Specialist Recognition Pathway for International Medical Graduates

Introduction

It is not possible to practice as a specialist radiologist or radiation oncologist in Australia without undertaking the Australian Medical Council (AMC) Specialist Pathway. This pathway enables International Medical Graduates (IMGs) to have their training, qualifications and experience assessed for comparability to an Australian-trained specialist.

In New Zealand, the Medical Council of New Zealand refers IMG applications to the College for advice and recommendation as to whether the applicant should be granted vocational registration and under what conditions, if any.

This process is different to the area of need assessment process whereby an IMG is assessed for his/her suitability for a specified position in a designated area of need with limited registration. IMGs who would like to work as a specialist in an area of need position must undertake the area of need pathway through their prospective employer.

It is important to note that the College solely assesses the comparability to the skills, qualifications and experience of an Australian trained specialist and cannot guarantee employment. It is up to the individual to arrange their employment in Australia and New Zealand.

Initial Step

IMG applicants who do not hold the AMC Certificate or a primary medical degree from an Australian university and who want their specialist qualifications assessed must first apply to the AMC (www.amc.org.au) for initial assessment.

If the IMG obtained their primary medical degree in Australia, but gained their specialist radiology / radiation oncology training overseas, they are not required to go through the AMC and can proceed to be interviewed. Please download the direct entry application form from the website and contact the College directly to arrange an assessment.

All relevant documentation and qualifications are checked through the International Credentials Service (EICS) of the Educational Commission for the Foreign Medical graduates (ECFMG). If the applicant meets the basic eligibility criteria, the AMC will refer the application to RANZCR to determine whether that applicant’s qualifications and professional experience are comparable to those of an Australian-trained specialist. Once a satisfactory determination from the AMC is received, the College sends the appropriate application form to the applicant and requests the AMC Form SC and the College assessment fee.

The College must receive the RANZCR application form and AMC Form SC within a 2 year period from the date sent. Beyond that time, the applicant will need to reapply to the AMC for specialist assessment as the application will have lapsed.

Fees

The fee for specialist recognition applications for comparability is $5000 (GST exempt) and this should be paid on the application being forwarded to the College for assessment.

If an applicant has applied for an area of need position, they will be assessed for comparability at the same time and the area of need fee applies ($5000, GST exempt).

The fee covers administrative costs, document processing, document verification, interview preparation and assessor costs.
The RANZCR accepts Bank Drafts, Cheques, Money Drafts, all in Australian Dollars, and MasterCard, Visa, Amex and Diners. Please contact the College beforehand if you require a tax invoice for payment.

The Interview

The RANZCR will advise in writing the next step of the assessment process, being the face-to-face interview. The purpose of the application and interview process is to provide a fair and transparent opportunity for the College to make a proper assessment of the applicants’ qualifications, training and experience.

The interview is conducted by two Fellows of the College, both of whom are trained assessors. All applicants are interviewed face-to-face (no telephone or video interviews are conducted). While the College endeavours to interview applicants and provide a final recommendation within a 10 - 12 week period, this is not always possible as in many cases, the applicant is not in Australia during this time.

All specialist recognition interviews are conducted at the RANZCR Sydney office, Level 9, 51 Druitt Street, Sydney on pre-determined days with the dates available on the College website.

The interview is a structured and thorough process that provides an opportunity for the panel to:

- explain the assessment process;
- clarify the applicant's training and experience;
- determine the applicant's suitability for practice in Australia

It is an opportunity for the applicant to:

- detail and explain previous training and working experience.
- ask any questions of the panel about the assessment process.

Applicants are required to arrive for the interview no later than 10 minutes prior to the start of the interview. (If you are not able to attend please contact the College as soon as practical). The interviews are scheduled to run for approximately 1 hour.

If for some reason you cannot make the interview, another interview can be scheduled through the College for a later date (it should be made aware that a re-schedule of an interview in many cases cannot be sooner than 4 weeks later).

Specialist Short Term (Locum) Positions

A specialist may be required as a locum in a practice not deemed as an area of need. In these circumstances, the applicant must still apply through the AMC specialist recognition pathway.

If the contract period is less than six (6) months duration, the IMG Committee Chair and Chief Censor will consider the nature of the position and the appropriate process to be followed.

Any position greater than six (6) months duration will be treated as a standard specialist recognition application.

Recommendations of the Interview Panel

The interview panel will determine if the IMG is substantially comparable, partially comparable or not comparable.

If Substantially comparable to an Australian-trained specialist, the applicant is required to take up an appointment in a specialist (non area of need) position under supervision and undertake a peer-assessment in the work place.
If **Partially** comparable –

a) **Radiology** - the applicant is required to commence the College Part 2 examinations within three (3) years of the specialist assessment; or

(b) **Radiation Oncology** - the applicant is required either:
   i. To undertake a prescribed period of supervised training in an accredited training site¹ not exceeding two years and to sit and pass the College Phase 2 examinations; or
   ii. To sit and pass the College Phase 2 examinations without additional training.

