

Centre plans exit exam for MBBS students

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Armed with recommendations from the Medical Council of India (MCI) and the parliamentary standing committee on health and family welfare, the Centre is considering instituting an exit examination for MBBS students passing out of government and private medical colleges.

All students would have to clear the test before they can start practising medicine, as well as to get admission in postgraduate medical courses. This year's National Eligibility cum Entrance Test - Post Graduate (NEET-PG) is slated for the first week of December.

The Union health ministry is planning to notify the NEET-PG as the common exit test, which will replace the myriad university-level examinations that MBBS students have to take before they start practising medicine. Many countries have such centralised tests, and experts have long felt that the emphasis on entrance tests for courses takes away from the need to test students on their way out of the programme — which is when they actually start seeing patients.

The ministry also looking at replacing the screening test for foreign medical graduates (FMGE) with NEET-PG, effectively making it the only test that any MBBS student would need to take to continue in the field of medicine — as a practitioner or as a PG student.

Based on the test scores, there could be a grading mechanism for medical colleges, a senior official in the ministry said.

Sources said the exit examination would ideally require an amendment by the Parliament to the Indian Medical Council (IMC) Act. So it may not be possible to introduce NEET-PG as an MBBS exit examination this year. The modalities are being worked out to ensure a rollout as soon as possible.

“A notification can be issued making NEET-PG the exit examination for MBBS students, but the decision can be challenged in court. We are in the process of making changes in the IMC Act on priority as per instructions of the Prime Minister's Office. It is currently with the NITI Aayog. Once it comes to us, we will consider incorporating the exit examination provision,” said a senior official in the health ministry.

The MCI had recommended to the ministry last July that there should be an exit examination for MBBS students to ensure quality.

The parliamentary standing committee said: “... there is an urgent need to introduce a common exit test for doctors, which will go a long way in standardising the passing out medical graduates and certify the competencies which are expected to be generated out of him.”

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