

U.S. Department of Education

Staff Analysis of the Standard Report Submitted by Ireland

Prepared October 2012

Background

The National Committee on Foreign Medical Education and Accreditation (NCFMEA) first determined at their March 1997 meeting that Ireland's standards and processes for accrediting medical schools that offer programs leading to the Medical Doctorate degree (M.D.), or equivalent degree, were comparable to those used in the United States. The NCFMEA reaffirmed Ireland's determination of comparability in September 2003. The NCFMEA also reviewed and accepted status reports on Ireland's accrediting activities in September 2004 and January 2008. In June, 2009 the NCFMEA determined that the country's system for accrediting medical schools continued to be comparable to that used in the United States.

This analysis provides a review of Ireland's report of its accreditation activities and includes the following areas:

- Current status of medical schools
- Overview of accreditation activities
- Laws and Regulations
- Standards
- Processes and procedures
- Schedule of upcoming accreditation activities

Summary of Findings

Comprehensive responses have been provided for all areas of the report

Staff Analysis

Current status of medical schools

Country Narrative

The accreditation status of medical schools in Ireland reflects the high quality of the medical education and training provided.

All accreditations are undertaken under Section 88 of the Medical Practitioners Act 2007 (Appendix 1). When undertaking inspections, under Section 88, the Medical Council's options are:

(a) Approval with subsequent monitoring and reaccreditation in line with the Medical Council's policies and processes for all programmes and bodies

Or

(b) Approval subject to conditions attached with a specified timescale for the Medical School to meet the conditions following which the conditions may be amended or removed

Or

(c) Amend or Remove conditions attached

Or

(d) Withdrawal of Approval

Or

(e) Refusal of Approval

The Medical Council may also Defer Approval following which the programme will be re-evaluated.

The list of medical schools currently operating in Ireland and their status is as follows:

- University College Dublin (direct entry programme)* approved by Council in March 2012
- University College Dublin (graduate entry to medicine programme) approved by Council in April 2012
- University College Cork (direct entry programme) approved by Council in April 2012
- University College Cork (graduate entry to medicine programme) approved by Council in April 2012
- National University of Ireland, Galway (direct entry programme) approved by Council in May 2011
- University of Dublin, Trinity College (direct entry programme) approved by Council in May 2011
- Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland (direct entry programme) approved by Council in March 2012
- Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland (graduate entry programme) approved by Council in January 2012
- University of Limerick (graduate entry programme) approved with one condition by Council in May 2012

A year-on-year summary of Medical Council accreditation inspections 2009-2012 is provided in Appendices 2-5 and a detailed breakdown in relation to Council's decision on each programme is provided in Appendix 6. A flowchart of the

accreditation process is provided in Appendix 7. A detailed description of the processes used by Council in its accreditations is provided in the relevant section of this report.

In all cases, the inspection process evaluates the medical school against the Medical Council's Rules, Criteria, Standards and Guidelines to assess whether they comply (Appendix 8 and Appendix 9). These are all new documents published since 2009 although they are based on Council's previous World Federation for Medical Education benchmarks.

* Direct Entry Programmes were previously referred to as primary medical programmes in the Medical Council submission to NCFMEA in 2009.

Analyst Remarks to Narrative

The Medical Council reports that there are nine medical schools operating within the country. As of May, 2012 all nine of the country's medical schools were fully accredited. In addition, the Medical Council notes, that all accreditations are undertaken in accordance with Section 88 of the Medical Practitioners Act 2007. Also, the Medical Council reports that its rules, criteria, standards and guidelines were newly published in 2009. However, they are based on the Council's previous World Federation for Medical Education benchmarks.

Overview of accreditation activities

Country Narrative

Accreditation reviews of school campuses and clinical clerkship sites

Each accreditation includes a review of the school/university campus and the clinical training environment for example major teaching hospitals, smaller affiliated hospitals and community sites. Appendices 2-5 provide a timetable for the campus inspections and for the clinical training site evaluations included in each inspection, since 2009. This shows that there have been 24 inspections of medical schools and associated clinical training sites by the Medical Council since 2009.

