



Medical Board of Australia

REGISTRATION STANDARD: SPECIALIST REGISTRATION

15 February 2018

Summary

This registration standard sets out the requirements of the Medical Board of Australia (the Board) for an application for, and renewal of, specialist registration.

Background

Under section 13 of the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law, as in force in each state and territory (the National Law) the Australian Health Workforce Ministerial Council (Ministerial Council) decides whether specialist recognition applies to a health profession on the recommendation from a National Board established for the profession.

Specialist registration applies to the medical profession.

Specialist registration can only be granted in a specialty that has been approved by the Ministerial Council. The Ministerial Council has approved a list of specialties, fields of specialty practice and specialist titles for the medical profession. The approved list is published on the Board's website.

Under the National Law, practitioners with specialist registration can use the protected title associated with their specialist registration in a recognised specialty or field of specialty practice. It is a breach of the National Law for practitioners to use a protected specialist title if they do not have specialist registration in the relevant specialty.

The Board and the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) maintain and publish an online *Specialists register* that contains the names and registration status of medical practitioners who are registered as specialists. Medical practitioners who have more than one specialist qualification may have specialist registration in more than one specialty and this is reflected on the register.

The specialist medical colleges accredited by the Australian Medical Council (the AMC) are currently the education providers for specialist training for the purposes of specialist registration. They also conduct the assessment and/or examination of specialist international medical graduates (IMGs) who are seeking to qualify for specialist registration in Australia. This assessment process for specialist IMGs is currently known as the specialist pathway - specialist recognition.

Does this standard apply to me?

This standard applies to individuals who apply for specialist registration, or who apply to renew their specialist registration.

Qualifications for specialist registration

Under section 58 of the National Law, you are qualified for specialist registration, if you:

1. hold an approved qualification for the specialty. A list of approved qualifications for specialist registration is published on the Board's website at www.medicalboard.gov.au
2. hold another qualification the Board considers to be substantially equivalent, or based on similar competencies to an approved qualification for the specialty
3. hold a qualification relevant to a recognised specialty that is not approved by the Board and you have successfully completed an examination or other assessment required by the Board for the purpose of registration in the specialty. The accredited specialist medical colleges currently conduct the assessment and/or examination of specialist IMGs, and
4. hold a qualification that qualified you for specialist registration (however described) under the National Law or the corresponding prior Act and you were previously registered under the National Law or the corresponding prior Act on the basis of holding that qualification for the specialty.

What must I do?

When you apply for specialist registration

Applicants with current general registration and/or specialist registration in another specialty

You must provide evidence of:

1. being awarded an approved qualification for the specialty, or
2. holding a qualification relevant to a recognised specialty that is not approved by the Board and evidence you have successfully completed any examination and/or other assessment required by an accredited specialist medical college for the purpose of registration in the specialty, or
3. holding a qualification that qualified you for specialist registration (however described) and previous registration under the National Law or the corresponding prior Act on the basis of holding that qualification for the specialty.

Applicants who are not qualified for general registration

You must:

1. meet the requirements in the Board's approved registration standards for:
 - a. English language skills
 - b. recency of practice
 - c. professional indemnity insurance, and
 - d. continuing professional development.
2. comply with the Board's and AHPRA's proof of identity requirements as published on the Board or AHPRA websites
3. satisfactorily complete a criminal history check in accordance with guidance issued from time to time by the Board or AHPRA
4. provide evidence that you have applied for, or have the results of, primary source verification of your medical qualifications from an authority(ies) approved by the Board
5. 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 publications approved by the AMC and/or Board. An approved course of study means that you must be able to demonstrate that you have completed a medical curriculum leading to an entitlement to registration in the country issuing the degree to practise clinical medicine
6. provide evidence of successful completion of a medical internship or comparable. The Board may issue guidance on what defines a comparable medical internship
7. provide evidence of:
 - a. being awarded an approved qualification for the specialty, or
 - b. holding a qualification relevant to a recognised specialty that is not approved by the Board and evidence you have successfully completed any examination and/or other assessment required by an accredited specialist medical college for the purpose of registration in the specialty, or
 - c. holding a qualification that qualified you for specialist registration (however described) and previous registration under the National Law or the corresponding prior Act on the basis of holding that qualification for the specialty.
8. provide a curriculum vitae that meets the standard format that has been approved by the Board, and
9. provide evidence of your registration history. This includes arranging for the Board to receive certificates of good standing / registration status (or equivalent type of certificate) from each registration authority that you have been registered with in the previous 10 years. The certificates should be supplied, where possible, directly to the Board from the relevant registration authority.

All applicants

Documents submitted to support an application for specialist registration must comply with the requirements for certifying and translating documents as published on the Board or AHPRA websites.

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If you have previously been, or are currently registered in a health profession, in Australia under the National Scheme and have therefore provided information to a Board previously or your information is available to the Board through the AMC secure portal, some of the documentation requirements in this standard may be waived.

The Board may require you to provide any other information consistent with section 80 of the National Law to determine your eligibility and suitability for specialist registration.

At renewal of specialist registration

When you apply to renew your specialist registration, you must:

1. complete a renewal of registration application that includes the annual renewal statement in accordance with the provisions in the National Law, section 109, and
2. demonstrate compliance with any conditions or undertakings imposed on registration.

The Board may require further information, or may require you to undergo an investigation, examination or assessment consistent with section 110 of the National Law to determine whether to renew your registration.

Period of specialist registration

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

More information

Assessment of specialist IMGs

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

This assessment process is currently known as the specialist pathway – specialist recognition.

