

Message from MSC Chair



This is my final newsletter as chair of the MSC. It has been a challenging, but immensely rewarding year and it has been a privilege to work with such a dedicated, enthusiastic team of reps driving for something they believe in – improving the experiences of medical students, now, and in the future.

Indeed, preparing for the future has been our theme for the year. We have looked to the issues that will affect us when we finally graduate, taking an active role in the review of the foundation programme application process and pressing for improvements to the bursary scheme to fight against escalating levels of debt. Additionally, we have focused on what will impact us more immediately – working on welfare issues, such as student fitness to practise, which will enhance student experience throughout medical school. Recently, we have taken up your concerns about how some medical schools are implementing the Department of Health guidance on Blood Borne Viruses and will be working on your behalf to make sure that the planned protocol for medical schools is fair and workable. We have also had smaller but nonetheless important successes such as ensuring the British National Formulary was available free to medical students for the March edition after the Department of Health withdrew central funding.

Improving how the MSC communicates has been one of our main objectives for the year and I hope that you feel we have gone some way to achieving that. Through your local intra-school committees, your MSC rep, our surveys and the annual medical student

conference, we have listened to your views on the issues which matter to you. More importantly, we have ensured that these views are relayed to those who need to hear them, making sure the essential changes are made. This newsletter also lets you know what we are doing on your behalf so you can keep up-to-date with the latest issues and the achievements that we are making.

We are not complacent. Being students ourselves, we know only too well the challenges that face us every day. Our work will not stop once I have left office. Your reps met for the first time on 16 and 17 August and your new Chair, Ian Noble, has been elected. I am absolutely confident that with Ian and your deputy chairs, the MSC will rise to the challenges, working on your behalf with professionalism, ingenuity and authority.

You will find information about our work in the MSC Annual Report on the MSC pages of the website. Please look out for information from the Committee on our web pages

www.bma.org.uk/students

Finally, we do still want to know what you think so please get in touch with us if you have any comments or views

info.students@bma.org.uk

Emily

The ARM

The BMA's Annual Representative Meeting took place in Torquay. Medical students were well represented at the ARM and played an active part in voting on wider BMA policy issues as well as, of course, medical student issues. The ARM debates motions submitted from all branches of practice including medical students and the resolutions passed decide what the BMA – and MSC – priorities are for the year.

Resolutions passed this year include those on the application to the foundation process, Bologna, fees in Scotland and Wales, review of the bursary scheme, the provision of the BNF and welfare support services for medical students.

The MSC, Executive and its three policy subcommittees – education, welfare and finance – will be meeting shortly to agree how best to take forward their work based on the policy from the medical students conference and ARM. Some of this work is already in hand, such as the Foundation Programme application process and the BNF, but there is new work and policy which we'll be developing over the coming

year. We'll keep you informed about our work on a regular basis through this Newsletter, your local MSC reps and our website.

Bologna

A quick word on Bologna – the Bologna process, an initiative to develop a European Higher Education Area by 2010, has the potential to alter the delivery of medical education as we know it. In particular, it could see the five-year degree split into a three-year bachelors and two-year masters degree. MSC has been taking the lead on this in encouraging the development and implementation of our policy. The ARM agreed that the BMA should take forward discussion on the implications of the process with key stakeholders such as the General Medical Council (GMC) with the view to making positive progress on a European stage. You'll be hearing more about this as our work progresses.

Foundation Programme Application Process

The UK Foundation Programme website has now opened. It can be accessed on www.foundationprogramme.nhs.uk

This should provide official information for medical students, foundation doctors, foundation schools, deanery staff and anyone involved in recruiting or training foundation doctors. It will include information on:

- How to apply – all application information will appear as it becomes available
- Training and assessment – what to expect
- Your career path – resources available
- Key documents
- Frequently asked questions

You can also sign up for regular updates on the Foundation Programme to be sent straight to your inbox. We are in regular contact with the foundation programme team and use feedback that we receive to guide our input, so let us know if you have any comments or concerns about the website, the information and the process in general. We've pushed hard for more and better information to be available this year.

Info on the process

The timetable for applications is set out below. We are aware that some students will be on their electives for some or all of this time so it's advisable to start thinking of key achievements that you may want to put across and who you may wish to have as your references so you are not under as much pressure when the time comes.

We can also confirm that interviews will not be used as part of the

application process for allocation to foundation schools, although, once you have been allocated to a foundation school, some schools (very few) may use interviews as part of the process of allocation to posts.

