



Australian
National
University

25 August 2014

Ms Susan Philp
Director, Adjudication Branch
Australian Competition and Consumer Commission

Via email: Susan.Philp@accc.gov.au
cc: Jaime.Martin@accc.gov.au

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Dear Ms Philp

Re: GAMSAT Consortium application for re-authorisation of Interview and Preference Policies – response to interested party submission and information request

I act for the Australian National University ('ANU'), a member of the GAMSAT Consortium. I refer to your letter dated 8 August 2014. The ANU has consulted the other GAMSAT Consortium universities and their response to your letter is as follows (adopting your numbering):

Issues raised by interested parties

"1. SA Health's submission notes the foreshadowed reforms to the higher education sector, including the removal of the fee caps in Commonwealth supported places from January 2016. It submits that 'if this change is implemented this may allow each university to set their own fees to study medicine.'

a) Please explain what impacts the above mentioned reforms might have on the operation of the Interview and Preference Policies for which authorisation is sought."

The issue of what might happen in a deregulated fee environment is speculative. The deregulation of fees is a decision of the Australian government and the outcome of the Senate process is currently unknown.

The GAMSAT Consortium universities do not think that fees will have an impact on the operation of the Interview and Preference Policies. If the Government's proposed changes are implemented applicants will consider the fees charged by each graduate

entry medical school in determining their preferences, along with other competitive factors outlined in our submission for reauthorisation (reputation, location, prerequisite requirements, and any focus of each medical school – eg on rural healthcare or the attributes included in personal statements or portfolios).

“b) Please explain what impact the above mentioned reforms might have on the public benefits and detriments likely to result from the Interview and Preference Policies.”

Differences in the fees participating Universities charge in a deregulated environment might influence applicants' preference rankings but there will still be many more applicants than there are places and continuing the two policies will ensure the most cost-effective selection process for both applicants and universities and maximise opportunities for applicants regardless of the cost of education fees. We also note that any detriment to socio-economically disadvantaged applicants in a deregulated fee environment will be more than offset by the accompanying requirement for Universities to make 20% of the higher fee differential available for scholarships for disadvantaged applicants.

Information request

“The ACCC also seeks further information about the extent of the public benefits and detriments flowing from the Interview and Preference Policies during the term of the current authorisation, as well as the operation of the policies more generally. In particular:

1. At paragraph 26 of the supporting submission to the application, the applicants advise that The University of Sydney withdrew its membership of the GAMSAT Consortium in 2011. Since then, The University of Sydney has conducted its own application and interview processes for graduate-entry medical students.

a) Can you please list any other graduate-entry medical schools in Australia that are not currently members of the GAMSAT Consortium.”

Currently there are no other graduate entry medical schools in Australia, except The University of Sydney, that are not party to the GAMSAT Consortium. However, since submitting the application to ACCC, Monash University have indicated that they will withdraw effective 2015. The reason Monash have made this decision is because their graduate entry intake is small and they have decided to accept their own undergraduates.

“b) For each intake since 2011, please outline what impact, if any, The University of Sydney conducting its own application and interview processes has had on the GAMSAT Consortium's processes. In your response, please outline any delays experienced, increases in the total number of interviews conducted and the number of rounds of offers required to fill graduate-entry medical school places.”

The separate application process through The University of Sydney does not affect the operation of the Interview and Preference Policies.

The separate process does impact however when offering a place because some students wait to see the outcome of both processes before making a decision to take The University of Sydney place or the GAMSAT Consortium university place.

Since 2012 The University of Sydney has conducted their admission process slightly earlier than the GAMSAT Consortium process but does not make offers of a place until just before the GAMSAT Consortium universities interviews start.

A proportion of applicants who receive an admission offer from The University of Sydney then decline the offer of an interview (and rest of process) for the GAMSAT Consortium universities, particularly if they have been made an offer of an unbonded place (see explanation of bonded places here: <http://www.health.gov.au/bmpscheme>).

However, students who receive an offer of a bonded medical place at The University of Sydney (25% of places) may wait to see if they receive an offer of an unbonded place at a GAMSAT Consortium university. GAMSAT Consortium universities directly impacted are required to conduct additional interviews in anticipation of significant number of declines. It is difficult to judge how many extra interview offers to make because of year to year variations.

