THE CARIBBEAN ACCREDITATION AUTHORITY FOR EDUCATION IN MEDICINE AND OTHER HEALTH PROFESSIONS

Accreditation Guidelines for New and Developing Medical, Dental, Veterinary and Nursing Schools

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BACKGROUND TO ESTABLISHMENT OF THE CAAM-HP

The Caribbean Accreditation Authority for Education in Medicine and Other Health Professions (CAAM-HP) was established in 2004 under the *aegis* of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) to ensure that the education programmes of medicine and other health professions offered by institutions in participating countries are recognised nationally and regionally to be of international standard.

Medical education in the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) began with thirty-three (33) students in 1948 at the foundation of the University College of the West Indies (UCWI), at the Mona Campus in Jamaica as a constituent part of the University of London. In 1962 the UCWI sought independence from London becoming the University of the West Indies (UWI). From its inception until 2001 when the practice of accrediting overseas institutions was discontinued in keeping with European Union (EU) regulations regarding academic and professional training programmes, the medical education programme of the UWI was accredited by the General Medical Council (GMC) of the UK. This gave national, regional and international recognition to UWI graduates who were able to register freely in the UK and other Commonwealth countries. This practice continued over the years even as various changes took place in medical education at the University of the West Indies (UWI).

Other medical schools were established at the University of Suriname in 1969 and at the University of Guyana in 1985.

From the mid-1970s onwards the region witnessed the influx of a number of 'offshore' medical schools catering almost exclusively for an international student population mainly from the US and Canada.

In response to these developments and the regional thrust to ensure quality education and training in the context of the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME), a regional accreditation system was established as a means of providing the assurance of quality that generates confidence in the stakeholders. Thus, the Caribbean Accreditation Authority for Education in Medicine and Other Health Professions (CAAM-HP) was launched under the *aegis* of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) in July 2004 to accredit the education programmes in medicine, dentistry, veterinary medicine, nursing and other health professions in CARICOM member states.

PURPOSES AND CONSEQUENCES OF CAAM-HP ACCREDITATION

The Authority seeks mutual recognition with other established medical, dental, veterinary and degree nursing education accreditation bodies and is responsible for an ongoing review of accreditation standards. Through accreditation, the Authority will provide assurance to students, graduates, the health professions, healthcare institutions and the public that medical and other health professions education programmes meet reasonable and appropriate international standards for educational quality and that the graduates have received a complete and valid educational experience and have achieved appropriate standards.

The cyclical process of institutional self-study and assessment, coupled with external validation by a team of professional peers, provides a mechanism for ongoing quality improvement. This quality assurance focus ensures continuous adjustment of standards to evolving disciplinary expectations, and is closely linked to licensing requirements for practice and access to the postgraduate education in the disciplines.

DIFFERENCE BETWEEN ACCREDITATION OF SCHOOLS AND EDUCATION PROGRAMMES

The "scope of recognition" for the CAAM-HP, as recognised by the participating countries of the region, is the accreditation of medical, dental, veterinary and degree nursing education programmes that are provided in the participating countries. Several schools offer multiple parallel segments of their education programmes, sometimes by way of separate campuses where students may complete portions of their study, or through distinct "tracks" within educational programmes where students at a single location may learn similar content using varying educational methods.

Schools may also offer programmes or parts of programmes in countries outside of the participating countries, that is, in the case of offshore schools, clinical clerkships may be offered outside of the country in which the school is located. The basic sciences portion of the programme cannot be taken outside the country in which the medical school is located.

By restricting the scope of recognition to complete education programmes, the CAAM-HP is able to focus its assessment activities on comprehensive and comparable units of analysis, independent of the administrative structures of the schools that provide them. Thus, it does not confer accreditation on programmes of one or two-year duration, except as elements of a complete educational programme. Nor does it normally accredit programmes provided outside the participating countries even if the school responsible for the programme operates in the region.

THE ACCREDITATION PROCESS FOR NEW SCHOOLS

The CAAM-HP defines a **New School** as one that is in the planning stage and has not yet admitted its first charter class of students. For such schools, **candidacy** is the status that may be granted by the CAAM-HP during the initial phase of development of the school.

