

Registration standard: Specialist registration

21 October 2024

Summary

This registration standard sets out the eligibility requirements of the Medical Board of Australia (the Board) for specialist registration as a medical practitioner.

Does this standard apply to me?

This standard applies to individuals who are applying:

- for specialist registration, or
- to renew their specialist registration.

Requirements

The eligibility and qualification requirements for specialist registration are outlined in sections 57 and 58 of the National Law. Specialist registration is only available in the specialties that have been approved by the Ministerial Council.

Eligibility for specialist registration

Under section 57(1) of the National Law, you are eligible for specialist registration in a recognised specialty in Australia if you:

- are qualified for registration in the specialty; and
- have successfully completed –
 - any period of supervised practice in the specialty required by an approved registration standard for the health profession; or
 - any examination or assessment required by an approved registration standard for the health profession to assess the individual's ability to competently and safely practise the specialty;and
- are a suitable person to hold registration in the health profession; and
- are not disqualified under this Law or a law of a co-regulatory jurisdiction from applying for registration, or being registered, in the specialty; and
- meet any other requirements for registration stated in an approved registration standard.

Qualifications for specialist registration

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

a. an approved qualification for the specialty

Approved qualifications are obtained by completing an Australian Medical Council (AMC) accredited program of study for the profession. The Board approves the accredited program of study as providing a qualification for the purposes of specialist registration.

A list of approved qualifications for specialist registration is published at www.medicalboard.gov.au.

b. another qualification the Board considers to be substantially equivalent, or based on similar competencies to an approved qualification for the specialty

Some specialist international medical graduates may qualify for specialist registration through the Expedited Specialist pathway. A list of international specialist medical qualifications that the Board has assessed to be substantially equivalent or based on similar competencies to an approved specialist qualification is published at www.medicalboard.gov.au.

c. a qualification which is not referred to in paragraph (a) or (b) above, relevant to a recognised specialty and have successfully completed an examination or other assessment required by the Board for the purpose of registration in the specialty

Some specialist international medical graduates who are not qualified under paragraph (a) or (b) above, may qualify for specialist registration through the Specialist pathway. Individuals will qualify for specialist registration through this pathway if they hold a qualification relevant to the specialty **and after** they have successfully completed an examination or assessment required by the Board.

d. 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.

If an individual was qualified and previously held specialist registration under the National Law or under a corresponding prior Act, they are qualified for specialist registration.

Competency requirements for specialist registration

To satisfy the requirements of section 57(1)(b) of the National Law, you will have successfully completed a minimum of six months full-time equivalent supervised practice approved by the Board, within your specialty in Australia.

This may include supervised practice in the specialty that has already been completed:

- as part of an accredited program of study that provides an approved qualification for the specialty, or
- as part of the requirements of the Specialist pathway.

The Board may also take into account any other periods of supervised practice successfully completed in your specialty in Australia.

Other requirements for specialist registration

Under section 57(1)(e) of the National Law, you will:

- meet the requirements of the following approved registration standards:
 - English language skills
 - recency of practice
 - professional indemnity insurance
 - criminal history, and
 - continuing professional development
- have successfully completed a Board approved orientation to the Australian healthcare system and cultural safety education.

The Board has published further guidance on how you can satisfy the eligibility requirements for specialist registration at www.medicalboard.gov.au.

What must I do?

When you apply for specialist registration

Under section 77 of the National Law, the Board requires applications for specialist registration to be accompanied by:

1. evidence that you are eligible for specialist registration
2. evidence that you are qualified for specialist registration by:
 - a. being awarded an approved qualification for the specialty, or
 - b. holding a qualification that the Board considers to be substantially equivalent, or based on similar competencies to an approved qualification for the specialty, or
 - c. holding a qualification other than that which is referred under paragraphs (a) and (b) above, that is relevant to a recognised specialty and evidence that you have successfully completed an examination, period of supervised practice or other assessment required by the Board for the purpose of registration in the specialty, or
 - d. 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
3. evidence that you meet the requirements in the Board's approved registration standards for:
 - a. English language skills
 - b. recency of practice
 - c. professional indemnity insurance
 - d. criminal history, and
 - e. continuing professional development
4. proof of meeting the identity requirements as published on the Board or Ahpra websites
5. evidence of having been awarded a primary degree in medicine and surgery, after completing a course of study at a medical school listed in publications approved by the AMC and/or Board. A 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. evidence that you have applied for, or have the results of, primary source verification of the medical qualifications you are relying on to support your eligibility for registration, by an authority(ies) approved by the Board. This includes your primary medical degree and any relevant postgraduate specialist qualifications obtained outside of Australia or New Zealand
7. a curriculum vitae that meets the Ahpra standard format
8. evidence of your registration history as a health practitioner. If you are currently registered or have previously been registered overseas as a health practitioner, you must arrange for a Certificate of Registration Status or Certificate of Good Standing to be sent directly to Ahpra from each registration authority you have been registered with in the previous 10 years. The certificates must be provided in accordance with the Board's and Ahpra's published requirements
9. evidence that you have undertaken and satisfactorily completed a Board approved orientation to the Australian healthcare system and cultural safety education
10. evidence that you have successfully completed any required period of supervised practice in the specialty
11. evidence that you have completed any additional requirements that the Board considers to be necessary to practise the specialty.