There is also inconvenience to applicants and additional work for universities through a prolongation of the later phases of the admissions process because of the need to make second, third or late offers of a place to students who decline an offer from a GAMSAT Consortium university in favour of an offer from The University of Sydney.

"c) Please explain the steps that students would need to undertake in order to apply for a graduate-entry position at both The University of Sydney and GAMSAT Consortium medical schools, including whether applicants to The University of Sydney are required to sit the GAMSAT exam, and the relevant deadlines in selection and interview processes."

The University of Sydney's admission policies are specified on their website (<http://sydney.edu.au/medicine/future-students/medical-program/admissions/selection-criteria.php>). On review of their website it appears that The University of Sydney require GPA, GAMSAT test score and interview. As stated above The University of Sydney conduct their process slightly before the GAMSAT Consortium's process.

"2. The ACCC understands that interviewees receive a numerical score for their performance at interview. To allow for the interviewee's application to potentially be 'passed on' to a lower preferenced medical school, all interview scores are then 'standardised'.

The ACCC also understands that the 'standardisation process' was reviewed following the 2011/12 selection round, and that GAMSAT Committee members concluded that the current method of standardisation was valid and equitable and would be continued to be used.

a) Can you please clarify whether the GAMSAT Consortium develops common questions to be used by each medical school during interviews, or whether each medical school develops its own interview questions."

Not all Consortium universities conduct interviews. For those GAMSAT Consortium university medical schools that do conduct interviews, each develops its own interview questions. But all these medical schools base their questions on common categories including: communication skills, motivation for studying medicine, compassion and community qualities, ethical and moral standards, resilience, understanding of rural and indigenous health, teamwork and interaction with peers and colleagues, etc.

"b) In receiving scores from applicants interviewed at a higher preferenced school, please explain how each medical school ensures its own selection/information requirements are met – for example, are there agreed core subjects which are covered by all medical schools during interviews, and are the raw results and interview questions exchanged between medical schools for these applicants?"

The GEMSAS system ensures that only applicants who have met the requirements of a medical school, including any pre-requisite subjects, are included on the ranking list for that school. There are no agreed core or pre-requisite subjects. Interview questions and raw interview scores are not exchanged between GAMSAT Consortium universities. Only standardised scores are exchanged.

"3. At paragraph 79 of the supporting submission to the application, the applicants submit that without the Interview and Preference Policies, the GAMSAT Consortium medical schools would be required to interview considerably more applicants. Further, the applicants submit that since the introduction of the policies, Australian graduate entry medical schools typically interview about 125 per cent to 150 per cent of the applicants needed to fill the available places.

a) To the extent possible, for each member of the GAMSAT Consortium please provide the total number of interviews conducted and the number of positions available for each year between 2007 and the current intake."

Please see confidential information in table attached as 1".

Annexure

Yours sincerely



Jasmine Hope
Senior Lawyer
ANU Legal Office



Annexure 1 – GAMSAT Consortium universities - total number of interviews conducted and the number of positions available for each year between 2007 and the current intake

University	2007		2008		2009		2010		2011		2012		2013		2014	
	interview	positions	interview	positions	interview	positions	interview	positions	interview	positions	interview	positions	interview	positions	interview	positions
Australian National University	128	81	109	76	123	86	117	72	141	92	200	85	220	98	220	90
Deakin University	NA	NA	186	120	186	132	199	132	200	133	214	130	189	130	197	127
Flinders University	167	103	172	115	184	121	202	117	189	113	177	111	211	112	205	118
Griffith University	231	150	217	150	210	150	255	129	208	126	203	125	130	90	138	90
Monash University	NA	NA	82	50	97	50	108	65	124	75	123	75	125	75	110	75
The University of Notre Dame Fremantle	154	96	167	105	168	105	164	101	163	101	167	99	174	106	170	100
The University of Notre Dame Sydney	NA	NA		112		112	143	112	167	112	180	112	215	120	275	120
The University of Melbourne	120	67	111	75	111	75			426	300	446	320	436	295	428	300
The University of Queensland *																
The University of Western Australia	87	61	86	63	95	65	112	70	72	50	160	105	175	122	225	145
The University of Wollongong	124	81	111	82	107	87	116	83	112	82	152	86	156	85	153	85

*No interview required