



Communiqué

National Specialist IMG Committee Meeting: 5 December 2012

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.

The main agenda item for this meeting was a proposal to review the specialist pathway.

A nationally uniform assessment process for International Medical Graduates (IMGs) was implemented from 1 July 2008. This was an initiative of the Council of Australian Governments 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 fulfill the requirements of one of the pathways.

Broadly, the specialist pathway is available to specialists who qualified outside of Australia. There are two types of assessment:

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

Specialist assessment involves a number of agencies. In brief, the current process includes:

1. IMGs initially apply for specialist assessment via the AMC. The AMC acts as a clearing house for primary source verification of documents and ensures all documentation is complete
2. Once the documentation is complete, the AMC sends the documentation to the relevant college which assesses the IMG and provides advice to the AMC
3. After the IMG has been assessed, he/she can apply to the Board for registration.

Detailed information on the requirements of the specialist pathway can be found on the AMC website at www.amc.org.au.

The specialist pathway was established at a time when there were eight separate state and territory Boards. With the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme in place, there is an opportunity to streamline processes, reduce duplication and increase clarity.

The Committee previously agreed to establish a working party made up of representatives of the Committee of Presidents of Medical Colleges (CPMC), the Australian Medical Council (AMC) and the

Board and the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) to review the specialist pathway, taking into consideration the recommendations of the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Health and Ageing report into the inquiry into the registration processes and support for overseas trained doctors.

The Committee considered a report from the specialist pathway working party and noted that the key changes proposed by the NSIMGC include:

- To remove the need for checking of the documentation by the AMC prior to submission to the relevant specialist medical college. The practitioner will have a more direct relationship with the college, rather than communicating through the AMC
- To use a portal so that agencies involved in progressing an application can communicate more effectively
- To 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 recommended that the Board consult on the proposed changes to the specialist pathway.

Dr Joanna Flynn AM
Chair, National Specialist IMG Committee

27 December 2012