REQUIREMENTS AND PROCEDURES FOR CANDIDACY

To gain Candidacy status, any new medical, dental, veterinary or degree nursing education programme seeking CAAM-HP accreditation must follow a series of steps outlined in the document *'Procedures of the CAAM-HP'*. In general, the sequence involves initial evaluation of the readiness of the programme of a new school to admit a charter class.

For a programme to be considered for Candidacy, the school must first pay the required fee (see Appendix C in *'Procedures of the CAAM-HP'* for the Schedule of Fees), provide information outlined

on Pages 4-8 of this document and respond to any additional requests for pertinent data. These data are used to make a determination of the readiness of the proposed programme to admit a first-year class. Candidacy is normally granted for a period of two years prior to enrolment of the first students.

Please note that candidacy is not accreditation and does not guarantee eventual accreditation. It merely indicates that a school has met certain minimum standards to begin operations.

The steps in the Candidacy process leading up to application for Provisional Accreditation are outlined below.
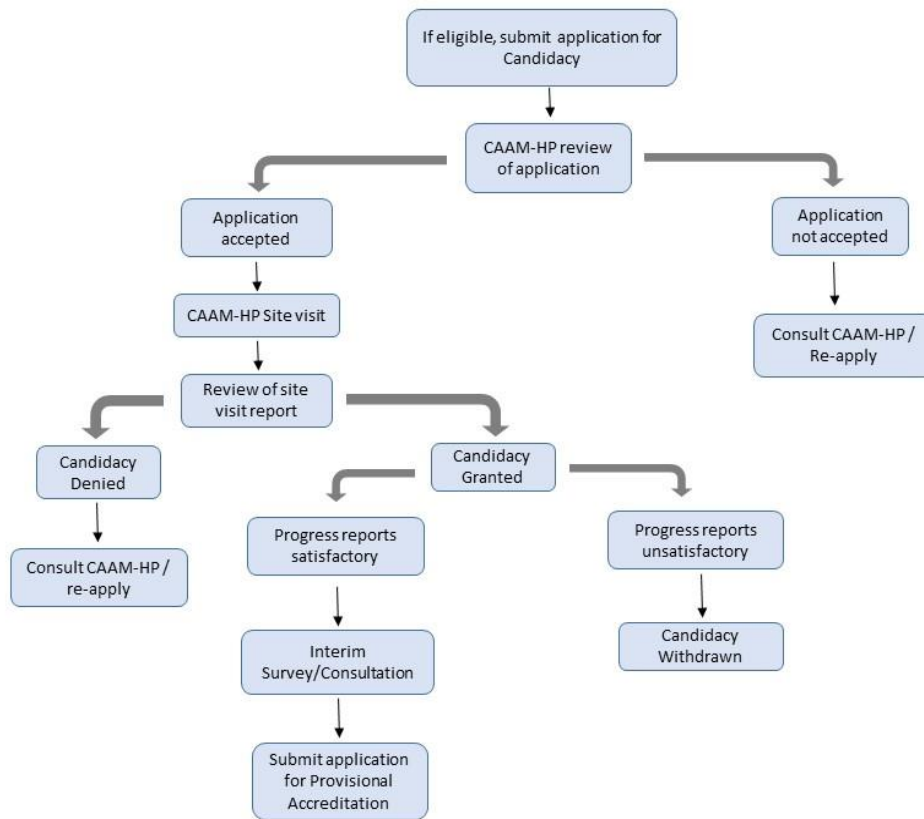
1. An initial candidacy survey is conducted during the years prior to enrolment of the first class to determine whether the minimum requirements for consideration by the CAAM-HP have been met. Based on the report of the survey team, the CAAM-HP will determine whether or not to award candidacy status.

2. Once Candidacy is awarded, schools are required to submit annual progress reports stating what actions are being taken to address areas of concern.

3. A consultation survey is arranged by the Secretariat early in the final candidacy year, to review progress and to assist the dean and faculty in the formation of a "problem list" to be analysed in the institutional self-study required for the survey for Provisional Accreditation. A report of the survey will be reviewed by the CAAM-HP.

