



THE WFME POSTGRADUATE MEDICAL EDUCATION (PGME) RECOGNITION OF ACCREDITATION PROGRAMME

**Policies and Procedures for the Recognition of
agencies accrediting PGME institutions/programmes**

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1. Introduction

The World Federation for Medical Education (WFME) was founded in 1972 on the initiative of the World Health Organization (WHO) and the World Medical Association (WMA). It is the global organisation concerned with the education and training of medical doctors. WFME offers to evaluate agencies that accredit postgraduate medical education (PGME) institutions/programmes against pre-defined PGME Recognition Criteria through the PGME Recognition of Accreditation Programme ('PGME Recognition Programme').

This document contains the Policies and Procedures used by WFME for the recognition of agencies accrediting PGME, and is publicly available on the [WFME website](#).

2. WFME PGME Recognition Programme governance and organisation

2.1. WFME Executive Council

The Executive Council is the strategic decision-making body of WFME. This includes approval of policies, procedures and Recognition Criteria of the Recognition Programme. The membership of the Executive Council is set out in the Articles of Association of WFME. The Executive Council delegates the authority for PGME recognition decisions to the WFME PGME Recognition Committee. In addition, it approves PGME Recognition Committee members, Chair and Vice-Chair and acts as the Appeals Committee, as required.

2.2. PGME Recognition Committee

The WFME PGME Recognition Committee ("Recognition Committee") is the decision-making body of the WFME PGME Recognition Programme. The Recognition Committee is governed by a Terms of Reference.

Recognition Committee members consider and make decisions on eligibility, the Recognition Status of applicant agencies and any other information that arises within the Recognition Programme and requires determination and possibly recognition action. The Committee also reviews Annual Monitoring Reports and decides on any required follow up action, as well as agencies' progress towards compliance with any imposed recognition conditions.

Members recuse themselves from discussion and voting during consideration of any agency with which there could be an actual or perceived conflict of interest (as defined in Section 4). The member from the region where the accrediting agency is located participates in the discussion but is excluded from the vote.

2.3. Recognition Teams

The Recognition Team reviews the full application and supplementary evidence submitted by the agency, conducts a site visit to observe the agency's accreditation processes in operation, including the agency visit to the institution/programme and a clinical site, observes the decision-making process and completes the Recognition Report. The recognition team must not include any member with a conflict of interest (as defined in Section 4). One of the team members is designated as the chair of the team. The team chair functions as the official voice of the team and leads its on-site deliberations. Another member is designated as the team secretary, responsible for the compilation of the recognition report, as well as being the primary point of contact between

the agency and the recognition team while on a site visit. In most circumstances, recognition teams will consist of three to five members.

WFME is responsible for recruitment and training of a suitable group of Recognition Team members who are knowledgeable about medical education, PGME and its accreditation. Recognition team members complete an induction course and regular professional development.

3. Recognition of Accreditation Programme Core Policies and Procedures

3.1. Recognition Criteria

Recognition of an accrediting agency by the WFME PGME Recognition Committee is based on the assessment and review of the agency's compliance with the WFME PGME Recognition Criteria. The Eligibility Criteria address the agency's authority, legal status and impact of their decisions, level of responsibility for accreditation functions if some of these are carried out by other organisations, and appropriateness of the agency's accreditation policies and processes for any cross-border operations. The full Criteria address a wide range of aspects of the agencies' accreditation standards, accreditation and decision-making policies and processes, and governance and resources.

3.2. Term of Recognition

Accrediting agencies generally are subject to review on a six-year cycle, however the Recognition Committee has the discretion to require that the agency be subject to a full review in less than six years if there are questions about ongoing compliance with the Recognition Criteria, for example arising from the Annual Monitoring.

Once recognised, an accrediting agency remains recognised as a credible accrediting agency until the recognition term expires, or the agency voluntarily terminates its status, or the Recognition Committee terminates the agency's recognition through a formal action. Recognition Status remains unchanged until a formal action is taken by the Recognition Committee. When recognition is withdrawn, a letter specifying that decision indicates the date on which recognition ceases.

3.3. The Recognition Process

Expression of Interest

Accrediting agencies interested in obtaining WFME PGME Recognition are required to first express interest by contacting WFME by emailing pgme.recognition@wfme.org. WFME provides the agency with a preliminary (eligibility) application template.

Preliminary Application

The completed preliminary application is returned for review. WFME verifies the preliminary application for completeness and may request additional documentation.

