

Guide to intern training in Australia

Introduction – What is intern training?

In Australia, all medical graduates must successfully complete an internship before becoming generally registered with the Medical Board of Australia. Your internship is a key part of the transition from medical school to independent practice and specialty training, and focuses on practical (on the job or work based) training under supervision from senior colleagues, who also provide you with support, feedback, teaching, and assessment. You will have the opportunity to apply, consolidate and expand your clinical knowledge and skills, and progressively increase your responsibility for providing safe, high-quality patient care. By the end of your internship, you should be able to demonstrate the skills and knowledge described in *Intern training – Intern outcome statements*. The outcomes focus on ensuring the provision of safe, high-quality patient care.

In this guide you will find information about intern training common to all sites across Australia, including the program structure, supervision, assessment, completion, and how to be involved in your training.

Some aspects of intern training differ between states, territories and health services. You will need to make local enquiries for further information about the application process (including prioritisation and allocation systems), industrial arrangements (such as pay and leave entitlements) and individual program specifications (such as available rotations and future training options). The health service or postgraduate medical council (listed at the end of the document) may have a local guide for interns.

What are my rights and responsibilities?

As a provisionally registered medical practitioner, you have responsibilities defined by the Medical Board of Australia and its registration standards.

The internship is also most medical graduates first period of employment as a medical practitioner. You have rights and responsibilities as an employee. You will need to understand the terms and conditions and obligations of your employment, including your responsibility for safe patient care. You have the right to a safe workplace free from bullying, harassment and discrimination.

How is intern training structured?

The Medical Board of Australia sets the broad structure for intern training in its *Registration standard*. The total duration of internship is 47 weeks (full-time equivalent), which excludes annual leave but may include professional development leave, depending on local policies. It may be undertaken part-time, but once started, it must be completed within three years.

An intern training program may be provided by one or more health service, but during internship you will usually be employed through one facility. You may complete terms in public and private hospitals, general practices and community-based facilities.

A senior clinician, often called the Director of Clinical Training, will oversee the intern training program. They also play an important role in supporting interns and liaising with term supervisors on remediation.

What terms will I complete?

The Medical Board of Australia requires you to complete a series of terms (sometimes known as rotations or placements) in a range of specialties to ensure you have a broad-based introduction to working as a doctor. Each term will include orientation, supervised practice, education, and assessment.

The minimum requirement is to complete terms of at least 10 weeks each in medicine and surgery, and at least 8 weeks in emergency medical care. The learning opportunities these terms should provide you are described in *Intern training – Guidelines for terms*. You will also usually complete other terms in a range of specialties, and in different health care settings. Examples include aged care, anaesthesia, general practice, palliative care, psychiatry, rehabilitation medicine and paediatrics.

What learning opportunities will I have?

While internship is your first year of medical work, it also includes a formal education program. At the start of each rotation, you should meet with your Term Supervisor to define learning objectives, their expectations of you, and your role and responsibilities in the team. This provides an important opportunity to designate the specific skills and knowledge that you would like to acquire during the term. As a guide, you should look at the *Intern training – Intern outcome statements* for the knowledge and skills you need to develop by the end of internship.¹

As well as structured teaching sessions, your intern experience is likely to involve activities such as:

- Work-based learning
- Team and/or unit based activities, including:
 - mortality and morbidity audits
 - case presentations and seminars
 - journal clubs
 - radiology and pathology meetings
 - multidisciplinary meetings
- Sessions with senior medical practitioners and other health professionals, including one-to-one teaching with supervising medical practitioners during patient clinical care
- Simulation training
- Grand rounds
- Quality improvement activities.

¹ Supervisors and some interns will be familiar with *the Australian Curriculum Framework for Junior Doctors (ACF)*, which defines the knowledge and skills that should be acquired within the first two years after graduation from medical school. The ACF is not specific to the internship. The *Intern training – Intern outcome statements* detail the expected intern-specific outcomes, and also explains the relationship to the ACF. You should read the *Intern outcome statements* for further information.