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

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, some of the documentation requirements in this standard may be waived.

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

When you apply for 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 of section 109 of the National Law
2. demonstrate satisfactory compliance with any conditions or undertakings imposed on your registration
3. provide the Board with any further information it requires, which may include undergoing an investigation, examination or assessment consistent with section 80 of the National Law, to decide your application for renewal of specialist registration.

If your registration is subject to conditions that require you to successfully complete a period of supervised practice in Australia, the Board may decide to refuse your application for renewal of specialist registration if your performance is deemed to be below the level expected, or you are unable to successfully complete the period of supervised practice within the required timeframe.

Are there exemptions to this standard?

Approved qualification for the specialty

You may be exempt from the requirement to complete six months full-time equivalent supervised practice within your specialty if you have been awarded an approved qualification for the specialty completed in Australia or internationally.

Expedited Specialist pathway

If you are qualified for specialist registration through the Expedited Specialist pathway but have not completed the required period of supervised practice, the Board may impose conditions on your registration under section 83 of the National Law to meet this requirement.

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. the Board or an authority in a co-regulatory jurisdiction may take action against you under Part 8 of the National Law if you breach any of the requirements of this registration standard or any of the Board's standards, codes or guidelines. Registration standards, codes or guidelines may be used in disciplinary hearings as evidence of what constitutes appropriate professional conduct or practice for the health profession (section 41 of the National Law).

Period of specialist registration

Specialist registration may be granted for a maximum period of 12 months. All registrants will be required to apply to renew their specialist registration annually. All specialist registrations will have a common end date of 30 September each year. The Board will initially grant specialist registration for the period until 30 September.

More information

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 hold specialist registration only, your name is only recorded on the *Specialists register*. You may opt to surrender your specialist registration if:

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

Limited scope of practice

If you hold specialist registration only, 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 has specialist registration only is limited to their specialty.

The Board may impose conditions on the registration of a specialist to restrict their scope of practice to a specified area of practice within a recognised specialty or field of specialty practice. The conditions will appear on the *Specialists register*.

Authority

This registration standard was approved by the Ministerial Council on 1 October 2024.

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

Definitions

Approved qualification means a qualification obtained by completing an approved program of study for the profession. As per section 58(a) of the National Law, the approved qualification for specialist registration is fellowship of a specialist medical college accredited by the AMC.

The Ministerial Council has approved a range of specialties for medicine. Some specialties also have specialty fields. The approved list of specialties and specialty fields are published on the Board's website at www.medicalboard.gov.au.

Cultural safety is defined for the National Scheme:

Principles

The following principles inform the definition of cultural safety:

- Prioritising the Ministerial Council's goal to achieve healthcare free of racism supported by the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan
- Improved health service provision supported by the Safety and Quality Health Service Standards User Guide for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health
- Provision of a rights-based approach to healthcare supported by the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
- Ongoing commitment to learning, education and training.

Definition

Cultural safety is determined by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals, families and communities. Culturally safe practice is the ongoing critical reflection of health practitioner knowledge, skills, attitudes, practising behaviours and power differentials in delivering safe, accessible and responsive healthcare free of racism.

How to

To ensure culturally safe and respectful practice, medical practitioners must:

- a. Acknowledge colonisation and systemic racism, social, cultural, behavioural and economic factors which impact individual and community health
- b. Acknowledge and address individual racism, their own biases, assumptions, stereotypes and prejudices and provide care that is holistic, free of bias and racism
- c. Recognise the importance of self-determined decision-making, partnership and collaboration in healthcare which is driven by the individual, family and community
- d. Foster a safe working environment through leadership to support the rights and dignity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and colleagues.

Expedited Specialist pathway is the pathway which enables specialist international medical graduates to qualify for specialist registration on the basis of holding a qualification that the Board considers to be substantially equivalent, or based on similar competencies to an approved qualification for the specialty.

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: 21 October 2024

This standard replaces the previously published registration standard dated 15 February 2018.