

From the medical school ... an update on progress towards independence

Lancaster Medical School is now well on the way to independence. As we had hoped and expected, the General Medical Council (GMC) gave us approval towards the end of 2012 to admit to a Lancaster degree in 2013-14 – the applicants who were already in the UCAS cycle became applicants to Lancaster; which caused us no problems. The GMC then surprised us by offering to follow through approval for the *current* first years to receive a Lancaster MBChB – which would shorten the road to full independence by one year, giving us our first graduates in the summer of 2017. This was welcome news, but more complicated than the GMC probably realised, because we then had to ask the students if they would agree to switch registration (having been admitted to a Liverpool MBChB, they were entitled to remain with that if they wished). After a lot of consultation, we were delighted when 100% of the year group agreed to the change – meaning that we now have two years of Lancaster-registered students.

The GMC team continued to visit us in 2012-13, including a trip to Furness General Hospital in the spring of 2013. The emphasis this year was very much on assessment, as many of you will know through our requests for your help in building up a bank of exam questions. We needed to prepare for running of our own exams and OSCEs for years one and two in 2013-14 – and we also took on (with Liverpool's permission) the same for year three, even though these students are still registered for a Liverpool degree. We were required to show the GMC that we could write and quality assure enough questions to set the formative exams for all three years – they set tight deadlines, but we achieved this in time (we had to!). Alongside this work we have been piloting two new systems: the 'ROGO' online assessment system, which holds the question bank and allows students to take the written papers on a computer; and a project for OSCE examiners to use i-Pads to record station marks.

Curriculum development work also began in earnest during 2012-13, for introduction in 2013-14. We began with some sessions on the overall direction, including the future shape of

clinical placements, and moved on to detailed work which concentrated on years one, three and five. There was no wish to move away from a PBL-based curriculum, but a working group undertook a complete review of the year one learning objectives, including the writing of new scenarios. Changes to year three were more structural, with the Therapeutics rotation being spread through the year rather than in one chunk. We also removed the Special Study Module days which were previously within the rotations after Christmas, and could cause problems if they clashed with clinical placement commitments; SSM4 now has four discrete weeks outside of the rotations. The year five curriculum with its system of 'student assistantships' was recognised as being very satisfactory as it was, and we merely made some improvements: the patient safety programme was concentrated at the start of the year, and a week has been added to introduce 'Leadership and Management'. During 2013-14 we will be focussing on a review of year two and further changes to the content of year three – with the final piece of the jigsaw being a thorough look at year four:

Meanwhile the GMC visits continue. Some of you at Royal Lancaster Infirmary were involved in their visit in October 2013, which was part of the GMC's current review of the North West as part of their cycle of regional review visits – so this one focussed on postgraduate education as well. There will be more visits in the spring and summer of 2014, including at least one observation of a Lancaster Examination Board, and an OSCE visit.

Lancaster Medical School would like to thank all those at the Trust who have contributed to our independence project in many different ways – we've come a long way but there is still plenty to do!

Ruth Hutchison
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The newly formed Lancaster University Medical Ethics Society (LUMES) will be holding its first annual conference on Saturday, 24 May 2014, at Royal Lancaster Infirmary Education Centre. The meeting is being funded by the Institute of Medical Ethics. The theme is 'Autonomy and Consent' and there will be numerous guest speakers throughout the day. This will provide students from the Northern medical schools the perfect opportunity to present their work on medical ethics. Lunch will be provided.

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