4. At the end of the period of Candidacy, schools which comply with these requirements become eligible to apply to the Authority for Provisional Accreditation.

5. Applications for Provisional Accreditation should not be submitted until the end of the year in which the first students are admitted.

MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS FOR CANDIDACY

New educational programmes do not need to comply immediately with all CAAM-HP accreditation standards nor have the resources in place for the entire programme. Nevertheless, the CAAM-HP does expect essential elements of institutional organisation, operation, and resources to be in place before it will consider the programme for *Candidacy.*

Additional expectations may be appropriate under certain circumstances (for example, if a school intends to offer extensive clinical instruction during the first year of study). Schools are encouraged to consult with the CAAM-HP Secretariat to determine if additional requirements are likely to be warranted.

The minimum requirements for candidacy correspond in general to the five major headings and related accreditation standards published on the CAAM-HP website for accreditation of Medical, Dental or Veterinary Schools and Degree Nursing Programmes in the Caribbean Community, The minimum standards that new schools are expected to meet to be granted Candidacy are outlined below.

1. Institutional Setting

To have a reasonable likelihood of complying with relevant accreditation standards, a school should have accomplished at least the following with regard to the institutional setting of the educational programme:

- For schools operating as part of a university, formal delineation of the relationship between the school and the parent university
- Definition of the governance structure of the school, including the composition and terms of membership of any governing board
- Development of a job description for the dean, with approval of the description from the appropriate university authorities
- Appointment of the dean
- Appointment of the senior leadership within the dean's staff, particularly in the areas of academic affairs, student affairs, hospital relationships, administration and finance
- Appointment of administrative leadership (e.g., department heads) for academic units that will have major responsibilities for student education, especially in those disciplines to be taught during the first two years of the curriculum
- Chartering of the major standing committees of the school, particularly those dealing with the curriculum, student admissions, and faculty appointment, promotion & tenure.

The manner in which the school is organised, including the responsibilities and privileges of administrative officers, faculty members, standing committees, and students must be established, and, where relevant, the relationship of the school to the university should be made clear. The CAAM-HP considers the development of a concise job description and the appointment of the dean as essential starting points for the creation of a medical, dental, veterinary or degree nursing education programme. The dean serves as the focal point for providing leadership in the implementation of the school's missions and goals, and acts as the catalyst for securing the resources needed to assure the accomplishment of the school's aims.

Senior leadership in education, student affairs, hospital or affiliates relationships, administration and finance is necessary to begin implementation of programmes and services in these areas. Appointment of administrative leadership, especially in those academic units that will have substantial involvement in student education, creates an infrastructure that should facilitate effective development of the educational programme.

An appropriate committee structure rounds out the organisational framework for operations and decision-making that has proven value in existing successful programmes. Standing committees should be chartered in the school or university bylaws, and should have a clearly delineated charge or terms of reference that will facilitate their effective functioning.

2. Educational Programme

The educational programme leading to the qualifying degree lies at the core of the CAAM-HP's accreditation process and standards. Prior to admitting its first class of students, a new school is expected to have accomplished at least the following for its educational programme:

- Definition of overall objectives for the educational programme
- Creation of a working plan for the curriculum as a whole, consistent with the educational objectives
- A detailed layout of the first year of study, including required courses and content, and identification of the resources needed for the delivery of required courses
- Specification of the types of teaching and student evaluation methods best suited for the achievement of educational objectives
- Design of a system for curriculum management and review
- Design of a system for educational programme evaluation, including the designation of outcome measures to indicate the achievement of overall educational objectives

Learning objectives form the foundation of the educational programme. General objectives for the educational programme as a whole create a framework for the design and implementation of specific learning expectations at the level of required courses and clerkships/clinical experiences, and so need to be specified at the earliest stages of programme planning. The school should be able to elucidate the overall structure of the educational programme to maximise opportunities for efficient learning through horizontal and vertical integration of desired content.

