



THE SECRETARY OF EDUCATION

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SENT BY FACSIMILE TRANSMISSION

**Avudh Srisukri, M.D., Secretary-General
Consortium of Thai Medical Schools
c/o Faculty of Medicine
Chiang Mai University
Chiang Mai 50202, Thailand**

Dear Dr. Srisukri:

Some time ago, Dr. David A. Longanecker, Assistant Secretary for Postsecondary Education, wrote to inform your country about a law passed in the United States in 1992 that changed the eligibility criteria for U.S. students who wish to finance their medical education in a country other than the U.S. with a loan through the U.S. Federal Family Education Loan (FFEL) Program. Eligible students must enroll in a medical school that is eligible to participate in the FFEL Program and that meets the accreditation or approval standards of the country in which the school is located.

Further, the accreditation or approval standards used by that country must have been reviewed by a panel of medical experts appointed by the U.S. Secretary of Education, which must have determined them to be comparable to the accreditation standards applied to medical schools in the United States. This panel of medical experts is known as the National Committee on Foreign Medical Education and Accreditation (NCFMEA).

I am pleased to inform you that the NCFMEA, at its October 8, 1998 meeting, determined that the accreditation or approval standards used by the Ministry of University Affairs and the Thai Medical Council to evaluate the medical schools in Thailand are comparable to those used to evaluate programs leading to the M.D. degree in the United States. This determination of comparability will remain in effect for a period of four years from the date of this letter. Prior to the expiration of that period, the NCFMEA will seek to confirm that your standards and procedures for accrediting/approving medical schools in Thailand 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 four-year period.

As a result of the determination of comparability by the NCFMEA, any medical school in your country that is accredited or approved by the Ministry of University Affairs and the Thai Medical Council may apply, if it has not recently done so, to the U.S. Department of Education to participate in the 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.

U.S. Department of Education



**Staff Analysis
of the
Standards Used by
Thailand**

for the Evaluation of Medical Schools

October 8, 1998

U.S. Department of Education
Staff Analysis
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Prepared August, 1998

Background

At its September 1996 meeting, the National Committee on Foreign Medical Education and Accreditation (NCFMEA) reviewed the information provided by Thailand's Medical Council concerning the standards and processes for the evaluation of medical schools in that country. Because it did not believe it had sufficient information on which to make a determination regarding the comparability of the Thai standards to those used to evaluate medical schools in the United States, the NCFMEA made no decision regarding comparability but rather requested additional information from the country. That information was reviewed at the March 1997 meeting of the NCFMEA, at which time the Committee determined that the standards used by Thailand to evaluate medical schools were not comparable to those of the United States.

Department staff has now received additional information from the Secretary-General of the Consortium of Thai Medical Schools. A key document included with the information is a booklet entitled Accreditation of Medical Schools in Thailand, which appears to be jointly published by the Ministry of University Affairs, the Medical Council, and the Consortium of Thai Medical Schools. The Department has also received English translations of five other booklets:

The Ministry of University Affairs:

Standards for Undergraduate Curricula
Policies and Guidelines for Quality Assurance at the Higher Education
Level--1996;

The Medical Council:

Criteria for Certification of Medical Institutions
Criteria for Medical Practitioners--1993
Criteria for Medical Practitioners--1993 (Supplemented)--Appendix 4--
Knowledge of Basic Medical Science.

The staff analysis that follows is based primarily on the information in these booklets.

According to the information provided by the country, medical schools in Thailand are accredited by not just one but three organizations, each with its own responsibilities

and duties. The three organizations are the Ministry of University Affairs, the Medical Council, and the Consortium of Thai Medical Schools.

The Ministry of University Affairs (MUA)

By law, the MUA has responsibility for approving and supervising the academic curricula of every university in Thailand and for evaluating the quality of these educational programs. The MUA's specific duties include the following:

1. Review new curricula and evaluate existing curricula to determine if they meet the criteria set forth in the MUA's academic standards. The MUA provided the following statement about those standards:

"The MUA will check academic programs to ascertain that they meet certain criteria, i.e., have the right concept, meet their objectives, have adequately good basic structure, appropriate duration of studies, number of credits, etc., for example:

 - Philosophy and objectives of the curriculum must meet the international standards of each discipline and must conform to the national university educational development plan.
 - Structure of the medical curriculum: number of semester credits must be not less than 210 and not more than 263 in the following categories:
 - a. General education must be not less than 30 credits.
 - b. Professional education must be not less than 180 credits.
 - c. Electives - not less than 6 credits.
 - Time span of the overall medical curriculum must not be less than 12 semesters."
2. Determine factors governing the quality of education, i.e. inspect institutions that apply to establish a medical curriculum and check whether they have met not only the general criteria such as numbers and appropriate qualifications of instructors, library facilities, educational media, and basis infrastructure but also the specific criteria established by the Medical Council (these are mentioned below under the description of the Medical Council).
3. Visit medical institutions to check the quality of various institutions. The MUA has established its own committee of external evaluators who make

site visits periodically to check the effectiveness of the institution's internal audit system. Documentation, including various reports reflecting educational quality such as lesson plans, handouts, lecture notes, references, examination papers, and results of teaching evaluation are evaluated during the site visits.

The Medical Council

The Medical Council was established by an Act of Legislation in 1968; it was subsequently restructured in 1992. The objectives of the Council are as follows:

1. To oversee the moral and ethical standards of medical doctors.
2. To enhance education, research, and career opportunities.
3. To strengthen unity and sustain the honor of the membership.
4. To assist, advise, and educate other organizations and the general public about medicine and public health and to disseminate information.
5. To act as a national representative of medical practitioners in Thailand.

The Council's legal responsibilities are as follows:

1. To issue or cancel medical licenses to qualified practitioners.
2. To certify degrees and certificates offered by medical institutions.
3. To certify all curricula offered by medical institutions.
4. To approve the academic standard of medical institutions where specialty and subspecialty training takes place.
5. To issue licenses for medical practice in all specialties and subspecialties.

The Council consists of two types of members: members by position and members by election. There are 18 members by position, including the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Public Health, the Director-General of the Department of Medical Services, and the Deans of every medical school in Thailand. The 18 members by election are elected by medical practitioners.