Eligibility review by the Recognition Committee

The Recognition Committee reviews the preliminary application based on the Eligibility Criteria and makes a determination. The applicant is informed of the decision. If eligibility is confirmed, a full application template is sent to the agency.

Full Application

The completed full application is returned to WFME. WFME verifies the full application for completeness and may request additional documentation.

Nomination of the Recognition Team

The Recognition Team is nominated by WFME from the list of qualified potential Recognition Team Members (PGME Assessors). To avoid conflicts of interest (COI), the agency has opportunity to review the proposed team and raise any COI concerns to determine if an alternative team member can be appointed. In such cases, the WFME President makes the final decision on the Recognition Team composition.

Recognition Evaluation

The evaluation process for eligible accrediting agencies consists of the following key steps:

- comprehensive review of the accrediting agency's completed Full Application by the Recognition Team;
- on-site observation/evaluation by the Recognition Team of a site visit conducted by the accrediting agency;
- on-site or virtual observation/evaluation by the Recognition Team of a meeting of the decision-making body of the agency.

In consultation with the agency, WFME will select dates for the on-site evaluation (site visit) that coincides with a regularly scheduled accreditation site visit by the agency. It is a requirement for the site visit to be at a time when the institution/programme subject to accreditation and any visited clinical sites are fully operational, avoiding holiday seasons or examination periods.

The observation by the WFME Recognition Team of a meeting of the agency's decision-making body can be carried out during the same site visit, understanding that the decision-making meeting will most likely concern accreditation of a different programme/institution. If this is not possible, a virtual observation of a decision-making meeting will be arranged by WFME in consultation with the agency.

Recognition Report

Following the on-site evaluation of the agency, the Recognition Team prepares a report detailing their findings. The report includes background information about the agency and a narrative about the agency's compliance with the Recognition Criteria. WFME may assist the Recognition Team with matters such as chronology of events.

Unless exceptional circumstances prevail, the draft report is completed no later than eight weeks after the conclusion of the Recognition Team site visit or the agency decision-making meeting observation by the Recognition Team, if the latter took place virtually after the site visit.

WFME sends the draft report to the accrediting agency for a review and comment on any factual errors or omissions. The agency has 30 days to provide feedback. The agency's feedback is reviewed by the Recognition Team and the report is finalised by the Recognition Team Secretary. The final report is sent to the agency for acceptance.

Option of Deferment

At any point before the report is presented to the Recognition Committee, the agency may choose to pause the assessment and defer for up to two years. In this case, an interim report is written by the team. When the agency indicates readiness for re-assessment, WFME determines the composition of a Recognition Team which may comprise some original team members and at least one new member, and the recognition process will resume. If the assessment is deferred for more than two years, the agency needs to re-apply and undergo the full recognition process.

Recognition Decision

The Recognition Team's final report provides the principal source of information used by the Recognition Committee in making decisions regarding the agency's Recognition Status. If possible, the Recognition Team Chair attends the meeting of the Recognition Committee to present the outcomes of the assessment and respond to any questions that may arise, but they do not participate in deliberations or decision-making.

Communication

WFME communicates the final decision to the accrediting agency. Should they be granted Recognition Status, WFME issues a recognition certificate and publishes the decision on the WFME website.

3.4. Evaluation of the Recognition Process

For the purpose of continuous quality improvement, WFME conducts evaluation at the end of each recognition assessment by requesting confidential written feedback from the agency and Recognition Team members on the relevant aspects of process and the Recognition Team membership.

3.5 Decisions in the Recognition Programme

The Recognition Committee may make any of the following decisions:

Eligibility

- Accrediting agency is eligible.
- Accrediting agency is not eligible.

Recognition Status

- Recognition for a six-year term with no conditions.
- Recognition for a six-year term with conditions.
- Denial of the Recognition Status.

Annual Monitoring

- Annual Monitoring complete.
- Annual Monitoring requires follow up.

Other Decisions

- Temporary suspension of the Recognition Status of an agency under conditions defined below.
- Withdrawal of the Recognition Status

Negative decisions (**Denial** of the Recognition Status and **Withdrawal** of the Recognition Status) are actions subject to appeal. Details of the appeal process are included in *APPENDIX A*. Denial or withdrawal decision is not considered final until:

- (a) the agency has indicated in writing its acceptance of the action, or
- (b) the time for filing an appeal has lapsed, or
- (c) the appeal has been concluded with the original decision affirmed, and the agency has been notified in writing of the outcome of the appeal.

