

*To consider*

## **Amending the List of bodies entitled to award UK Primary Medical Qualifications**

### **Issue**

- 1 Swansea University has applied for the right to issue its graduates with Primary Medical Qualifications (PMQs).

### **Recommendation**

- 2 Council is asked to agree that Swansea University be added to the GMC's list of bodies that can award UK Primary Medical Qualifications.

# Amending the list of bodies entitled to award UK Primary Medical Qualifications

## Issue

### *Entitlement to award Primary Medical Qualifications*

- 3 Under Subsection 4(1) of the Medical Act 1983 (as amended), we are required to hold a list of the bodies entitled to hold examinations for the purpose of granting a UK Primary Medical Qualification (PMQ). Under Subsection 4(1C): 'The General Council shall only include in the list maintained under subsection (1) bodies or combinations of bodies that require from candidates at examinations a standard of proficiency that conforms to the prescribed standard of proficiency.' The standard of proficiency is currently set out in *Tomorrow's Doctors* (2009) and compliance with the standard is demonstrated through the Quality Improvement Framework, which includes annual returns from medical schools and a programme of visits.
- 4 The current list of bodies and combinations of bodies entitled to award UK PMQs is published on our website at:  
[http://www.gmc-uk.org/education/undergraduate/awarding\\_bodies.asp](http://www.gmc-uk.org/education/undergraduate/awarding_bodies.asp)

### *Swansea medical school*

- 5 There are two medical schools in Wales, based in Cardiff and Swansea. In the past, graduates received their PMQs from an umbrella organisation, the University of Wales. But in June 2007, Cardiff University was granted the right to award its own PMQs.
- 6 The College of Medicine at Swansea runs a four-year Graduate Entry Programme (GEP), with about 70 students in each year. Up to 2012/13, the students undertook their first two years in Swansea and then transferred to Cardiff to complete the programme.
- 7 However, Swansea wished to run a GEP entirely separate from Cardiff and this new programme started in September 2009. In 2012/13, Swansea provided its first Year 3 in the new four-year GEP and this year, 2013/14, it is providing its first Year 4. This summer it hopes to issue the first cohort of successful students from the new GEP with Swansea University PMQs.
- 8 The GMC has been quality assuring the development of the new GEP. Since 2008, a visiting team led by Professor Sean Hilton has kept Swansea's progress under review. There were three visits in 2012/13, in November 2012, April 2013 and June 2013. In the current academic year, Professor Hilton and colleagues visited Swansea in December 2013 and further visits will be held in March and May 2014.

- 9** The visiting team has raised concerns and has set out recommendations and requirements. The main concerns have related to clinical placements, support for students in Year 3 and assessment. The medical school has responded appropriately.
- 10** In light of the GMC's initial concerns about the arrangements for clinical placements, Swansea put back by a year its original plan to provide the first Year 3 of its separate GEP in 2011/12. Instead, that cohort transferred to Cardiff in line with the arrangements for previous years.
- 11** A main concern in 2012/13 was the unhappiness of the Year 3 students. As the first cohort facing the significant shift in learning experiences from Year 2 to Year 3, they had no guidance from students above them and would have liked more support from the medical school. The senior management team has since worked on the support they provide for Year 2 students in order to prepare them well for Year 3, and the current Year 3 students seem much happier. The senior management team are also planning visits to placements to see more of Year 3 and 4 students and address their perceived detachment from the medical school.
- 12** Several of our recommendations and requirements to the Swansea medical school throughout the quality assurance process have concerned assessment. The school has responded well to these issues. Most recently, we have been concerned about the arrangements to ensure that students can demonstrate achievement of all the 'outcomes for graduates', including the list of practical procedures, set out in *Tomorrow's Doctors* (2009). In 2012/13 we heard that placements were overcrowded and it was difficult for students to get their competence in all the practical procedures recognised and signed off. Changes made to the placements have given the students more opportunities to get their competence in the procedures signed off. This year's students have not reported difficulties in this regard. Overall, the school's assessment scheme and planning now seem robust.
- 13** The medical school has responded very well to our requirements and recommendations. We are also aware that they are responsive to student feedback. The GMC visiting team is satisfied that Swansea should be added to the list of awarding bodies.

## Supporting information

### How this issue relates to the corporate strategy and business plan

**15** Strategic aim 2 in the *Corporate Strategy 2014-17* and *Business Plan 2014* is to 'Help raise standards in medical education and practice'. Maintaining the list of bodies entitled to award PMQs is a key component of our regulation of undergraduate medical education.

**If you have any questions about this paper please contact: Ben Griffith, Policy Manager – Education, [bgriffith@gmc-uk.org](mailto:bgriffith@gmc-uk.org), 020 7189 5283.**