

## **Information for current and prospective international medical students on the availability of internships in Australia**

The Australian Medical Students' Association (AMSA) is the peak representative body for medical students in Australia. International Students' Network (ISN) is a committee of AMSA that is made up of international student representatives from all of the medical schools in Australia. ISN's specific purpose is to address the issues facing international students studying in Australia.

There are serious concerns that some international students in Australia may miss out on an internship in the 2012 allocation process. The following information is designed to assist current and prospective international students and help ensure you understand the situation so that you are able plan accordingly. Please note that this information is a guide only and that it is critical that you continue to liaise with the relevant state bodies to keep up to date on internship availability and the allocation process.

There is no doubt that Australia is a great place to live and study medicine. However, if you are an international student who has applied or is contemplating an application to study medicine in Australia, you should be aware of current issues surrounding the availability of internships for international students. Please refer to the AMSA ISN website for information at <http://isn.amsa.org.au>.

AMSA holds that international medical students:

- should be provided with internship positions to gain full registration as doctors in Australia
- should be given comprehensive and realistic information regarding their future employment opportunities within Australia prior to enrolment

AMSA has called upon Australian medical schools to:

- accurately and explicitly explain to prospective international medical students before enrolment that internships are not currently guaranteed
- continue to inform Australian trained international medical students of their current internship prospects and to provide support for students to pursue alternative internship opportunities when placement in local positions are not possible.

## **The importance of internship**

In Australia, medical graduates must complete an internship in order to obtain full registration as a doctor. In many countries, including Australia, graduates who have not completed an internship are not eligible for medical 'residencies' and other positions that require full registration.

*Without completing an internship position, you are not eligible to apply for resident medical officer positions in Australia and may not be able to do so in other countries.*

## **The allocation of internships in Australia**

In Australia, the allocation of internships is administered by the postgraduate medical councils (PMC) of each Australian state. Each PMC has their own system of allocating internships; however, domestic students are generally allocated before international students. This becomes significant if the supply of medical graduates seeking an internship in Australia exceeds the number of available internships.

Australian medical schools do not administer the allocation of internships. A major barrier to providing internships for international medical students is that the number of international students remains unregulated in Australia.

*International medical students in Australia are not guaranteed an internship.*

## **The availability of internships for international students in Australia until 2011**

Until recently, the number of available internship places in Australia has exceeded the number of medical graduates and international students who wished to complete an internship in Australia were generally able to do so without difficulty.

However, since 2005 the number of medical students graduating each year in Australia has doubled.

AMSA has advocated strongly on this issue over several years, resulting in State and Federal governments significantly expanding the number of internships to provide for the increasing number of medical graduates, both domestic and international.

Accurately assessing the number of medical students moving through the system is very difficult. Although many international students experienced significant anxiety waiting to receive later round offers, at the time of writing this document, AMSA had received no confirmed reports that international students have missed out on an internship position in the 2011 allocation, for commencement of internship in 2012.

It is important to note that although no international students have officially missed out thus far this does not account for those students who withdrew their applications after waiting months after the initial allocation without receiving internships. In addition, the increasing number of medical graduates will not reach its peak until 2015.

## Availability of internships for international students in 2012 and beyond

In 2011 there were 3,135 graduates of Australian medical schools, compared to 1,587 in 2005. In 2012 the number of medical graduates is expected to further increase to 3,512<sup>1</sup>. Despite substantial efforts to further expand the number of internships there are serious concerns that in the 2012 allocation, for commencement of internship in 2013, international students may miss out.

### Being prepared for an internship shortage

#### Start planning early

- Given the possible shortage of internships in Australia in 2012, many international medical students may find it beneficial to give thought to where they would like to continue their medical career, in Australia or elsewhere. In Australia it is important to become familiar with the criteria and specific requirements of internship allocations in each state where you choose to apply, as each PMC has different administrative requirements. Links to each PMC can be found on the Confederation of Postgraduate Medical Education Councils (CPMEC) website: <http://www.cpmecc.org.au/Page/cpmecc-links>

#### Consider applying in multiple states

- International students are increasingly choosing to apply in multiple Australian states to maximise their chance of receiving an internship position in Australia. If you are an international student who would like to remain and practice in Australia, consider whether you intend to do the same.

#### Consider whether you are willing to apply for internship outside of Australia

- Many international medical students are sponsored to study in Australia and are required by the government of their home country to return after graduation. For others, it is their preference to return to their country of origin. However, an increasing number of medical students whose preference it is to remain in Australia are also electing to maintain their options to return to their country of origin or an alternative destination. In some cases, such as Canada and the USA, applicants are required to meet additional requirements, such as examinations (MCCEE for Canada and USMLE for the USA). In some cases, preparing for and sitting these exams requires consideration in the early years of their medical degree.

More information on the process of returning home as an international medical graduate can be found at the following websites:

- Canada: <http://www.carms.ca/>
- United States: <http://www.ecfm.org/>
- Singapore: <http://www.moh.gov.sg/mohcorp/careers.aspx?id=260>
- Malaysia: [http://www.mma.org.my/Portals/0/A%20Guidebook%20-%2015072009\[1\].pdf](http://www.mma.org.my/Portals/0/A%20Guidebook%20-%2015072009[1].pdf)

### More information

For more information on issues affecting international medical students please visit the ISN page on the AMSA website at <http://www.amsa.org.au/>. You can also contact the Chair of the AMSA ISN at [chair@isn.amsa.org.au](mailto:chair@isn.amsa.org.au) or your local AMSA Representative, whose details are available at <http://www.amsa.org.au/>.

\*Except where marked all figures are from the Medical Training and Review Panel 14th Report, March 2011

<sup>1</sup>Medical Training Review Panel 15<sup>th</sup> Report, February 2012