Report on the National Audit of Applications and Acceptances for Medical Internship and the Late Vacancy Management Process for 2015 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 intern recruitment and again undertook this function for 2015 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 2015 intern recruitment state and territory intern applications closed on 6 June 2014 and states and territories commenced making offers from 14 July 2014. State and territory intern recruitment closed on 24 November 2014.

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 2015 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 2014, before any state/territory or Commonwealth offers had been made. The audit showed that there were 5751 applications for a 2015 internship in Australia by 3676 applicants: 3004 Australian-trained domestic medical students, 480 Australian trained international medical students, 97 medical students from Australian Medical Council (AMC) accredited overseas campuses (Monash Malaysia and Oschner), 91 AMC graduates and 4 medical students from NZ medical schools. Of these applicants, 2694 applied to one jurisdiction and 528 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 2015 intern recruitment. As in 2013 all intern offers by states and territories were paused while the audits were undertaken in 2014. 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 14 July 2014. The first Audit of Acceptances was completed in August 2014 with the fifth and final audit completed in November 2014. A total of 219 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 3229 state and territory intern positions were available for 2015. This was an increase of 26 positions from 2014.

Applicants who accepted a state/territory intern position

After completion of the fifth and final audit 3222 applicants had accepted a 2015 state or territory intern position, including 2951 domestic medical graduates from Australian universities, 258 international full fee paying medical graduates from on shore Australian universities, 12 international full fee paying medical graduates from Australian Medical Council (AMC) accredited offshore campuses and 1 New Zealand Medical School graduate.

Commonwealth Medical Internships

The Australian Government funded additional medical internships in 2015 under the Commonwealth Medical Internships (CMI) initiative. A total of 81 interns commenced work in 2015. CMI positions are based in New South Wales, Queensland and Western Australia, and include 26 full regional internships (Townsville, Bundaberg and Mackay). All other internships will be based in a metropolitan centre (Sydney, Brisbane or Perth) but will 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 24 November 2014. The LVM process concluded on 20 February 2015. The process was facilitated by the National Data Manager and ensured that only those applicants who did not hold an offer for a 2015 intern position received an offer if a vacancy arose. A total of twenty six offers across four jurisdictions were made through the Late Vacancy Management Process. The most common reasons provided for late vacancies occurring: failure of the applicant to complete medical school and therefore not able to take up intern position; applicant taking up a position in home country and applicant deciding to take up further education.
2016 intern recruitment

A Review of Medical Intern Training is being undertaken. However it will not be completed before 2016 intern recruitment and therefore any changes to internship recommended by the Review will not impact on 2016 intern recruitment. The National Medical Intern Data Management Working Group will oversee the 2016 intern recruitment and audits of applications and acceptances will be undertaken.

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