If **Not** comparable, the applicant is referred back to the AMC where they may proceed down one of their pathways leading to general registration: -

   i) Competent Authority
   ii) Standard pathway (work-place based assessment) or
   iii) Standard pathway (AMC examination) – existing process

They may then compete for a training position along with other medical graduates.

There is one other existing pathway for those that are substantially comparable - **International Recognition**, where an individual applies for admission to Fellowship of the College on the basis of International Recognition. They are of an extremely high caliber; have an extensive record of publications, presentations, recipient of academic awards and hold a high level academic appointment. They are interviewed by the Chief Censor and a Councillor and, if successful, are granted specialist recognition. Admission to Fellowship under this provision is recommended only upon taking up a position in Australia or New Zealand.

An applicant who wishes to be considered for this pathway will need to notify the College in the first instance.

¹ Can be fully or partially accredited, or provisionally (with approval)
Undertaking Further Training and Learning - Radiology

During the specialist assessment, there may have been deficiencies in the IMG’s training and/or experience identified and a recommendation to address these deficiencies prior to sitting the FRANZCR Part 2 examinations.

Below is a listed of learning resources available (but not limited) to the IMGs that the College has to offer in order to supplement their preparation for the examinations:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning</th>
<th>Details</th>
<th>Link</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Radiology: Beyond a Textbook</td>
<td>DVD with spoken commentary containing &gt; 2000 images individually described. Compiled by Prof Nina Sacharias.</td>
<td><a href="http://www.radiologybeyondatextbook.com">www.radiologybeyondatextbook.com</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Learning Management System (through the RANZCR Learning Portal)</td>
<td>The RANZCR Learning Portal is comprised of various systems to assist members in their learning including a Learning Management System (LMS). The LMS will be the central location for various learning opportunities, including a library of educational resources and online learning (e-learning) courses funded by the Rural Health Continuing Education (RHCE) grant.</td>
<td><a href="http://www.ranzcr.edu.au/members/ranzcr-learning-portal">http://www.ranzcr.edu.au/members/ranzcr-learning-portal</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RANZCR Part 2 e-examination</td>
<td>The radiology and pathology multiple choice question exams are offered in an electronic format at various Cliftons’ Training Centres. To assist candidates with their exam preparation the following three resources have been produced: e-MCQ User Guide e-MCQ Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) e-MCQ video demonstration</td>
<td><a href="http://www.ranzcr.edu.au/training/exams/radiology-examinations/part-2-examination">http://www.ranzcr.edu.au/training/exams/radiology-examinations/part-2-examination</a></td>
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Whilst not mandatory, it is strongly advisable to obtain the recommended training as per the outcome letter in order to maximise the likelihood of clearing the examinations within four (4) attempts.

The training is not required to be undertaken in an accredited training facility, however a training position in a training hospital is highly desirable in order to increase the chance of success. The College plays no part in employment matters – this is solely up to the individual practices and training departments and you will need to contact the relevant departments directly to discuss obtaining a position.

If a training position is obtained, as part of the mechanism to grant special purpose registration from the Medical Board of Australia (Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) - http://www.medicalboard.gov.au/), the employing practice or hospital will need to obtain a letter of support from the College to approve the training position.

In regards to a hospital training position, the role of the College is to determine whether the position is a genuine training position and whether the training program is appropriate for the applicant according to the outcome from the College assessment.

The hospital must submit the following documents:

- a position description and/or detailed training program
- a written statement that the appointment will not disadvantage any trainees currently registered in the College's training program
- the applicant's current curriculum vitae, including evidence of post graduate training and/or work experience in radiology or radiation oncology since the College assessment
- completed relevant RANZCR application form. This is available from the website at: http://www.ranzcr.edu.au/img-a-aon/resources/forms-and-fees
- completed AHPRA form ALPS-03

If the above criteria are satisfied, RANZCR will provide a formal letter of support which is necessary to obtain conditional registration by AHPRA to undertake the training.

Similarly, a practice should submit a comprehensive training plan for the applicant to the College to ensure that the plan is appropriate for them.

**Undertaking Further Training – Radiation Oncology**

It may be recommended that you require further training before you will be permitted to sit the FRANZCR Phase 2 examination. This training is to be undertaken in an accredited department in Australia or New Zealand. The period of time required can range from 2 to 24 months. Accredited radiology training positions are highly competitive. In many circumstances, you will be competing alongside Australian/New Zealand trained graduates. There are many more applicants than positions available and it should be noted that it may take time to secure a position. In some circumstances, the position may be unpaid. The College accredits the positions, but does not determine their numbers or locations. Similarly, the College does not have a role in employment matters – this is solely up to training departments. You will need to contact departments directly to discuss obtaining a position.

A list of accredited departments for radiation oncology training can be found on the College website at http://www.ranzcr.edu.au/training/radiation-oncology.

