

**National Report on the
2006 Commencing Medical Students Questionnaire Data**

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Introduction

This report presents the data from the 2006 entry level survey for the Medical Students Outcome Database Project conducted by Medical Deans Australian and New Zealand. This was the first year in which all medical students in Australia were invited to participate in the Medical Schools Outcome Database by completing the Commencing Student Questionnaire.

Method

Early in their first semester, entry level medical students at 15 Australian medical schools completed the survey instrument. The survey sheets were returned to Medical Deans Australian and New Zealand and then scanned at Educational Assessment Australia (EAA) located at the University of New South Wales. One school opted to complete the survey electronically, entering data directly into the database.

Survey instrument

This is the first year that the survey was administered to all students. The survey consisted of 17 questions assessing basic demographic details, enrolment characteristics, previous tertiary education and plans for future practice. The majority of the questions were closed-answer questions.

Analysis

Survey data were received from EAA in SPSS 16.0 for analysis. The analysis followed the format of the 2005 pilot survey analysis, and is presented using the format previously agreed to by the Management Committee for predefined reports for the commencing questionnaire.

Results

Sample characteristics

The sample consisted of 2128 individuals enrolled at 17 medical programs at 15 Australian medical schools. Table 1 shows the number of respondents at each program at the participating medical schools. Of these programs, eight were Postgraduate programs, responsible for training 42% of the responding students. The overall response rate was 85% (range: 57% -98%) of all enrolled students.

Table 1: Breakdown of responses by medical school

Medical School	Frequency	Percent
ANU	76	3.6
Bond	78	3.7
Flinders	94	4.4
Griffith	72	3.4
JCU	91	4.3
Monash	270	12.7
Adelaide	117	5.5
Melbourne (UG)	224	10.5
Melbourne (GE)	69	3.2
Newcastle	101	4.7
Notre Dame	80	3.8
UNSW	199	9.4
Queensland	288	13.5
Sydney	177	8.3
Tasmania	48	2.3
UWA (UG)	113	5.3
UWA (GE)	31	1.5
Total	2128	100.0

Base: All surveyed individuals

In keeping with the trend, 55% of respondents were females (Table 2). For Table 3, respondent ages were grouped into 5-year age ranges. Just over three quarters were under 25 years of age. Among the respondents commencing Undergraduate programs, 96% were under 25 years of age, compared with 38% of those in the Postgraduate programs.

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Table 2: Gender of respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Male	946	44.5
Female	1182	55.5
<i>Total</i>	2128	100.0
<i>Missing</i>	0	
Total	2128	

Base: All surveyed individuals

Table 3: Age range of respondents

Age group	Frequency	Percent
<20 years	846	39.8
20-24 years	856	40.2
25-29 years	269	12.6
30-34 years	74	3.5
35-39 years	47	2.2
40 years and over	36	1.7
<i>Total</i>	2128	100.0
<i>Missing</i>	0	
Total	2128	

Base: All surveyed individuals

The majority of respondents were attending medical school under the Commonwealth supported (CSP) entry scheme (Table 4), with 57% of respondents reported entry under this scheme. Around 15% reported entering under a rural scheme (including Commonwealth Bonded Medical

Table 4: Percent of respondents under each entry scheme

Entry scheme	Frequency	Percent
Commonwealth supported (CSP)	1203	56.9
Commonwealth Medical Rural Bonded Scholarship student (MRBS)	86	4.1
Commonwealth Bonded Medical Places student (BMP)	200	9.5
Queensland Health Bonded Medical Scholarship student (State BMS)	23	1.1
Commonwealth Department of Defence Sponsored student (DDS)	7	0.3
Australian Fee Paying student (FFP)	195	9.2
International Fee Paying (IFP)	390	18.5
University Funded student (UF)	9	0.4
<i>Total</i>	2113	100.0
<i>Missing</i>	15	1.0
Total	2128	

Base: All surveyed individuals

Places students, Commonwealth Medical Rural Bonded Scholarship students, or State Health Bonded Medical Scholarship students), and around 28% were fee paying students, including both International (IFP) and Australian Fee Paying students (FFP).