The Medical Council's standards, described in more detail in the Standards section later, facilitate a comprehensive evaluation of all the components of the campus and training site environment under the following headings:

- Mission and Objectives
- Educational Programme
- Assessment of Students
- Students
- Academic Staff/Faculty
- Educational Resources
- Programme Evaluation

- Governance and Administration
- Continuous Renewal

The ‘Processes and Procedures’ section provides additional relevant information on this area.

Meetings held and decisions reached

As described in the ‘Processes and Procedures’ section, after every evaluation the inspection team makes a recommendation to the Council’s Professional Development Committee (PDC) on the Team’s findings. The PDC in turn makes a recommendation to Council and Council takes the decision on approval or otherwise of the programme and the body which delivers it. Appendices 2-5 provide a breakdown of the date of the inspection, the date of consideration by the PDC and the date of approval by Council for all the programmes and bodies which have been inspected since 2009 with the outcomes as specified in the previous section of this document.

Accreditation conferences or training sessions held

The training of assessors is described in the processes and procedures section.

In addition, members of the Medical Council, external assessors and the Medical Council Executive keep abreast of developments in accreditation and quality assurance through membership and attendance at major international conferences run by the main European medical education ‘think tanks’ and the International Association of Medical Regulatory Authorities (IAMRA). The Medical Council is an active member of Irish Network of Medical Educators (INMED). The Medical Council also took part in the recent review of the WFME Standards and will be represented at WFME’s major conference in Sweden later this year. There are also less formal links with fellow regulatory bodies reflected in Medical Council Executive participation in recent quality assurance review workshops held by the General Medical Council in the United Kingdom.

Analyst Remarks to Narrative

From 2009 -2012 the Medical Council notes in appendix (6) (provided as an attachment for the previous section) that it has conducted (19) site visits (inspections) of schools in Ireland. In this section, the Medical Council states that it has conducted (24) total inspections of medical schools and associated clinical training sites during the reporting period (2009-2012). This number includes inspections of four medical schools in Malaysia which, according to the Medical Council, have the authority to issue Irish medical degrees. The Medical Council indicates this is a new development since its 2009 NCFMEA comparability determination. The Medical Council has provided the dates of each site visit and its corresponding Accreditation Decision meeting and action, as well as information about site visits to the associated clinical training sites, in appendices 2-5.

It should be noted that the NCFMEA has not received and approved an application from the government of Malaysia for a comparability determination, to include designation of the Medical Council as the body responsible for evaluating medical education in Malaysia. Therefore, the Medical Council's accreditation of the four schools in Malaysia would not make them eligible to apply to the U.S. Department of Education to participate in the federal student loan program. Additional information is needed regarding the Medical Council's communications to the Malaysian schools on this issue.

The Medical Council reports, that its members, external assessors and the Medical Council Executive stay informed with new developments in accreditation and quality assurance through membership in the International Association of Medical Regulatory Authorities (IAMRA) and attendance at major international conferences, conducted by IAMRA and European medical education "think tanks". . . In addition, the Medical Council notes that it is an active member of the Irish Network of Medical Educators (INMED).

Staff Determination: Additional information is requested for this section regarding the Medical Council's communications to the Malaysian schools regarding its comparability determination.

Country Response

In the Analyst Remarks to Narrative in respect of 'current status of medical schools', I should like to clarify that there are six approved medical schools in Ireland delivering nine approved programmes. The medical schools and the programmes are as follows:

University College Dublin – Direct Entry Programme and Graduate Entry to Medicine Programme

University College Cork – Direct Entry Programme and Graduate Entry to Medicine Programme

National University of Ireland, Galway – Direct Entry Programme

University of Dublin, Trinity College – Direct Entry Programme

Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland – Direct Entry Programme and Graduate Entry to Medicine Programme

University of Limerick – Graduate Entry to Medicine Programme

I should like to clarify, in respect of Analyst Remarks to Narrative in 'Overview of accreditation activities', that the Council has conducted 20 site visits in Ireland which together with the inspection of four medical schools in Malaysia totals, as you rightly say, 24 visits.

In the Country Narrative of 'Laws and regulations'; Council's power to approve programmes should reference Section 7 (2) (c) of the Medical Practitioners Act 2007; and under the Universities Act 1997 the Minister for Education and Skills accredits universities thorough the Department of Education and Skills.