Withdrawal of the Recognition Status may occur when:

- (a) documented evidence emerges that an agency exhibits substantial deficiencies in compliance with the Recognition Criteria, and
- (b) the deficiencies are sufficiently serious, in WFME's judgment, to raise concern about the credibility of accreditation decisions being made by the agency.

Temporary suspension may occur when:

- (a) the agency does not comply with or respond to the conditions set by the Recognition Committee, or
- (b) the agency misrepresents the scope and implications of their Recognition Status, or
- (c) the agency fails to submit the Annual Monitoring Report or fails to follow up on the actions arising from the Annual Monitoring Report required by the Recognition Committee, or
- (d) the agency fails to pay the respective fees, as defined below, or
- (e) the agency does not respond to WFME when enquiries are made regarding a complaint that was made to WFME about the agency, or
- (f) the agency makes substantial changes such that it no longer complies with the WFME Recognition Criteria.

When the agency informs WFME that the respective deficiency (deficiencies) has been corrected, this will be reassessed by the Recognition Committee. If compliant, the Recognition Status will be reinstated.

If, at any time, an agency knowingly supplies false or misleading information to WFME or its Recognition Team, the Recognition Committee will reconsider the agency's Recognition Status and determine the appropriate follow-up action. Similar action may result if an agency knowingly fails to provide substantial information to WFME or its Recognition Team, makes misleading or incorrect public statements or disclosures regarding its Recognition Status, or provides misinformation regarding its Recognition Status.

3.6 Reporting of the Recognition Decisions

Within 30 days of any final Recognition Committee decision, WFME will send a decision letter conveying the WFME decision to the chief executive of the agency. The decision letter will include the WFME decision, any conditions, and any necessary follow-up. The decision letter and final Recognition Report are held confidential by WFME but may be disclosed by the agency at its discretion.

Newly recognised agencies will be added to the list of PGME agencies with WFME Recognition Status on the [WFME website](#). Recognition information made available to the public includes the current Recognition Status of an agency and the duration of recognition (month and year recognised until) but does not include recognition reports, correspondence with an agency regarding its Recognition Status, or the basis for WFME decisions regarding an agency's Recognition Status.

If an agency makes a public disclosure of its Recognition Status and/or the Recognition Certificate, the agency must disclose these accurately and unedited and provide the contact information of WFME. Any incorrect or misleading statements about recognition decisions or Recognition Status must be corrected or clarified immediately by an official announcement or notification. Failure to make such a timely correction or clarification may result in reconsideration of the agency's Recognition Status.

3.7 Annual Monitoring and Follow-up

Recognised agencies are monitored by WFME throughout the duration of the recognition term. By 30 June each year, recognised agencies are required to complete an Annual Monitoring Report, commencing between six to 18 months after the agency is formally recognised. The Annual Monitoring Report requests information such as the summary of the agency's accreditation activities, any substantial changes in the scope, standards or processes that have taken place in the preceding 12 months, and an updated link/URL to the list (in English) of accredited PGME institutions/programmes on the agency's website. The Annual Monitoring reports are reviewed by the Recognition Committee.

Where an agency has been awarded Recognition Status with conditions, the Recognition Committee will indicate timelines for the agency to correct any deficiencies in compliance with the Recognition Criteria, or timeframes for specific steps towards compliance. The Agency's progress toward compliance with each condition should be addressed in the Annual Monitoring Report, until written confirmation from WFME that the conditions have been met. Failure to achieve timely compliance constitutes grounds for withdrawal of the Recognition Status unless the timeline extension was requested and granted, at the discretion of the Recognition Committee.

If an agency is undergoing renewal of the Recognition Status or is up for renewal within 12 months of the regular annual monitoring, it is exempt from the requirement to submit the Annual Monitoring Report for the respective year.

3.8. Recognition Programme Fees

Recognition Application fee and expenses

The agency is responsible for fees for the recognition process and expenses related to the recognition site visit by the WFME Recognition Team. Recognition Application fees are due in advance.

The structure of the Recognition Application fee is as follows:

- Eligibility fee – USD 1,000. The eligibility fee is non-refundable, and it must be received prior to review of the Preliminary Application.

- Part I Application fee – USD 29,000. This fee is payable no later than 2 months prior to a scheduled WFME site visit.
- Part II Application fee – USD 30,000. This fee is payable no later than 1 month prior to a scheduled site visit.