How will I be supervised?

During internship, you will be supervised at a level appropriate to your experience and responsibilities at all times. In each term, the supervision arrangements (who supervises you, and for which activities) should be clear and explicit. You will usually have a number of supervisors with different functions:

- A *Term Supervisor* – the person responsible for your orientation and assessment.
- A *Primary Clinical Supervisor* – a consultant or senior medical practitioner with experience managing patients in the term's discipline.
- An *Immediate Supervisor* – a doctor (usually a registrar) who is at least postgraduate year three, and who has direct responsibility for patient care.

How will I be assessed?

Assessment is an important part of your internship, as it ensures you have acquired the skills and knowledge necessary to be recommended for general registration. To prepare, you are encouraged to seek feedback on your performance.

Progress

Unlike medical school, the intern year has no examinations. Instead, your Term Supervisor will assess your progress in a work-based setting. Typically, this will occur at the mid- and end points of a particular term. These assessments are primarily to provide feedback on your performance and assist your professional development. The end-of-term assessment also ensures you have met your pre-defined learning objectives.

Your supervisors will assess your progress using the processes described in *Intern training – Assessing and certifying completion*. They will be looking for whether you can demonstrate the skills and knowledge described in *Intern training – Intern outcome statements*. There is a specific form, *Intern training – Term assessment form*, which covers these outcome statements. Your supervisors may use this form to assess your performance and make recommendations on your progress.

If there are any issues with your progress, such as if you are performing below the level your supervisors expect for an intern, you may be required to participate in remediation. This is an immediate and natural process in the training program that aims to support your professional development. Any remediation is tailored to your specific circumstances and jointly agreed with your supervisors. You can read more about this in *Intern training – Assessing and certifying completion*.

Completion

To successfully finish internship, you must complete the minimum time requirements (described above), and demonstrate that you have acquired the skills and knowledge expected from the training (described in *Intern training – Intern outcome statements*).

At the end of your internship, your Director of Clinical Training will determine whether you have completed the *Registration standard* requirements, based on your end-of-term assessments. Other senior medical staff may also be involved. The Director of Clinical Training will then inform the Medical Board of Australia. This allows you to apply to the Board to be granted general registration. You can read more about this process in *Intern training – Assessing and certifying completion*.

If you receive an 'unsatisfactory' rating for a particular term, it does not necessarily mean that you will be unable to complete your internship within the 47 week period. However, your Director of Clinical Training and the Medical Board of Australia will need to be satisfied that your performance has improved, and that you have acquired the skills and knowledge described in *Intern training – Intern outcome statements*. If you have not demonstrated satisfactory performance, your general registration may be delayed.

What if I need help?

Your welfare through the intern training program, and as you progress further in your medical career, is important. Internship can be physically, intellectually and emotionally challenging. Specific local resources are outside this scope of this national guide, but if you are feeling pressured or stressed, seek support. Starting points include speaking with your fellow interns, supervisor, Director of Clinical Training, and looking for government services that may be available in your facility.

Doctors' health programs also exist in all states and territories, and you can refer to your Medical Education Officer (MEO) (or equivalent) as the local support person.

If you witness or experience bullying, harassment or discrimination your employer will have confidential pathways for reporting, addressing the issue and providing support.

How is the quality of intern training programs assured?

Individual health services develop intern training programs, and both the program and the individual terms within it must be accredited. As an intern you cannot undertake unaccredited terms.

Accreditation is a form of program evaluation in which the quality of a program is judged against defined standards through external peer review. Currently, postgraduate medical councils (PMCs) accredit intern training programs (and terms) using criteria to assess quality. These criteria outline minimum standards, including for program management, program structure, feedback, assessment, clinical experience and supervision. You can find the complete set of criteria in *Intern training – National standards for programs*.

PMCs in turn are accredited on their performance by the Australian Medical Council (AMC), which also accredits medical schools and specialist colleges. The Medical Board of Australia then approves the PMCs to accredit your training. To assess PMCs, the AMC uses specific criteria, which are defined in *Intern training – Domains for assessing accreditation authorities*.

