

Medical grads having difficulty finding internship posts

PORT OF SPAIN

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THE Ministry of Education has lamented the difficulty in finding internship spots for medical graduates of the University of the West Indies (UWI) because there are simply too many graduates in the medical field.

Without their one-year internship, the graduates cannot be registered as doctors, the Ministry noted.

"In effect, it is necessary and mandated, according to the policy, that we find places for scholars that would

add to their competencies and skills, but we find an oversupply of certain professions where the number of places are limited, especially in the medical area," said Dr Gaylene Holdip, of the Ministry's Scholarship and Advanced Training Division.

The Ministry of Education on Monday appeared before the Public Administration and Appropriations Committee (PAAC), held to examine the Ministry's expenditure and internal controls in several areas.

The hearing was held at Tower D, In-

ternational Waterfront Centre, Port of Spain.

Holdip said while it has been easy to find positions for persons graduating in the fields of law and business, this has not been the case for medical graduates.

Waiting to start internship

She said the Ministry was aware that since 2016, graduates of UWI's Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery (MBBS) programme have been waiting to start their internship.

"We are presently

in the process of receiving a whole number of those who are reporting in this year. We are looking at 148 persons with scholarships coming back into us for their internship," she said.

Holdip said this figure is added to the "several hundred" graduates under the Government Assistance for Tuition Expenses (GATE) programme.

"Generally for all scholars we are expected to try and place them within three months of completion and reporting in. Those who stud-

ied abroad have one month to come back in. The persons who are not placed within the three months must provide evidence that they have attempted to find alternative work over an 18-month period. It is only after the 18 months, on the evidence, that we must issue a no objection to their moving out of the local jurisdiction," she explained.

"When it comes to the medical graduates, their choice of alternative places than the public health system is severely limited," Holdip stated.

She added: "What

we have seen is a number of scholars applying for what we call deferral of obligatory service, because they are obligated to service for as much as five years, because we spend over \$600,000 and sometimes up to \$3 million training these persons and after the 18 months or the deferral they do get offers and they leave us to do specialty obstetrics, gynaecology, paediatrics."

She said as of June 30, 2017, the Ministry of Education is owed \$3 million from persons who have either breached their schol-

arship arrangements or have chosen to repay their loans, given that they had found alternative jobs.

Meanwhile, permanent secretary in the Ministry, Angela Sinaswee-Gervais, told the PAAC that since the Ministry's move to its new location at the Education Tower, St Vincent Street, Port of Spain, it has saved a substantial amount of money in electricity, security, janitorial services, telephone bills and rental fees.



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