The majority of respondents (90%) were not in receipt of a scholarship as they commenced medical studies. Although an option in the questionnaire, reporting of Rural Australian Medical Undergraduate Scholarships (RAMUS) and John Flynn scholarships was unreliable as these scholarships are not awarded at this early stage. Commonwealth Medical Rural Bonded Scholarships (BMP) were held by 9.4%, Medical Rural Bonded Scholarships (MRBS) by 4%, and State Health Bonded Medical Scholarships (State BMS) by 1% of respondents. In addition, 6.3% held scholarships from other sources. These sources are summarised in Table 5.

Table 5: Sources of scholarships in 'Other' category

Scholarship source	Frequency	Percent
Australian Commonwealth scholarships (including MRBS)	72	35.0
Scholarships provided by home country to international students	78	37.9
Scholarships provide by Australian universities	21	10.2
Other Australian state scholarships	25	12.1
Scholarships provided by other institutions	10	4.9
Total respondents	206	

Base: Respondents holding a scholarship

Place of birth

Over half (58%) of all respondents reported being born within Australia. Of these, the majority were born in NSW and Victoria. The total breakdown of place of birth for those reporting an Australian birth place is shown in Table 6.

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Table 6: Place of birth within Australia

Place of birth	Frequency	Valid Percent
NSW	350	28.3
Victoria	316	25.6
Queensland	249	20.2
Western Australia	122	9.9
South Australia	123	10.0
Tasmania	36	2.9
ACT	7	0.6
Northern Territory	32	2.6
Total	1235	100.0

Base: Respondents reporting being born within Australia (n=1235)

Of those reporting being born in Australia, 20 individuals identified as of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander descent (Table 7).

Table 7: Indigenous status

Indigenous status	Frequency	Percent
No, not of Aboriginal and/or ATSI origin	2082	99.0
Yes, of Aboriginal and/or ATSI origin	20	1.0
<i>Total</i>	<i>2102</i>	<i>100</i>
<i>Missing</i>	<i>26</i>	
Total	2128	

Base: All surveyed individuals

When considering the citizenship status of the respondents, 81.5% were Australian or New Zealand citizens or Australian permanent residents, the remainder holding Temporary entry permits or of 'Other' status (Table 8).

Table 8: Citizenship status within the sample

Citizenship status	Frequency	Percent
Australian citizen	1643	77.6
New Zealand citizen	28	1.3
Australian permanent resident	56	2.6
Temporary entry	384	18.1
Other status	6	0.3
<i>Total</i>	<i>2117</i>	<i>100.0</i>
<i>Missing</i>	<i>11</i>	
Total	2128	

Base: All surveyed individuals

Tables 9 and 10 report the most frequent country of birth for those born overseas. The pattern of overseas birth differed between citizenship categories. Among Australian/NZ citizens and Australian permanent residents, the most frequent place of birth was China followed by India. For those holding Temporary/Other entry permits, Malaysia was most frequently nominated, followed by Singapore.

Table 9: Overseas place of birth for Australian/NZ citizens and Australian permanent residents

Country of birth	Frequency	Percent
China (not SARs and Taiwan)	66	13.7
India	46	9.6
Sri Lanka	31	6.4
Malaysia	29	6.0
Hong Kong	26	5.4
New Zealand	25	5.2
England	24	5.0
Singapore	21	4.4
UK, nfd	19	4.0
Taiwan	15	3.1

Base: Australian or New Zealand citizen and Australian permanent residents reporting overseas birth (n=481)

Table 10: Country of birth for those holding Temporary or 'Other' entry permits

Country of birth	Frequency	Percent
Malaysia	138	36.8
Singapore	70	18.7
Canada	40	10.7
Brunei Darussalam	19	5.1
USA	17	4.5
Botswana	10	2.7
Indonesia	9	2.4
Hong Kong	7	1.9

Base: Holders of Temporary or 'Other' entry permits who report overseas birth (n= 375).

