

Australian Medical Council Submission

SENATE SELECT COMMITTEE MENTAL HEALTH

Executive Summary

The Australian Medical Council (AMC) is a national standards body for medical education and training. Its mission is: "To promote and protect public health and safety by ensuring a safe and competent workforce distributed across Australia to meet community needs."

The AMC conducts two processes which review standards of medical education and training. Medical training programs are assessed against standards set by the AMC through a consultative process. The standards define the knowledge, skills and professional attributes expected on graduation, and in broad terms how the education and training should be provided.

The AMC assesses basic medical courses offered by university-based medical schools. It also assesses specialist medical training programs offered by national specialist medical colleges. This process aims to assure the community that specialist medical training meets appropriate standards, and that practicing specialists are being assisted to maintain and enhance their knowledge, competence and performance.

In August 2005, the AMC is assessing the education and training of the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists.

AMC reviews follow a standard process, in which the team gathers information on the quality of the college's training programs from multiple sources, validates the information provided through a program of meetings and site visits, and produces a detailed report. The process starts with a self-assessment by the college being reviewed, which leads to development of a detailed submission describing the college's training programs, the challenges for delivery of high quality training, relationships with stakeholders including health consumer groups and health departments, programs to support specialists enhance their knowledge and skills over their professional career, and processes for identifying and retraining practicing specialists who are underperforming.

The AMC's psychiatry accreditation team will be exploring a number of issues that are relevant to the review by the Senate Select Committee on Mental Health Services, relating to:

- The delivery of a psychiatry training program that meets community needs.
- The environment in which training takes place and the quality of the experience gained by trainees. Most specialist medical education and training takes place in hospitals or in community-based health facilities.
- The dual roles of specialist medical trainees. Specialist medical training is apprenticeship-based training, and trainees are both members of the medical workforce and postgraduate students. The expectations relating to these roles can create conflict at a time when both the health delivery and vocational training systems are under pressure.
- The assessment and training support for overseas-trained psychiatrists recruited to positions in the Australian health care system.

AUSTRALIAN MEDICAL COUNCIL

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Background information on the Australian Medical Council

The Australian Medical Council (AMC) is a national standards body for medical education and training. Its mission is: “To promote and protect public health and safety by ensuring a safe and competent workforce distributed across Australia to meet community needs.”

The AMC:

- assesses medical courses and training programs, both medical school courses and the programs for training medical specialists, and accredits programs which meet AMC accreditation standards
- assesses overseas trained doctors who wish to practice medicine in Australia
- advises the Commonwealth on the recognition of fields of medical practice as medical specialties
- advises Health Ministers on matters to do with the registration of medical practitioners and the maintenance of professional standards in the medical profession.

Membership of the Council (and its committees) is drawn from nominees of the groups associated with the standards of medical practice in Australia, including:

- Commonwealth and State/Territory health departments
- bodies that offer medical training: the universities and the specialist medical colleges
- Federal Council of the Australian Medical Association
- health consumers
- medical students and junior doctors undertaking specialist medical training
- State and Territory medical boards, which register doctors for practice.

Australian Medical Council review of medical education and training programs

The AMC conducts two processes which review standards of medical education and training. Medical training programs are assessed against standards set by the AMC through a consultative process. The standards define the knowledge, skills and professional attributes expected on graduation, and in broad terms how the education and training should be provided.

The AMC assesses basic medical courses offered by university-based medical schools. The purpose of this process is the recognition of medical courses that produce graduates competent to practise safely and effectively under supervision as interns in Australia and New Zealand, and with an appropriate foundation for lifelong learning and for further training in any branch of medicine.

The AMC also assesses specialist medical training programs offered by national specialist medical colleges. An aim of this process is to assure the community that a doctor who has successfully completed an accredited program is able to practise as a specialist in that area and is being assisted to maintain and enhance her/his knowledge, competence and performance.