The first year of study must be clearly articulated prior to the admission of the first class. Careful consideration should be given to the sequence of required courses and the workload of students

during the first year of study. Each required course should have a designated director or leader, written objectives, and clearly defined criteria for evaluating student performance. The kinds of educational experiences needed for each course should be determined by both institutional and course objectives.

Resources should be allocated for each required course, including instructional staff, teaching space, technological and information needs, and any specific instructional needs (e.g., lab materials and supplies, real or simulated patients). Consideration should also be given to academic and tutorial services that may be required, as well as any training needs for instructional staff. Careful consideration must be given to teaching and evaluation methods, since these choices will determine many of the resource requirements for the units of study. A well-designed system of curriculum management and review assures continuity and consistency of the educational experience for students.

Programme evaluation implies the systematic collection and review of student evaluations of courses and instructional staff, as well as any other appropriate indicators of curriculum effectiveness. Documentation of the achievement of objectives should include student performance data.

3. The Students

To comply with CAAM-HP accreditation standards regarding the students, a school will be expected to have the following elements in place before requesting consideration for *Candidacy:*

- Clearly defined admissions' policies and selection criteria
- Adequate resources to assure essential student services in the areas of academic counselling, financial aid, health services, and personal counselling
- Written standards and procedures for the evaluation, advancement, and graduation of students and for disciplinary action, including appeal mechanisms to assure due process
- Standards of conduct for the teacher-student relationship, including written policies for addressing violations of such standards

The school needs to define its minimum requirements for admission, and develop criteria for the selection of its students. Technical standards for the admission of handicapped applicants should be delineated.

The school will need resources in place to provide basic student services in the areas of academic counselling and tutorial services, financial aid services and counselling, preventive and therapeutic health services, and personal counselling. If the school intends to utilise parent university resources for some of these services, it should assure that mechanisms are developed to address any unique needs of the students. The school should also decide which immunisations it will require, and develop protocols for addressing student exposure to infectious and environmental hazards.

Criteria for reviewing student performance, and for making decisions about advancement or dismissal, need to be elaborated before the first class is admitted and communicated clearly to students. Policies relating to student advancement, graduation, dismissal, and disciplinary action should be written and available to entering students.

The school should also develop and publicise to the academic community its system for addressing allegations of student mistreatment. Mechanisms for reporting and acting on incidents of mistreatment should assure that they can be registered and investigated without fear of retribution.

4. Faculty

Schools will need to have the following in place regarding faculty before requesting consideration for *Candidacy:*

- Written policies and procedures for faculty appointment, promotion, and tenure
- While schools will not be required to appoint faculty prior to application for Candidacy, arrangements must be put in place for the hiring of sufficient teaching staff to provide the first year of instruction for the education programme, and other staff as needed for the implementation of institutional plans regarding student admissions, curriculum planning and management, and achievement of other missions or goals
- A recruitment plan and timetable for hiring faculty to deliver the second year of the educational programme

Written appointment, promotion and tenure policies must be developed to specify the terms, conditions, and expectations for the school's faculty. The school needs enough faculty to deliver the first year of instruction and to make any necessary decisions about student admissions, curriculum design and management, student evaluation and promotion policies, and any other activities that are fundamental to the school's ability to accomplish its mission and goals. Such faculty should have appropriate content expertise for the material to be learned, and be familiar with the school's educational objectives.

While faculty to teach the second year do not need to have been hired before the charter class is admitted, the school should at least have identified the numbers and types of faculty needed for the second year so that hiring can begin before or early during the first year of the educational programme.

5. Educational Resources

The following resource requirements are considered essential prerequisites for a school seeking candidacy from the CAAM-HP:

- Budgets and supporting financial resources for the first five years of operation
- Classroom space and supporting educational infrastructure for the first year of instruction
- Plans for providing classroom space and any supporting educational infrastructure for the second year of study
- Library and information technology services appropriate to the needs of the school for education, research, and patient care
- Identification of clinical teaching sites

New schools should demonstrate that they have sufficient financial resources to accommodate the development of their educational programme and to accomplish any other institutional goals.

Operating budgets for the first years should be provided to indicate expected revenue sources and expenditures.