In the Analyst Remarks to Narrative of ‘Laws and regulations’, the reference to the Medical Education Act should be replaced by reference to the Medical Practitioners Act.

In respect of Analyst Remarks to Narrative of ‘Standards’: HPAT is a new admission requirement for direct-entry programmes, but other admissions requirements (i.e. those relating to applicants to graduate-entry programmes, and Non-European Union applicants) are unchanged.

References to the European Community should refer to the European Union.

In the Analyst Remarks to Narrative of ‘Overview of accreditation activities’, additional information was requested regarding the Medical Council’s communications to the Malaysian schools regarding its comparability determination.

The Medical Council’s role is to verify the quality of the Irish degrees awarded following students’ study at these Malaysian medical schools. The Medical Council determined that assessment of these programmes should be part of its comprehensive accreditation activity.

The Medical Council of Ireland does not intend being the body responsible for evaluating medical education in Malaysia, with the exception of the accreditation of the four programmes mentioned in the submission, namely the Irish medical degree programmes delivered in collaboration with:

International Medical University, Kuala Lumpur
Perdana University – Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland, Kuala Lumpur
Penang Medical College, Penang
Allianz University College of Medical Sciences, Penang

The Medical Council’s communications with the above schools has been very clear as to the remit of the Council, which is an independent one that is distinct from the role of any other accrediting body that may evaluate the four programmes concerned. Whether the Malaysian Medical Council is the appropriate authority in relation to eligibility for the US Federal student loan programme is a matter for discussion between the NCFMEA and the Malaysian Medical Council if the NCFMEA feels that is appropriate.

Thank you for the opportunity to review the Staff Analysis, and I hope these clarifications have been useful. Representatives of the Medical Council look forward to attending the NCFMEA meeting in Washington DC in October 2012.

Analyst Remarks to Response

In the draft report Department Staff requested additional information concerning the Medical Council's accreditation of four schools in Malaysia. Department staff noted in the draft report that the Medical Council's accreditation of the four schools in Malaysia would not make them eligible to apply to the U.S. Department of Education to participate in the federal student loan program. Additional information was requested regarding the Medical Council's communications to the Malaysian schools on this issue. In its response to the draft report the Medical Council states that it has been "very clear as to the remit of the Council, which is an independent one that is distinct from the role of any other accrediting body that may evaluate the four programs concerned". The Irish Medical Council further states in its response that "eligibility for the US federal student loan program is a matter for discussion between the NCFMEA and the Malaysian Medical Council if the NCFMEA feels that is appropriate.

The Medical Council clearly indicates that the purpose of their accreditation is to ensure that the quality of medical education taught at the Malaysian medical schools meets its degree standards. In addition, the Medical Council notes that assessment of these programs should be part of its comprehensive accreditation activity. The Council also indicates that it has no intent of being the body responsible for evaluating medical education in Malaysia.

The Medical Council noted some needed corrections in the analysis remarks. There are currently (6) approved medical schools in Ireland offering (9) approved medical programs. The Council notes that it has conducted (20) site visits along with the (4) medical schools in Malaysia for a total of (24) site visits. The additional corrections in the analysis remarks to the narrative have been noted by Department Staff.

Staff Conclusion: Comprehensive response provided

Laws and regulations

Country Narrative

The Medical Council continues to operate within the framework of the key statute namely the Medical Practitioners Act 2007 which enables Council to protect the interests of the public when dealing with registered medical practitioners. This includes the responsibility to ensure the quality of medical education and training at all levels. The Medical Council, under Article 7 (2) (c) of the Medical Practitioners Act 2007 has the power to approve programmes of education and further education necessary for the purposes of registration and continued registration of medical practitioners. This includes undergraduate and postgraduate programmes.

Part 10 of the Medical Practitioners Act 2007 is devoted to specifying Council's powers in setting, monitoring and maintaining standards in medical education and training. Since 2009, Council has continued to exercise its accreditation

responsibilities of:

- approving programmes of basic medical education and training and the bodies that deliver them
- producing guidelines on curriculum issues and content and on ethical standards and behaviour for medical students
- monitoring adherence to criteria, guidelines and standards
- inspecting medical schools and clinical training sites
- issuing recommendations to sites
- advising the Minister for Education and Skills on relevant issues

as described elsewhere in this document.

