



Delivering a Joint Medical Program: A Student Administration Perspective

In 2007, a Joint Medical Program (JMP) was launched by a partnership of University of Newcastle, University of New England, the Hunter New England Area Health Service and Northern Sydney Central Coast Health. The launch was in response to Federal Government interest in expanding medical training especially rural medicine and both Universities well placed to take on this challenge.

The JMP delivers one curriculum for the B Medicine across the two institutions with one admission process, one assessment process and one Dean. The Australian Medical Council accreditation for the joint program requires evidence of this unity and it is important to both universities to maintain the joint nature of the program.

The constant push and pull of two very different institutions who are delivering this one program has created a unique experience from the Student Administration viewpoint. The issues faced include two student systems, different policies, different term dates, different administrative structures, the tyranny of distance and establishing relationships across the various areas of the two universities.

Establishing a network of staff within both universities who work together to ensure an excellent student experience was one of the first important steps to ensuring the success of this program. The need for staff to show good will and to put aside institution rivalries and concerns was imperative.

A well-established Student Administration Committee now meets regularly via teleconference and annually face to face to ensure issues are identified, discussed and resolved as collaboratively as possible. This Committee provides input to the Joint Medical Program Committee and other sub-committees as needed.

Student Administration and other staff members across both Universities have worked together to establish guidelines and procedures that document expectations, responsibilities and actions for all involved. This provides clarity to those who work directly in this area and transparency for those who are involved in the JMP from another angle (academic or otherwise).

Despite all the issues faced, there is now a truly joint program that delivers one curriculum to students across the two campuses. The first cohort of students

successfully graduated from the program in 2013.

The Dean of Medicine is now looking to the future and in 2015 there should be a new B Medical Science/Doctor of Medicine program that replaces the current B Medicine – Joint Medical Program. The cycle begins again for Student Administration at both universities to establish clear guidelines, policies and documentation to ensure students who progress through this program have a positive experience and the program remains highly regarded.