Adequate physical resources for the first year of the educational programme need to be in place, including classroom, laboratory, and office space, study space for students, and support services (e.g., room scheduling, exam grading, security). Planning for second-year resources allows for consideration and identification of potential shared facilities such as classrooms, wet labs, physical examination rooms, etc. The information needs of students and faculty for teaching, research, and any patient care should be addressed by library and information technology systems as appropriate.

The inpatient and ambulatory sites that will be used for student education across the entire curriculum should be identified. Affiliation agreements must be negotiated and signed for any clinical facilities used for instruction during the first and second years.

THE ACCREDITATION PROCESS FOR DEVELOPING SCHOOLS

A **Developing School** is defined as one that has already admitted at least one charter class of students but which has not yet had any graduates at the time of application. Such schools will normally have been in operation for 1-4 years at the time of their application depending upon the duration of their educational programme.

Such developing schools become eligible to apply for **Provisional Accreditation** at the end of the year in which their charter class is admitted.

The steps in the application process for Provisional Accreditation are outlined in the following flow chart.
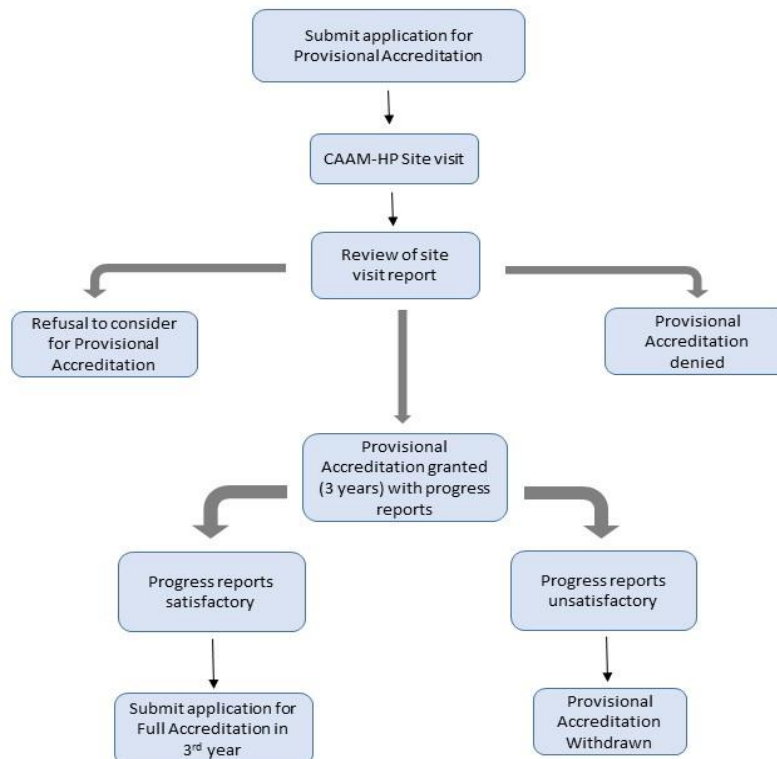
1. Following payment of the requisite fee by the school and receipt of a complete application for Provisional Accreditation, CAAM-HP will work with the school to schedule a survey site visit. Incomplete applications will not be considered for Provisional Accreditation.

2. CAAM-HP will review the required information provided by the school and its plans for development, along with the survey team's report and make a determination on accreditation.

3. Once Provisional Accreditation is granted, schools are required to submit annual reports to the CAAM-HP stating what actions are being taken to address areas of concern and non-compliance.

4. These reports are reviewed by the CAAM-HP to ensure that such areas of concern or non-compliance are adequately addressed, in which case, the school will be eligible to apply for full accreditation. (see *"Procedures of the CAAM-HP'* for established schools)

5. The survey for a full accreditation review is usually initiated early in the final year of Provisional Accreditation to ensure that there is no lapse in programme accreditation.

6. As part of the survey for a full accreditation review, the school is required to carry out an institutional self-study and to submit an education database, and plans for further development. The CAAM-HP reviews the survey team report and makes a determination on accreditation.