In addition, accrediting agencies are responsible for covering the travel expenses of the WFME Recognition Team members as well as any other expenses directly related to the site visit, including, but not limited to flights, visa fees, disease testing (if required), meals and local transportation (if not organised by the agency). Arrangements by WFME (such as flights) are made in line with the WFME Travel and Expenses policies. The final invoice covering these expenses is sent to the agency as soon as practical following the site visit.

The fees and expenses are invoiced by WFME with a 30-day payment period.

Re-application after Recognition Status is denied fee

Agencies that are denied Recognition Status may reapply and must pay the application fees as stated above, and are again responsible for expenses related to recognition site visit.

Annual Monitoring fee

Recognised agencies shall submit the Annual Monitoring Report annually as per Section 3.7 of these policies and procedures.

The submission of the Annual Monitoring Report is subject to a fee of USD 2,000 per year. Unless otherwise agreed with the agency, the fee shall be invoiced when the Annual Monitoring process opens, and the payment shall be due by 30 June each year, coinciding with the deadline for submitting the Report.

Recognition of Cross-border Accreditation fee

Having received the WFME Recognition Status for a certain country (countries) or geographic region (regions), recognised agencies may apply for the Recognition Status to be extended to an additional country / geographic region, provided their application is in line with the *WFME Recognition of Cross-border Accreditation Policy*. The fee for assessing this application is USD 6,000 for each additional country / geographic area and it is non-refundable. It is invoiced at the time the application is submitted.

Deferment fee

If an agency decides to defer the Recognition process, the fee for deferment consists of the following components:

- Base (standard) fee of USD 10,000, invoiced at the time the agency notifies WFME that they are ready for the follow-up review. This fee is non-refundable.
- Additional fee, amount of which is to be determined by WFME, depending on the scope of the follow-up activities. This fee is payable if based on the original draft Recognition Report WFME decides that the subsequent review requires a follow-up site visit of at least two WFME assessors to review the compliance with WFME Recognition Criteria.

If a follow-up site visit is mandated, the accrediting agency is responsible for covering the travel expenses of the WFME Recognition Team members as well as any other expenses directly related to the site visit.

4. Avoidance of Conflicts of Interest

To avoid actual or perceived conflicts of interest, WFME Executive Council Members (both in determination of policies and when acting as Appeals Committee), Recognition Committee members, Recognition Team members, and WFME Team members who are involved in WFME recognition activities ("WFME Representatives") must agree in writing to abide by the following policies:

Recognition process: No WFME Representative will participate in a recognition process, or in discussions or voting at WFME meetings, if the accrediting agency being evaluated or discussed is:

1. One in which the Representative or an immediate family member (defined as a spouse, life partner, child, parent, or sibling) has been connected as an administrative officer, staff member, employee, or contracted agent within the past three years.
2. One in which the Representative or an immediate family member has been interviewed for employment within the past two years.
3. Part of an organisation where the Representative is employed.
4. Engaged in substantial cooperative or contractual arrangements with the employer of the Representative or an immediate family member.
5. One that has engaged the Representative or an immediate family member as a paid consultant within the past five years on matters such as evaluation, organisational structure or design, management, or finances. Provision of short-term services (such as giving guest lectures) is not considered consulting that poses a conflict of interest.
6. One in which the Representative or an immediate family member has any financial, political, professional, or other interest that may conflict with the interests of WFME.
7. One in which the Representative believes that there may be a conflict due to other circumstances, such as participation in review for other organisations, close personal relationships with individuals at the accrediting agency, etc.
8. One in which the accrediting agency has reason to believe, and can document to the satisfaction of WFME, that the participation of the Representative could be unfairly prejudicial.

Consultancy: No Representative will act as a paid or unpaid consultant on WFME recognition matters during their service with WFME, and for a period of three years after completion of their service to WFME, to any accrediting agency subject to WFME recognition, unless such consultancy is explicitly mandated by WFME as part of their WFME role.

WFME Discretion: Whenever in this document a term is not expressly defined, the definition of such term and its potential for creating a conflict of interest shall be at the sole discretion of WFME.

5. Data Collection, Research, and Confidentiality

WFME publishes the Recognition Status awards and duration of recognition on its website. Recognition reports, correspondence with an agency regarding its Recognition Status, or the basis for WFME decisions regarding an agency's Recognition Status remain confidential.

