

## **Review of the Duration of the Vocational Training Program**

The College commenced a review of the duration of the training program in 2002. At this time the length of the training program was four years long.

The College had a pre-vocational examination (Basic Sciences Examination) which candidates had to sit and pass to be eligible to apply for selection into the training program. The Chief Censor at the time, Dr John Auld, discussed this situation with Professor Peter Phelan, consultant to the CPMC and the AMC on educational issues. Professor Phelan indicated that he believed that a pre-vocational examination outside of the training program of the College was educationally and politically untenable.

The BOC then developed a detailed proposal for Council to consider. The key points of the proposal were:

- Abolition of the Basic Sciences Examination in its current form;
- Extension of the training program to five years with the option to sit the Fellowship examination in the fourth year of training;
- For trainees who failed the examination in their fourth year of training, the opportunity of completing their fifth year of training in a fully accredited training program of the College;
- For trainees who passed the examination in their fourth year of training, the opportunity to do a more flexible and innovative senior year.

This was presented to the College Council at its meeting on 17 May 2002. In response to this, the Council resolved:

That the Basic Sciences examination in its current format be abolished from 2003.

The BOC was also requested to submit a detailed plan of implementation of the new program to Council for consideration at the Interim Council Meeting held on 9 November 2002.

At this meeting the Council resolved to implement a five year training program comprising two years of basic training, two years of advanced training and a senior trainee year (fifth year). Trainees would be required to attain a pass in the Clinical Sciences Examination (which essentially replaced the Basic Sciences Examination) during basic training. There would be two sittings of this exam each year (in June and November) and trainees would have three opportunities to sit this exam before appointments to advanced training positions were made around the middle of each calendar year (the month in which these appointments are made varies in each state). Trainees would be eligible to sit the Fellowship Examination in the fourth year of training. Trainees who passed this exam would then commence a senior registrar year. Trainees who failed the examination would undertake a fifth year of normal registrar training and sit the exam again during the fifth year.

A further change to the structure of the training program was made at the Council meeting on 16 May 2003 when the Council resolved that from 2004 all first year trainees would sit a Clinical Pharmacology examination.

At its meeting held on 8 November 2003 the Council discussed the arrangements for the final (5<sup>th</sup>) training year and resolved:

That the following options are suitable for the senior trainee year, for those trainees who have passed the Fellowship examination. All positions need to meet the published requirements of the Board of Censors:

- A rotation to an international teaching hospital;
- A rotation to an appropriate international institution, eg working in tropical dermatology in Tanzania;
- Specific projects;
- Research positions;
- Advanced training in a sub-specialty of dermatology;
- Interstate registrar exchange programs;
- Rural practice as part of an overall program;
- A normal training position.

At this meeting the Board also resolved:

That the following principles are adopted for the Board of Censors to use to accredit the (5<sup>th</sup> year) training positions:

- Unsupervised private practice will not be considered;
- Programs will be accredited for the incumbent only;
- Programs must have some clinical exposure;
- Trainees will be encouraged to do an alternate Senior Trainee year but will be guaranteed a Senior Trainee year in a normal training position if one cannot be arranged;
- Consideration may be given to trainees who wish to spend part of the senior registrar year in private practice if it is an integral and useful component of a broader senior registrar program. Private practice training is not encouraged, but supervised private practice may be allowed if it is of sufficient merit as a component of a program. Senior registrars may need to have provider numbers as non VRGPs if they are attached to a private practice;
- Trainees must complete a pro rata requirement of the ACD CPD Program. This will ensure that they maintain their educational exposure, particularly with regard to clinical and departmental meetings as well as national meetings. If in Australia, trainees will be expected to attend Faculty events.

The College experienced difficulties in planning the implementation of the fifth year of training. Concerns were expressed from both Fellows and trainees and these were considered by the Board of Censors and Council. These concerns included:

- Funding which would only be available if a trainee continued in a hospital training position or an overseas post and would not be available to the majority of trainees;
- Difficulty in the practical aspects of arranging specific programs;
- Availability of specialized training and insufficient supervisors for arranged program.

In addition, many Fellows were concerned with the reduction in the number of dermatologists that would result from increasing the duration of the program.

The Australian Medical Council (AMC) expressed concern about the workforce implications of a five year program, while recognizing the improvements that had been introduced in the revised course. The Chief Medical Officer stated that specialist Colleges should be reducing the length of training rather than increasing the length. For these reasons it was felt that despite the clear educational advantages of a fifth year of training, it would not be offered to those who passed the Fellowship examination in their fourth year of training.

The Executive reported at the Council meeting on 13 May 2005 that it had reconsidered the fifth year of training and proposed that the Council approve the following interim arrangements for introducing the five year training program:

- Trainees sitting and passing the Fellowship examination in their fourth year of training in 2006, 2007 and 2008 would not be required to undertake a fifth year of training;
- For those who failed the Fellowship examination in these years, an additional year of training would be required in an accredited position.

The Council approved these arrangements.

Following this, the then College Training Task Force was asked to review the fifth year of training and report to the Board of Censors and Council. The recommendations of the Task Force were considered by the Council at its meeting on 12 November 2005.

At this meeting the Council resolved:

That the training program remain a five year training program, with one-year training credit available to trainees who complete satisfactorily all requirements for admission to Fellowship of the College, including a pass in the written and clinical examinations, by the end of their fourth year of training. Any trainee who does not complete all requirements by the end of the fourth year will be required to complete a fifth year of training in its entirety

and

That trainees who are required to undertake a fifth year of training be able to do so in a teaching hospital or private practice setting, or a combination. At present there is provision to allow one year's accreditation of a specific training program for a specific registrar, prepared by the registrar in association with their supervisor, provided that application is made in advance and approved by the Board of Censors".