

MEDICAL BOARD STAFF REPORT

DATE REPORT ISSUED: July 2, 2013
ATTENTION: Medical Board of California
SUBJECT: Recognition of International Medical School
University of Queensland Ochsner Clinical School Program
Request to Authorize Site Inspection
STAFF CONTACT: Curtis J. Worden, Chief of Licensing

REQUESTED ACTION AND RECOMMENDATION:

1. Determine if the admission process at the University of Queensland Ochsner Clinical School Program (UQO), which does not include a student interview as part of the evaluation for admission and criminal background checks are only done as part of the student visa application, is equivalent to those utilized by US and Canadian medical schools as required by the California Code of Regulations, Title 16, Division 13, Section 1314.1 (b)(8).
2. If the Board determines that the UQO's admission process is sufficient to meet the standards set in regulation:
 - a. Authorize a site team to conduct a site inspection of the University of Queensland School of Medicine in Australia and/or several representative teaching hospitals in the Ochsner Health System in southeast Louisiana where students in the Ochsner Clinical Program receive clinical training.
 - b. Approve the composition of the site team, which usually includes at least one Board Executive staff member, one legal counsel, one Board member and a Medical Consultant.
 - c. Delegate to staff the determination of the hospital training site or sites to be reviewed.
 - d. Approve staff to move forward with an out-of-state travel request for the teaching hospital sites and an out-of-country travel request for the medical school site visit.

BACKGROUND AND ANALYSIS:

The University of Queensland School of Medicine, located in Brisbane, Australia, was founded in 1936 to train physicians to practice medicine primarily in Australia. It is the largest medical school in Australia and is currently recognized by the Board. Students graduate with the MBBS degree, which is the equivalent of the M.D. degree in the United States. Geographically, the

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school extends throughout Queensland with major sites in Brisbane, the outer metropolitan areas, and a number of rural and remote area facilities throughout the rest of Queensland.

In 2008, the school adopted a “clinical school model” with the School of Medicine organized around 11 clinical schools (there were 10 clinical schools at the time the Self-Assessment Report was submitted) where students conduct their clinical training. Nine of the clinical schools are located in Australia and the remaining two are offshore clinical schools located in New Orleans, Louisiana, and in Brunei, SE Asia. The Brunei and Ochsner (New Orleans) clinical schools are designed for international students who will return to their own country to practice medicine upon graduation. Australian students are not eligible to apply to the offshore clinical school programs. Under the clinical school model, students study two years of basic sciences at the University of Queensland School of Medicine in Brisbane, Australia and then complete two years of clinical training at one of the clinical school sites. The Australian Medical Council has reviewed and approved each of the eleven clinical programs. The University of Queensland is not seeking the Board’s recognition of the Brunei Clinical School Program at this time.

The Ochsner Clinical School Program in Louisiana is conducted in partnership with the Ochsner Health System which includes eight hospitals throughout southeast Louisiana, primarily in New Orleans and Baton Rouge. Ochsner has full institutional accreditation from the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME) as does its 27 Graduate Medical Education programs through the respective Residency Review Committees. The Ochsner Health System is also formally affiliated with both Louisiana State University School of Medicine and Tulane University School of Medicine. The UQO admits one class of students each year, with the academic year running from January to late November. The first class of students was admitted in January 2009 with an enrollment of 12 students. The UQO is aiming for a total enrollment of 480 students (120 students admitted into the program each year).

As a medical school program whose primary purpose is to educate non-citizens to practice medicine outside Australia, UQO meets the criteria for the Board’s review pursuant to Section 1314.1(a)(2) of Title 16, California Code of Regulations. In January 2012, UQO officials submitted a Self Assessment Report to commence the Board’s review process. Medical Consultant James Nuovo, M.D., has been reviewing the school’s application. Dr. Nuovo and medical school officials have exchanged written information over the past year. On May 10, 2013, Dr. Nuovo and staff met with Dr. William Pinsky, Chief Academic Officer at Ochsner and Head of the UQO to discuss several issues concerning the administration of the school’s educational program.

In his attached memorandum dated May 1, 2013, Dr. James Nuovo presented the results of his review of written documentation submitted by University of Queensland officials. Dr. Nuovo is recommending that the Board determine if the UQO’s admission process is equivalent to those utilized by US and Canadian schools and, if deemed equivalent, proceed to the site inspection phase of the medical school review process.

