Final Report on Evaluation of
Allianze University College of Medical Sciences
Medical School

Partner Universities:
University College Cork
National University of Ireland, Galway

22\textsuperscript{nd} and 23\textsuperscript{rd} February 2012
A. Summary and General Assessment

Context

The Allianze University College of Medical Sciences (AUCMS) is a university college established in 2002 on a campus in Kepala Batas, Penang Island, which specialises in medicine and allied health sciences courses. The partnership with University College Cork and National University of Ireland, Galway will be in the form of a twinning programme which will see students spend the first two and a half years in Ireland, either in UCC or NUIG, and will provide graduates with a medical degree awarded by the Irish universities on completion of the programme in Malaysia.

The mission and objectives are in line with those already established at the partner universities.

A Memorandum of Agreement was signed in 2009. There are plans for a building to include staff offices, seminar rooms, and clinical skills laboratories at a location a kilometre from Taiping Hospital. It is intended that the majority of the teaching will take place at Taiping Hospital, with rotations to Kulim Hospital.

1) Main recommendations of Council Team

The Team’s view was not that the AUCMS plans were unacceptable, but that the plans were not in a sufficiently advanced stage as to allow assessment against the Council’s criteria, standards and guidelines. Further engagement with AUCMS is needed to evaluate this. The Team do not feel in a position to make a formal recommendation under the terms of the Medical Practitioners Act 2007 given the status of the current situation. The Team believe that there is a large body of work to be undertaken by AUCMS in the short to medium term and the Team is sufficiently concerned about the AUCMS plans as to warrant a revisit to AUCMS in one year (i.e. Spring 2013) by which time the Medical Council will expect clear and substantial evidence that AUCMS is at a very advanced stage of planning the governance structures, the unity of the programme at the Irish sites, and the plans for student placements at the clinical training sites.

2) Recommendations additional to the conclusion above:

1. Irrespective of any previous agreement regarding separate NUIG and UCC submissions, the Team believes that one single programme submission to the Medical Council should be made by UCC and NUIG jointly, to ensure consistency of planning and delivery of the programme.

2. This submission should take account of the contents of this report, and provide evidence of the ability of AUCMS to deliver on its plans.

3. AUCMS should ensure awareness among students of the following:

   A. The Medical Council’s Eight Domains of Good Professional Practice
B. The Medical Council’s Guidelines for Medical Schools on Ethical Standards and Behaviour appropriate for Medical Students, particularly on affiliated sites and in general practices used for teaching
C. The revised Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children guidelines in Ireland before students have attachments in paediatrics
D. The World Health Organisation Patient Safety Guidelines

4. AUCMS should ensure that defined learning outcomes are disseminated to students and staff, particularly staff on clinical training sites
5. AUCMS should ensure that clinical training site staff are offered incentives to teach, such as the opportunity to be involved in curriculum development, and
6. access to electronic journals
7. AUCMS should ensure that clinical training site staff get feedback from the students
8. AUCMS should ensure that the teaching environment incorporates high standards in hygiene and infection control.

3) The Team commend AUCMS for:

1. The enthusiasm of the staff
2. The work that has already been undertaken to date
3. Their aspirations for the future
4. The Medical English Course which has been designed to ensure students will understand specific terminology on arrival in Ireland
5. The work being put in to deliver on the philosophy of an English speaking campus

4) The Team request the following information/clarification from AUCMS:

1. Confirmation that the AUCMS is recognised by the relevant national and international medical education authorities and competent bodies, such as the Malaysian Medical Council, the Malaysian Qualifications Agency, the Avicenna Directory and the International Medical Education Directory (IMED) of the Foundation for Advancement of International Medical Education and Research (FAIMER)
2. The earliest possible sight of the revised curriculum which has been devised by UCC but has not yet been approved by the University Council.

It is noted that the World Federation for Medical Education self-assessment table has been requested, and since been received; it is included in the appendices
B. Issues arising from initial evaluation

1. Curriculum planning and delivery

The Team was of the view that the two submissions made by University College Cork and National University of Ireland, Galway should be reconsidered and resubmitted as one single submission, to ensure consistency of delivery of the programme across both sites. While the programmes at NUIG and UCC have recently been separately accredited by the Medical Council, the Team was concerned that, as yet, there is insufficient harmony between the programmes as delivered in University College Cork and the National University of Ireland, Galway to ensure parity for the students. There is a need for harmonisation and further work to be done on a preparation module prior to the students returning to Malaysia.

The Team was advised that the AUCMS Academic Council needs to finalise academic details across the sites and the Team will await an update in this regard. The Team stress that there is a need for a Curriculum Committee to commence work and involve local clinicians.

The Team is aware that due to the contractual arrangements of clinical staff with the Ministry of Health in Malaysia, there is little opportunity for leverage for the AUCMS, should a situation arise whereby the clinical teaching is not satisfactory. The Team urge that comprehensive Memoranda of Understanding with clinical training sites and staff be devised as soon as possible.

The Team has concerns about the difficulties AUCMS students may have in being placed in hospitals where there are existing medical students from other universities and which may have strong branding of another university.