All materials provided by agencies which inform recognition reports are retained for the most recent recognition cycle. Full Applications, Recognition Reports, Annual Monitoring Reports, records of WFME actions, correspondence with individual agencies, and agendas and minutes of all WFME meetings are retained indefinitely.

All information compiled in preparation for recognition reports or collected on site, including the contents of the comprehensive review and correspondence regarding the agency's prior recognition history, is held in strict confidence by WFME. All information received by WFME that relates to an agency's Recognition Status (including Recognition Reports and Annual Monitoring Reports) is also treated as confidential data.

WFME may conduct and publish research based on confidential information contained in the Full Applications and evidence, Recognition Reports and Annual Monitoring Reports. Published results will be anonymised, unless the agency gives prior consent otherwise. Neither the source documents used for such research, nor the results of such research may be shared or made available to individuals or organisations outside of WFME (including staff of the WFME's sponsoring organisations) unless authorised by WFME.

6. Complaints

WFME will consider complaints about the quality of a recognised accrediting agency, that if substantiated would represent significant noncompliance with one or more of the Recognition Criteria. It will not, however, intervene on behalf of a complainant to achieve redress of grievances. Complaints may come from any source. All complaints must be submitted in writing to WFME. Anonymous complaints will not be considered.

WFME will conduct an initial evaluation of any complaint about agency quality to determine whether it represents potential noncompliance with one or more Recognition Criteria. If WFME determines that the complaint presents evidence of one or more areas of noncompliance, the agency's leadership will receive a copy of the complaint or comment and will be given an opportunity to respond in writing.

The issue(s) raised in the complaint and the agency's response will be reviewed by an *ad hoc* subcommittee of the Recognition Committee appointed by WFME. Details of these procedures are included in *APPENDIX B*.

Complaints about WFME's PGME Recognition Programme Policies and Procedures or operations are reviewed by the Executive Council. Such complaints must be submitted in writing to WFME.

7. Procedures for Revising the PGME Recognition Criteria

Feedback and prompts for revising the Recognition Criteria may arise from any source. If a proposed amendment to the criterion is deemed to have merit, it is referred to the WFME Executive Council for further action. WFME reserves the right for the Executive Council to make a change when needed, with a prior notification to the agencies preparing to undergo review.

The Recognition Criteria as a whole will be reviewed every four years at a minimum. Any new or revised criteria adopted by WFME will be published on [WFME website](#), along with the effective date for the criteria.

8. Recognition of Cross-Border Accreditation

Assessment of an agency in the WFME PGME Recognition Programme includes review of the agency's accreditation activity in each country / geographic region of operation for which WFME recognition is sought. WFME Recognition Status is then granted for this country (countries) or geographic region (regions).

If an already recognised agency seeks to extend its WFME Recognition Status beyond the originally evaluated jurisdiction(s), WFME needs to verify that the agency is recognised by the appropriate authorities in the new intended country / geographic region of operation, that the agency's accreditation decisions have impact in the country, that agency maintains responsibility for accreditation operations in the country / geographic region across the breadth of the functions set out in the Recognition Criteria, and that the agency has considered the appropriateness of its policies, procedures and standards in the context of the country / geographic region.

To achieve this, the agency is expected to submit a formal request to WFME to extend their Recognition Status to a new country / geographic region by completing a *Recognition of Cross-Border Accreditation* form and paying the relevant fee as per section 3.8. Further information is available in *Recognition of Cross-border Accreditation Policy* on [WFME website](#).

9. Extending the agency's WFME-recognised scope of accreditation activity

WFME Recognition Status is granted to agencies for the assessed scope of accreditation activity defined in the Context section of the agency's recognition application. This could include PGME programmes provided following graduation from medical school before commencement of specialisation (such as prevocational or foundation programmes), core training programmes across groups of specialties, or PGME programmes in specific specialties and/or sub-specialties. If an agency seeks recognition for more than one country / geographic region, its scope of activity may be the same or different in different countries / geographic regions.

If an agency with WFME Recognition Status seeks to extend WFME recognition to a new area of activity (for example, due to the formal recognition of a new specialty or sub-specialty in the country), it should inform WFME of this change through the Annual Monitoring Report. The agency is expected to describe the rationale for the change and the agency's authority to extend the scope of accreditation activity, how these new responsibilities affect the agency and its accreditation operations, and availability of the required expertise to carry out accreditation in the new area of activity. The extended scope of recognised accreditation activity will be reflected in the agency's listing on [WFME website](#).

