

## **Accreditation and Recognition of Medical Schools**

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**Elected Council Member**

The Malaysian Medical Council (MMC), established under the Medical Act 1971, is responsible for recognising medical schools for the purpose of licensing their graduates for practice in Malaysia pursuant to section 12(2) of the Medical Act:

*“The Minister may from time to time, after consulting the Council, add to, delete from or amend the Second Schedule by order published in the Gazette.”*

Under the Medical Act, graduates of universities listed in the Second Schedule are eligible for provisional registration and need to undergo a period of housemanship training of not less than a year. Upon full registration, the Medical Act requires them to serve a period of not less than two years in the public health sector. On the other hand, graduates from medical schools not listed in the Second Schedule need to sit and pass the medical qualifying examination to be eligible for provisional registration.

The Medical Act provides that the role of standard setting and certification of all medical degree programmes awarded of medical schools within and outside Malaysia is vested solely in the MMC.

When the Medical Act came into force in 1971, the Second Schedule contained a list of recognized universities inherited from the General Medical Council. More universities were added after visits to these medical schools by the teams comprising representatives of the Public Services Department (PSD) which is responsible for recruiting doctors into the public health sector, Ministry of Education and the MMC. The objectives of these visits were to certify that the standards of medical education in these universities were acceptable.

Pursuant to its statutory role, the MMC decided in 1995 to accredit medical schools prior to recognizing them. The MMC, in collaboration with the Liaison Committee for Medical Education of the United States, established standards and procedures for accrediting medical schools following a workshop conducted by Dr Nancy Gray of the Educational Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates of the United States under the auspices of the World Health Organization at the Ming Court (now Corus) Hotel in Kuala Lumpur on 25-27 March 1996.

The draft Guidelines and Procedure for Accreditation of Medical Schools, prepared by a MMC committee comprising Datuk Dr Megat Burhanuddin Megat Abdul Rahman, Prof Dato Khalid Kadir, Dr Milton Lum, Prof M P Deva, Prof Azizi Omar, Dr Ramli Saad and Dr Omar Said was first tabled at the MMC meeting on 20 May 1997 and subsequently approved. This was communicated to the then recently established National Accreditation Board (“LAN”) on 22 July 1997.

LAN had been established by an Act in 1996 with the aim of assuring the quality of educational programmes in private higher educational institutions which included private medical schools. LAN’s functions were to establish minimum standards and to ensure

compliance for the purpose of course approval and certification of achievement of minimum accreditation standards. In order for a degree to be awarded it is compulsory for an institution to achieve minimum standards. The achievement of accreditation standards was voluntary.

MMC and LAN agreed to the accreditation of public medical schools on 16 February 1998.

To avoid unnecessary duplication in efforts and to harmonise the accreditation exercise, Tan Sri Dr Abu Bakar Suleiman, the then President of the MMC, directed on 19 May 1998 that a joint MMC, Ministry of Health (MOH), Ministry of Education (MOE), LAN and PSD workshop be organized in November 1998. The objectives of the workshop were to establish common guidelines for standards and procedures in accreditation and to recommend a practical working relationship that will be adopted by all regulatory agencies.

A Joint Technical Committee was established in 1999. It was chaired by the President of MMC and comprised representatives of MMC, MOH, MOE, LAN, PSD and the universities.

The guidelines on criteria, standards and procedures for accreditation that were developed in 1998 were reviewed to align them with the World Federation for Medical Education (WFME) guidelines on International Standards at a workshop in University Science Malaysia on 24-26 September 2000.

The WFME had established a general quality assurance instrument for medical education that could be used worldwide. Its "International Standards in Medical Education" specified basic and quality development standards across nine broad areas organised into 37 criteria that serve as performance indicators for quality assurance in medical education. The standard provided operational guidelines for the assessment of individual medical schools against these criteria.

The Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) hosted a WHO Regional Workshop on Quality Assurance in Medical Education, in collaboration with the Association for Medical Education in the Western Pacific Region in April 2001. The MMC guidelines were applied in evaluating the medical programme at UKM. The standards and procedures were found to be consistent, comparable, practical and acceptable.

The MMC criteria, standards and procedures have been revised subsequently in 2007 and 2010 by a committee chaired by Prof Dato Mafauzy Mohamed.

All public and private medical schools in Malaysia have been accredited and recognised by the MMC since 2000.

The Quality Assurance Division (QAD) in the Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE) was established in 2002 as the national agency responsible for managing and coordinating the quality assurance system for public higher educational institutions.

The National Accreditation Board (LAN) and QAD were dissolved and replaced by the Malaysian Qualification Agency (MQA) in 2008 and the LAN Act has been superseded by the MQA Act in 2008.

### **Joint Technical Committee**

A Joint Technical Committee (“JTC”) responsible for the accreditation process and course approval in both private and public medical schools was initially established in 1999. The Technical Committee then was responsible for constituting the evaluation panel, studying the report of the evaluation team and submitting the recommendations on accreditation for ratification by the relevant agencies and, in particular, for recognition by the MMC. The Technical Committee was also responsible for reviewing the validity of the standards and procedures from time to time and to considering proposals for changes.

The JTC today is chaired by the President of the Malaysian Medical Council. It comprises two representatives each from MMC, MOH, Ministry of Higher Education (QAD of the Ministry of Education prior to the establishment of MOHE) and universities, as well as a representative each from PSD and MQA (LAN prior to 2008). Each appointment is for a period of not more than three years. The secretariat of the Technical Committee is the Malaysian Medical Council secretariat.

The functions of the JTC are specified in section 51(1) of the MQA Act:

- (a) consider an application for accreditation;
- (b) make recommendations to grant or refuse the application for accreditation;
- (c) make recommendations for imposing conditions;
- (d) enter and conduct an institutional audit under; and
- (e) make recommendations for the revocation of accreditation.

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The recommendation of the JTC is then forwarded to the MMC, which has the power under section 52(1) of the MQA Act to:

- (a) approve the granting of accreditation; or
- (b) refuse the granting of accreditation, stating the grounds for refusal.

Section 54 of the MQA Act provides that the MMC may, “upon recommendation of the Joint Technical Committee at the time of or at any time after a certificate of accreditation has been issued under subsection 52(2), impose such conditions as it may deem necessary or expedient and may vary, amend or revoke any such conditions or impose new or additional conditions from time to time.”

Section 55 of the MQA Act also provides that the MMC may, upon recommendation of the Joint Technical Committee at any time, withdraw the approval for accreditation granted to a higher education provider under paragraph 52(l)(a) and the Agency shall revoke the certificate of accreditation.”

The role of LAN and subsequently MQA in the accreditation of all medical schools has solely been that of providing logistic and administrative support.

The MMC has always set the criteria, standards and procedure for accreditation, constituted the evaluation panels and recognised the medical schools after considering the reports of evaluation panels recommended by the JTC.

This is evident from section 35 (2) of the MQA Act which states “Subject to subsection (4), the Agency may for the purposes of subsection (1) from time to time amend the Framework and may collaborate, cooperate and coordinate with any person, including government agencies, higher education providers, students, academic staff, quality assurance and accreditation bodies, examination or certification bodies and employers, and **in the case of professional programmes, professional qualifications and higher education providers, the Framework shall be amended in accordance to the criteria and standards set by the relevant professional bodies.**”

Both the MMC and MQA have complementary roles in ensuring that the medical education provided by the various institutions is fit for purpose.