

U.S. Department of Education

Staff Analysis  
of the Report Submitted by

**Taiwan**

Prepared July 2004

Background

At its September 1996 and October 1998 meetings, the National Committee on Foreign Medical Education and Accreditation (NCFMEA) made a determination that, based on insufficient information, Taiwan's standards for the evaluation of its medical schools were not comparable to those used in the United States. As the result of the 1998 NCFMEA meeting, the Ministry of Education (MOE) in Taiwan called a meeting of the deans of all of its medical schools to consider a proposal to completely overhaul its medical schools' accreditation processes and to create a new accrediting body. This proposal was accepted and a new accrediting body, the Taiwan Medical Accreditation Council (TMAC), was established.

In July 2000, after agreeing that the MOE would provide TMAC's initial five-year budget, TMAC was formally approved and began conducting its accreditation visits in spring 2001. TMAC operates as the accrediting body for the MOE and is an independent agency; the MOE does not involve itself or interfere in the operations of TMAC.

TMAC was reviewed for comparability at the March 2002 NCFMEA meeting. The NCFMEA determined that the standards of accreditation used by TMAC to accredit medical schools offering programs leading to the M.D. (or equivalent) degree were comparable to standards of accreditation applied to M.D. programs in the United States. The NCFMEA requested that one or two of its members observe a TMAC accreditation review of one of Taiwan's medical schools. In addition, the NCFMEA requested that TMAC submit a status report on its continuing accreditation activities at the September 2003 NCFMEA meeting. The report was reviewed and accepted by the NCFMEA at the September 11-12, 2003, meeting and another report was requested for the September 2004 meeting.

In September 22-25, 2003, Dr. Deal, a former member of NCFMEA, observed the site visit conducted at China Medical University. The team members interviewed faculty members and students and reviewed the curriculum, admission process, governance and administrative structures, student support

services, facilities, and extensive materials. At the March 2004 NCFMEA meeting, Dr. Deal reported that it was a productive and meaningful site visit.

The status report below was requested at the September 2003 NCFMEA meeting.

### Summary of Findings

Based on its review of the report submitted by TMAC, Department staff concludes that the Council has provided all of the information requested by the NCFMEA and that its actions during the past year appear to be consistent with the NCFMEA guidelines.

### Staff Analysis

#### *Current Status of Medical Schools*

There are eleven medical schools in Taiwan, the same number reported at the September 2003 NCFMEA meeting. Ten schools are provisionally accredited and one school, Taiwan University College of Medicine, is fully accredited. TMAC reports that only one school is fully accredited because: (1) TMAC was just established in 2000 and began its first accreditation visits in spring 2001; and (2) TMAC standards and evaluations are stringent.

#### *Overview of Accreditation Activities*

On March 28, 2003, TMAC conducted site visitors' training, including a review of the updated guidelines, at the National Health Research Institutes (NHRI). The site visitors were divided into groups according to their assigned schools to review the major areas of the schools' operations that needed special attention.

TMAC had originally scheduled site visits for spring 2003. However, due to the threat and outbreak of SARS, the visits were rescheduled for fall 2003. On August 8, 2003, the TMAC reviewed the revised site visit schedule. Other agenda items included discussion of the upcoming visits from international visitors: Dr. Deal, representing the NCFMEA, and Dr. Hans Karle, President of the World Federation for Medical Education.

TMAC visited all eleven medical schools between September 2003 and January 2004. Regular first assessment visits, which last four days, were conducted at the schools listed below.

- China Medical University - September 22-25, 2003<sup>1</sup>
- Chung Shan Medical University - September 29-October 2, 2003
- Defense University – October 13-16, 2003
- Tzu Chi University – October 6-9, 2003

Follow-up visits, which usually last for one day, review a school's progress toward any findings cited during its regular first assessment visit. Follow-up visits made, including their dates, are listed below.

- Chang Gung University - October 21, 2003
- Cheng Kung University - January 12, 2004
- Fu Jen Catholic University - November 3-5, 2003
- Kaohsiung Medical University – November 26, 2003
- Taipei Medical University – October 28, 2003
- Taiwan University – October 28, 2003
- Yang Ming University - November 30, 2003

On March 1, 2004, TMAC met to discuss the assessment reports from the regular first assessment visits and follow-up visits and to make accreditation decisions. TMAC transmitted all of the reports to the MOE. MOE decides the appropriate actions that schools must take to correct any deficiencies and sends the reports to the schools.