One third of respondents spoke a language other than English at home (Table 11). Not surprisingly, individuals who held a temporary visa were more likely to report speaking a language other than English at home than were Australian/NZ citizens and Australian permanent residents (80.2% vs 23.4% respectively).

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Table 11: Speak a language other than English

Speak language	Frequency	Percent
No	1404	66.1
Yes	720	33.9
<i>Total</i>	<i>2124</i>	<i>100.0</i>
<i>Missing</i>	<i>4</i>	
Total	2128	

Base: All surveyed individuals

Of Australian citizens born overseas, 60% spoke a language other than English at home. Table 12 shows the most frequently nominated languages among all respondents; while Table 13 is limited to those speaking languages other than English for Australian/NZ citizens and Australian permanent residents only.

Table 12: Most frequently spoken languages other than English

Language	Frequency	Valid Percent
Mandarin	156	21.7
Malay	109	15.1
Cantonese	74	10.3
Tamil	33	4.6
Vietnamese	25	3.5
Arabic	22	3.1
Sinhalese	20	2.8
Hindi	18	2.5
Korean	18	2.5

Base: All surveyed individuals who reported speaking a language other than English (n=720)

Table 13: Most frequently spoken languages other than English (Australian/NZ citizens and Australian permanent residents only)

Language	Frequency	Valid Percent
Mandarin	80	19.4
Cantonese	56	13.6
Tamil	26	6.3
Vietnamese	24	5.8
Arabic	19	4.6
Sinhalese	18	4.4
Hindi	16	3.9
Bengali	14	3.4
Korean	14	3.4

Base: Australian or New Zealand citizen and Australian permanent residents reporting speaking a language other than English (n= 413)

Rural/Urban background

There was some confusion among the respondents in completing this section of the questionnaire. The meaning of 'principal home address' was not clear, particularly to international students. Some of those to whom the question did not apply skipped the questions while others recorded 'zero years'. In addition, the past twelve years refers to schooling for Undergraduate students commencing a medical degree straight from school, but a variety of life situations for those who with previous qualifications and older students.

Nearly three-quarters of those responding to the question stated that their principal home address had always been in a capital or major urban centre. As can be seen in Table 14, nearly 10% of individuals had lived for 1 – 6 years, and 14% for 7 – 12 years outside a capital or major city. This question was obviously misread by some respondents, as it specifically referred to residence during the past *twelve* years and 2% reported living rurally for more that 12 years. The maximum rural residency reported was 22 years.

Table 14: Length of time principal residence outside capital or major city

Length of residency	Frequency	Percent
0 years	1458	74.3
1-3 years	93	4.7
4-6 years	93	4.7
7-9 years	74	3.8
10-12 years	200	10.2
13 or more years	44	2.2
<i>Total</i>	1962	100.0
<i>Missing</i>	166	
Total	2128	

Base: All surveyed individuals

Respondents were asked to indicate the type of location they had lived in the longest within Australia. Over three quarters reported living longest in a capital or major urban centre. A further 9% had lived mostly in a regional city, while 13% had lived in a small town or community for most of their lives.

Table 15: Location of longest residency within Australia

Type of location within Australia	Frequency	Percent
Capital city	1364	69.0
Major urban centre (>100 000)	180	9.1
Regional city (25 000 – 100 000)	177	9.0
Smaller town (10 000-24 999)	131	6.6
Small community (<10 000)	125	6.3
<i>Total responses</i>	<i>1977</i>	<i>100.0</i>
<i>Missing</i>	<i>151</i>	
Total	2128	

Base: All surveyed individuals

One fifth perceived themselves to be from a rural background (Table 16). Self-rated rurality corresponded well with the type of location an individual had lived in the longest. As seen in Table 17 the majority of individuals who had spent most time in a capital or major city did not rate themselves as rural. This pattern was reversed for those from smaller towns. The overall pattern of increased self-perception of rurality with decreasing urban centre size was significant ($\chi^2_2=1124.2, p<0.001$).

