

Criteria for establishment of a new medical school

This paper is a decision-making guide to be followed when thinking of founding a new medical school, and is for the use of governments and regulatory authorities as well as universities.

Purpose This paper is a set of guidelines for analysis and decision-making when considering the establishment of a new medical school. It is directed to the decision makers in the country in question such as the ministry of health or the ministry of education, or both, and the regulatory bodies. It is hoped that these guidelines will be helpful in avoidance of the development of unnecessary or low-quality new medical schools.

Criteria There are two sets of criteria. These are first, on the need for a medical school - or rather, for the output of medical doctors from a medical school with the proposed location and size (criterion 1) - and second, on the possibilities of implementing the plans for the medical school (criteria 2 – 7).

The need for a medical school

The assessment of the need for the medical school should primarily be based on available information on the need for medical doctors in the community and nation, on the supply of medical doctors from other medical schools, and on possible impact of national and international patterns of mobility of doctors.

Criterion 1

- What is the need for additional medical education?
- What is the best available estimate of the need for medical doctors?
- What is the assessment of the quantitative and qualitative demand for medical doctors?
- What is the assessment of actual and expected future demand for medical graduates in the different parts of the health care sector (hospitals, clinics, primary care etc.) and in different geographical and political or cultural areas (local, national and regional)?

Supplementary criterion 1a: Is the purpose of the medical school to serve special groups, for example culturally defined groups? Are there any imbalances in the availability of medical doctors?

Supplementary criterion 1b: What is the assessment of possibilities for substitution of medical doctors in the health manpower of the community, region or nation by other healthcare professionals?

The possibilities of implementing the plans for the medical school

In the assessment of the need for provision of the different types of resources, a brief description of the planned institution and its educational programme is necessary. This description should include information on the type of proposed institution (public or private, part of a university or an independent institution), on the planned number of students (intake of new students the first 6 – 8 years) and on the main characteristics of the educational programme. These main characteristics of the planned programme would be the duration in years, the division between theoretical and clinical training, main disciplines and subjects and the types of learning methods, especially the extent of use of different types of small group teaching and practical classes, laboratory work and so on.

Criterion 2

Essential for agreeing the establishment of a new medical school should be the certainty of providing appropriate clinical settings and a sufficient numbers of patients for the clinical part of the educational programme. Ideally this would include a general teaching hospital owned and run by the medical school or the university. If this is not the case, the proposed school must document the existence of the necessary clinical facilities outside the school and university and must demonstrate that the students are ensured, by formal agreements, access to the clinical facilities.

Criterion 3

The necessary economic resources for the medical school are essential, each year until fully developed (corresponding to the duration of the programme in years) and for the subsequent years. The finance available should cover all expected costs, both the initial costs of establishment of the institution and programme, as well as the running costs. The financial resources should be enough to cover all types of expenses: for buildings, for equipment, for salaries and benefits for staff and for all types of support of students.

Criterion 4

There must be a plan for provision of the physical facilities necessary to deliver the programme. This includes the buildings, initial costs of building and the cost for running and maintenance of the facilities, and the costs of different types of teaching rooms, laboratories, offices and so on.

Supplementary criterion 4a: There must be plans for the provision of other specialised facilities such as science laboratories, clinical skills laboratories, and library and IT facilities.

Criterion 5

There must be a financial and business plan covering all expected staff costs such as salary, benefits, training and faculty development of staff, for the academic staff (including teaching staff and research staff) and administrative staff.

Supplementary criterion 5a: What is the assessment of the possibilities of recruitment of qualified staff locally, nationwide and internationally?

Supplementary criterion 5b: Is the leadership of the proposed medical school in place, with a competent and experienced academic as well as administrative leadership.

Criterion 6

What is the plan for student numbers, and the wide range of student support such as student housing, dining and catering facilities, sports facilities and the like, and academic and social counselling? The assessment of needs and availability should be in accordance with local traditions and cultures.

Supplementary criterion 6a: Are qualified student applicants likely to exist in the number expected, from the local area or from other national and international areas? Is it the intention to recruit students from special groups?

Criterion 7

What is the assessment of the local political and popular support of the plan for establishment of the medical school?

Supplementary criterion 7a: Is the existing local infrastructure sufficient, and is it possible to connect a new medical school to existing systems (for water supply, power and electricity supply, a public sewerage system and public transportation)?