Since the NCFMEA accreditation of the Medical Council in 2009, and following a public consultation process, the Medical Council has adopted Rules in respect of the duties of Council in relation to Medical Education and Training (Appendix 8 and Appendix 9). These rules reflect the responsibilities referenced above and provide the framework for the accreditation processes described in this documentation.

Legislative changes have been made that impact on the first year after graduation. As a result of the implementation of Section 49(2) of the Medical Practitioners Act 2007, the Medical Council now grants a Certificate of Experience to the medical practitioner who has completed a period of internship to the satisfaction of the Council. These certificates were previously granted by medical schools.

The Medical Council therefore continues to be the regulatory and quality improvement body in medical education and training.

In the wider context of university education in general, under the Universities Act 1997 (Appendix 10) the Department of Education and Skills**, through the Minister for Education and Skills, has accredited all universities in Ireland. This Act also requires universities to establish and undertake quality assurance and quality improvement programmes which are rigorous and robust, aimed at improving the quality of education and related services provided by the university.

The Higher Education Authority (HEA) continues to be the funding body and the statutory planning and policy development body for higher education and research in Ireland.

** The Department of Education and Skills was previously referred to as the Department for Education and Science in the Medical Council submission to NCFMEA in 2009.

Analyst Remarks to Narrative

Medical Council reports that since its last NCFMEA comparability determination in 2009 it has adopted new rules related to medical education and training. The Medical Council notes the new rules elaborate on the duties of the Council prescribed in section 88 of the Medical Practitioners Act of 2007. The Medical Council reports that it continues to operate within the framework of the Medical Education Act and continues to exercise its accreditation responsibilities under part 10 of the Act. An additional legislative change reported by the Medical Council, requires it to grant a Certificate of Experience to medical practitioners who complete internships meeting the Medical Council's requirements. These certificates were previously issued by medical schools.

Standards

Country Narrative

Administration

There have been no significant changes since 2009 in the accreditation standards used to evaluate and accredit medical schools in the area of administration. However, supplementary information on standards may be found in Appendix 11.

Faculty

There have been no significant changes since 2009 in the accreditation standards used to evaluate and accredit medical schools in the area of faculty - supplementary information may be found in Appendix 11.

Curriculum

The Medical Council's accreditation processes since 2009 have confirmed the appropriateness of Irish curricula and the continuing emphasis on:

- the balance between basic and clinical sciences
- early patient contact leading to appropriate participation in patient care
- preparing students for subsequent stages of practice and for their role in the healthcare system
- the contributions of the behavioural sciences, social sciences and medical ethics that enable effective communication, clinical decision making and ethical practices
- professionalism
- opportunities for students to explore areas of particular interest to them
- use of primary care settings, in the practices of general practitioners or family doctors and other community settings
- electronic learning environments and clinical skills laboratories

These trends have all been apparent for a number of years and since 2009 have continued to enhance curricular development.

Under the Rules developed since 2009, the Medical Council expects that

medical schools will incorporate the Eight Domains of Good Professional Practice (adopted by the Medical Council in June 2010 and provided in Appendix 12) into their curricula. The evidence during inspections is that medical schools have been commendably proactive in doing so. The Medical Council believes that it is important for medical schools to have the flexibility to develop their curricula. The Medical Council's key role is ensuring that the curricula of medical schools reach a satisfactory standard and that its graduates are competent. The accreditation process since 2009 has confirmed this.

Student satisfaction surveys and medical schools responses to them are an integral part of the accreditation and monitoring process. Medical schools may utilise such tools as the Dundee Ready Educational Environment Measure (DREEM) which is a generic instrument for measuring students' perceptions of undergraduate health professions curricula. Where these tools have been used, the Medical Council requests sight of the results and will question the medical school on its implementation of improvements based on the feedback they receive from such student satisfaction surveys. This is then cross-referenced with the student responses during the meetings with students to ensure that their perception is that improvements have indeed been implemented.

