



STATEMENT

Accreditation of Postgraduate (Specialist) Medical Education Programs

Scope

1. This statement addresses the accreditation of programs that provide postgraduate education and award a qualification in a specialized area of medicine.¹ Graduates of such programs are referred by terms such as, but not limited to, 'Specialists', 'Board Certified' and 'Consultants'.

Definition

2. Accreditation is the process by which a credible, independent body assesses the quality of an education program to provide assurance that it produces graduates that are competent to practise safely and effectively as specialist practitioners.

Purpose

3. IAMRA has as one of its strategic goals, to 'explore potential roles for IAMRA in providing support to members to achieve high standards for the education of doctors through appropriate accreditation processes'.
4. The purpose of this statement is to outline an accreditation framework and to encourage Members to utilise accreditation systems to ensure the provision of high quality postgraduate medical education, identify inadequate programs, assist education providers to improve the quality of their programs and ultimately, protect patients.

Introduction

5. There is considerable diversity in the types of bodies offering postgraduate education programs and there is potential for the quality of the programs to vary. Postgraduate medical education is frequently profession-led through Colleges or Boards, although provision in the university and private, for-profit sectors is not uncommon.
6. Internationally, it is increasingly common for postgraduate medical education programs to be accredited by the Medical Regulatory Authority, government, or an independent body established for the purpose.

¹ See also IAMRA's 2016 policy statement, *Accreditation of Medical Education Programs*.

The benefits of an accreditation process

7. Accreditation processes:
 - a. enable the community to be satisfied that a postgraduate medical education program meets the approved accreditation standards, benefiting trainees, employers of the graduates of the program and, ultimately, healthcare consumers;
 - b. enable the development of standards that are relevant to the local healthcare environment;
 - c. assist postgraduate medical education providers to ensure that their programs respond to evolving health needs and practices, and educational and scientific developments, while retaining diversity and encouraging innovation;
 - d. enable postgraduate education providers to identify the weaknesses and strengths of their programs;
 - e. assist the local Medical Regulatory Authority to assess a graduate's suitability for specialist practice and specialist registration/licensure, where implemented;
 - f. assist other Medical Regulatory Authorities to assess the quality of an applicant's specialist medical education, and therefore their suitability for registration/licensure.

Accreditation standards

8. Accreditation should be undertaken with reference to clearly stated standards and requirements. The accrediting body should develop standards for the delivery of postgraduate medical education.
9. Accreditation standards should address program domains such as:
 - a. Governance
 - b. Curriculum
 - c. Teaching and learning
 - d. Assessment of learning
 - e. Program monitoring and evaluation
 - f. Trainee selection, participation and wellbeing
 - g. Implementation, including accreditation and monitoring of training sites
 - h. Continuing Professional Development, further training and remediation of graduates
 - i. Assessment of specialist international medical graduates.

Accreditation framework

10. Ideally, an accreditation process should be underpinned by law to ensure that participation and outcomes are enforceable.
11. An accreditation body should:
 - a. have an appropriate governance structure to oversee its accreditation activities;
 - b. be independent of the provider being assessed, and members of the accreditation team should have no personal conflict of interest;
 - c. respect each provider's autonomy to set its educational policies and processes;

- d. adopt mechanisms to ensure that members of assessment teams, committees and staff apply standards and procedures in a consistent and appropriate fashion;
- e. follow documented procedures, and implement the accreditation process in an open and objective manner;
- f. in making decisions, gather and analyse information from multiple sources and viewpoints, including from trainees;
- g. review its processes and the accreditation standards on a regular basis;
- h. gather feedback on, and evaluate, its performance.

Accrediting accreditation bodies

- 12. The reliability and value of work undertaken by an accreditation body can be further enhanced if the body is, itself, independently accredited. This is strongly encouraged, where available.

Conclusion

- 13. IAMRA supports and encourages the development and implementation of robust, independent postgraduate medical education accreditation systems that ensure the provision of high-quality training, identify inadequate programs, assist providers to improve the quality of their programs and ultimately, protect patients.**