Table 16: Self-Perception of rurality

Perception	Frequency	Percent
Rural origin	427	21.3
No rural origin	1580	78.7
<i>Total</i>	<i>2007</i>	<i>100.0</i>
<i>Missing</i>	<i>121</i>	
Total	2128	

Base: All surveyed individuals.

Table 17: Crosstabulation of location classification and self-perceived rurality

Classification of location	Consider self rural		
	Yes	No	Total
Capital/major city (frequency)	80	1418	1498
% within location	5.3%	94.7%	100.0%
Regional city (frequency)	108	62	170
% within location	63.5%	36.5%	100.0%
Smaller town (frequency)	229	22	251
% within location	91.2%	8.8%	100.0%
Total	417	1502	1919
Total percent	21.7%	78.3%	100.0%

Base: All surveyed individuals stating their location and rating their rural background

Education

Respondents were asked to indicate the length of time their **secondary** schooling had taken place outside a capital city or major urban centre within Australia. Once again, over three-quarters of respondents stated that their schooling had never taken place outside such centres. Of the remaining individuals, Table 18 suggests that only 18% spent 1-6 years outside capital or major urban centres. However, it is not clear whether the additional 3% who reported spending between 7 and 18 years in a rural area were referring to their total years of schooling, or to their total lives to date.

Table 18 Length of time schooled outside capital city or major centre

Length of time	Frequency	Percent
0 years	1542	79.1
1-3 years	77	3.9
4-6 years	269	13.8
7 or more years	62	3.2
<i>Total</i>	1950	100
<i>Missing</i>	178	
Total	2128	

Base: All surveyed individuals

Respondents were asked to state the name and postcode of their secondary school, and these were used to indicate state of secondary education in Table 19. It should be noted that some of the Temporary/Other entry permits also undertook secondary education in Australia.

Table 19: Location of secondary schools

Secondary school location	Frequency	Valid Percent
NSW	449	28.1
Victoria	390	24.4
Queensland	379	23.7
South Australia	130	8.1
Western Australia	163	10.2
Tasmania	48	3.0
Northern Territory	9	0.6
ACT	32	2.0
<i>Total</i>	1600	100.0
<i>Missing</i>	528	
Total	2128	

Base: All surveyed individuals.

Previous university education

Around 45% of individuals had previously completed one University degree, 11% held a second degree, 2% held three degrees, and 3 individuals held four degrees. First degrees, as entered, were categorised as shown in Table 20. When Science/Engineering and Medical Sciences are combined, 64% of respondents reported a science-based degree. A further 20% already held a Health/Allied Health qualification.

Table 20: Discipline within which previous degrees were completed

First degree	Frequency	Percent
Science	517	41.7
Medical science	226	18.2
Health/Allied health	244	19.7
Humanities	102	8.2
Business/Law	47	3.8
Physical sciences (Engineering/Maths/Computer)	55	4.4
Other	48	3.9
Total	1239	

Base: All surveyed individuals with previous qualifications

Table 21 summarises the total number and type for all previous qualifications. While the majority of these were held by those enrolled in Postgraduate programs, 6% enrolled in Undergraduate degrees also held at least one former qualification, and 2% between two and four previous degrees.

Table 21: Nature and number of qualifications

All degrees	Frequency	Percent
Bachelor degree (incl those with Honours year)	924	74.6
Honours year	157	12.7
Diploma (Graduate, Other))	71	5.7
Masters	54	4.4
PhD	22	1.8
Total qualifications	1239	

Base: All surveyed individuals with previous qualifications

Marital status and dependants

The majority of respondents were single (91%), with only 9% reporting either being married or living with a partner. Partners' occupation was most frequently given as 'Student' (16% of those providing partner's occupation). Thirteen reported being divorced or separated and no respondent stated that they were widowed.

