

Policy Document

Internship Policy

Background

The Australian Medical Students' Association (AMSA) is the peak representative body for medical students in Australia.

Completion of an accredited internship is necessary after graduation from Medical School to attain full registration (general registration) as a doctor with the Medical Board of Australia [1]. It can be viewed as a necessary extension of Medical School. Without completion of an internship, only Provisional Registration may be received, which limits clinical work to approved internship positions and sites.

Currently, all Commonwealth-Supported Place (CSP) students are guaranteed an internship position in Australia upon graduation from Medical School according to the agreement by the Australian Health Ministers' Conference on 12 February 2010 [2]. This guarantee does not extend to medical graduates who are full-fee domestic or international students of Australian Medical Schools [3].

Medical student numbers in Australia are at an all time high following a decision in 2004 by the Federal Government to increase student numbers in attempts to alleviate a nation-wide shortage of doctors. We have seen graduate numbers almost double between 1999 and 2010 (MTRP report), with further increases recently. The number of internship positions has not increased proportionally to the number of medical graduates, resulting in Australian-trained international students missing out on internships in Australia, forcing them to complete their training overseas.

The core competencies of an intern are outlined in the Australian Curriculum Framework for Junior Doctors (ACFJD). To be accredited, an internship position must:

- be approved by the Medical Board of Australia following assessment by a postgraduate medical council[4];
- be a minimum of 47 weeks full time; and
- include each of a medicine, surgery, and emergency medicine rotation[5].

Considering the above requirements for each internship position, current obstacles to increasing internship positions are multifactorial and require input from each of federal and state governments, in addition to universities and local health providers. There is both difficulty in securing the finances to fund these positions, in addition to a lack of core rotations to provide for the requisite increase.

Until all graduates of Australian Medical Schools can be guaranteed an internship, national consistency is important for equity of access to internship positions for both domestic and international students (see *National Intern Application Policy* document, AMSA 2013).

Head Office
42 Macquarie St
Barton ACT 2600

Postal Address
PO Box 6099
Kingston ACT 2604

Phone +612 6270 5435
Fax +612 6270 5499
Email mail@amsa.org.au

Website www.amsa.org.au
Twitter @yourAMSA

ABN 67 079 544 513

Position Statement

AMSA believes that all medical students of Australian medical schools, both domestic and international, should be guaranteed a quality internship position in Australia upon completion of their degree.

Policy

AMSA believes that:

1. all "Australian Medical Graduates" should be guaranteed quality internship positions in Australia upon completion of their degree.
 - a. For the purpose of this policy, "Australian Medical Graduates" are defined as students who:
 - i. complete their primary medical qualification at an Australian university;
 - ii. complete the majority of their clinical coursework in Australia; and
 - iii. are not bonded to a government (other than an Australian government) upon completion of their medical degree.
2. the means by which internships are allocated should be equitable, transparent and efficient.
3. until all Australian Medical Graduates are guaranteed an internship, medical schools of Australia should, prior to enrolment, explicitly explain to prospective international medical students that they are not guaranteed an internship in Australia upon their graduation.
 - a. All prospective international medical students should be presented with a nationally consistent document outlining their chances of obtaining an internship position in Australia upon graduation, prior to acceptance of a position and payment of any fees.
 - b. Medical schools should ensure that students are continually updated about their likelihood of securing an internship position upon graduation as further information becomes available.
4. it should be possible to complete an internship within one year, but graduates should be permitted, though not required, to undertake a year of generalist medical training following internship before application to postgraduate training programs.
5. there should not be an examination in the internship year.
6. all internships should carry the option of a term in community medicine.
7. the Medical Board of Australia is an appropriate body to govern internship regulations and accreditation.
8. the Australian Curriculum Framework for Junior Doctors (ACFJD) is an appropriate framework for defining the expected standards for internship.

AMSA calls upon:

1. State and Federal Governments of Australia to guarantee quality accredited internship positions in Australia for Australian Medical Graduates, whether domestic or international, Commonwealth-supported or full-fee;
2. universities of Australia to consider a nationally coordinated approach to medical student numbers to ensure all graduates are guaranteed a quality internship in Australia and numbers are in line with future societal health care needs;
3. continued investigation of a nationally coordinated process for internship allocation to more easily identify vacancies.

References

- [1] Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency. General Registration [internet]. Canberra (ACT): AHPRA; 2011 [updated 2011 July 19; cited 2012 May 17]. Available from: <http://www.medicalboard.gov.au/Medical-Registration/General-Registration.aspx>

[2] Department of Health & Ageing. Australian Health Ministers' Conference Communiqué - 12 February 2010. Canberra (ACT). DHA: 2010 [updated 2010 February 12; cited 2012 May 17]. Available from: <http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/mr-yr10-dept-dept120210.htm>

[3] Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency. General Registration [internet]. Canberra (ACT): AHPRA; 2011 [updated 2011 August 5; cited 2012 May 17]. Available from: <http://www.medicalboard.gov.au/Medical-Registration/Provisional-Registration.aspx>

[4] Australian Medical Association. AMA Medical Training Joint Statement [internet]. Canberra (ACT): AMA: 2010 [updated 2010 September 29; cited 2012 May 17]. Available from: <http://ama.com.au/node/6102>

[5] Confederation of Postgraduate Medical Councils. National Registration and the Internship. CPMC: 2009 [updated 2009 January; cited 2012 May 17]. Available from: http://www.cpmec.org.au/files/Nat%20Registration%20and%20Internship%20wp%20final%20report%20FINAL%20_2_.pdf

Policy Details

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