examination. That is 90 percent.

The ACCM examined this issue carefully. In 2007/2008 the number of students permitted to take Step 1 for the first time was determined by their ability to pass the final basic science examination. Of this select group of students, the first-time pass rate in Step 1 was 92 percent, however, based on the number of

students in the fifth semester, the first-time pass rate was 85 percent.

In September 2008, the Honorable Alden McLaughlin, Minister of Education in the Cayman Islands, was informed that the NCFMEA was scheduled to review information regarding the standard use by the Cayman Islands for accrediting medical students for the redetermination of comparability.

The NCFMEA was organized to meet on the 30th or 31st of March 2009. As the ACCM is responsible for accrediting the only medical school in the Cayman Islands, it was asked to accept responsibility for the report by the minister.

To the best of its ability, the ACCM answered all the questions posed in the NCFMEA Guidelines for requesting a comparability determination revised September 2007.

The ACCM report was duly made available to the Cayman Islands Government and the U.S. Department of Education by December 15, 2008. The Department staff analysis of standards for evaluation of medical schools

used by the Cayman Islands arrived just as promptly, being prepared in January 2009.

The ACCM appreciates the work undertaken by the U.S. Department of Education on behalf of the Cayman Islands Government and the ACCM. The U.S. Department of Education staff analysis indicates that the standards and the processes that the ACCM applies to its evaluation of the medical education programs remain substantially comparable to the guidelines established by the NCFMEA.

Among many other issues accepted by the Department of Education, it disclosed three areas of concern. Dated February the 20th, 2009, ACCM replied in writing, as a result of the issues raised by the Department of Education in its staff analysis, the ACCM at its meeting in May 2009 will be requested to incorporate the aforementioned issues into the elements of accreditation and where necessary into the protocol.

This document is prepared on behalf of the Government of the Cayman Islands and the ACCM. Dr. Peacock and I will be happy to answer any questions which may arise. Ian Temperley.

DR. DOCKERY: Thank you, Dr. Temperley. Dr. Peacock, do you have any additional comments?

DR. PEACOCK: No, Chairman, not at this time. As I said, we'd be very willing to take any questions that may arise from the both written submission and also the verbal submission this morning.

DR. DOCKERY: Are there questions from members of the Committee before we go into Executive Session?

If we could ask our guests please to depart, and we'll go into Executive Session.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

END OF EXECUTIVE SESSION

DR. DOCKERY: Thank you again for coming and being with us, and wish you bon voyage, Dr. Temperley. We'll miss you. I'm sure you'll miss us. Say yes, say yes.