

Authority

This registration standard has been approved by the Australian Health Workforce Ministerial Council (the Ministerial Council) on 7 June 2011 pursuant to the *Health Practitioner Regulation National Law Act* (the National Law) as in force in each state and territory. It takes effect from 14 June 2011.

Summary

Specialist registration applies to the medical profession. The Australian Health Workforce Ministerial Council (Ministerial Council) has approved a list of specialties, fields of specialist practice and specialist titles for the medical profession. The Medical Board of Australia (the Board) and the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) maintain and publish a Specialists Register that contains the names of individuals who are registered as specialists.

The *Health Practitioner Regulation National Law Act* (the National Law) as in force in each state and territory defines the qualifications for specialist registration. Currently, the ways in which to qualify for specialist registration are:

1. by holding a qualification approved by the Board. All approved qualifications are fellowships of specialist colleges accredited by the Australian Medical Council (AMC)
2. by holding a specialist qualification that has not been approved by the Board, when the applicant has successfully completed an assessment by the relevant specialist college
3. by holding a qualification that is not approved by the Board, but which previously qualified that person under the National Law or a previous law for specialist registration.

Medical practitioners who are qualified for both general and specialist registration can have their name published on both the Register of Medical Practitioners and the Specialists Register. International Medical Graduates (IMGs) who do not qualify for general registration but who have qualifications for specialist registration can have their name published only on the Specialists Register and must restrict their scope of practice to the specialty or the field of specialist practice in which they hold registration.

Medical practitioners with more than one specialist qualification may have specialist registration in more than one specialty. The Board expects these medical practitioners to comply with the continuing professional development (CPD) requirements of every specialty in which they hold specialist registration. The Board accepts that there may be CPD undertaken that fulfils the CPD requirements of more than one specialist college or specialty.

Medical practitioners may opt to remove their name from the Specialists Register, particularly if they are no longer practising in a specialty. When re-applying to have their name entered on the Specialists Register, they will have to demonstrate that they comply with the Board's recency of practice registration standard in relation to that specialty.

If the Board removes the name of a medical practitioner from the Register of Medical Practitioners, it will also remove the name of the practitioner from the Specialists Register.

Scope of application

This standard applies to all applicants for specialist registration under Part 7, Division 2 of the National Law and to all applicants for renewal of specialist registration under Part 7 Division 9 of the National Law.

Background

Section 13 of the National Law states that specialist recognition operates for the medical profession.

The Ministerial Council has previously approved a list of specialties, fields of specialty practice and specialist titles for each specialty on that list. The list of specialties and specialist titles can be found at www.medicalboard.gov.au.

The Board has approved qualifications for each specialty. The qualifications are all fellowships of specialist colleges. All the specialist colleges with approved qualifications have been accredited by the Australian Medical Council (AMC). The approved qualifications can be found at www.medicalboard.gov.au.

Under section 59 of the National Law, the Board has decided that any examination or assessment of internationally qualified specialists that is undertaken to assess the individual's ability to competently and safely practise the specialty, will be conducted by the relevant AMC accredited specialist college.

Qualifications for specialist registration under the National Law

Section 58 of the National Law states:

An individual is qualified for specialist registration in a recognised specialty in a health profession if the individual—

- a) holds an approved qualification for the specialty; or
- b) holds another qualification the National Board established for the health profession considers to be substantially equivalent, or based on similar competencies, to an approved qualification for the specialty; or

- c) holds a qualification, not referred to in paragraph (a) or (b), relevant to the specialty and has successfully completed an examination or other assessment required by the National Board for the purpose of registration in the specialty; or
- d) the individual—
 - i) holds a qualification, not referred to in paragraph (a) or (b), that under this Law or a corresponding prior Act qualified the individual for specialist registration (however described) in the specialty; and
 - ii) was previously registered under this Law or the corresponding prior Act on the basis of holding that qualification for the specialty.

Current pathways to specialist registration

Under currently available pathways, a person is qualified for specialist registration if they hold:

1. an approved qualification. The Board has approved the qualification of fellowship of all the AMC accredited specialist colleges
2. a qualification relevant to the specialty, usually from a country outside Australia, when the applicant has been assessed by an AMC accredited specialist college and has completed all requirements for a qualification that is approved by the Board. This is commonly referred to as the 'specialist pathway' to registration.

The specialist college will usually confirm that the applicant is eligible for the fellowship qualification to be awarded.

If a specialist college assesses a practitioner under the specialist pathway as 'partially comparable' or 'substantially comparable', the practitioner is not qualified for specialist registration until the specialist college confirms that they have successfully completed any additional requirements such as supervised training or examinations

3. a qualification that is not an approved qualification but was previously registered under the National Law or another corresponding prior Act on the basis of holding that qualification for the specialty.

Relationship between specialist registration and specialist colleges

Most medical practitioners with specialist registration will have a fellowship qualification from an AMC accredited specialist college. However, the Board will accept for specialist registration confirmation that an applicant has been assessed by a specialist college and has passed the

requirements for the approved qualifications, regardless of whether they have been awarded a fellowship.

It is not necessary for medical practitioners with specialist registration to continue to be members or fellows of the specialist college to remain on the Specialists Register. Fellowship in this context does not refer to the qualification (which cannot be revoked), but to the ongoing affiliation with or membership of the specialist college. However, medical practitioners on the Specialists Register are required to continue to comply with the Board's registration standard for CPD. In the case of medical practitioners on the Specialists Register, this requires that they meet the standards for CPD set by the relevant AMC accredited specialist college.