Medical schools are assessed by the Medical Council on their ability to be dynamic institutions initiating procedures for regular review and updating of curricula. The Medical Council expects medical schools to adapt instructional methods, taking into account new developments in educational theories, adult learning, methodology and active learning principles as well as student feedback. Changes in the sequence and the content of components have been made in some medical schools since 2009 as a result of review by the school and/or student feedback and/or Medical Council recommendations. The Medical Council has assessed and supports these changes.

Admission Procedures

There are three different routes depending on origin of student and type of programme.

European Community (EC) students: Requirements for admission to a basic direct entry medical programme changed in 2009. A new Health Professions Admissions Test (HPAT) has been introduced. HPAT measures a candidate's logical reasoning and problem-solving skills, as well as non-verbal reasoning and the ability to understand the thoughts, behaviour and/or intentions of people. Students entering a basic direct entry medical programme must now achieve a minimum academic standard in the final secondary school (high school) exit examinations (Leaving Certificate or its equivalent); meet any entry requirements specific for the medical programme (e.g. passes in science subjects); and pass the HPAT admissions test.

Applications for these programmes are processed through a national central office, known as the Central Applications Office (CAO) which operates independently of the medical schools and of the Medical Council.

Non-European Community students entering a basic direct entry medical programme must obtain the necessary standards in the examination system that applies in their country of origin that are equivalent to the Irish Leaving Certificate, and additionally may undergo an interview as part of the admissions process.

Graduate entry medical programme entrants must obtain a minimum of a Second Class, First Division (2.1) in their primary degree, which may be in any subject. They must also reach a threshold score on either the Graduate Australian Medical School Admission Test (GAMSAT) or Medical College Admission Test (MCAT). Applicants for graduate entry medical programmes who come from outside the EC additionally may undergo an interview as part of the admissions process.

Student Services

Since 2009, the Medical Council has devised Guidelines for Medical Schools on Ethical Standards and Behaviour appropriate for Medical Students (Appendix 13) to support students and medical schools in the development and maintenance of professionalism among students. These guidelines are a new publication (January 2011) which medical schools have been using as part of their teaching. Medical schools have procedures for addressing the issue of students who are not demonstrating the required level of professionalism.

Methods for evaluating student achievement

All medical schools have systems in place for evaluating and tracking the achievements of individual students and of student cohorts. The Medical Council has access to this information as part of its accreditation process.

Where a new medical programme is given approval with conditions until such time as the first cohort of students graduate, the Medical Council request that the medical school provides the Council with the final year examination results of that first cohort of students. This is to ensure that student achievement in a new programme is monitored and that their performance is analysed in comparison to their peers in an existing programme. In terms of graduate entry programmes accredited since 2009, the initial indication to date suggests that these students perform as well as those students in traditional direct entry programmes. There are also initial indications that in graduate entry programmes, students from a non-science background perform as well as those students from a science background. Due to the fact that graduate entry programmes are a relatively new development in the Irish medical education system, the detailed evidence is being compiled and analysed.

Facilities

There have been no significant changes since 2009 in the accreditation standards used to evaluate and accredit medical schools in the area of facilities. Supplementary information may be found in Appendix 11.

Analyst Remarks to Narrative

The Medical Council's report does not indicate there have been major changes in its accreditation standards for curriculum, administration, faculty or facilities since its 2009 NCFMEA accreditation review. The Medical Council notes that in accordance with new rules related to education and training, discussed under the laws and regulation section, it now expects medical schools to incorporate into their curriculum the Eight Domains of Good Professional Practice, adopted by the Medical Council in June 2010, evidenced in Appendix 12. The Medical Council highlights three newly established admission requirements for students depending on the student's origin and the medical program selected by the student.

The Medical Council does not report any major changes related to student services, but does note that it has developed new Guidelines for Medical Schools on Ethical Standards and behavior.

The Medical Council does not report any major changes related to its student achievement standards, or its methods of evaluating student achievement since it was last accredited in 2009 by the NCFMEA.