As mentioned in the September 2003 report, one of TMAC's members, Dr. Huang, submitted a 15,000 word Status Report (White Paper) on Medical Education in Taiwan. This report, which recommended reforms that should be required of medical education in Taiwan, was submitted to the Ministry in hopes that MOE would require these changes. The combination of this report and its timing--it was submitted just before Taiwan was hit by the SARS epidemic--prompted the Ministry to draft a Six-Year Reform Plan for Medical Education. The Reform Plan was officially approved during a September 2003 meeting that was called by the MOE. The meeting included representatives from all eleven medical schools.

The Reform Plan includes most of the suggestions that TMAC had been recommending since beginning its accreditation oversight responsibility. Some of the Reform Plan's short-term goals include more emphasis on general education, improvement in teaching English, strengthening methods of evaluating student performance, and a requirement that each medical school establish a Center for Faculty Development. The Reform Plan's medium range goals include the development of methods for evaluating students' aptitude in dealing with patients and ensuring that graduates are kept up-to-date by faculty introducing new developments in medicine. The long-range goals involve increasing the preparedness of students for their medical profession and working toward

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<sup>1</sup> Change of name to "university" with approval from MOE on August 2003.

successful clerkship reforms in order to reduce medical education from seven to six years.

As a result of the Reform Plan, TMAC voted to conduct special evaluation visits of all of its medical schools, regardless of current accreditation status, to determine if the reform goals, especially its short-term goals, are being implemented.

### Laws and Regulations

There have been no changes in Taiwan's laws or regulations that affect the accreditation of medical schools since the last report. However, the report included several items that should be noted.

TMAC has almost four years of medical school accreditation experience and reports that it is considered an accreditation model for similar institutional systems. If the MOE's plan to establish an independent accrediting body for higher education is approved, TMAC has requested that it be included in this body. TMAC and the Ministry have an understanding that TMAC would continue to operate independently, as specified in its bylaws.

Because some paramedical programs had been called medical schools, TMAC proposed, and the MOE's Committee on Medical Education passed an executive order, that a "higher education institution cannot have a school to be called medical if that school does not have a medical program."

As the result of two events--the birth rate decline in Taiwan during the past two years and some weaknesses discovered in the quality of faculty members--TMAC proposed and MOE concurred by executive order that no new medical schools would be approved for the next ten years. The number of medical school graduates will be maintained at 1,300 each year, which is expected to be adequate to replace the natural attrition of doctors. This action will allow resources to be used for the improvement of its current medical schools with special emphasis placed on the Reform Plan's short-term requirement to establish a Center for Faculty Development at each of its schools.

### Standards, Processes, and Procedures

TMAC reports that there have been no changes in its standards, processes and procedures since its last report in 2003. TMAC has an understanding that the Standards of Accreditation, which were approved in 1999, will be revised every five or six years.

Currently, TMAC has a pool of 80 site visitors and continues to conduct training for new site team members. TMAC reports that it has identified highly effective members and makes an effort to use these individuals as much as possible to conduct the site visits.

TMAC reports that it is making progress in enforcing its conflict-of-interest policies by disseminating information about ways its members can avoid conflicts of interest. TMAC disseminated this information through lectures at its schools and by publishing articles in magazines and newspapers. Also, TMAC shares conflict-of-interest information from other sources, such as publications from the American Association of Medical Colleges.

TMAC reports that it continues to promote faculty involvement through workshops by strengthening faculty members' interviewing skills so that they can select students that are more qualified. Additionally, the workshops provide information to assist the faculty to be more effective in operating the Centers for Faculty Development at their schools.

The White Paper, which was mentioned earlier in this report, emphasized the need for TMAC to become more involved in the evaluation of its medical school graduates during their residency. Residents were evaluated by the Hospital Accreditation Agency, which is responsible for the evaluation and accreditation of hospitals for hospital accreditation. During the SARS epidemic, it became evident that this component of the medical training needed strengthening. A proposal was accepted that a more direct and detailed evaluation of the residency program should come under the control of TMAC. This resulted in the evaluation of the residency program jointly by TMAC and the Hospital Accreditation Agency.

#### *Schedule of Upcoming Accreditation Activities*

TMAC's upcoming accreditation activities include a meeting on July 9, 2004. As mentioned, TMAC will conduct special evaluation visits in fall 2005 of all of its medical schools to determine if the reform goals of the Six-Year Reform Plan, especially the short-term goals and the establishment of the Center for Faculty Development, are being implemented. A special evaluation visit at Taiwan University has already been scheduled for spring 2005. Since all of the medical schools were evaluated in 2003, some of the follow up assessment visits will be conducted in combination with their special assessment visits in 2005.

TMAC continues to provide free access to information on the Internet to assist perspective students in their selection of schools. TMAC reports that it continues to expand and become more active in bringing about changes in medical education in Taiwan.