The number of children reported by is shown in Table 22. Few individuals reported having no children under 16 years of age (97%). Similarly 98% of individuals reported having no dependants (Table 23). The majority of those with children and other dependents were local students. However, one fifth of those on Temporary entry permits did not respond to this question.

Table 22: Percentage of sample reporting child dependants

Number of children	Frequency	Percent
0	1930	96.8
1	29	1.5
2	19	1.0
3 or more	16	0.7
<i>Total responses</i>	<i>1994</i>	<i>100</i>
<i>Missing</i>	<i>134</i>	
Total	2128	

Base: All surveyed individuals

Table 23: Percentage of sample with other financial dependants

Number of dependants	Frequency	Percent
0	1905	98.1
1	25	1.3
2 or more	11	0.6
<i>Total responses</i>	<i>1941</i>	<i>100</i>
<i>Missing</i>	<i>187</i>	
Total	2128	

Base: All surveyed individuals

Sources of income

Table 24 shows the percentage of the sample reporting receiving income from each source. As 37% of the sample indicated more than one source of income the percentages in the figure do not add to 100%. There are some differences between those enrolled in Undergraduate and Postgraduate programs. Government assistance is far more important to those in Postgraduate

programs compared with undergraduate programs (39% and 13% respectively), as is part-time work (40% and 19% respectively), whereas those respondents in Undergraduate programs and more likely to be supported by parents or other family members (79% and 39% respectively).

Table 24: Percentage of respondents reporting each source of income

Source of income	Undergraduate		Postgraduate	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Government assistance	155	12.5	349	39.3
Parents/other family	975	78.6	342	38.6
Part-time work	239	19.3	354	39.9
Scholarship	207	16.7	102	11.5
Financially independent	35	2.8	79	8.9
Other	34	2.7	140	15.8
Total number in program	1241		887	

Base: All surveyed individuals

Preferred location of future medical practice (Australia)

Eighty-one percent of the total sample stated that their preferred location of future practice was within Australia. Table 25 shows the distribution of preferences over each State. For those individuals born in Australia, the preferred location of future practice followed a similar pattern to that for all those responding to this question. For those on Temporary or Other entry permits, 66% preferred to practice outside Australia, with Victoria the state of first choice for those preferring to practice within Australia.

Table 25: Preferred location of practice within Australia

Preferred location	Frequency	Percent
NSW	469	22.6
Victoria	474	22.9
Queensland	369	17.8
South Australia	109	5.3
Western Australia	171	8.3
Tasmania	35	1.7
Northern Territory	18	0.9
ACT	28	1.4
Overseas	398	19.2
Total responses	2071	100.0
Missing	57	
Total	2128	

Base: All respondents stating their preferred location of future practice

Capital cities were the most preferred geographical location for future practice within Australia. The percentage of individuals nominating a particular location tended to decrease as the population of the centre decreased, as shown in Table 26, with just under 10% preferring smaller towns or rural communities.

Table 26: Preferred geographical location within Australia

Location within Australia	Frequency	Percent
Capital city	1161	64.1
Major urban centre (>100 000)	231	12.8
Regional city (25 000 – 100 000)	246	13.6
Smaller town (10 000 – 24 999)	106	5.9
Small rural community (<10 000)	67	3.7
<i>Total responses</i>	<i>1811</i>	<i>100.0</i>
<i>Missing</i>	<i>317</i>	
Total	2128	

Base: All surveyed individuals

The preference for a particular location was significantly influenced by past exposure to that location ($\chi^2_2=420.8$, $p<0.001$). As can be seen in Table 27, 90% of those who did not consider themselves as from a rural background stated that they would prefer to practice in capital cities or major urban centre. Those perceiving their background as rural were more likely to consider increasingly rural locations as a preferred option for future practice.