During the site inspection, Dr. Nuovo, along with a Board staff representative, legal counsel and one Board member, will tour the school’s campus in Australia; interview UQO

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Executives/Administrators, faculty and students; and/or also tour several representative U.S. hospitals where UQO students complete clinical rotations during their third and fourth years and meet with students and Ochsner Executive/Administrators and faculty. The Board has previously conducted site inspections to multiple medical schools, primarily in the Caribbean region. Site inspections have proved invaluable to the Board in confirming the resources documented in the Self Assessment Report, determining whether the curriculum satisfies the minimum requirements of law and in evaluating the effectiveness of the program to graduate physicians who will be able to safely practice medicine in California.

Staff is requesting the Board members review Dr. Nuovo's report and determine whether to conduct site inspections to UQO's campus in Australia and to a representative sample of clinical training sites in southeast Louisiana. If the Board approves this request, staff will begin the process of arranging a site inspection. The Board will also need to approve the composition of the site team. Staff will work with UQO officials to determine the most compatible dates for the inspection and develop the team's itinerary. After these arrangements are finalized, staff will submit the request for out-of-state/out-of-country travel approval to the Governor's Office. Following the site inspection, the team members will prepare a comprehensive report for the Board's review. The team's report will present the team's findings and will recommend that the Board either disapprove or grant recognition to the UQO.

Alternatively, if the Board requires further information regarding the school's educational resources before it reaches a decision regarding site inspections, staff will request UQO officials to submit the information for the Board's review during a future meeting.

FISCAL CONSIDERATIONS:

In accordance with Business and Professions Code Section 2089.5, the costs of conducting a site inspection are borne by the medical school applying for the Board's recognition. These costs include all team members' air and ground travel costs within the guidelines allowed by the State, the consultant's daily per diem expense, and the consultant's travel expenses to and from any Board meetings where the team presents its report. Subsection (e) of Section 1314.1 of the regulations requires the medical school to reimburse the Board for the team's estimated travel expenses in advance of the site visit.

Representative(s) from the UQO are planning on being available during the meeting to answer any questions you may have concerning the school's educational program.

If you have any questions concerning this memorandum, please telephone me at (916) 263-2389.

May 1, 2013

To: Linda Whitney
Executive Director
Medical Board of California

From: Jim Nuovo, MD
Professor & Associate Dean of Graduate Medical Education
UC Davis School of Medicine

Re: Evaluation of the University of Queensland Ochsner Clinical School Program

Background

The Medical Board of California (Board) requested a review of the materials provided by the University of Queensland Ochsner (UQO) Clinical School Program. These were submitted in pursuit of a request for the recognition of the UQO Clinical School Program by the Board to enable their students and graduates to participate in clinical clerkships, to enter graduate medical education programs in California, and to become eligible for licensure to practice medicine in California.

This report is based on my review of the documents initially provided to the Board and from a response by the School to additional questions posed after review of the Self-Assessment Report.

The goal of this review was to determine if the medical education received in this program meets the requirements of current California statutes and regulations for recognition by the Medical Board of California.

Recommendations

The documents that have been provided are insufficient to determine whether the UQO Clinical School Program is in substantial compliance with the requirements of Business and Professions Code Sections 2089 and 2089.5 and California Code of Regulations, Title 16, Division 13, Section 1314.1.

In order to determine whether the UQO Clinical School Program is in substantial compliance with the aforementioned statutes and regulations, I recommend that the Board consider a site visit.

However, before the Board considers a site visit, I feel that the concern regarding the admissions process, as described below, be addressed.

Review

The University of Queensland (UQ) School of Medicine

The University of Queensland's School of Medicine was founded in 1936. It has worked to establish itself as "Australia's Global Medical School." As an indication of these efforts, the School notes that there are "over 450 staff who work across 31 sites over three continents." As of 2011, there were 1770 students studying in the MBBS program.

Once fully implemented, the UQO Clinical School Program would add 480 students to the School's complement.

The School has a defined mission statement which includes its "Vision, Purpose, Core Values and Strategic Priorities." Its Core Values include: Social Commitment, Inspiring Passion, Collective Pursuit of Excellence, Integrity and Professionalism, Valuing Our Social Community, and Innovation."