If an agency reduces its scope of WFME-recognised accreditation activity (for example, because a specialty is no longer required and has been decommissioned in the country, or the stage of PGME no longer exists due to training system restructure), the agency should notify WFME of the change through the Annual Monitoring Report.

APPENDIX A

Appeal Procedure for Actions Affecting Recognition

Actions of WFME that are Subject to Appeal

The following actions by WFME affecting recognition are subject to appeal:

- a)** Denial of the Recognition Status
- b)** Withdrawal of the Recognition Status
- c)** Temporary suspension of recognition

The appeal shall be limited to the time and circumstances that triggered the WFME action (such as a site visit, Annual Monitoring Report, etc.) and shall be based solely on the information contained in the relevant documentation (final recognition report, evidence submitted to the Recognition Committee in support of withdrawal of recognition). Descriptions of changes made since will not be considered.

Notice of WFME Action

Upon finding that an accrediting agency is not in substantive compliance with WFME's published Recognition Criteria, and imposing an adverse action that is subject to appeal, WFME shall promptly notify the agency in writing of the decision and of the specific areas of noncompliance that support the imposition of the decision. WFME shall also inform the agency of its right to appeal.

Notice of Appeal

The agency wishing to appeal against WFME's decision must notify WFME within 30 calendar days from the date of receipt of the notice of the WFME decision. The agency's Notice of Appeal must be addressed to the WFME President and must contain a concise statement of why the agency believes that WFME's decision should be reversed. If no written request for an appeal is received by WFME within 30 days, WFME's initial decision shall constitute final action by WFME.

Review by an Independent Review Committee

The first step of the reconsideration process is review by an ad hoc Independent Review Committee, which will be advisory to the WFME Executive Council. The Independent Review Committee shall be appointed by WFME and shall consist of three individuals who have expertise in the PGME Recognition Programme. No person shall be included on an Independent Review Committee for a given program if they participated in a site visit that triggered the WFME Recognition Committee decision or have a conflict of interest as determined under the Conflict of Interest of the *WFME Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct* and Section 4 above.

The WFME shall forward to each of the members of the Independent Review Committee a complete file of all documents concerning the agency that were available to the Recognition Committee for their decision. This file shall constitute the Review Record.

The Independent Review Committee will make recommendations to affirm or modify the Recognition Committee decision related to the compliance with the Recognition Criteria.

If the Independent Review Committee determines that there is no reason to alter the initial Recognition Committee decision, it shall recommend affirming the decision. If the Independent Review Committee determines that the Recognition Committee decision is not supported by the evidence, it shall recommend that the WFME Executive Council modify the decision. The Independent Review Committee shall forward a written report of its recommendation, and the reasons therefor, to WFME.

The agency shall not receive a copy of the report or recommendation of the Independent Review Committee.

The Appeal Hearing before the WFME Appeals Committee

The WFME President shall schedule the appeal hearing, held in person or virtually, for a regularly scheduled WFME Executive Council meeting. The members of the Appeals Committee are the members of the WFME Executive Council who do not have a conflict of interest. WFME shall notify the agency in writing of the date, time, and place of the hearing. The notice shall be provided at least 45 calendar days prior to the hearing. The notice shall advise the agency that it:

1. May send representatives to appear before the Appeals Committee.
2. May be represented by legal counsel.
3. May submit a written response to WFME's cited areas of noncompliance. Such response must be based solely on the information contained in the final recognition report.

The agency's written intent to send representatives to appear before the WFME Appeals Committee, the names of the representatives and, if any, the legal counsel who will attend the hearing, must be received by WFME no later than 21 calendar days before the scheduled date of the hearing.

The WFME President shall send to each member of the Appeals Committee who will participate in the hearing complete copies of all documentation concerning the agency that was available to WFME at the time the appealed decision was made, along with the report from the Independent Review Committee. This documentation shall constitute the Appeal Record.

Conduct of the Hearing before the WFME Appeals Committee

The hearing will be limited to a consideration of the time and circumstances that triggered the initial Recognition Committee decision. Descriptions of changes made since that time will not be considered.

No person shall be present at or participate in a hearing if he or she has a conflict of interest as determined under Avoidance of Conflicts of Interest (Section 4).

