

Consultation paper: AMC review of accreditation standards for specialist medical education programs and professional development programs – July 2015

The Australian Medical Council (AMC) is consulting on proposals for change to the *Standards for Assessment and Accreditation of Specialist Medical Education Programs and Professional Development Programs by the Australian Medical Council*. This is the second round of consultation. It takes into account feedback received from the first consultation round.

The consultation document outlines changes proposed to the standards as a result of the initial consultation process in March 2015. It also provides background information on the accreditation standards, the role of the AMC and the reason for the review of the standards, for reference. This information was outlined in the initial consultation document in March 2015. The consultation document is structured as follows:

1. Background information on the standards and scope of the review
2. Review process and stakeholder feedback
3. Questions of interest in this consultation
4. Implementation of the standards in 2016
5. Next steps

There are two attachments: Attachment 1: Summary of key changes including comparison table and Attachment 2: Draft revised standards.

1 Background information on the standards and scope of the review

What are accreditation standards and how are they used?

Accreditation functions for regulated health professions are defined under the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law as in force in each state and territory (the National Law). **Accreditation standard**, for a health profession, means a standard used to assess whether a program of study, and the education provider that provides the program of study, provide persons who complete the program with the knowledge, skills and professional attributes necessary to practise the profession in Australia. (Section 5 of the National Law).

The AMC is the accreditation authority for the medical profession and it develops accreditation standards for medical programs and their education providers. In doing so, it must undertake wide-ranging consultation about the content of the standards. The Medical Board of Australia is responsible for approval of accreditation standards developed for the medical profession by the AMC.

In reviewing the standards the AMC takes account of the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency *Procedures for Development of Accreditation Standards*, and of the objectives and guiding principles in the National Law.

The AMC uses accreditation standards to assess medical programs for the purposes of accreditation. The AMC also uses the accreditation standards for monitoring accredited programs and providers to ensure that they continue to meet the standards.

The AMC develops standards for all phases of medical training and education. The standards follow similar structure and formatting, but are customised to the requirements of the stage of training and education.

Most of the providers of specialist medical programs offer training and education in both Australia and New Zealand. The Medical Council of New Zealand works with the AMC to accredit specialist medical programs in New Zealand and to develop standards that apply in both countries.

Why is the AMC reviewing the accreditation standards?

The AMC reviews the accreditation standards at least every five years, in keeping with good practice. It reviews relevant developments nationally and internationally, consults about the proposed scope of the review, draft proposals for any change, and then once it has feedback on the changes, consults again on the final draft set of revised accreditation standards.

The AMC revised the *Standards for Assessment and Accreditation of Specialist Medical Education Programs and Professional Development Programs* when the National Law took effect in 2010 by bringing them into line with the National Law and Medical Board of Australia's registration standards and guidelines.

This review of the standards for specialist medical programs and continuing professional development programs is one of the AMC's regular five-yearly reviews.

The scope of the review

In the March 2015 consultation document, the AMC indicated that it did not see this as a major restructure of the standards, but an update of the standards in response to evolution in education and training and healthcare delivery and to clarify language and internal ordering. Stakeholder feedback has indicated support for this view, and for the direction of the review.

The revisions to the standards make no change to the overall structure of the accreditation standards or the aim of the process. The standards continue to be set a high level, that is, not prescribing specific processes or methods, and be able to be met in different ways.

In these revisions, the AMC aims to:

- provide clear and simple standards;
- reflect contemporary educational terminology and thinking in the standards;
- reduce duplication between standards;
- strike a balance between the impact on education providers and ensuring that standards remain appropriate for assessing whether specialist medical programs and their providers provide graduates with the knowledge, skills and professional qualities necessary to practise in Australia;
- align the standards across the stages of medical training and education; and
- result in standards appropriate for the breadth of health care services used for specialist medical training.

The implications of revisions to the standards are discussed under section 4.

2 Review process and stakeholder feedback

The revised standards were released for initial stakeholder consultation from March to May 2015. The revised standards were sent to key stakeholders including; specialist colleges, health departments, regulatory bodies, junior doctor groups, consumer groups and a number of professional organisations. The AMC also met with a number of key stakeholder groups.

The AMC received 33 responses to the consultation on the draft revised standards. The Working Party considered the stakeholder feedback and has developed the next version of the revised standards for a second round of consultation. Further information about the stakeholder feedback is provided in the following section.

The AMC is now seeking stakeholder input on this set of revised standards. It is not proposing a third round of consultation unless stakeholder feedback raises significant additional issues.

Overall, the stakeholder feedback indicated that the content and structure of the revised accreditation standards is helpful, clear, relevant and workable and that the standards should be achievable by education providers. The stakeholder feedback agrees that a review of the standards every five years is reasonable. There were specific suggestions for changes to the wording of standards and the notes under all nine standards. Fifteen new standards were also proposed.

