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To Medical Deans Australia and New Zealand

Please find attached DPA’s submission on Inclusive Medical Education: Guidance on medical programme applicants and students with a disability.

## Disabled Persons Assembly NZ

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# Introducing Disabled Persons Assembly NZ

The Disabled Persons Assembly NZ (DPA) is a pan-impairment disabled person’s organisation that works to realise an equitable society, where all disabled people (of all impairment types and including women, Māori, Pasifika, young people) are able to direct their own lives. DPA works to improve social indicators for disabled people and for disabled people be recognised as valued members of society. DPA and its members work with the wider disability community, other DPOs, government agencies, service providers, international disability organisations, and the public by:

* telling our stories and identifying systemic barriers
* developing and advocating for solutions
* celebrating innovation and good practice

# The submission

DPA is pleased to see that the consultation document recognises the historic underrepresentation and disadvantage of disabled students in medical education programmes and welcomes this guidance to medical schools on inclusive medical education for disabled applicants and students.

DPA agrees that ‘Having a disability does not automatically preclude an individual from studying Medicine’ [[1]](#endnote-2). We welcome the focus on early discussions involving the disabled applicant or student and their support person, medical school staff, the university support services and any relevant external support services: open discussions involving the above parties is the most effective way to ensure that disabled students have the best chance of successfully completing a programme of medical education.

In sections 1 and 2 of the consultation document there is recognition that students can study medicine without the intention of going on to practice medicine. People study various programmes of education, including medical education, for a myriad of reasons and the guidance document needs to be more explicit that this is open to disabled students.

# DPA’s recommendations

1. The Disabled Person’s Assembly recommends that the guidance explicitly states that medical education programmes are open to disabled applicants and students who may not intend to go on to practice medicine.

Section 3. of the guidance refers to other study options being available. However, it does not explicitly refer to study pathways such as medical education programmes having a graduate pathway to a medical science degree.

1. DPA recommends that the guidance explores and highlights other degree pathways available in medical education programmes.

DPA believes that the reflective questions in Annexe 1 of the guidance are helpful for both disabled applicants and students and medical school staff to work through. However, we feel that what is missing are examples of the kinds of reasonable adjustments / accommodations that have previously proved successful. As the guidance currently stands, in the areas for exploration, Communication Skills, it could be read that a person who is Deaf and uses sign language could not study medicine as they cannot speak English, nor would it be possible for a blind person to study medicine as they cannot see non-verbal clues. We know that both Deaf and blind people have studied and completed medical education programmes with reasonable adjustments / accommodations. This section would be much more useful if it included one or two previously successful reasonable adjustments / accommodations (case studies) for each area of exploration.

1. DPA recommends that each area for exploration is strengthened by adding one or two examples of reasonable adjustments / accommodations that have previously been successfully utilised by disabled students on programmes of medical education.

DPA is pleased that the Medical Deans of Australia and New Zealand have produced guidance for medical schools on issues pertaining to disabled applicants and students. We believe that similar guidance needs to be produced aimed at disabled applicants and students to reinforce that applications are welcomed from them.

1. DPA recommends that similar guidance on programmes of medical education is produced aimed at disabled applicants and students.

# Conclusion

DPA welcomes this updated guidance for medical schools on supporting disabled applicants and students. We believe that the guidance would be greatly strengthened by adding previously successful reasonable adjustments/accommodations to the ‘areas for exploration’ in Annexe 1 of the guidance: providing possible solutions to the issues raised.

1. Inclusive medical education: guidance on medical program applicants and students with a disability p1. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)