Its Strategic Priorities include: "Learning, Discovery, Engagement, Globalisation, and Operational Excellence."

The Self-Assessment Report provides a statement of the "Broad Expectations for the Education of Students." These are presented as "three aims of the UQ MBBS curriculum with seven goals and 35 outcomes, which align with the School of Medicine's Vision, Purpose and Values as well as the Australian Medical Council's Attributes of a Medical Graduate."

The Ochsner Health System

The Ochsner Health System (OHS) is a not-for-profit healthcare provider based in southeast Louisiana. OHS was founded in 1942. The OHS hospitals include: Ochsner Baptist Medical Center, Ochsner Medical Center – Kenner, Ochsner Hospital – Elmwood, Ochsner Medical Center – West Bank, Ochsner Medical Center – Baton Rouge, Ochsner St. Anne General Hospital, Ochsner Medical Center, and Ochsner Medical Center – Northshore.

The OHS "Mission and Vision Statement" is included in the Self-Assessment Report and states: "Ochsner will be a global medical and academic leader who will save and change lives. We will shape the future of healthcare through our integrated health system, fuelled by the passion and strength of our diversified team of physicians and employees."

The University of Queensland Ochsner (UQO) Clinical School Program

The UQO Clinical School Program opened in January 2009 with an enrollment of 12 students. The first class of UQO students graduated from the program in September 2012. The goal of the UQO Clinical School Program is for a total enrollment of 480 students.

Students admitted to this program will study two years of Basic Sciences at UQ in Australia. They will then spend two years completing their core and elective clinical rotations at OHS in New Orleans and/or Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

Upon successful completion of the curriculum, the UQO students are eligible for ECFMG certification and receive the MBBS degree.

UQ has 10 different “clinical schools” within its school of medicine where students complete their clinical rotations. Two of these schools are offshore; UQO and the Brunei Clinical School, which is a partnership between UQ and the University Brunei Darussalam in Brunei. UQ is not seeking recognition of the Brunei Clinical School.

The following is a detailed assessment of the School based on the aforementioned statutes and regulations and on the School’s response to the Self-Assessment Report and the additional concerns posed by this reviewer.

Business and Professions Code Sections 2089

Section 2089 requires the medical curriculum to extend over four years or 32 months of actual instruction. UQO is a four year program in which the first two years (called Phase 1) are primarily pre-clinical and completed in Australia. The third and fourth years (called Phase 2) are structured as 10 Core Clinical Rotations and are completed in the OHS. These Core Clinical Rotations include: Medicine, Surgery, Mental Health, General Practice, Medicine in Society, Obstetrics and Gynecology, Pediatrics and Child Health, Medical Specialties, Surgical Specialties, and Electives.

The total number of hours of all courses required to complete the MBBS degree program is 5,740. This complies with the 4,000 hour minimum requirement in Section 2089.

UQO has an expected attendance of 100% for all curricular elements of Phase 1 and Phase 2. Students are required to sign in for all educational sessions and this is monitored in an attendance log folder. Students must account for all absences and there is a process to address those who are not in compliance.

The School does not allow transfer into the MBBS program for students enrolled at other medical schools.

The School’s curriculum includes all of the courses listed in Section 2089 (b). The information provided in the Self-Assessment Report indicates that the goals, objectives and course content meet the educational requirements.

The School meets the medical curriculum requirement for instruction in pain management and end-of-life care as listed in Section 2089 (c).

Business and Professions Code Sections 2089.5

The documents provided by UQO indicate that the instruction in the clinical courses meets or exceeds the minimum requirements in Section 2089.5. For example, Section 2089.5 requires a minimum of 72 weeks of clinical coursework. UQO requires 82 weeks of clinical coursework.

Students complete the core clinical rotations required in Section 2089.5 at OHS hospitals. The information provided by the School indicates that they are in compliance with item (d); specifically, that the sites provided for these core clinical rotations are performed in hospitals that meet one of the stated requirements.

OHS has a long track record of providing training in both undergraduate and graduate medical education. OHS is the sponsoring institution for 27 ACGME accredited training programs with over 300 residents and fellows.