What opportunities are there to be involved?

You have many opportunities to be involved in how your intern training program operates. Taking an active interest in your education and training will benefit both you and your fellow interns. Talk to your Director of Clinical Training to find out how to be involved. Suggested ways include:

Providing feedback to your intern training provider	You can do this for both your term, and the intern training program itself (including formal sessions). This feedback is crucial for improving the quality of intern experiences.
Participating on committees or councils	<p>Each facility will have a local intern education and training (or similar) committee, which will seek to involve interns in developing and improving the facility's intern training.</p> <p>Each local postgraduate medical council has a junior doctor forum, through which you can provide input at either a state or national level. State and territory branches of the Australian Medical Association also have junior doctors' committees.</p>
Undertaking research in education and training	Each year a Prevocational Medical Education Forum is conducted nationally and welcomes presentations of intern projects that address intern education, supervision, and assessment.
Becoming a team member or surveyor for accreditation	<p>Postgraduate medical councils (PMCs) accredit intern training providers for the Medical Board of Australia. You can gain invaluable experience in becoming a surveyor, allowing you to see what other intern providers implement and then sharing ideas with your own provider.</p> <p>Likewise, the Australian Medical Council accredits the PMCs and welcomes junior doctor input as surveyors.</p>

Important supporting documents

The table below lists the national documents related to intern training. These were developed by the Australian Medical Council for the Medical Board of Australia. Together, they form the basis of intern training in Australia, but do not cover all aspects of internship; you may need to seek local guidance.

These are available on the AMC website: <http://www.amc.org.au/index.php/ar/psa>

Document	What this contains
Intern training – Intern outcome statements	A broad outline of the significant outcomes you must achieve to successfully complete internship.
Intern training – Guidelines for terms	A guide to experience you should have during medicine, surgery, emergency medical care, and other terms during internship. Includes notes on supervision.
Intern training – Assessing and certifying completion	A guide to how assessment works in intern training, including assessment criteria, forms, what happens with remediation, and how your internship is certified as complete.
Intern training – Term assessment form	A form both you (for self-assessment) and your supervisors can use to provide feedback and assess your performance. This form was developed to align with the <i>Intern training – Intern outcome statements</i> .
Intern training – National standards for programs	The minimum standards for intern training programs. It outlines criteria including governance, program structure, orientation, teaching and learning, supervision, assessment, feedback, resources and intern participation. These criteria are used by postgraduate medical councils (PMCs) to accredit your intern training program.
Intern training – Criteria for assessing accreditation authorities	This document outlines the criteria the Australian Medical Council uses to accredit PMCs.

Intern training is part of a larger system, and all documents above draw on a number of other sources. These are listed below for your information.

Further reading	What this contains ...
Australian Curriculum Framework for Junior Doctors	<p>Many interns and supervisors may be familiar with the Australian Curriculum Framework for Junior Doctors (ACF), which is a comprehensive curriculum statement covering the first two years after medical school graduation. The ACF describes the knowledge, skills and behaviours expected for you to work safely in Australian hospitals and other healthcare settings. The <i>Intern training – Intern outcome statements</i> is designed to complement the ACF.</p> <p>Available from: http://curriculum.cpmech.org.au/index.cfm</p>
Registration standard – Granting general registration as a medical practitioner to Australian and New Zealand medical graduates on completion of intern training	<p>Registration standards define the requirements you need to meet to be registered. There are a number of different registration standards, including this one dealing with registration following your internship.</p> <p>Available from: http://www.medicalboard.gov.au/Registration-Standards.aspx</p>
Good Medical Practice: A Code of Conduct for Doctors in Australia	<p>This code of conduct forms part of the outcomes you need to demonstrate from your intern training (see <i>Intern training – Intern outcome statements</i>).</p> <p>Available from: http://www.medicalboard.gov.au/Codes-Guidelines-Policies.aspx</p>
Health Practitioner Regulation National Law, as enacted in each state and territory	<p>This is the legal basis for registration to practise medicine in Australia, and underpins all the information and systems around achieving your medical registration. There is a different enactment of the National Law in each state and territory.</p> <p>You can find them all here: http://www.ahpra.gov.au/Legislation-and-Publications/Legislation.aspx</p>
Resources developed by the Australian Medical Association Council of Doctors in Training	<p>There are a number of resources, including guides, reports and position statements, developed by the AMA, available online.</p> <p>Available from: https://ama.com.au/resources/doctors-in-training</p>

