



Communiqué

National Specialist IMG Committee Meeting: 28 March 2012

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

This Communiqué reports on the first meeting of the National Specialist IMG Committee held on 28 March 2012. At this meeting the Committee agreed to meet quarterly and publish reports after each meeting.

Background

Historically, responsibility for the assessment of specialist International Medical Graduates (IMGs) has rested largely with individual specialist colleges. In 1999, recognising the importance of uniform standards and processes, the Committee of Presidents of Medical Colleges (representing specialist colleges), the Australian Medical Council (AMC) and state and territory medical boards, established the Joint Standing Committee on Overseas Trained Specialists (JSCOTS).

The role of JSCOTS has changed since it was first established, reflecting a range of external influences including the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission's authorisation case into the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons in 2002/3 and the Council of Australian Government's International Medical Graduate assessment initiative in 2007.

The National Registration and Accreditation Scheme has also changed some of the traditional roles and accountabilities of organisations involved in the assessment of specialist IMGs. This provides an opportunity to review the processes, aiming where necessary, for improved efficiencies and increased transparency.

On this basis the Board convened a meeting last year with the AMC and some of the specialist colleges to scope issues around the roles, responsibilities, pathways and processes for the assessment of specialist IMGs under the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme. The Board agreed to establish a National Specialist IMG Committee to continue much of the work of the prior JSCOTS.

The Board formally appointed the following nominees to the Committee:

Membership	Name of nominee
Two National Board members – The National Board to appoint the Chair. The Chair to be a National Board member	Joanna Flynn (Chair) Mary Cohn
Two state or territory board members who are also current Registration Committee members	Peter Dohrmann (Chair of Victorian Registration Committee) Denis Smith (Chair of NSW Registration Committee)

Two staff from the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency including one selected by AHPRA CEO with operational expertise	Kym Ayscough (NSW State Manager) Joanne Katsoris (Executive Officer, Medical)
Two representatives of the Australian Medical Council	Ian Frank Christine Tippett
Three College representatives, nominated by the Committee of Presidents of Medical Colleges	Patrick Giddings (ACRRM) Professor Claire Jackson (RACGP) Richard Willis (ANZCA)
Two representatives of the states or territories, nominated by the Health Workforce Principal Committee	Susan O'Dwyer (QLD) Paddy Phillips (SA)
One representative of the Commonwealth Government, nominated by the Commonwealth	Andrew Singer
One consumer representative nominated by the Consumers Health Forum of Australia	Patricia (Patti) Warn
One specialist international medical graduate who has been through the specialist assessment process, nominated by the Committee of Presidents of Medical Colleges	Ajay Rane (RANZCOG)
One representative of the Association of Medical Recruiters Australia and New Zealand	Stephen Bott
One representative of Health Workforce Australia	Claire Austin

Terms of Reference

The Committee considered its role and responsibilities as an advisory Committee to the Board. It agreed to recommend to the Board for approval the following terms of reference for the Committee:

- review the operation of the assessment of specialist IMGs (both area of need and comparability specialist assessment) and make recommendations to the Medical Board of Australia
- consider, consult with stakeholders and in particular specialist colleges, and make recommendations to the Medical Board of Australia about policy issues that arise in relation to the assessment of specialist IMGs (both area of need and comparability specialist assessment)
- communicate policy decisions about the assessment of specialist IMGs to relevant stakeholders
- enhance communication and dialogue between all major stakeholders
- explore options for sharing resources in the assessment of specialist IMGs (both area of need and comparability specialist assessment)
- monitor and report to the Board on the assessment of specialist IMGs, including reporting on activity and issues arising
- coordinate the publication of guidelines for applicants and colleges for the assessment of specialist IMGs.

Specialist Assessment Process

The Committee acknowledged that due to the particular nature of specialist medical practice the assessment of specialist IMGs is individualised and tailored to the individual specialist IMG. The assessment of specialist IMGs is a complex process involving interaction with various agencies including the Australian Medical Council, the specialist colleges and the Medical Board of Australia at various stages of the process.

The Committee looked at ways in which the process could be improved and streamlined without impacting on the standards required to ensure that only IMGs who are suitably trained and qualified to practise in a competent and ethical manner are registered. The Committee also looked to the recommendations made in the report by the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Health and Ageing on the inquiry into the registration processes and support for overseas trained doctors for any additional views on how the process could be improved.

Future work plan

Following consideration of the issues raised about the current assessment process, the Committee agreed to a work plan which included:

1. Engaging with the operational staff of the AMC, specialist colleges and the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency to review how the assessment process and outcomes are being applied
2. Defining the requirements of the specialist assessment pathway and simplifying the process where possible. This will include a review of documentation requirements with the aim of reducing duplication of the documents required to be provided by IMGs to the AMC, specialist colleges and the Board
3. Investigating the feasibility and utility of a central repository for documents provided by IMGs so documents only need to be provided once and accessed by authorised agencies
4. Improving communications so stakeholders can better understand processes for specialist IMG assessment.

Dr Joanna Flynn AM
Chair, National Specialist IMG Committee

11 April 2012