

U.S. Department of Education
Staff Analysis
of the Annual Report Submitted by
United Kingdom
Prepared August 22, 2002

Background

The National Committee on Foreign Medical Education Accreditation (NCFMEA) first determined that the standards of accreditation used by the United Kingdom 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 at its February 1995 meeting. At its February 2001 meeting, the NCFMEA deferred a decision as to whether the United Kingdom's accreditation process continued to be comparable to that used in the United States until further information could be gathered.

The Committee also directed that a member of Department staff meet with representatives of the General Medical Council (GMC) to discuss, more fully, the GMC's role in the evaluation of medical schools in the United Kingdom. The information gathered at that meeting along with additional documents provided by the GMC enabled the Committee, at its September 2001 meeting, to determine that the United Kingdom's accreditation process continues to be comparable to the system of accreditation used in the United States to evaluate medical education.

As part of its decision, the NCFMEA requested that the GMC submit annual reports of its activities with respect to its accreditation of medical schools in the United Kingdom. This is the first annual report submitted by the GMC.

Summary of Findings

Based on its review of the annual report submitted by the country, Department staff believes that the United Kingdom has provided all of the information requested by the NCFMEA. Department staff also concludes that the country's actions during the past year appear to be consistent with the NCFMEA guidelines.

Staff Analysis

Overview of accreditation activities:

The GMC reports that they have concluded a round of site evaluation visits that occurred from 1998 to 2001. Currently, a report summarizing the Council's findings is being developed and will be published shortly. Although the country did conduct evaluation visits to three medical schools during 2001, none were conducted during the reporting period outlined in the Secretary's letter of October 31, 2001.

Additionally, the report notes that four new medical schools have been established in the United Kingdom (Peninsula, University of East Anglia, Hull York, and Brighton and Sussex) and that these schools will admit their first students in the fall of 2002 or 2003. The GMC has been closely involved in the development of all four schools and has visited each school.

Summary of any changes or developments in the following areas:

Laws and Regulations:

There were no changes to laws or regulations that affect the accreditation of medical schools in the United Kingdom.

Standards, Processes and Procedures:

In 1993, the GMC's Education Committee published a document entitled Tomorrow's Doctors: Recommendations on Undergraduate Medical Education that gives guidance to medical schools on the medical training that should be provided. The GMC states that over the last two years it has been working on an updated version of this document. Although no *specific* information was provided on the updated version of Tomorrow's Doctors, the GMC reports that one new area of focus will be on outcomes. The document will require medical schools to address student outcomes (competencies) but will continue to allow flexibility in determining the content of the courses offered in each school. The GMC published the updated document published in August 2002 and will provide copies to all interested parties.

Also, the GMC's Education Committee continues its development of a Quality Assurance (QA) process for basic medical education that will be used to evaluate medical schools. The QA process will be discussed at the November 2002 meeting of the GMC. Once a process has been developed, it will be piloted to ensure the adequacy of the procedures. The

U.S. Department of Education will receive a copy of the finalized QA process document.

Schedule for upcoming accreditation activities:

The next round of on-site evaluation visits to medical schools will begin in 2003 and will use the QA model being developed. Included in those visits will be the four new medical schools. The GMC notes that the four new medical schools will be revisited in the fall of 2002 and the early part of 2003.