All enquiries in regard to training positions should be made in writing to the Head of Department. Once a training position is obtained, as part of the mechanism to grant special purpose registration from the Medical Board of Australia (Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) - http://www.medicalboard.gov.au/), the employing hospital will need to obtain a letter of support from the College to approve the training position, provided that the criteria as mentioned above are met.
Peer Review Assessment
Where the initial assessment by the assessment panel deems that an applicant is suitable to work as a specialist without having to sit the FRANZCR Part 2 or Phase 2 examinations, a peer review assessment will be required prior to the RANZCR recommending specialist registration without conditions. The assessors will have taken into consideration the training program and subsequent work experience undertaken by the IMG before coming to Australia. As a minimum, the following criteria apply (but are not restricted to):

- the training and assessment program is nationally based where the goals & objectives are clearly defined;
- the program is a minimum of four years and preferably five years in length;
- the training program is predominantly clinically based;
- training is conducted under supervision;
- objective written and clinical assessments are included in the program;
- the qualification obtained or conferred is nationally recognized;
- there is Continuing Professional Development activity;
- the training, assessment and CPD programs leading to nationally recognized qualification are accredited by an external assessing body;
- there is ongoing performance appraisal in the workplace;
- the applicant has had a minimum of five (5) years post Fellowship experience in a consultant position and/or held academic posts (senior lecturer or above) at nationally recognised institutions;
- The applicant has published a minimum of five (5) articles in peer reviewed journals. The articles can include an original manuscript of publishable quality;
- The consultant position being sought must be based in a facility with an accredited imaging/radiation oncology department.

After the interview, the assessment panel will make a recommendation to the IMG Committee who, in turn, will refer the application to the Education and Training Committee.

The purpose of the peer review is two-fold. It allows the IMG to gain experience in working in the Australian healthcare system and it also allows currently practising specialists to interact with the IMG in a clinical context, to determine if he or she is practising competently prior to recommendation of specialist registration. In addition, the location of the consultant position in an accredited training department benefits the IMG in providing the necessary support and guidance, where required.

The peer review assessment must include:

- Practise under supervision/guidance of senior radiologist/radiation oncologist within institution or at a nearby site; and
- A review to occur in conjunction with the Branch Education Officer or others as determined by the Chief Censor and/or Education and training Committee.

The period of review is 12 - 24 months, as determined on the basis of the initial assessment and interview. During this time the IMG will obtain limited registration (supervised practice) through AHPRA in order to work under peer review.

Periodic assessments will be required at times nominated in the assessment report, with a more detailed multi-source feedback required at the end of the peer review period.

Subject to satisfying the peer-review assessment(s), the College would then recommend that the IMG be granted full specialist recognition without conditions. The outcomes of the peer review reports will be communicated to the Medical Board of Australia by the College.

It is also required that the applicant working under peer review become a member of the College as an Educational Affiliate. Membership entitles you to receive –

- the College’s quarterly Newsletter;
- “Australasian Radiology”, the College’s quarterly journal;
- access to the members section of the RANZCR web page (via a password system);
- access to participate in the RANZCR Continuing Professional Development Program
- other mailings and relevant correspondence
Subscriptions are paid annually and the memorandum of fees is available from the College website.

6. Eligibility for Fellowship

There are a number of pathways towards Fellowship that are available for IMGs, depending on the assessment undertaken for specialist recognition. An IMG may be eligible for College Fellowship if they have:

1. Entered the College training program in Australia, New Zealand or Singapore and sat and passed all College examinations; or

2. Been assessed as ‘partially’ comparable to an Australian or New Zealand trained Fellow of the College, sat and passed the College Part 2/Phase 2 examinations, and have had a minimum of five (5) years full time radiology or radiation oncology training and experience (or equivalent); or

3. Been assessed as ‘substantially’ comparable to an Australian or New Zealand trained Fellow of the College from the evidence available and interview; and proceeded to specialist recognition under peer review; and was eligible for appointment to a specialist position (located at a training facility fully accredited by RANZCR with no conditions) to work under supervision/peer review for a period of up to 24 months with appropriate professional/peer assessment; and upon satisfactory completion of this period and the required assessments, the IMG was recommended for unconditional specialist recognition; and completed a minimum of two years practice as a specialist in Australia; or

4. Qualifications and experience assessed by the College to be of ‘international reputation’, and are appointed to a very senior academic appointment (without a requirement to pass the College Part 2/Phase 2 examinations).

Access to Medicare Benefits

It should be noted that under the terms of the Commonwealth Health Insurance Act, practitioners who did not obtain their primary medical degree in Australia may be restricted in their ability to access Medicare benefits even after obtaining Fellowship, with the exception of those doctors working in designated area of need. For further information regarding access to Medicare Benefits, refer to the Medicare Australia website at: www.humanservices.gov.au or the fact sheet on the DoctorConnect website at: www.doctorconnect.gov.au/internet/otd/publishing.nsf/Content/section19AB.

IMG Assessment in New Zealand

The IMG assessment process in New Zealand is different from that in Australia. Further details on the NZ assessment process can be found at: http://www.ranzcr.edu.au/img-a-aon/specialist-recognition/new-zealand.

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2 For the RANZCR area of need assessment process, please refer to http://www.ranzcr.edu.au/img-a-naon/area-of-need