

NSWMSC Letter of Support for Medical Students

To whom it may concern,

The NSW Medical Students' Council (NSWMSC) is the peak representative body for over six thousand medical students at the nine medical schools across NSW and ACT.

As a council we recognise the need to monitor and engage with public health efforts during the current rapid and unprecedented spread of COVID-19 within Australia. Our subsequent concerns involve student education outcomes and wellbeing, as well as the sustainability of the future medical workforce.

The NSWMSC has been and will continue to collaborate with key stakeholders around these issues, including NSW Health, the Australian Medical Association NSW, the Medical Deans of Australia and New Zealand, as well as medical schools and medical students' societies around the country. We recognise that each of these bodies has been working tirelessly to stay informed and are responsive to the situation.

We appreciate and commend the work of many medical faculties who have adapted strategies to protect their students, as well as their responsiveness to students' concerns. However we have identified that a number of student groups may need to negotiate special provisions or considerations while the landscape of medical education continues to adapt in response to the current pandemic, and adequate provisions have not yet been outlined for all. These groups include students;

- with pre-existing medical conditions which place them at higher risk of adverse health outcomes, or students with a family member to which the same applies,
- in self-isolation or quarantine,
- concerned about their personal safety during higher-risk placements (e.g. critical care, general practice) due to e.g. lack of PPE, inappropriate supervision or training, exposure to vulnerable populations or COVID-19 positive patients, this is particularly pertinent to GP placements as they are decentralised, and too disconnected from structured hospital systems to be adequately protected.
- with dependents who may become sick, or as services and access to facilities reduce, require care,
- experiencing critical levels of anxiety or stress,
- who are enrolled as international students,
- and those experiencing other extenuating circumstances beyond their control.

NSW Medical Students' Council

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The NSWMSC believes that the impacts of COVID19 should not act as a barrier to the completion of any particular year of a medical degree under any of these circumstances. We have written this letter in support of those students who will require alternative education and placement arrangements to do so. We ask for your understanding in considering the following;

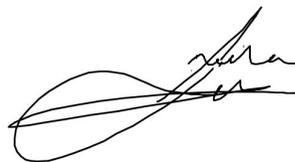
- flexible attendance and assessment requirements which may involve substitutes for reduced face-to-face contact hours, limited or altered clinical placement requirements,
- facilitation of asynchronous learning outside of normal contact hours in acknowledging that the time available for some students to engage in learning will be reduced during normal business hours (as mentioned above),
- transparent communication updated in as timely manner as possible,
- clear guidelines for students who are unwell, require testing, or must self-isolate,
- communicated plans for how students will continue to fulfill learning requirements for that year in keeping with pre-existing graduation timelines,
- outlines of escalation pathways that is accessible to students who wish to remove themselves from unsafe situations,
- and continued transparent discussion around the conditions and effects of entry into any sort of COVID-19 workforce.

The safety and wellbeing of medical students is paramount, we write in support of a safe learning environment for our students. We hope to work collaboratively with all interested groups, and through elected medical student representatives to that end.

Yours Sincerely,



Alice Shen
President, NSW Medical Students' Council



Neila Litkouhi
Vice President, NSW Medical Students' Council