



Information sheet

May 2015

Specialist medical college assessment processes for Australian and New Zealand medical graduates with overseas specialist qualifications

Medical practitioners who have been awarded their primary medical qualification in Australia or New Zealand, and who have gained a specialist qualification overseas, may seek recognition as a specialist with the Medical Board of Australia (the Board) on their return to Australia.

These medical practitioners cannot be registered as a specialist in Australia until they have been admitted as a Fellow of an Australian Medical Council (AMC) accredited specialist medical college, or until they have been advised by the college that they have passed all the requirements for the approved qualification.

International medical graduates (IMGs) are assessed under the specialist pathway. The specialist pathway is for medical practitioners who are not qualified for general or specialist registration. Therefore, Australian and New Zealand medical graduates are not eligible to apply for assessment under this pathway as they are qualified for general registration.

Purpose of the specialist medical college assessment

The purpose of the specialist medical college's assessment is to determine if the training and experience of the applicant is comparable with the training and experience of an Australian trained specialist, and the skills standard required to practise in that specialty in Australia for the purposes of awarding fellowship.

Principles of assessment

The colleges are part of the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme (the National Scheme). The guiding principles of the National Scheme are that the scheme operates in a way that is:

- transparent
- accountable
- efficient
- effective
- fair.

The Board expects that the principles that apply to the assessment of specialist IMGs will also apply to the assessment of Australian and New Zealand medical graduates with overseas specialist qualifications.

Eligibility

This process is for Australian and New Zealand medical graduates who have been awarded their primary medical degree from an AMC accredited education provider in Australia or New Zealand and who have a specialist qualification from a country outside Australia or New Zealand.

The list of specialities that have been approved by the Ministerial Council is available on the Board website at [Specialties and Specialty Fields](#).

The applicant should have current registration with the Medical Board of Australia or be eligible for provisional or general registration.

Primary source verification for specialist qualifications

Applicants must apply to the [AMC](#) for primary source verification of their specialist qualification(s).

From 1 October 2015 the AMC will verify medical qualifications through the Educational Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates (ECFMG) Electronic Portfolio of International Credentials (EPIC), or for applications submitted before 30 September 2015, ECFMG International Credentials Services (EICS).

The verification process is identical to that undertaken for IMGs. The outcome of the verification process can be accessed by the college on the AMC portal.

Application to college

The applicant should apply directly to the specialist medical college for a comparability assessment of their specialist qualification.

College assessment

The college receives an application for assessment directly from the applicant. The college assesses the applicant's comparability against the criteria for an Australian-trained specialist in the same field of specialty practice.

The college assessment should undertake a paper based review of the application. The college may interview the applicant. If an interview is required, the college advises the applicant and a time is scheduled.

The college undertakes an assessment to determine if the applicant is eligible for fellowship or the applicant's qualifications, training and experience are:

- substantially comparable or
- partially comparable, or
- not comparable.

The definitions are the same as those that apply to the colleges' assessment of international medical graduates in the specialist pathway – specialist recognition.

Comparability definitions

Substantially Comparable

Substantially comparable applicants have been assessed as suitable to undertake the intended scope of practice, taking full responsibility for individual patients with only oversight of their practice by a supervisor. In order to be considered substantially comparable an applicant must have satisfied the College requirements in relation to previous training, assessment, recent specialist practice and continuing professional development (CPD). The applicant may be required to undertake a period of up to 12 months full time equivalent of practice under peer review by a reviewer approved by the College, which may involve the satisfactory completion of a workplace-based assessment (WBA). This is to ensure that the level of performance is similar to that of an Australian trained specialist, and to assist with their transition to the Australian health system, provide professional support and help them to access CPD. The length of peer review and nature of assessment is up to the individual College to determine on a case-by-case basis, but the peer review period must not exceed 12 months. Following satisfactory completion of this process, the applicant will be eligible for Fellowship of the relevant specialist College without formal examination, and may apply for registration as a specialist.