OHS currently provides 600 student-months of clerkship training for third and fourth year medical students from Tulane and the Louisiana State University School of Medicine. Therefore, the UQO program represents a substantial increase in the number of student months offered within their system. As noted above, the projected full complement of students will require accommodation of 240 students at a time in Phase 2 of the curriculum. Additional information will need to be acquired during a site visit to assess the educational and administrative capacity of OHS to meet this educational load.

The School indicates that there is a head of the department for all required courses. For the preclinical sciences, the instructors have full-time faculty appointments and appropriate credentials. For the clinical training, the faculty at OHS have appropriate credentials for the training of the students.

California Code of Regulations, Title 16, Division 13, Section 1314.1

The Self-Assessment Report states that UQ is one of Australia's "premier learning and research institutions." UQ is a founding member of the "national Group of Eight, an alliance of research-strong universities." The School of Medicine is the largest School within the Faculty of Health Sciences at UQ, and one of the largest Schools within the University with 461 FTE staff and 2700 unpaid Academic Title Holders. The Schools programs are delivered across three of UQ's campuses (Herston, St. Lucia, and Ipswich), and through 10 Clinical Schools; two of which are offshore (OHS and Brunei).

The School of Medicine has an "Office of the Medical Dean" which includes the Deputy Head of the School (with oversight of the Clinical Schools); an "Office of Teaching and Learning" which is responsible for quality assurance in teaching, learning and assessment; and an "Office of Research."

The organization and governance of the UQO "matches that of the other Clinical Schools within the School of Medicine." UQO has the "same structures, functions, and responsibilities as the onshore Clinical Schools. All Clinical School Heads report to the Deputy Head of the School." UQ acknowledges the challenges it faces in operating the offshore clinical schools due to the geographic separation and describes a plan to ensure effective communication. The effectiveness of the UQO Program to meet this challenge will need to be assessed during the site visit.

UQ provided a description of the facilities and faculty for each preclinical course. There is a sufficient description of the credentials of the faculty to indicate that they are appropriately qualified to teach their specific curricular content. It is unclear whether the School has sufficient resources to manage the proposed increase in the complement of students for the UQO Program and this will need to be assessed during the site visit.

UQ has published standards governing admission requirements. There is a description of the admissions criteria, student selection and promotion. However, the information provided is not of sufficient detail to determine whether the School has an effective process of assessment of

these admissions requirements; specifically, that the School has a comprehensive method of review of students' performance and this is reflected in modifications to the admissions policies and procedures.

UQ states that it has "an admissions process, not a selection process." There are admission guidelines which include: "a completed key degree" with a GPA equivalent of 2.67, an MCAT with a minimum score of 8/8/M/8 – "(Students who do not meet the minimum MCAT requirement but have no less than a score of 7 and nor more than one 7 in their MCAT will be assessed on a case-by-case basis)," English language proficiency "(this requirement is met if the applicant graduated from an institution where the instruction and assessment was in English.)"

Further, "an interview will not be part of the selection process. A consultation with a school of medicine representative will be provided to all eligible students, either in person or by telephone. This consultation is designed to assist students with the decision to study medicine at UQ. It will not affect the student's offer of a place in the program."

Students who are interested in applying to the MBBS program are directed to a website led by International Pathways Incorporated at <http://www.mededpath.org>.

Finally, it is stated that "our practice is that if students meet our criteria then we make an offer."

Criminal background checks are done as part of the student visa application; however, it is unclear whether the stated criteria will be acceptable to the Board.

Based on the documents provided, I do not feel the School meets the entrance requirements of the California Code of Regulations, Title 16, Division 13, Section 1314.1 (8); specifically, that "its admitted students generally meet entrance requirements equivalent to those utilized by U.S. and Canadian medical schools, including an appropriate background check." This issue should be resolved before consideration of a site visit.

There are defined promotion standards for each phase of training. The capacity of the UQO to have well defined roles will need to be assessed as part of the site visit.

The School does not accept transfers from other medical schools.

The School presented information on its financial resources. The School appears to have sufficient financial resources to carry out its stated mission.

The School indicates that it is compliant with the requirement to permanently retain student transcripts.

Final Comments

The concerns listed above are not necessarily inclusive of all concerns and it is possible that additional concerns may need to be addressed while on site or by subsequent documents.

Thank you for the opportunity to review the materials from UQ and the UQO Program.