In the initial consultation the AMC asked whether there should be a separate standard relevant to the specialist international medical graduate assessment processes. A majority of respondents agreed that elements of the process should be drawn together in a separate standard.

The AMC has made the following significant changes to the standards as a result of the feedback:

- Added to the glossary and clarified terminology;
- Added a substandard 1.3 on Reconsideration, review and appeals processes. This entails moving part of 7.5 Resolution of training problems and disputes;
- Changed substandard 5.3.4 to include informing regulators, where appropriate, when patient safety concerns arise in assessment;
- Because of overlap between the two, incorporated 7.1.3 in 7.1.2. These substandards relate to the documented trainee selection process;
- Created a new substandard, 7.1.3, on enhanced training participation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and/or Maori trainees;
- Taken into account feedback from recent AMC workshops on generalism and interprofessional education;
- Reviewed wording of standards and notes concerning trainee welfare, including processes to address discrimination, bullying and sexual harassment;
- Reviewed Standard 9.1, Continuing professional development, to ensure it is in line with current Medical Council of New Zealand and Medical Board of Australia requirements.
- Created a new standard 10 that draws together the requirements concerning processes for assessment of specialist international medical graduates. The new standard draws on elements of standard 5 and standard 7. It includes key requirements from Medical Board of Australia and Medical Council of New Zealand guidelines.

A summary of the specific revisions to the standards as a result of the review and in consideration of stakeholder feedback is provided in [ATTACHMENT 1](#).

3 Questions of interest in this consultation

- i. Are any of the standards in these draft revised standards unclear or irrelevant?
- ii. Is there any content that needs to be changed?
- iii. Is the revised glossary complete and are the definitions appropriate for the standards?
- iv. Based on feedback from the initial consultation the AMC has drafted a separate standard which draws together all the elements relevant to the specialist international medical graduate assessment processes. Previously these elements were integrated throughout the standards. The AMC is seeking feedback on this new standard.
- v. The feedback from the initial consultation suggested that the standards should be achievable with some clarification of the AMC's expectations and timeframes. Are there any standards in the latest revision that are not achievable by education providers? In the first year of implementation, the AMC will ask education providers to demonstrate planning towards meeting new standards, rather than expecting that they will meet the new standards. Do you support this approach?
- vi. Do you have any other comments on the draft revised accreditation standards?

4 Implementation of the standards

The expected completion date of the review is August/September 2015, with implementation of the revised standards from 2016. This will mean that the new standards will apply to the accreditation assessments scheduled for 2016 from May.

The AMC understands there are number of implications of the revisions to the standards, summarised below:

- Education providers will need to become familiar with and report against the revised standards. The AMC will consult education providers particularly to ensure the revisions are clear. It will provide revised templates to assist preparation for accreditation assessments and map existing standards to new standards. By simplifying standards which had been identified as unclear, reporting should be easier. The AMC will review the experience with the standards in the first year of operation and if necessary provide additional guidance. In the first year of implementation, the AMC will ask education providers to demonstrate planning towards meeting new standards, rather than expecting that they will meet the new standards. The AMC will in contact specialist education providers separately with further information about implementation in 2016.
- AMC accreditation assessment teams will need to become familiar with the new standards to ensure they assess programs fairly and consistently against the standards. The AMC will provide specific guidance and training for teams to assist their preparation for assessing against the revised standards.
- The AMC reports to the Medical Board of Australia and the Medical Council of New Zealand on its assessments of individual programs and providers. The AMC will need to revise its accreditation reports to include the new standards, and in the early stages of implementing revised standards, provide guidance to the Medical Board and the Medical Council of New Zealand on the changes.

The AMC will work closely with education providers, accreditation assessment teams and regulation authorities to implement the standards.

The AMC is holding a workshop with specialist education providers undergoing an assessment in 2016 this year to work through the revised standards and implications.

A second workshop for all education providers will follow.

5 Next steps

The AMC will consider the feedback from the second round of consultation on the standards. The stakeholder submissions received will be considered by the AMC Standards Review Working Party and through the relevant committee processes.

When finalised, the accreditation standards will be submitted to the Medical Board of Australia for approval. The AMC is aiming to have the standards finalised by September 2015.

Please send any questions about the process or the draft standards to standardsreview@amc.org.au.

Attachments

Attachment 1: Summary of key changes including comparison table

Attachment 2: Draft revised standards

The AMC asks for feedback on the standards by email to standardsreview@amc.org.au by **24 August 2015**.

Please provide your feedback in an accessible PDF or Word format.