

Ministry of Health's Written Response to the Public Administration and Appropriations Committee of Parliament

8th Report of the PAAC on the Examination into the Ministry of Education with specific reference to Inventory Control, Internal Audit, Sub-Head 02- Goods and Services, Sub-Head 03- Minor Equipment Purchases, Sub-Head 04- Current Transfers and Subsidies, Sub-Head 09 Development Programme Consolidated Fund and Infrastructure Development Fund

Discussion on the Placement of Returning Scholars

The Committee noted that many returning scholars, especially in the field of medicine were having difficulties in obtaining internships. Completion of internships is mandatory for medical graduates to become eligible for House Officer positions. However, due to the fact that House Officer is a public hospital position, graduates were encouraged by other parties to not undertake the internship to become a House Officer. Additionally, contract positions in the Private Sector are very limited. Therefore, returning graduates sometimes opt to apply for a deferral of obligatory service to pursue a specialty (obstetrics, gynecology, pediatrics).

Additional evidence indicated that as at July 27th 2017, approximately ninety-two (92) scholars reported to the Scholarship and Advanced Training Division (SATD) and nineteen (19) requested deferral of obligatory service or have had such requests approved. The Ministry of Health reported that one hundred and eight (108) scholars were placed as interns, so far this year, inclusive of those whom had deferred in previous years. The Ministry assured that at the end of August 2017, the SATD would have contacted the remaining eighty-five (85) scholars who are yet to report in.

Recommendation:

The Ministry of Health should submit a status report to the Committee on the placement of all medical graduates by March 14, 2018.

MOH Response:

In all instances, first preference is granted to the scholars who applied annually for enrolment under the Ministry of Health's Internship Programme. Annually, 371 approved positions are available under the Internship Programme of which, all of the medical graduate scholars who apply, ranging from 130-180 is enrolled.

For instance, for the period July 2017 to January 2018, a total of 356 medical graduates was accepted as Interns, of which, 139, who applied and on scholarship, were all accepted in the first instance.

Further, on 1st July 2018, the initial intake for the year, of 208 medical graduates was accepted as Interns, of which, 101, who applied and on scholarship, were all accepted in the first instance.

The selection of Interns per hospital is based on the medical graduates' preference of residential area to proximity of hospital location and it is conducted on a first come first serve basis. In some instances, where the vacancies are filled, medical graduates are placed at public health institutions where vacancies exist irrespective their preference location.

For instance, in July 1st, 2018, there were 213 total vacancies across public health institutions and only 208 accepted positions as none accepted the 5 remaining positions in Tobago.