



## Letter to the Editor

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### **Mandatory entrance examinations for foreign students applying to enrol in Nepalese medical schools: A good step**

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Dear Editor,

Nepal, a small landlocked country sandwiched between India and China, has a total land area of 147,181 square kilometres and a population of 26.6 million. Despite Nepal's size and the relatively poor socioeconomic status of many residents, medical education is a growing business.

Currently, Tribhuvan University (TU), Kathmandu University (KU), B.P. Koirala Institute of Health Sciences (BPKISH), and Patan Academy of Health Sciences (PAHS) each have a Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery (MBBS) programme. In addition to its own Institute of Medicine (IOM), Tribhuvan University has given affiliation to six medical colleges: KIST Medical College, National Medical College, Janaki Medical College, Universal College of Medical Sciences, Chitwan Medical College, and Gandaki Medical College).

Similarly, seven medical colleges, including Manipal College of Medical Sciences, Kathmandu Medical College, College of Medical Sciences, Nepalgunj Medical College, Nepal Medical College, Nobel Medical College, and Lumbini Medical College are affiliated with Kathmandu University. KU has its own School of Medical Sciences (KUSMS). BPKISH and PAHS have their own programmes, and they have not given affiliation to other medical colleges.

Each institution's MBBS programme is a four-and-a-half year integrated programme followed by a compulsory internship training of one year.

Historically, there have been different criteria for Nepalese and foreign students to gain admission to these medical colleges. The private Nepalese medical colleges prefer to admit Indian students, as they gain more monetarily in doing so, compared to admitting Nepalese students. Foreign students have gained admission in MBBS and postgraduate programmes (PG) on the basis of personal interviews

without taking any written entrance test. In contrast, Nepalese students need a minimum of 50 per cent in physics, chemistry, and biology. Furthermore, they are required to pass written entrance examinations conducted by the respective universities: the IOM entrance examination for applicants to TU and its affiliated colleges; and the Kathmandu University Medical Entrance Test (KUMET) for applicants to KU and its affiliated colleges. In addition, 10 per cent of the total available seats in each of Nepal's medical colleges are allocated to students sponsored by the Ministry of Education (MOE); a separate entrance examination is conducted for its sponsored candidates.<sup>1</sup>

As a point of comparison, in 2001, the Indian parliament added a new provision to its Medical Council of India (MCI) statute, requiring that medical graduates who want to practise in India must take the MCI screening test *except* for those who receive medical education from Nepal, Bangladesh, and Ireland. Subsequently, however, several irregularities and shortcomings in medical graduates from Nepal, Bangladesh, and Ireland became evident, so the MCI implemented a screening test for graduates from these countries as well.<sup>2</sup> The privilege offered by the Government of India was retracted on the basis of lack of quality in medical education.

Having mandatory entrance examinations for foreign students applying to medical schools in Nepal is a vital step towards improving the quality of the country's medical education.

It is an encouraging sign that effective 27 April 2013, Tribhuvan University—under the directives of the Centre for Investigating Abuse of Authority (CIAA)—initiated entrance examinations for foreign students (including applicants from India) who seek admission in MBBS and PG programmes in its affiliated medical colleges.<sup>3</sup> Kathmandu University and all other medical institutions running MBBS and PG programmes ought to follow suit and conduct entrance examinations for foreign students, in order for students to qualify before being enrolled. It is hoped that the introduction of these initiatives leads to ongoing and sustainable improvements in not only the quality of medical education, but also the standard of graduates from Nepalese medical programmes.



Sincerely,

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