Accreditation is a collegial process based on self and peer assessment. The two processes follow similar formats. For both, there is a committee responsible for setting policy and accreditation

standards, deciding on the assessment process, selecting teams to complete the detailed assessments, and seeking to encourage improvement in medical education.

AMC teams conduct the assessments. Team members have a range of backgrounds: clinicians, scientists, allied health professions, the wider community and health administration.

Training programs are assessed against standards set by the AMC. The standards define the knowledge, skills and professional attributes expected on graduation, and in broad terms how education and training should be provided. The AMC's goals of specialist medical training and the AMC accreditation standards are provided in **Appendix 1**.

AMC review of training by the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists

The AMC is currently assessing the education and training of the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists.

The team appointed by the AMC to complete this review comprises practicing clinicians from other related disciplines, an international expert in psychiatry training, a doctor completing training in another training program, a senior hospital manager, and a health consumer. The team will complete its review by early September 2005, and its report will be available by December 2005.

The review occurs over a two-year timeframe. In the early stages of the review process, the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists developed a comprehensive submission which describes how it educates and trains psychiatrists, and the major challenges facing training in psychiatry in Australia. The submission is available on the College's website: www.ranzcp.org/pdf/AMC%20Submission.pdf.

The AMC accreditation team has considered the College's submission, and is now gathering information from multiple stakeholders to supplement its understanding of the training of psychiatrists, and the environment in which they train. The AMC has invited a wide range of groups to comment on the training of psychiatrists: health departments; professional associations for the health professions which contribute to the mental health team; health consumer bodies; psychiatrists in training; and other organisations that provide medical training. These submissions will be supplemented by meetings with key stakeholder groups in late August 2005.

Issues that will be explored in the AMC review include:

- The delivery of a psychiatry training program that meets community needs. This includes issues such as:
 - preparation for working in multidisciplinary teams
 - how issues of patient and doctor safety are addressed in training
 - opportunities for psychiatrists in training to undertake research
 - strategies used in the training program to prepare psychiatrists to interact effectively with general practitioners
 - how the College renews its training programs to take account of changes in medical practice and the mental health services
 - how the College seeks stakeholder feedback on the quality and appropriateness of its training, and its response to that feedback.
- The environment in which training takes place and the quality of the experience gained by trainees. Most specialist medical education and training takes place in hospitals or in community-based health facilities. The learning environment and the quality of the experience gained are thus of critical importance. The range of experience is also important; the team will

be considering whether trainees experience the breadth of psychiatry in preparation for independent practice as psychiatrists.

- Specialist medical training is apprenticeship-based training, and trainees are both members of the medical workforce and postgraduate students. These dual expectations can create conflict at a time when both the health delivery and vocational training systems are under pressure. Growing demands on the health delivery system can lead employing authorities to emphasise the trainee's service delivery role at the expense of training. The Team will be exploring how the College manages to ensure high quality training is provided in this environment, and the effect of workforce pressures and service delivery pressures on training.
- Barriers to recruitment of trainees to psychiatry, and strategies to overcome these barriers.
- Recognising that there are significant numbers of overseas-trained psychiatrists recruited to positions in the Australian health care system, the team will review how the College assesses the qualifications and experience of such doctors, how any special support or training needs are met, and contributions of these doctors as supervisors of psychiatry trainees.
- The programs available to assist practicing psychiatrists in maintaining their knowledge, skills and performance so they can deliver adequate and safe medical care, and processes in place for retraining and remediation of psychiatrists who are under performing.

The report produced by the accreditation team will be available as a public document when the review has been completed.

The AMC is very willing to provide more information about this review process if requested.



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AUSTRALIAN MEDICAL COUNCIL: STANDARDS FOR ACCREDITATION OF SPECIALIST MEDICAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

Goals and Objectives of Specialist Education and Training and Professional Development

The AMC, the medical boards and the specialist medical colleges have accepted the following as the broad goals of specialist education and training, including professional development.

