

## Communiqué

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### National Specialist IMG Committee Meeting: 6 March 2013

The National Specialist International Medical Graduate (IMG) Committee is established as a Committee of the Medical Board of Australia (the Board). The Committee meets quarterly.

#### Review of the specialist pathway

A nationally uniform assessment process for IMGs was implemented from 1 July 2008. This was an initiative of the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) and resulted in the establishment of three nationally consistent assessment pathways for IMGs. These are:

- Competent authority pathway
- Standard pathway
- Specialist pathway

All IMGs who apply for limited registration for postgraduate training or supervised practice or limited registration for area of need are required to meet the requirements of one of the pathways.

As previously reported in past Communiqués, the National Specialist IMG Committee (the Committee) has reviewed the specialist pathway for internationally qualified specialists seeking a comparability assessment or an assessment for an area of need position. The Committee has proposed changes to the pathway and has recommended that the Board consult on these proposals.

By way of background, the two types of assessment processes that have been reviewed are:

- Comparability assessment – The IMG's qualifications, training and experience are assessed against those of a newly qualified Australian specialist. The relevant specialist medical college can assess the IMG as being substantially comparable, partially comparable or not comparable
- Area of need assessment – If a specialist IMG is applying to work in an area of need, the relevant specialist medical college will assess whether the IMG is able to meet the service requirements for that particular position. Some colleges also conduct a comparability assessment at the time that they assess for suitability to practise in a specific position in an area of need.

The proposed changes to the pathway aim to maximise clarity, ensure clear accountabilities, minimise duplication and ensure that terminology used is current and consistent. The review also takes into consideration the recommendations made in the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Health and Ageing on the inquiry into the registration processes and support for overseas trained doctors.

The key changes proposed include to:

- remove the need for checking documentation by the AMC before submitting them to the relevant specialist medical college. The practitioner will have a more direct relationship with the college, rather than communicating through the AMC

- use a portal that agencies involved in progressing an application can use to communicate more effectively and efficiently
- streamline the definitions of comparability with the goal of emphasising the key differences between an IMG who has been assessed as either “substantially comparable”, “partially comparable” or “non-comparable”.

The Committee noted that the Board has undertaken a focused preliminary consultation on the proposed changes to the specialist pathway and will be consulting widely shortly.

### **Specialist pathway – short term training**

Under the specialist pathway there is also an avenue for internationally qualified specialists or international specialists-in-training (i.e. specialist trainees who have nearly completed specialist training in another country) to undertake short-term training in Australia. This pathway is referred to as the *specialist pathway – short term training*. IMGs in this pathway are not required to complete the Australian Medical Council Examination or to have a full comparability assessment by the relevant specialist college. The *specialist pathway – short term training* does not lead to general or specialist registration and it is a requirement that IMGs in this pathway will return to their country of origin on completion of the short term training (usually six months and up to 2 years).

Stakeholders have requested clarification on the processes and requirements of the *specialist pathway – short term training* including clarification on the role of the Board and the role of the specialist medical colleges in the assessment of IMGs applying for limited registration postgraduate training or supervised practice under this pathway.

The Committee considered draft guidelines on the *specialist pathway - short term training* which aim to clarify for applicants and specialist colleges the requirements for registration for medical practitioners who are in this pathway. The draft guidelines also spell out the role of the specialist medical colleges who provide advice to the Board about the suitability of the training position for the specific applicant for registration.

The Committee recommended that the Board consult on the draft guidelines. The Board is likely to consult on the draft guidelines later in 2013.

**Dr Joanna Flynn AM**  
**Chair, National Specialist IMG Committee**

27 March 2013