Substantially comparable applicants will not be eligible to apply for specialist registration during the period of peer review.

Partially Comparable

Partially comparable applicants have been assessed as suitable to undertake a defined scope of practice in a supervised capacity. In order to be considered partially comparable an applicant must have satisfied the College requirements in relation to previous training, assessment, recent specialist practice and continuing professional development (CPD) that will enable them to reach the standard of an Australian trained specialist within a maximum period of 24 months full time equivalent of practice. During this period, the applicant will undertake upskilling with associated assessment under a supervisor(s) approved by the College and may be required to undertake formal examination(s). This is to ensure that the level of performance reaches that of an Australian trained specialist. This period of supervised practice will assist the applicant with the transition to the Australian health system, will provide them with professional support and assist with access to CPD. The length of supervised practice and nature of assessment is up to the individual College to determine on a case-by-case basis, but the supervised practice period must not exceed 24 months full time equivalent of practice. Following satisfactory completion of this process, the applicant will be eligible for Fellowship of the relevant specialist College and may apply for registration as a specialist.

Partially comparable applicants will not be eligible to apply for specialist registration during the period of supervised practice.

Not comparable

Applicants who do not meet the requirements of the relevant specialist College in regard to previous training, assessment, recent specialist practice and continuing professional development (CPD) or who are assessed as unable to reach comparability within 24 months full time equivalent of practice will be assessed as not comparable. They may be eligible to seek registration to practise via another pathway that will enable them to gain general registration, and subsequently seek formal College training and assessment.¹

¹ If an Australian or New Zealand medical graduate is assessed as 'not comparable' they can apply for provisional or general registration and subsequently apply for the college training program.

Outcome of assessment

The college decides if the applicant's training and experience is comparable to that of an Australian trained specialist and whether they are eligible for fellowship.

If the applicant is not eligible for fellowship, but is assessed as substantially comparable or partially comparable, the college determines what further training, up-skilling and/or examinations are required, noting the requirements and timeframes in the definitions. The college may opt to approve the position and/or specify supervision and other requirements for the practitioner.

If the applicant is assessed as 'not comparable', the college should advise them of the option to apply for the college training program.

After the applicant has completed any further requirements, the college determines if the applicant has satisfactorily completed all the requirements and is eligible for fellowship.

The college must advise the applicant in writing, of the outcome of the assessment(s). A record of the outcome should be held by the college but is not recorded on the AMC portal.

Fees

The colleges should each determine the applicable fees for applicants. The college should publish the fees on the college website.

Appeals

The college must have an appropriate appeals process that is available on its website.

Medical registration

A medical practitioner can only apply for specialist registration after they have been admitted as a Fellow of an AMC accredited specialist medical college, or after they have been advised by the college that they have passed all the requirements for the approved qualification and are eligible for registration as a specialist. The list of specialties that has been approved by the Ministerial Council is available on the Board website at [Specialties and Specialty Fields](#).

If the applicant is eligible for fellowship they must submit evidence to the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) with their application form for specialist registration, either a certified copy of:

- their fellowship qualification, or
- confirmation from the relevant specialist college that they are eligible for the qualification.

If the applicant is required to undertake further training or a period of supervised clinical practice, they must hold provisional or general registration to complete these requirements.²

Australian and New Zealand medical graduates with overseas specialist qualifications are not eligible to apply for limited registration and cannot be granted 'Limited registration for area of need'.

Information for applicants

Further information for applicants is available on the Board, college and AMC websites. The *Registration standard for specialist registration* provides further information about specialist registration.

² Note that if a medical practitioner has never been registered in Australia and they completed their internship and further training overseas, they are required to register in Australia with provisional registration to undertake 12 months approved supervised practice to familiarise themselves with the Australian health care system before being eligible for general registration. This period of supervised practice does not need to be in an accredited intern position. For more information see the Board's registration standard *Granting general registration as a medical practitioner to Australian and New Zealand medical graduates on completion of intern training*.