Report on the National Audit of Applications and Acceptances for Medical Internship and the Late Vacancy Management Process for 2016 Clinical Year

Introduction

Each state and territory undertakes its own intern recruitment process. Applicants for intern positions apply separately to each state and territory where they would like to undertake an internship. Applicants therefore may receive offers from more than one state and territory.

Australian primary medical qualifications are recognised by many countries. This means that medical graduates from Australian universities, including international full fee paying medical graduates, are able to apply for internship/residency programs in countries other than Australia.

To provide consolidated intern recruitment information from the different states and territories, the Australian Health Ministers’ Advisory Council (AHMAC) asked the Health Workforce Principal Committee (HWPC) to oversee the intern data collection and audit process for intern recruitment. HWPC established the National Medical Intern Data Management Working Group (Working group), as a subcommittee of HWPC, to oversee the data collection and audit process. The Working Group provided oversight to the audit process for 2014, 2015 intern recruitment and again undertook this function for 2016 intern recruitment.

The Working Group membership includes representatives from all state, territory and Commonwealth Health Departments, the Confederation of Postgraduate Medical Education Councils, state and territory postgraduate medical councils, Australian Medical Students’ Association and the AMA Council of Doctors-in-Training.

While recognising that applicants do apply to overseas jurisdictions and do accept overseas offers the data collection and audit process does not involve sharing of data with overseas jurisdictions or audit of multiple acceptances involving overseas acceptances.

Internship in Australia is 12 months long and commences generally in January each year. There is significant work and lead in time required to ensure that a medical graduate is ready to commence as an intern on the first day of the clinical year. Therefore the intern recruitment process commences 6 months before the commencement of internship. Medical graduates apply for an internship mid-way through their final year as a medical student before they have finished their medical degree.

While each state and territory undertakes its own intern recruitment process there has been agreement around key recruitment dates. For 2016 intern recruitment state and territory intern applications closed on 5 June 2015 and states and territories commenced making offers from 13 July 2015. The intern recruitment process closed on 27 November 2015.

Some students who apply and receive an offer of an intern position are not able to take up the offer because they fail to complete the requirements of their medical degree. There is therefore attrition between those who apply and who finally commence an internship – some applicants may formally withdraw their application if their circumstances change while others may not accept an offer when they receive it due to changing circumstances.

The NSW Health Education and Training Institute (HETI) was appointed as the National
Data Manager. Through the work of the working group the Data Manager completed one audit of applications and five audits of acceptances as part of intern recruitment for 2016 clinical year and managed the Late Vacancy Management Process.

**Intern Placement Number**

The Intern Placement Number is a unique nine digit number which is generated by the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) and is provided to medical schools for distribution to final year medical students. Applicants for an intern position are required to provide their IPN as part of the intern recruitment process. The IPN is used as a unique identifier for intern applicants in the audit process.

**Audit of Applications**

The Audit of Applications was completed in June 2015, before any state/territory or Commonwealth offers had been made. The audit showed that there were 5739 applications for a 2016 internship in Australia by 3648 applicants: 3098 Australian-trained domestic medical students, 445 Australian trained international medical students, 97 medical students from Australian Medical Council (AMC) accredited overseas campuses (Monash Malaysia and Oschner), 2 AMC graduates and 6 medical students from NZ medical schools. Of these applicants, 2631 applied to one jurisdiction and 565 applied to two jurisdictions, the remaining applied to between three and eight jurisdictions.

**Audit of acceptances**

The audit of acceptances process does not prevent applicants receiving multiple offers but aims to clarify and resolve which offer an applicant is truly accepting when two or more offers in different states and territories have been accepted. The audit of acceptances is an important process to ensure that all positions are filled in a timely way and that applicants have maximum opportunities to receive intern offers. During previous intern recruitment it was identified that some applicants receiving multiple offers accepted and held onto to multiple offers until they were due to commence the internship. This practice resulted in potentially some applicants not receiving an offer at all because all positions appeared to be filled and then late vacancies occurring in hospitals when applicants holding multiple acceptances failed to commence in the position.

Applicants who had received and accepted an offer were not prevented from receiving offers for positions in other states and territories in subsequent offer rounds.

A total of five audits were completed for 2016 intern recruitment. During the audit process the intern offer process was paused with the offer process resuming once the audit was completed. Once the National Data Manager identified a duplicate acceptance applicants had forty eight hours to advise which position they were accepting and which they were declining. If an applicant was unable to make a decision or failed to respond to the National Data Manager all but the first offer they had received, it was agreed, could be withdrawn by the offering state or territory.

States and territories made their first offers on 13 July 2015. The first Audit of Acceptances was completed in August 2015 with the fifth and final audit completed in November 2015. A total of 252 multiple acceptances were identified and resolved across the five audits of
multiple acceptances. Multiple acceptances were identified at each audit.

State and Territory Intern positions

A total of 3314 state and territory intern positions were available for 2016. This was an increase of 85 positions from 2015.

Applicants who accepted a state/territory intern position

After completion of the fifth and final audit in December 2015, 3299 applicants had accepted a 2016 state or territory intern position, including 3049 domestic medical graduates from Australian universities, 234 international full fee paying medical graduates from on shore Australian universities, 14 international full fee paying medical graduates from Australian Medical Council (AMC) accredited offshore campuses and 2 New Zealand Medical School graduates.

Commonwealth Medical Internships

The Australian Government funded additional medical internships in 2016 under the Commonwealth Medical Internships (CMI) initiative. A total of 99 interns commenced work in 2016. CMI positions are based in New South Wales, Queensland and Western Australia, and include 30 full regional internships (Townsville, Bundaberg and Mackay). All other internships are based in a metropolitan centre (Sydney, Brisbane or Perth) but offer one or more rotations in a regional area (Australian Standard Geographical Classification Remoteness Area 2-5). As states and territories guarantee internships for Commonwealth Supported medical graduates, the CMI is available only to full-fee paying international medical graduates from an onshore university who meet all eligibility criteria.

Late Vacancy Management Process

A Late Vacancy Management (LVM) Process was implemented to deal with any late vacancies that arose after the conclusion of intern recruitment on the 27 November 2015. The LVM process concluded on 25 March 2016. The process was facilitated by the National Data Manager and ensured that only those applicants who did not hold an offer for a 2016 intern position received an offer if a vacancy arose. A total of forty three applicants received offers for intern positions across seven jurisdictions through the Late Vacancy Management Process.

2017 Intern Recruitment

The National Medical Intern Data Management Working Group will oversee the 2017 intern recruitment and audits of applications and acceptances will be undertaken. All states and territories will commence making offers from Monday 11 July 2016. The National Close Date for 2017 Intern Recruitment is Friday 25 November 2016.

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