



AUSTRALASIAN COLLEGE
FOR EMERGENCY MEDICINE

ACEM EXPERT ADVISORY GROUP

ACEM EXPERT ADVISORY GROUP INTERIM REPORT – JUNE 2017

SUMMARY

KEY FEATURES

The EAG has expressed a preliminary view that the introduction of the OSCE Fellowship Examination in 2015 may have unintentionally given rise to a systemic racial discrimination effect, principally through the mechanism of potential unconscious bias of examiners as outlined below.

There is a culture, perceived or real, within the College, which does not encourage transparent and fair hearing of views of trainees and this compounds the experience of trainees who are unsuccessful in the Fellowship Examinations.

The open entry to the Emergency Medicine Fellowship Training Program as compared to the competitive entry requirements of some other Specialist Colleges means that there is a large cohort of doctors accepted into training who take the OSCEs as final exit examinations, who may not have had sufficient feedback around their capability, and who are vulnerable to any inherent discriminatory aspects of the examination process.

The EAG also holds concerns about the adequacy and quality of feedback provided to trainees during the training program through WBAs and ITAs; having received positive feedback throughout the training program trainees are surprised when they attempt the OSCEs and are unsuccessful.

The mechanism by which Fellows are appointed to the Court of Examiners is an area of particular concern to the EAG. Specifically, other than geographical diversity, there is no clear consideration of cultural diversity in the selection and appointment of examiners and in the Senior Court of Examiners.

The EAG has been unable to formally engage with the original complainants, either directly or through their representative, which has made it difficult to form a view as to the substance of the allegations in the complaint.

The issues are complex, and the EAG has heard from trainees who obtained their primary medical degree in Australia who feel they are also adversely impacted by the current OSCE examination.

The EAG has commissioned and requested additional information (literature review and additional data) and is unable to comment in relation to medium and long-term reforms at this time.

The EAG notes that the DBSH project being conducted by the College and other broader initiatives that are ongoing in parallel to its own work. It is assumed that the preliminary findings of the DBSH survey and the concerns raised by submitters during this process will lead to further initiatives by the College. The EAG will take into consideration any recommendations arising from the survey.

The assumptions of the EAG reflected in the Interim Report will be further tested against the objective evidence base of the analysis of the examination pass rate data and the literature review and reported to the College Board in our final report.

The EAG notes that the work that the College is undertaking to build a positive culture needs to be complemented by a comprehensive communication strategy to members and trainees and this should be a priority for attention.

The EAG hold concerns for the health and wellbeing of unsuccessful candidates – particularly those who have made submissions to this process. Trainees who have had multiple attempts at the OSCE reported that their repeated failures have had significant impacts on their own and their families' health and wellbeing. Some reported they had experienced or were experiencing physical and mental ill-health associated with the stress of preparation for the OSCEs and failed outcomes. The EAG witnessed the distress and sense of hopelessness of some of these trainees – particularly from anonymous submitters. As an immediate step, the EAG recommends that the ACEM Board consider measures to support and address trainees affected by this issue.

The EAG therefore recommends that the ACEM Board:

1. Consider the Interim Report and provide a preliminary response to the work of the EAG to further inform its completion of the work;
2. Agree to the EAG extending its deliberations until October 2017 with a view to providing a final report to the ACEM Board at its meeting in October 2017; and
3. Agree to the ACEM Chief Executive Officer and Secretariat continuing to support the EAG process with the necessary resources to finalise its deliberations.

The ACEM Board has accepted and endorsed each of these recommendations.