Table 27: Crosstabulation of preferred location of future practice and perceived rurality

Preferred location of future practice	Consider self rural		
	Yes	No	Total
Capital city/major urban centre (frequency)	138	1205	1343
<i>% future preferred location</i>	<i>10.3%</i>	<i>89.7%</i>	<i>100.0%</i>
Regional city (frequency)	130	111	241
<i>% future preferred location</i>	<i>53.9%</i>	<i>46.1%</i>	<i>100.0%</i>
Smaller town (frequency)	105	63	168
<i>% future preferred location</i>	<i>62.5%</i>	<i>37.5%</i>	<i>100.0%</i>
Total frequency	373	1379	1752
Total % future preferred location	21.3%	78.7%	100.0%

Base: All respondents nominating a preferred location and rating their rural background

Preferred location of future medical practice (country outside Australia)

Around one fifth of individuals indicated they preferred to practice overseas. Of those holding Temporary/Other entry permits, 65% stated that they would prefer to practice overseas in contrast to 9% of Australian/NZ citizens/permanent residents. The majority of those holding temporary permits gave their home country as their future preferred location (Table 28), while Australian/NZ citizens and permanent residents tended to nominate English-speaking countries as preferred locations (Table 29).

Table 28: Preferred overseas country of practice for temporary entry permit holders

Preferred location	Frequency	Percent
Malaysia	105	42.3
Singapore	34	13.7
Canada	28	11.3
Brunei	19	7.7
United States	10	4.0
Botswana	9	3.6

Base: Temporary/other entry permit holders preferring to practice overseas (n= 248)

Table 29: Preferred overseas country of practice for Australian/NZ citizens/permanent residents

Preferred location	Frequency	Percent
USA	17	11.8
UK	16	11.1
England	14	9.7
New Zealand	8	5.6
Canada	7	4.9
France	6	4.2

Base: Australian/NZ citizens/permanent residents preferring to practice overseas (n= 144)

Type of preferred future practice

Respondents were asked what sort of practice they would prefer in the future. The most frequently endorsed option was 'Not yet decided'. As can be seen from Table 30, the next most frequently endorsed options were Surgery, followed by General Practice and Paediatrics for males, and Paediatrics, followed by Surgery and General Practice for females. The most frequently nominated 'Other' types of practice were Neurology/Neurosurgery (30 individuals), Orthopaedic and Sports Medicine (19 individuals), Haematology/Oncology (19 individuals), Cardiology (16 individuals) and Infectious Diseases (11 individuals).

When asked if they were interested in becoming involved with teaching or research, two thirds of respondents said that they would be interested in one or the other or both these options.

However, it is not clear whether those who did not respond were not interested or did respond to the question (Table 31).

Table 30: Crosstabulation of preferred type of practice and sex

	Male		Female	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Not yet decided	268	28.7	345	29.6
Surgery	244	26.1	154	13.2
Paediatrics and child health	69	7.4	182	15.6
General Practice	83	8.9	128	11
Other	55	5.9	69	5.9
Emergency medicine	55	5.9	46	4
Obstetrics and Gynaecology	16	1.7	84	7.2
Psychiatry	29	3.1	29	2.5
Ophthalmology	17	1.8	30	2.6
Anaesthesia	24	2.6	14	1.2
Pathology	10	1.1	22	1.9
Adult medicine	17	1.8	17	1.5
Dermatology	10	1.1	18	1.5
Radiology	13	1.4	8	0.7
Intensive care medicine	13	1.4	6	0.5
Public health medicine	2	0.2	7	0.6
Non-specialist hospital practice	4	0.4	2	0.2
Medical administration	3	0.3	1	0.1
Rehabilitation medicine	1	0.1	2	0.2
Occupational medicine	1	0.1	0	0
<i>Total</i>	<i>934</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>1164</i>	<i>100</i>
<i>Missing</i>	<i>12</i>		<i>18</i>	
<i>Total</i>	<i>946</i>		<i>1182</i>	

Table 31: Interest in research or medical teaching

	Frequency	Percent
Interested	1387	66.4
Not interested	701	33.6
<i>Total</i>	<i>2088</i>	<i>100.0</i>
<i>No response</i>	<i>40</i>	
<i>Total</i>	<i>2128</i>	