Contact details

For information specific to each state and territory, you should contact the relevant PMC. Their websites are listed in the table below.

State	PMC	Website
ACT	Canberra Region Medical Education Council(CRMEC)	http://www.health.act.gov.au/professionals/medical/jmo-accreditation
NSW	Health Education and Training Institute (HETI)	www.heti.nsw.gov.au/medical/prevocational-programs/
NT	Northern Territory Medical Education and Training Centre (NT METC)	http://www.ntmetc.com/
QLD	Queensland Prevocational Medical Accreditation (QPMA)	http://www.qpma.org.au/
SA	South Australian Medical Education & Training (SA MET)	http://www.samet.org.au/
TAS	Postgraduate Medical Education Council of Tasmania (PMCT)	http://www.pmct.org.au
VIC	Postgraduate Medical Council of Victoria (PMCV)	http://www.pmcv.com.au
WA	Postgraduate Medical Council of Western Australia (PMCWA)	http://www.pmcwa.health.wa.gov.au/home/

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Glossary

Assessment	The systematic process for measuring and providing feedback on the intern's progress or level of achievement. This assessment occurs in each term against defined criteria.
Certification	The final sign-off to the Medical Board of Australia that the intern has completed the statutory requirements for general registration.
Clinical supervisor	A medical practitioner who supervises the intern while they are assessing and managing patients. The AMC defines a suitable immediate clinical supervisor as someone with general registration and at least three years' postgraduate experience. The Primary Clinical Supervisor should be a consultant or senior medical practitioner.
Director of Clinical Training	A senior clinician with delegated responsibility for implementing the intern training program, including planning, delivery and evaluation at the facility. The Director of Clinical Training also plays an important role in supporting interns with special needs and liaising with term supervisors on remediation. Also known as the Director of Prevocational Education and Training (DPET) in some states. Other terms may be used in community or general practices.
Director of Medical Services	A senior medical administrator who leads the medical workforce at a facility. Also known as the Executive Director of Medical Services (EDMS). Other terms may be used in community or general practices.
Formal education program	An education program the intern training facility provides and delivers as part of the intern training program curriculum. Sessions are usually weekly and involve a mixture of interactive and skills-based face-to-face or online training.
Intern	A doctor in their first postgraduate year and who holds provisional registration with the Medical Board of Australia.
Intern training program	A period of 47 weeks of mandatory, supervised, work-based clinical training that includes medicine, surgery and emergency medical care terms to meet regulatory requirements. The program also includes orientation, formal and informal education sessions and assessment with feedback, and it may be provided by one or more intern training providers. Also called PGY1.
Intern training provider	The organisation that provides supervised clinical practice, education and training, and that is responsible for the standard of the intern training program. Providers may be a hospital, community, general practice setting, or a combination of these.
Employer	Interns complete their work-based training and formal education while employed to practise as a medical practitioner. Where the standards use the term employer it means the person or persons, usually in the intern training provider, who have a formal line management responsibility for the intern's work role and performance.
PGY	Postgraduate year, usually used with a number to indicate the number of years after graduation from medical school. For example, PGY1 is the first postgraduate year, also known as internship.

Term A component of the intern training program, usually a nominated number of weeks in a particular area of practice. Also called clinical rotation, post, or placement.

Term Supervisor The person responsible for intern orientation and assessment during a particular term. They may also provide clinical supervision of the intern along with other medical colleagues.