Specialist education and training:

- enables the trainees to understand the scientific basis of the discipline and to learn through exposure to a broad range of clinical experience in the relevant specialty;
- enables the trainees to appreciate the issues associated with the delivery of safe, high quality and cost effective health care within the Australian health system, to understand that system and to be prepared for the broader roles of medical specialists in working with and taking a leadership role within the community on matters relating to health;
- produces medical practitioners able to undertake unsupervised comprehensive medical practice in the relevant specialty (including general practice);
- includes a process of assessment that tests whether the trainees have acquired the requisite knowledge, skills and professional qualities to practise in the specialty at an appropriate standard;
- prepares specialists (including general practitioners) able to assess and maintain their own competency and performance through continuing professional education, maintenance of skills and the development of new skills.

ACCREDITATION STANDARDS

The Processes of Specialist Education and Training

The goals of education and training

The training organisation has determined the goals for each of its education and training programs. These goals are based on the nature of the discipline and its role in the delivery of health care and are related to community need.

The curriculum

For each of its training programs, the training organisation has a curriculum that enables trainees to achieve the goals of the training program.

The curriculum specifies the educational objectives for each component, details the nature and range of clinical experience required to meet these objectives, and outlines the syllabus of knowledge, skills and professional qualities to be acquired.

Completion of training must be certified by a diploma or other formal award.

The training organisation has processes to determine the broad roles of practitioners in the discipline. These roles are addressed by the objectives of training programs.

Assessment And Examination

The training organisation implements a systematic program of formative and summative assessments, which it has demonstrated to be valid and reliable.

The assessment program reflects comprehensively the educational objectives of the training program.

The training organisation has processes for the early identification of trainees who are under performing and for determining programs of remedial work.

Accreditation of hospitals / training positions

The training organisation specifies the clinical experience, infrastructure and educational support required of the accredited hospital / training position and implements clear processes to determine whether these requirements are met.

The training organisation's accreditation requirements cover: clinical experience, structured educational programs, infrastructure supports such as library, journals and other learning facilities, continuing medical education sessions accessible to the trainee, dedicated time for teaching and training and opportunities for informal teaching and training in the work environment.

The accreditation standards of the training organisation are publicly available.

Supervisors, assessors, trainers and mentors

The training organisation has processes for selecting and training supervisors and trainers.

The training organisation has processes for ensuring that trainees receive regular feedback from supervisors and trainers and for obtaining confidential reports from trainees on the quality of their supervision, training and clinical experience.

The training organisation has a systematic process for selecting assessors in written, oral and performance-based assessment and examination who have demonstrated relevant capabilities. Selection of assessors takes account of an overall balance in gender, cultural background, nature of practice and its location.

The training organisation implements training programs designed to foster sound and consistent assessment methods.

The training organisation assists all trainees in identifying a suitable mentor who is not and highly unlikely ever to be a supervisor, assessor or trainer for the trainee.

Selection of trainees

Selection of trainees into training programs is based on the principles in the 1998 report, 'Selection into Specialist Training Programs' by the Medical Training Review Panel.

Assessment of overseas-trained specialists

The processes for assessing the suitability of overseas-trained specialists for practise in Australia are in accordance with the principles outlined by the AMC and the Committee of Presidents of Medical Colleges Joint Standing Committee on Overseas Trained Specialists.

Outputs and outcomes of training

The training organisation maintains records on the outputs of its training program, is developing methods to measure outcomes of training and is collecting qualitative information on outcomes.

Evaluation of the program

The training organisation has processes for the regular evaluation and review of its training programs

Supervisors, trainees, health care administrators, other health care professionals and consumers contribute to these processes.

Professional Development Programs

The training organisation has professional development programs that assist its members in maintaining their knowledge, skills and performance so they can deliver adequate and safe medical care.

The training organisation monitors participation in all areas in which the specialist is currently practising and has processes to counsel fellows who do not participate in such programs when they are not compulsory.

Retraining

The training organisation has processes in place for retraining and remediation of its fellows who are under performing.