Rules Group

Medical Students Committee a seat the Rules Group which has been meeting every week to develop the process for the next round. We have already fed in student views from our survey and using feedback from your reps. (see the June edition MSC News). We want to make sure that the UK Foundation Programme Office gives all the information and advice medical students need – and in good time – to allow you to make the best application possible.

Keep letting your reps know what questions and concerns you have. They will feed this back to MSC and we will take up issues on your behalf to ensure that the process is as fair as possible.

Numbers of FP places

One of our main concerns has been the provision of an adequate number of Foundation Programme places for newly qualified doctors from UK medical schools. It is vital that the application process includes the expectation that all medical students graduating from UK medical schools are offered a foundation programme post. We believe that this will ensure that the financial investment in educating and training doctors to work in the NHS is returned and that the medical workforce shortage is addressed. We have written to the new Minister and asked for confirmation that, as agreed previously with Ministers, there will be places for all UK medical school graduates on the foundation programme.

Applicant Timeline

15 August 07	Eligibility criteria and person specification published
3 September 07	Eligibility office opens for overseas applications
28 September 07	Deadline for submission of special circumstances applications ¹
8 October 07	Application form published on UKFPO website
12 October 07	Eligibility office closes for eligibility applications
24 October 07	Special circumstances finalised by medical schools (including appeals process)
29 October 07	Application period opens. Applicants submit: <ul style="list-style-type: none">– Personal details– Answers to key statements exercise– Foundation School preferences
9 November 07	Application period closes
13 December 07	Deadline for submission of right to work in the UK
9 January 08	Applicants informed of allocation to FS and submit programme preferences
18 January 08	Deadline for submission of preferences for Trust/programme (NB this deadline may vary by foundation school).
February 08	Applicants informed of matching to programme (final date in February to be confirmed)
February 08	Complaints (appeals) process opens (final date in February to be confirmed)
February 08	Deadline for submission of complaints (appeals) (final date to be confirmed)

¹ Applicants who can not meet this deadline due to electives should contact their medical school for advice

MTAS for Specialty Posts

The Tooke Review – An independent review of the process for specialty posts was been set up and is being chaired by Prof Sir John Tooke. The BMA has submitted evidence to the review. An interim report is due to be published in September with the final report due in December. You can access more information on <http://www.bma.org.uk/ap.nsf/Content/HubMTAS>

The MTAS process for FY1 applications should be unaffected as the new process will be complete by the time the Tooke review reports in December.

Blood Borne Viruses

In March 2007 the Department of Health (DH) published *Health clearance for tuberculosis, hepatitis B, hepatitis C and HIV: New healthcare workers*.

Since the publication of the guidance, MSC has raised this issue with the Medical Schools Council (TMSC) and has been monitoring its impact. TMSC has set up a working group to produce a protocol for Medical Schools based on the DH guidance and MSC has a place on that group. The protocol is likely to be finalised at the end of 2007. It is likely to emphasise support, counselling and treatment where necessary for medical students undergoing testing.

In the meantime, we have heard that some medical schools are testing medical students apparently without the offer of proper pre-test information or counselling. Local MSC reps together with MSC as a whole are taking this up with the medical schools concerned.

MSC is opposed to compulsory testing for BBV as students are not

required by the GMC to undertake exposure prone procedures to complete their medical studies. Students who refuse a test or who test positive should not be restricted from either entering medical school or from completing their studies and there should be full information for students before being offered testing. The results should remain completely confidential and there should be full support including pre- and post-test counselling as well as occupational health support for those who need it.

MSC is working on a Focus on guidance note which should be available very soon. In the meantime do not feel pressured into being tested. If you hear of any compulsory testing taking place at your medical school, please inform your MSC representative who will take the matter up on behalf of the students at your school. Their details can be found on our website: <http://www.bma.org.uk/ap.nsf/Content/Hubmedicalstudentscommittees>

Review of the Bursary Scheme

Discussions between the MSC and the Department of Health (DH), along with other trade union stakeholders are still ongoing to review those parts of the scheme that will need to be improved including travel. We will keep you posted about this. In the meantime for further information about our work on this go to our website www.bma.org.uk/students and look under 'student finance'.