There may be circumstances when a specialist college decides to revoke a practitioner's fellowship (i.e. membership). This may be for one of a range of reasons, including because the practitioner is not considered to be suitable to be a fellow or member of the specialist college or because of non-compliance with the specialist college's CPD requirements. These practitioners will remain on the Specialists Register until the Board or a Tribunal decides to remove their name, consistent with the provisions of the National Law. If a practitioner's fellowship or membership has been revoked because they are not deemed to be suitable, particularly if there are issues of professional conduct, professional performance or impairment, the Board expects the specialist college to notify the Board, in the interests of public safety. The Board will consider the information and will decide on any necessary course of action.

The Board encourages any specialist college to notify the Board if it has revoked a practitioner's fellowship or membership for failing to comply with CPD requirements. The Board can ask the practitioner whether or not he or she has complied with the Board's CPD registration standard.

Period of registration

The Board will initially grant specialist registration for the period until the following 30 September. Thereafter, specialist registration will be granted for 12 months, with an expiry date of 30 September of each year.

Requirements

For initial registration - Applicant is on the Register of Medical Practitioners

If the applicant for specialist registration is currently registered, they are not required to produce documentation previously presented to the Board for registration purposes. This includes proof of identity documents, medical degrees and evidence that they have met the Board's English language skills registration standard.

Applicants are required to complete an application form and submit an original or certified copy of:

1. their fellowship qualification or
2. confirmation from the relevant specialist college that they have been assessed and have successfully completed all requirements for a qualification that is approved by the Board.

Applicants must provide any other information the Board requires under section 80 to determine whether the applicant is a suitable person to hold specialist registration.

For initial registration - Applicant is not on the Register of Medical Practitioners

If the applicant is eligible for general registration

Applicants are required to:

1. submit all documentation and meet all the necessary requirements for general registration
2. complete an application form for specialist registration and submit an original or certified copy of:
 - a) their fellowship qualification or
 - b) confirmation from the relevant specialist college that they have been assessed and have completed all requirements for a qualification that is approved by the Board.

Applicants must provide any other information the Board requires under section 80 to determine whether the applicant is a suitable person to hold specialist registration.

If the applicant is not eligible for general registration

Applicants are required to:

1. Present in person to a Board office or authorised delegate with proof of identity consistent with the approved proof of identity requirements published on the Board's website at www.medicalboard.gov.au

Applicants are required to provide certified documentation identifying changes of name, when the name of the applicant is different to the name on the primary degree in medicine and surgery and/or the name used with previous registration authorities

2. Provide evidence of having been awarded a primary degree in medicine and surgery, after completing an approved course of study at a medical school listed in the current International Medical Education Directory (IMED) (online only) of the Foundation for Advancement of International Medical Education and Research, or other publications approved by the Australian Medical Council. An approved course

of study means that the applicant must be able to demonstrate that they have completed a medical curriculum of at least four academic years, leading to an entitlement to registration in the country issuing the degree to practise clinical medicine

3. Provide evidence of application for primary source verification of medical qualifications from the Educational Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates International Credentials Service (EICS). The Board may take action under Part 8 of the National Law if the practitioner's medical qualifications are not verified. The New South Wales Medical Council may take action under the relevant law in that jurisdiction
4. Provide evidence of successful completion of a period of internship or comparable, consistent with guidelines issued from time to time by the Board
5. Provide evidence of English language skills that meets the Board's English language skills registration standard
6. Provide evidence of work practice history that meets the Board's recency of practice registration standard. This must include a resume that describes the applicant's full practice history and any specific clinical training undertaken. Any gaps and/or overlaps in practice history from the date of qualification to the present must be included and explained
7. Provide details of registration history including certificates of good standing/registration status from each registration authority with which the applicant has been registered in the previous 10 years (supplied where possible directly to the Board from the relevant registration authority)
8. Satisfactorily complete a criminal history check undertaken by the Board that meets the Board's criminal history registration standard
9. Confirm that they will comply with the Board's professional indemnity insurance registration standard
10. Submit an application for specialist registration, including an original or certified copy of:
 - a) the fellowship qualification or
 - b) confirmation from the relevant specialist college that the applicant has been assessed and has completed all requirements for a qualification that is approved by the Board.
11. Any other information the Board requires under section 80 to determine whether the applicant is a suitable person to hold limited registration.

Restricted scope of practice

A medical practitioner who is on the Specialists Register but is not on the Register of Medical Practitioners, will have a restricted scope of practice, compared to a medical practitioner who has both general and specialist registration.

The scope of practice of a medical practitioner who is only on the Specialists Register will be restricted based on the advice from the relevant specialist college, following assessment:

1. If the applicant is limited to the full scope of an approved specialty or field of specialty practice, this will be recorded on the Specialists Register in the specialist category field
2. If the applicant's scope of practice is limited within a specialty or specialist field, the Board will impose conditions reflecting the limited scope of practice. The conditions will be placed on the public Register.

Requirements for renewal of registration

Renewal of specialist registration will be subject to the practitioner meeting the following requirements:

- a) completion of an annual renewal form consistent with section 107 of the National Law, including an annual statement consistent with section 109
- b) demonstrated compliance with any conditions on registration
- c) any additional investigation, information, examination or assessment required by the Board consistent with section 80 of the National Law.

Review

Date of issue: 14 June 2011

Date of review: This guideline will be reviewed at least every three years

Last reviewed: