



## STATEMENT

### Accreditation of Medical Education Programs

#### Scope

1. This statement is limited to the accreditation of medical education programs that provide basic medical education and award an undergraduate or graduate degree in medicine that enables the graduate to seek registration as a medical practitioner.

#### Definition

2. Accreditation is the process by which a credible, independent body assesses the quality of a medical education program to provide assurance that it produces graduates that are competent to practise safely and effectively under supervision as interns (or equivalent), and have been provided with an appropriate foundation for lifelong learning and further training in any branch of medicine.

#### 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 medical education, identify inadequate medical education programs, assist education providers to improve the quality of their programs and ultimately, protect patients.

#### Introduction

5. Worldwide, there has been a rapid expansion in the number of medical education programs, increasing diversity in the bodies offering these programs and innovations in the way programs are delivered. Medical education is provided in both the government and private sectors and there is potential for the quality of the programs to vary considerably, even within a country. The *World Directory of Medical Schools*<sup>1</sup> lists medical education programs worldwide. Currently, there are nearly 3000 medical schools<sup>2</sup>, with the number of new medical schools increasing at a rate of approximately 5-10% per year.

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<sup>1</sup> The *World Directory of Medical Schools* has been developed through a partnership between the World Federation for Medical Education (WFME) and the Foundation for Advancement of International Medical Education and Research (FAIMER). The *World Directory* provides a comprehensive compilation of the information previously contained in the *IMED* and *Avicenna* directories.

<sup>2</sup> The *World Directory of Medical Schools* notes that 'the listing of a medical school in the World Directory of Medical Schools does not denote recognition, accreditation, or endorsement by the World Directory of Medical Schools or by the partner organizations leading this venture, the World Federation for Medical Education (WFME) and the Foundation for Advancement of International Medical Education and Research (FAIMER).'

6. Internationally, there are three main models for ensuring the quality of medical graduates:
  - a. accrediting medical education programs to ensure that they and their graduates meet an appropriate standard;
  - b. requiring new graduates to sit a licensing examination;
  - c. a hybrid of models a. and b.
  
7. Some countries already have well established accreditation and approval programs, generally provided by the Medical Regulatory Authority, government, or by an independent body established for the purpose<sup>3</sup>. Other countries utilise licensing examinations alone to determine new graduates' fitness to practise. In the absence of an accreditation system that requires an appropriate standard of medical education, graduates may find that after four, five or six years of study, they are unable to pass the licensing examination and therefore, cannot work in their chosen profession. With or without a licensing examination, a robust medical school accreditation system is highly desirable.

### **The benefits of an accreditation process**

8. Independent accreditation processes:
  - a. enable the community to be satisfied that a medical education provider and its medical program meet the approved accreditation standards, benefiting prospective students, employers of the graduates of the program and, ultimately, healthcare consumers;
  - b. enable the establishment of standards that are relevant to the local healthcare environment;
  - c. assist 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 education providers to identify the weaknesses and strengths of their program;
  - e. assist the local Medical Regulatory Authority to assess a graduate's suitability for registration/licensure;
  - f. assist other Medical Regulatory Authorities to assess the quality of an applicant's basic medical education, and therefore their suitability for registration/licensure.<sup>4</sup>

### **Accreditation standards**

9. Accreditation should be undertaken with reference to clearly stated standards and requirements. The accrediting body should set standards, or adopt, and as necessary, adapt template standards for the delivery of medical education and training.
  
10. One such set of standards is produced by The World Federation for Medical Education (WFME). WFME undertakes to promote the highest scientific and ethical standards in medical education, and to encourage development of learning methods, new instructional tools, and innovative management of medical education.

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<sup>3</sup> 77% of 31 respondents to IAMRA's 2015 survey have an accreditation system.

<sup>4</sup> In the U.S., the Educational Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates (ECFMG®) has announced that, effective in 2023, doctors applying for ECFMG Certification will be required to have graduated from a medical school that has been accredited through a formal process that uses criteria comparable to those established for U.S. medical schools by the Liaison Committee on Medical Education (LCME) or that uses other globally accepted criteria.

11. The WFME standards, in several languages, are available at <http://wfme.org/standards/bme>

### **Accreditation framework<sup>5</sup>**

12. An accreditation body should have an appropriate governance structure to oversee its accreditation activities.
13. Ideally, an accreditation process should be underpinned by law to ensure that participation and outcomes are enforceable.
14. An accreditation body should:
- be independent, and members of the accreditation team should have no personal conflict of interest;
  - respect each education provider's autonomy to set its educational policies and processes;
  - in making decisions, gather and analyse information from multiple sources and viewpoints, including from medical students;
  - follow documented procedures, and implement its accreditation process in an open and objective manner;
  - adopt mechanisms to ensure that members of assessment teams, committees and staff apply standards and procedures in a consistent and appropriate fashion;
  - review its processes and the accreditation standards on a regular basis;
  - gather feedback on and evaluate its performance.
15. An accreditation process should:
- focus on the achievement of objectives, maintenance of educational standards, public safety requirements, and expected outputs and outcomes rather than on detailed specification of curriculum content or educational method;
  - incorporate a self-assessment component;
  - monitor the implementation of recommendations and other developments in the program;
  - require a cycle of assessments, with a periodic full assessment of each program;
  - provide for a range of accreditation outcomes, such as accreditation with commendation, accreditation, conditional accreditation, withdrawal of accreditation.

### **Accrediting accreditation bodies**

16. 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.
17. One such accreditation system is available through the World Federation for Medical Education (WFME), which in collaboration with the Foundation for Advancement of International Medical Education and Research (FAIMER®), has developed a *Programme for Recognition of Accrediting Agencies*. The objective is to create a transparent and rigorous method of ensuring that accreditation of medical schools, world-wide, is always at an internationally accepted and high standard. Detailed information, including an explanation of the process and the required application forms, is available at the WFME website at: <http://wfme.org/accreditation/accrediting-accreditors>.

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<sup>5</sup> Adapted from *Procedures for Assessment and Accreditation of Medical Schools by the Australian Medical Council 2015*

## **Conclusion**

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

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

IAMRA gratefully acknowledges the assistance of the following organisations:

- World Federation for Medical Education (WFME)
- Foundation for Advancement of International Medical Education and Research (FAIMER®)
- Educational Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates (ECFMG)
- Australian Medical Council (AMC)