

POLICY DOCUMENT

INTERNSHIP POSITIONS FOR INTERNATIONAL MEDICAL STUDENTS

Background

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

Completion of an approved internship is necessary after graduation from medical school to achieve full registration as a doctor with the Australian Medical Board¹. Currently, Australian domestic graduates are guaranteed intern training positions in Australian hospitals upon completion of their medical degree until 2011, as specified by the Council of Australian Governments. However, intern positions have not been guaranteed for international medical students, despite their contribution towards expanding the medical workforce to meet nationwide shortages. Until recently this has not posed a significant problem for international medical students trained in Australian universities, with most international students attaining internships in Australian hospitals.

Medical student numbers in Australia are currently the highest they have ever been, following a decision in 2004 by the Federal Government to increase numbers and alleviate a nation-wide shortage of doctors. As the number of internship positions has not increased proportionally to the number of medical graduates, international students are now less likely to gain internships within Australia and are being forced to complete their training overseas.

International students comprise approximately 20% of the national medical student cohort. Without guaranteed internship positions for these students, international medical student enrolment and funding at Australian universities may be affected. This may result in flow-on effects for domestic students including potential impacts on fee structures, education and training.

At the AMA Medical Training Summit in late 2010, several key representative groups called on the Commonwealth and States/Territories to provide intern places for currently enrolled international full-fee paying medical students, and to work with medical schools in providing training to international students to meet continuing workforce needs².

Position Statement

AMSA believes that all Australian medical students, both domestic and international, should be guaranteed quality internship positions upon completion of their medical degree.

Policy

AMSA believes that all Australian trained international medical students:

1. Have an intimate knowledge and understanding of local healthcare systems;
2. Have training and competency in key Australian health issues, including Indigenous health;
3. Are already trained to a high standard as set by the Australian Medical Council;
4. Wish to remain and work in Australia in the majority of cases³;
5. Are recipients of a large amount of time and resources from the Australian health system;
6. Represent a valuable resource in alleviating the current doctor shortage in Australia;
7. Should be given comprehensive and realistic information regarding their future employment opportunities within Australia prior to enrolment; and
8. Should be provided with internship positions to gain full registration as doctors in Australia.

AMSA calls upon:

1. The State and Federal governments of Australia to guarantee quality internship positions for all graduates of Australian medical schools, whether domestic or international;
2. Australian health system administrators to acknowledge that current international medical students could help alleviate the shortage of medical professionals in Australia; and
3. Medical schools of Australia to accurately and explicitly explain to prospective international medical students before enrolment that internships are not currently guaranteed.
4. Medical schools of Australia to 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.

Policy adopted July 2011

For review Second Council 2014

References

1. Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency. General Registration [internet]. Canberra (ACT): AHPRA; 2011 [cited 2011 May 25]. Available from: <http://www.medicalboard.gov.au/Medical-Registration/General-Registration.aspx>

2. Australian Medical Association, Australian Medical Students' Association, Medical Deans of Australia and New Zealand, Confederation of Postgraduate Medical Education Councils. AMA Medical Training Summit Joint Statement: Action on Medical Training [internet]. Canberra (ACT): AMA; 2010 [cited 2011 May 25]. Available from: <http://ama.com.au/node/6102>
3. Hawthorne L, Hamilton J. International medical students and migration: the missing dimension in Australian workforce planning? Medical journal of Australia. 2010;193(5):262-265.