

POLICY DOCUMENT

GRADUATE-ENTRY MEDICINE APPLICATION PROCESS

Background

11 of the 18 Australian medical schools offer graduate-entry only medical degrees. Applicants are required to hold a bachelor's degree, sit the *Graduate Australian Medical School Admission Test (GAMSAT)* (or the *Medical College Admission Test* for international applicants) and attend an interview¹. In addition, medical schools may offer graduate and undergraduate entry into medical degrees. Additional application criteria may apply and the weightings of each component differ between the schools.

The process for applicants is typically lengthy (around nine months), starting with registration for the GAMSAT by early February, sitting of the test in late March, receiving results in mid May, applying for schools in early June, attending an interview in late September or early October and receiving an offer or declination in late October or early November.

In addition to being lengthy, the process is unduly stressful for many applicants because 10 of the 11 graduate medical schools act as a consortium and share a *One Interview Policy*², under which applicants will receive, at most, one offer of an interview³. Note that each school interviews more applicants than it offers places to (for example, Monash University interviews approximately 110 domestic applicants for only 65 places⁴). Under the *One Interview Policy*, applicants are deterred from applying to some universities for fear of “just” missing out on an offer and thus likely not receiving any offer at any school for that year. In such a case, applicants must normally wait until the following year to apply again, which may also require re-sitting the expensive and day-long GAMSAT. There is potentially a societal detriment from not accepting into medical school the applicants who “just” miss out on an offer from a highly-competitive school.

Position statement

The *Australian Medical Students' Association* (AMSA) seeks a graduate-entry only medicine application process that maximises the chance that an applicant who applies unsuccessfully to one school may still receive *in that same year* an offer from another school. Such a process is proposed herein and would raise the average quality of successful applicants and be fairer and less stressful for all applicants. It would be to the benefit of applicants, medical schools and society.

Policy

AMSA believes that:

1. To maximise the quality of the future medical workforce, medical school places should be offered to the “best” applicants. Applicants should therefore have the opportunity to be considered by as many medical schools as they wish to apply to, maximising the chance that an applicant who interviews unsuccessfully at one school may still receive *in that same year* an offer from another school;
2. The period of time from the closure of GAMSAT registrations to the release of first-round offers should be reduced to no more than six months;
3. The *Graduate Medical Admission Centre* (GMAC) should co-ordinate offers for all medical schools such that no more than one first-round offer is made to each applicant; and
4. There should be medical student representation in the ongoing review of the process.

Proposed application process

AMSA believes that the optimal application process would be as follows:

1. Applicants register for the GAMSAT;
2. Applicants sit the GAMSAT;
3. GAMSAT results are released;
4. Applicants log on to a website maintained by the GMAC and rank in order of preference the offers they would like to receive. This must include not only the medical school but also the type of place, i.e. unbonded Commonwealth-Supported Place (CSP), Bonded Medical Place (BMP) Scheme, Medical Rural Bonded Scholarship (MRBS) Scheme and Full-Fee⁵. Applicants submit any necessary supplementary information to the GMAC. The GMAC co-ordinates the calculation of grade point averages for each applicant and liaises with the medical schools;

5. Medical schools contact all of the applicants that they wish to interview, conduct their own interviews, rank all applicants according to their own criteria and return this list to the GMAC;
6. Applicants may log on to the website maintained by the GMAC and re-order the offers they would like to receive (initially submitted in step 4) until five working days prior to the release of first-round offers;
7. The GMAC matches applicants' final preferences (step 6) with the medical schools' ranking of applicants (step 5) and provides each medical school with a list of students to offer each type of place to;
8. On the specified date for release of first-round offers, each medical school contacts their successful applicants; and
9. Applicants accept or reject their offer by a specified date. Applicants who do not accept their offer are removed from the process and their place offered to the next-best applicant, as advised by the GMAC.

A potential concern with this proposal is the cost of the increased number of interviews that may need to be conducted. AMSA believes that a new system should remain accessible and equitable for all students through the minimisation of financial barriers including application and interview fees. The size of application pools could be maximised and the cost to schools and/or applicants minimised if:

- Medical schools offered interviews at multiple sites around Australia;
- Some schools consolidated their interview processes;
- Applicants were given the option of electing not to interview at their schools of lower preference and, if necessary, having those schools accept their interview result from elsewhere. Such a system might work well where schools have a comparable interview process and selection criteria; and/or
- Following careful consideration and testing, schools offered video interviews, either by using professional video-conferencing facilities or internet-based technology such as *Skype*.

Policy adopted July 2011

For review Second Council 2014

References

1. Since 2008, the University of Queensland has not required applicants to attend an interview.

2. Australian Competition and Consumer Commission. (2009). *The University of Melbourne & Ors - Authorisations - A91144 & A91145 & A91178*. Retrieved June 2, 2011, from: <http://www.accc.gov.au/content/index.phtml/itemId/878065>.
3. Since 2011, the University of Sydney only accepts direct applications.
4. Australian Council for Educational Research. (2011, May). *Graduate Australian Medical, Dental Surgery and Optometry Admission Guide 2012*. Retrieved June 2, 2011, from: http://gamsat.acer.edu.au/images/documents/gmac_guide2012.pdf, p. 22.
5. For example, an applicant might submit: 1. The University of Western Australia (UWA) – CSP, 2. The University of Sydney – CSP, 3. UWA – BMP, 4. Australian National University – CSP, etc.