The Team commend the development of a Medical English Course which has been designed to ensure students will understand specific terminology on arrival in Ireland. The Team also commend the obvious efforts to deliver on the philosophy of an English speaking campus.

The Team recommend that AUCMS ensure that the teaching environment incorporates high standards in hygiene and infection control. While the fabric of some of the clinical training sites may present challenges in this area, AUCMS should do everything that it can to support best practice.

2. Assessment of Students

The Team was informed that students would sit the same examinations across all three sites and that training of examiners will be the same. However, the Team believe that insufficient evidence was presented that there would be consistency across the three sites to ensure parity of process and parity of outcome.
The Team will require analysis in due course of the performance of the Malaysian cohort compared against their Irish counterparts.

3. Students

Due to the fact that the twinning programme has just commenced, the Team was not able to meet any students at the Kepala Batas site, as they are currently in Ireland. However, the Team highlights the importance of effective transitional arrangements for students moving to Ireland, and on their return to Malaysia.

It appeared to the Team that student support policies were not comprehensively established, particularly at the clinical training sites.

4. Academic Staff/Faculty

The Team commend the enthusiasm of the staff which was evident during the visit, both at University level and at the teaching hospitals.

The Team will require a progress report on the recruitment and appointment of the professors of eight specialties intended to be in place by September 2013, supported by one senior lecturer per specialty.

Detailed “organograms” will be required by the Team as currently, only Professor Edward Johns has been appointed as Foundation Dean, with advertisements for other posts envisaged in the near future.

5. Capacity and Educational Resources

The Medical Council, on previous visits to University College Cork and National University of Ireland, Galway, are already of the view that these medical schools face considerable pressures on capacity and the Team is therefore concerned that additional numbers of students will place significant additional strain. The proposed new building at National University of Ireland, Galway is still not in place although interim arrangements have been taken.

The AUCMS plans in general appear to the Team to be ambitious and aspirational, but at this stage it is not possible for the Team to assess the prospects for realising these plans. More evidence about implementation of plans is fundamental to the delivery of the programme on the Malaysian site.
6. Quality Assurance / Programme evaluation

The Team would welcome confirmation that the AUCMS is recognised by the relevant national and international medical education authorities and competent bodies, such as the Malaysian Medical Council, the Malaysian Qualifications Agency, the Avicenna Directory and the International Medical Education Directory (IMED) of the Foundation for Advancement of International Medical Education and Research (FAIMER). The Team believe that insufficient evidence was presented during the visit.

7. Governance / Administration

A robust governance structure will be required to deliver the twinning programme and the Team did not have sufficient evidence to establish this. Issues regarding funding and investment by the Malaysian Government require clarification.
Visits to Clinical Training Sites

Meeting with consultants at Kulim Hospital, Kedah

The Team met a number of representatives at Kulim Hospital, Kedah. The Team was impressed by the presentation. The hospital already accepts cohorts of medical students from AUCMS, who undertake rotations in orthopaedics, general internal medicine, psychiatry and other specialties. The Team praised the consultants who were obviously enthusiastic about and committed to teaching and the Team was informed that the consultants receive positive feedback from AUCMS.

The Team appreciate that under the Ministry of Health contracts, it is expected that consultants will teach students. The Team noted the advantages for consultants in terms of continuing medical education and continuing professional development. The hospital has regular meetings with AUCMS before every cohort of students and they are aware of the curriculum in place, though the consensus among staff was that the University did not always address issues that arose. Crucially, however, the Team noted that plans to accommodate the additional students under the AUCMS, UCC and NUIG twinning programme have not yet been discussed with the consultants at Kulim Hospital and details of plans have not been established, reinforcing the Team’s view regarding the need to firm up plans.

There is currently no surgical skills laboratory and the hospital is quite some distance from the university campus. There are inadequate information technology and audio visual facilities in place to support a programme delivered across the various sites. The hospital would benefit from additional rooms for case discussion at ward level, and additional student study space, along with student recreational facilities. Of particular concern to clinical staff is that they have good access to clinical journals.

Meeting with consultants at Taiping Hospital

The Team met a number of representatives at Taiping Hospital. The Team was impressed by the presentation. The Team praised the consultants who were obviously enthusiastic about and committed to teaching. The clinicians appeared, in general, to be aware of AUCMS’s plans, however they were generally unaware, as yet, of the full details of the future plans for the twinning programme. The Team underline the importance of clinicians being involved in the curriculum development process, and getting feedback from students on their experience, and the clinicians would welcome this. In addition, staff must be offered incentives to teach.

The Team noted that it was in some cases moot whether the clinicians welcomed the placement of students who would be taught by University staff, or whether they themselves would be prepared to teach.
There was a consensus among staff that the physical isolation of the site and access to a stable supply of staff had inhibited the placement of students, but that the staff issue had largely been resolved.

The Team believe that there may be significant challenges in AUCMS students being placed in hospitals such as Taiping Hospital, where other medical schools may already have a strong presence and branding. The Team recommend that AUCMS carefully monitor the placement of their students in such hospitals.

The Team feel that the student facilities will need to be enhanced, along with the IT infrastructure.

There were areas where there was considerable under-utilised capacity for teaching, staff believed, with psychiatry cited as an example.

*End of evaluation report*