Processes and procedures

Country Narrative

Conducting Site Visits

The main features of the Medical Council's accreditation process have been maintained since 2009 and are consistent with best practice as set out in the World Federation for Medical Education's Guidelines for Accreditation of Basic Medical Education (Appendix 14). New developments since 2009 are summarised as follows:

Under the provisions of the Medical Practitioners Act 2007:

- a) Council is required to consult with the Minister of Education and Skills before making its accreditation decision. Approval by the Minister is not required. The interaction between Council and the Minister has been very positive.
- b) Council is required to publish details of all inspections carried out. Executive Summaries of inspections have been placed on the Council website, and Council is currently redesigning the format to make them more user-friendly.
- c) The Medical Council has been designated the licensing authority under the Anatomy Act 1832 (Appendix 15) and is therefore responsible for granting appropriate members of faculty a licence to practise anatomy in the State, appointing inspectors of places in the State where anatomy is carried on (i.e. medical schools) and accepting returns from Inspectors.

The Medical Council has appointed an Inspector of Anatomy who has inspected and reported on all the anatomy facilities at medical schools, and has advised and assisted the Medical Council in the performance of these statutory

obligations.

Selecting and training individuals who conduct site evaluations or who make accreditation decisions

The Council has a robust process for recruiting and training assessors whether they are Council members or external assessors. In line with international best practice, the Medical Council utilises external assessors who have expertise in the assessment of programmes. All Council's assessment teams include at least one external assessor. Since 2009, the Medical Council has substantially increased its pool of external assessors. External assessors may apply to the Council for consideration or may be nominated as an assessor by an expert body. They are required to provide evidence of relevant expertise and experience. In each case, the external assessor is proposed by the Professional Development Committee and is considered by the Nominations Sub-Committee prior to full approval by the Medical Council. The external assessors then become members of the Assessor Sub-Committee before being selected to attend any accreditation inspections.

Periodically re-evaluating and regularly monitoring medical schools and reviewing substantive changes reported by medical schools

A new element to the monitoring process is being introduced this year. An Annual Return in a specified template will be required from each medical school. It will require them to provide an update on recommendations made by Council and to report any substantive changes in any of the areas covered by the Medical Council's standards.

The introduction of this process has been prompted by the comprehensive and intensive accreditation programme undertaken since 2009 and by the maturation and clear evidence of the sustainability of the four new programmes introduced since 2005. The introduction of the Annual Return process will serve as an effective monitoring tool. Monitoring inspections will take place before the end of the term of approval of the medical school if the Annual Return indicates that this is necessary. This is a risk-based targeted approach.

Ensuring the accreditation Commission has effective controls against conflicts of interest and the inconsistent application of accreditation standards

The Medical Council operates within the guidelines of the Standards in Public Office Act 2001 (Appendix 16) and also has its own controls that require a Council member or other assessor to declare any situation which they believe could cause a conflict of interest in the execution of their duties with the Medical Council.

Any members of the Assessor Sub-Committee who have joined since 2009 have been familiarised with these controls and the Medical Council regularly reiterates them. In practice, assessors will excuse themselves from medical school inspections where they believe there may be even a perception of conflict of interest.

The documentation and the training provided for all assessors and the clear and

transparent benchmarks set out in the Rules, Standards and Guidelines all reinforce the consistent application of accreditation standards. Consistency is reinforced by utilising the same assessors for a series of inspections to a particular site. This enables the assessment team to track the progress of particular issues over a period of time and enhances consistency.

Ensuring that accreditation decisions are based, in part, on the evaluation of student performance after graduation from medical school
Changes since 2009 include:

- the Medical Council's production of Standards for Training and Experience required for the granting of a Certificate of Experience to an Intern (Appendix 17)
- the Medical Council issuing Certificates of Experience to interns
- the introduction of an National Intern Training Programme
- the establishment of an Intern Coordinator Network

These have all strengthened the Medical Council's regulation of the intern year (the year immediately following graduation) and enable the Medical Council to have a clearer picture of interns' competency and performance.

The Medical Council's Guidelines on Medical Education and Training for Interns (Appendix 18) provide clear benchmarks for assessment. The new responsibility to issue a Certificate of Experience to interns gives Council a direct insight into whether interns have performed satisfactorily during their intern year. The Intern Curriculum provides a more structured programme with defined outcomes. The Intern Coordinator Network which has been assessed and approved by Council provides a robust structure for the supervision and evidence of satisfactory completion of the intern year. These factors are taken into consideration in Council's accreditation activity.