The hearing shall observe the following general format:

- a) Introductory statement by the President

- b) Oral presentation by the agency (maximum one hour)
- c) Questions by Appeals Committee members and WFME
- d) Appeals Committee private session
- e) Additional questions by Appeals Committee members and WFME
- f) Closing statement by the agency (maximum 15 minutes)
- g) Adjournment

If the agency, without good cause, fails to appear at the hearing or fails to advise WFME in writing more than five calendar days before the scheduled date of the hearing that it will not appear, WFME may elect to notify the agency that no further opportunity for a personal appearance will be provided.

Decision of the Appeals Committee

At the conclusion of the hearing, the Appeals Committee shall meet in executive session to review the proceedings and to reach a decision. The Appeals Committee shall consider the Appeal Record and the information presented during the hearing. The Appeals Committee shall determine whether each of the cited areas of noncompliance with the Recognition Criteria is supported by substantial credible evidence.

The Appeals Committee shall determine by majority of those members present whether substantial evidence supports the existence of the cited areas of noncompliance, and whether the initial Recognition Committee action should be affirmed, modified, or reversed. Such determination shall constitute final decision by WFME.

The WFME President shall notify the agency in writing of the WFME decision, including the reasons, within 30 calendar days after the hearing.

Appeal Review without a Hearing

An agency may inform WFME in writing that it does not wish to appear before the WFME Appeals Committee. In such an event, the Appeals Committee will consider the recognition status of the agency at the next regularly scheduled WFME Executive Council meeting. The Appeals Committee shall rely on the Appeal Record for information, and shall determine by majority of those members present whether to affirm, modify, or reverse the Recognition Committee's initial decision. The WFME President shall notify the agency in writing of WFME's decision, including the reasons, within 30 calendar days after the Appeals Committee meeting. The decision of WFME Appeals Committee, with or without a hearing, shall constitute final decision by WFME.

Responsibility for the Cost of Appeals

The agency appealing against a WFME decision shall be responsible for all costs associated with the appeal, including, but not limited to, costs involved in the development and presentation of its appeal, travel and other expenses of its representatives to represent the agency at the hearing, and legal expenses.

APPENDIX B

Procedures for Handling Complaints about Agency Quality

Any person concerned about the quality of an accrediting agency recognised by WFME may contact WFME to discuss lodging a complaint. Only complaints that, if substantiated, may constitute noncompliance with the Recognition Criteria will be investigated. WFME will not intervene on behalf of an individual PGME institution/programme regarding an accreditation decision.

Submitting a Complaint

Complaints must be made in writing, and may come from any source. Anonymous submissions will not be considered.

The written complaint should contain as much information and detail as possible about the circumstances that form the basis of the complaint. Hearsay cannot be accepted as evidence. If possible, the complainant should cite the Recognition Criteria relevant to the complaint. If the complaint indicates circumstances that, if substantiated, would indicate areas of noncompliance with the Recognition Criteria, WFME will contact the complainant (1) to obtain additional documentation or corroboration, if needed, and (2) to request a signed release form. If the complainant does not comply with either request, the file will be closed, and no further action will be taken.

WFME shall attempt to maintain the confidentiality of complainants and any corroborating material; however:

- Any information about an accrediting agency may be released to the leadership of the agency, WFME, members of the Recognition Committee, their respective legal representatives, and other persons required by law or necessity, at the discretion of WFME, to fully investigate the complaint.
- The complainant and any corroborators will be required to sign an authorisation to release the written complaint and corroborating materials to the accrediting agency, WFME, members of the Recognition Committee, their respective legal representatives, and appropriate outside parties.
- The complainant and any corroborators will also be required to authorise the agency to release any information deemed necessary by WFME.

Investigating the Complaint

WFME will make an initial determination of whether the complaint contains issues relating to the agency's compliance with the Recognition Criteria. If relevance is determined, WFME will contact the leadership of the agency, including the anonymised written complaint and corroborating information, and cite the information that the agency should provide in response. A response from the leadership of the agency will ordinarily be requested within 30 days.

Assessment of the Complaint

Complaints (including any corroborating material) will be assessed by WFME who will make a final determination, including the nature and timing of any required follow-up, and will notify the agency and the complainant of its decision. If WFME deems it necessary to escalate the matter to the Recognition Committee, it will appoint an ad hoc subcommittee from the Recognition Committee to

review the issues raised in the complaint and the agency's response. This subcommittee will determine the next steps, and WFME will inform both the complainant and the agency of the outcome and any required actions.