

UPDATE FOR FINAL YEAR STUDENTS FOLLOWING MINISTERIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

Q: I have heard that the Minister of Health announced that final year medical students at Queen's University will join the medical register four months earlier than originally envisaged, in order for us to help the existing workforce. Is this true? Will we be paid? Do we have to do it? Will we have an extended F1 period?

A: Please do not be unduly worried. Our first priority is to ensure the safety and wellbeing of our students and patients that they may treat. None of you will be required to do anything that you are not willing to do and without the appropriate safeguards in place. The University informs the General Medical Council that students are eligible for provisional registration only when it is satisfied that the learning outcomes of the course have been met. This normally requires satisfactory completion of the Assistantship and an exam board, usually held in mid-June. Provisional registration usually takes the GMC another 2-3 weeks. Following the Ministerial announcement on 19 March 2020, and recognising the crisis caused by COVID-19, we will work quickly to determine if the Assistantship can be curtailed, and if so by how much. Our initial estimate is that completion of the Assistantship and provisional registration will take at least another 6 weeks from now. However, in these unprecedented circumstances this estimate may be inaccurate. You can be assured that as soon as we have more information in terms of timelines, we will inform you immediately. The view of the medical school (which aligns with that of Medical Schools Council) is that students who are registered early should:

- be free to decide if they wished to join the workforce early (or not)
- be adequately supervised with clear governance arrangements and not work beyond their competencies
- be adequately remunerated for their work, with appropriate contracts and indemnification arrangements
- be provided with necessary personal protection and instruction in its use

It is uncertain at this stage whether or not such arrangements would have an impact on the duration of F1. Please bear with us while we work to establish a firmer position and we will convey this to you as soon as possible.