Specialist pathway – specialist recognition

IMGs with international specialist qualifications seeking to become eligible for specialist registration apply to the relevant specialist medical college for an assessment of their comparability to an Australian trained specialist in the same specialty. Specialist IMGs who are assessed under this pathway as 'partially comparable' or 'substantially comparable' are not qualified for specialist registration until the college confirms that they have successfully completed any additional requirements such as supervised training, assessments or examinations set by the college, to become eligible for specialist registration.

The Board has published guidelines on the specialist pathway – specialist recognition accessible at www.medicalboard.gov.au.

Australian and New Zealand medical graduates with international specialist qualifications

Australian and New Zealand medical graduates with international specialist qualifications also apply to the relevant specialist medical college for an assessment of comparability to an Australian trained specialist in the same specialty. Australian and New Zealand medical graduates with international specialist qualifications are not qualified for specialist registration until the college confirms that they have successfully completed any additional requirements such as supervised training, assessments or examinations set by the college to become eligible for specialist registration.

The Board has published guidance on the assessment process for Australian and New Zealand medical graduates with international specialist qualifications accessible at www.medicalboard.gov.au.

Relationship between specialist registration and specialist medical colleges

The Board publishes a list of approved qualifications for specialist registration accessible at www.medicalboard.gov.au. Currently, the approved qualification for specialist registration is fellowship of the relevant AMC accredited

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specialist medical college. Most medical practitioners with specialist registration will hold fellowship of an accredited college. However, the Board will accept for specialist registration confirmation that an applicant has been assessed by an accredited college and has successfully completed the college's requirements for an approved qualification, regardless of whether the medical practitioner accepts the offer of admission to fellowship of the college.

Medical practitioners on the *Specialists register* who have been awarded fellowship of a college are not required to maintain fellowship to remain on the *Specialists register*. However, specialist medical practitioners are required to comply with the Board's *Registration standard for continuing professional development* (CPD). The Board's standard requires specialist medical practitioners to meet the requirements for CPD set by the relevant specialist college for every specialty in which they hold specialist registration. There may be CPD activities undertaken that fulfill the CPD requirements of more than one college. Alternatively, specialist medical practitioners can choose a self-directed program of CPD only if the program meets the requirements for CPD set by the relevant college. For more information refer to the Board's registration standard for CPD accessible at www.medicalboard.gov.au.

There may be circumstances when a specialist medical college decides to revoke a medical practitioner's fellowship or membership of the college. This may be for one of a range of reasons, including because the practitioner is no longer considered to be suitable to be a fellow or member of the college or because of non-compliance with the college's CPD requirements.

The Board expects the specialist medical college to notify the Board in the interests of public safety, where a medical practitioner's fellowship or membership has been revoked because they are deemed not suitable, particularly if there are conduct, performance or impairment issues. The Board or the relevant co-regulatory jurisdiction will assess the information and decide whether any regulatory action is required to protect the public.

The Board also encourages any specialist medical college to notify the Board if it has revoked a medical

practitioner's fellowship or membership for failing to comply with CPD requirements. The Board will assess whether the practitioner has complied with its registration standard for CPD and decide whether any regulatory action is required.

Register of medical practitioners and Specialists register

The names of medical practitioners with general and specialist registration are published on both the *Register of medical practitioners* and the *Specialists register*.

If you only hold specialist registration, your name is only recorded on the *Specialists register*. This means you must restrict your scope of practice to the specialty or the field of specialty practice in which you hold specialist registration.

You may opt to surrender your specialist registration if:

1. you hold general and specialist registration and are no longer practising in the specialty, and/or
2. you hold specialist registration in more than one specialty and are no longer practising in one or more specialties.

You will not be required to meet the Board's registration standard for CPD for any specialties that you are no longer registered in.

Limited scope of practice

If you hold specialist registration but do not qualify for general registration, you will have a limited scope of practice compared with a medical practitioner who has both general and specialist registration.

The scope of practice of a medical practitioner who is granted specialist registration only will be limited to their area of specialist practice, based on the advice from the relevant specialist medical college. Your scope of practice is recorded on the *Specialists register*.

Where your scope of practice is limited to an area of practice within a recognised specialty or field of specialty practice, conditions will be imposed on your registration reflecting your limited scope of practice. The conditions will appear on the *Specialists register*.

What happens if I don't meet this standard?

The National Law establishes possible consequences if you don't meet this standard, including that:

1. the Board can impose a condition or conditions on your registration or can refuse your application for registration or renewal of registration, if you do not meet a requirement in an approved registration standard for the profession (sections 82, 83 and 112 of the National Law), and
2. registration standards, codes or guidelines may be used in disciplinary proceedings about health practitioners as evidence of what constitutes appropriate practice or conduct for the health profession (section 41 of the National Law).

If you breach any of the requirements of this registration standard or any of the Board's registration standards, codes or guidelines, the Board may take action in respect of health, performance or conduct under Part 8 of the National Law or an authority in a co-regulatory jurisdiction may take disciplinary action under their relevant legislation.

Authority

This registration standard was approved by the Australian Health Workforce Ministerial Council on 1 September 2017.

Registration standards are developed under section 38 of the National Law and are subject to wide ranging consultation.

Definitions

Approved qualification means a program of study accredited by the Australian Medical Council (AMC) and approved by the Board as providing a qualification for the purposes of registration. The current approved qualification for specialist registration is fellowship of a specialist medical college accredited by the AMC. Approved qualifications for general and specialist registration are published on the Board's website at www.medicalboard.gov.au.

National Law means the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law, as in force in each state and territory.

National Scheme means the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme.

Specialist medical college means a college:

1. whose program of study has been accredited by the Board's accreditation authority, the Australian Medical Council, and
2. whose resultant qualification has been approved by the Board as providing a qualification for the purposes of specialist registration.

Review

This standard will be reviewed at least every five years.

Last reviewed: 15 February 2018

This standard replaces the previously published registration standard from 14 June 2011.