Up-front fees – contact your MP! – In order to put pressure on the Higher Education Minister so that he can ensure that measures are in place to allow graduates entering medicine to defer top up tuition fees, you can write expressing your concerns direct to your MP. For further information, please go to: <http://www.bma.org.uk/ap.nsf/Content/campaignstgradstudentspayingupfrontfees?OpenDocument&Highlight=2,campaign,against,students,paying,top,up,fees>

British National Formulary

If you read our Newsletter regularly you will know that we first heard about the threat to the funding for the BNF earlier this year. Although we were successful in securing national funding for the latest (March) edition of the BNF to be made available to medical students at the appropriate stage of their course, its future funding is unclear.

We wrote again to the Department of Health who have now confirmed their decision to withdraw central funding for the provision of copies of the British National Formulary to medical students. There are now no guarantees that it will be provided in future. We have written to the new Minister to ask her to reconsider this decision and are awaiting a response as MSC News goes to print. We'll keep you updated.

Graduate fees & student debt

We have written to the new Minister about our concerns that UK graduates studying medicine as a second degree do not have access to the same deferred fee arrangements as other students, including those from the EU. We believe that this will have an adverse effect on the level of medical student debt as well as on applications to medical schools and will threaten the Government's Widening Participation initiative. Our survey showed that the average debt of final year medical students graduating in 2006 was £21,755. This is of huge concern to MSC and as medical students we know how difficult it is to reduce debt – the nature of the course makes it virtually impossible to balance studies with part time work. We have said that allowing the same deferred fee arrangements to graduate students as those of their fellow students is therefore vital. We await a response and will keep you updated.

Dates of Next Meeting – 2007/08 session

(BMA session officially begins after the ARM in June) Your rep came along to the first meeting of the new session and training day on Thursday 16 & Friday 17 August. Details of your new reps are now available on our website. We are currently updating this following the meeting on 17 August, so please bear with us.

Free Accommodation for FHO1

The Medical Act was amended in July 2006. This deals among other things with the issue of free accommodation for FHO1. There has been some confusion about whether free accommodation is still available as the relevant section of the Act hadn't been brought into force.

The amendments to the Medical Act that removed the requirement for pre-reg doctors to be resident have been enacted and came into force on 1 August 2007. This means that FHO1s are no longer statutorily required to work in a resident capacity in hospitals, which in turn means that such accommodation no longer has to be provided free of charge.

NHS Employers has posted guidance to employers explaining the enactment but encouraging employers to honour any agreements they have already made with FHO1s starting in post in August. See their website at <http://www.nhsemployers.org/workforce/workforce-2264.cfm#question1189>

NHS Employers will be discussing the arrangements for future years with the BMA. MSC will be working with the BMAs Junior Doctors Committee in these discussions. In the meantime if there are any problems locally, please contact your regional office through askBMA. Tel: 0870 60 60 828, email: askBMA@BMA.org.uk

Alcohol Awareness project

We are developing information and guidance for students in relation to alcohol dependence services and are working actively with the Medical Council on Alcohol (MCA) to raise awareness of the issue in medical schools. A poster competition is planned across UK medical schools in the next few months so watch out for it. We will also be lending our support to the MCA's Alcohol Awareness roadshows at various UK universities.

Guidance notes

Focus on... Medical School Charter

Focus on... MTAS

Focus on... MTAS information

Focus on... MSC

Guidance for students with dependents:

Look for these on our website at www.bma.org.uk/students

Join the BMA!

Becoming a student member is easy and will benefit you in so many ways. The BMA provides high quality support, advice and information during your training and throughout your career. We can help you on matters relating to personal and professional finance, and provide support for your future and that of the medical profession. For more information go to:

<http://www.bma.org.uk/ap.nsf/Content/jointheBMAstudentmembership>

To join go to:

<http://www.bma.org.uk/join>

Further help and advice

If you have any enquiries about any of the issues in this newsletter, contact your MSC representative and your ISC Chair. Details can be found on our website at www.bma.org.uk/ap.nsf/Content/Hubmeetyourmedicalstudentrep?OpenDocument&Login

You can also contact the MSC office on: Info.students@bma.org.uk



For advice and support, BMA members can also contact askBMA (tel: 0870 60 60 828, email: askBMA@BMA.org.uk anytime from 8.30am to 6pm Monday to Friday (except UK-wide bank holidays). If your query is judged to be complex it will be referred to the appropriate national or local office. For all other queries, either contact the relevant BMA department, the BMA's head office or the appropriate national office – full details are available on the website and in *Your BMA – a guide to membership benefits*.



0870 60 60 828

www.bma.org.uk/askbma