The Council seeks documentary evidence that regular and constructive feedback is undertaken by an intern's direct supervisor/trainer who has knowledge of the intern's development and performance and can verify their satisfactory progress. Areas such as communication skills and professionalism are also assessed. Where an intern has made satisfactory progress, the intern is signed off by their supervisor/trainer and the Council may issue a Certificate of Experience.

Under Section (88(3)(e-g) of the Medical Practitioners Act 2007, Council is required to inspect clinical training sites with approved intern posts, for the purposes of monitoring adherence to Council's relevant guidelines and standards.

In 2011, the Medical Council inspected 38 clinical training sites in Ireland and a further nine clinical training sites have been inspected in 2012. Thus all clinical training sites for interns have been inspected.

The Medical Council may, following consultation with the Minister for Health, the

Health Services Executive (HSE), and the managers of the site, and having regard to the views expressed in that consultation, remove approval for the purposes of internship training where it considers that the guidelines or the standards are no longer being adhered to.

See Appendix 19.

Analyst Remarks to Narrative

The Medical Council's report indicates that there have not been any major changes in its accreditation process since it was last accredited by the NCFMEA in 2009. The Medical Council does provide a summary of new developments in its narrative, which it believes have improved its accreditation process. The Medical Council notes that it has appointed an inspector of anatomy responsible for inspecting all anatomy facilities at medical schools as well as advising the Medical Council on statutory related issues. The Council reports that it has significantly increased its pool of external assessors, since 2009 and that it has added a new element to its monitoring process which will require medical schools to provide an update to the Medical Council on the recommendations it makes and also report any substantive changes related to its standards.

The Medical Council has initiated new policies in 2009 to strengthen its requirement that students' performance after graduation from medical school remains a key factor in making accreditation decisions. The specific changes are highlighted in the narrative.

Schedule of upcoming accreditation activities

Country Narrative

Following the recent rigorous accreditation process, the Medical Council is currently entering a monitoring phase of the medical schools in Ireland. Eight of the nine programmes currently delivered in Ireland are approved by the Medical Council for a period of five years (i.e. until 2017) pending the completion of an Annual Return. The next round of accreditation inspections of Irish medical schools is therefore scheduled for 2017. At any point during the five years of approval of a medical school, an inspection may be undertaken if deemed necessary by Council.

The University of Limerick is the exception to this. This programme and body is approved for three years (until 2014) with one condition, namely, the resolution of the issue of the unsatisfactory education and training facilities at the Mid-Western Regional Hospital, Dooradoyle (MWRH Dooradoyle) as specified elsewhere in this submission. In the interim, the Medical Council is satisfied that all University of Limerick graduates have the necessary knowledge, skills and attitudes to be registered with the Medical Council. The Medical Council will, at the appropriate time, assess implementation by the University of Limerick of the interim solution and of the long-term solution in relation to the education and

training facilities in Dooradoyle.

Two medical schools in Malaysia namely Perdana University – Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland and the Allianze University College of Medical Sciences will be inspected in Spring 2013. Two other medical schools in Malaysia, namely International Medical University and Penang Medical College will be inspected in 2017.

The five year monitoring phase will give the Medical Council the opportunity, through its newly formed Standards Setting Sub-Committee and Standards Monitoring Sub-Committee (Appendix 20 and Appendix 21), to review and enhance its accreditation processes in line with international best practice procedures. Any reviews or developments would be put before the Professional Development Committee for approval, prior to ratification by the Medical Council.

As it has since 2009, the Medical Council will continue to act as the regulator and quality assurance agency for medical education and training in Ireland. The evidence of Council's accreditation activities since 2009 shows a gratifying commitment on the part of medical schools in Ireland to continue to enhance their existing high standards.

Analyst Remarks to Narrative

The Medical Council reports that eight of the nine medical schools in Ireland are accredited for five years and are up for renewal in 2017. The University of Limerick is currently accredited for three years and is up for renewal in 2014.

Accreditation schedule of medical schools in Malaysia:

Perdana University, Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland - spring 2013
Allianze University College of Medical Services - spring 2013
International Medical University - 2017
Penang Medical College - 2017
