# Medical Board of Australia

Report on specialist medical colleges' specialist pathway data

Reporting period: 1 January 2020 - 31 December 2020



Medical Board Ahpra

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#### 1 Introduction

The specialist pathway is for international medical graduates (IMGs) who are overseas-trained specialists seeking specialist registration in Australia (specialist recognition) or who are applying for an area of need specialist level position in Australia.

The Medical Board of Australia (the Board) has developed guidance for the specialist medical colleges on the current specialist pathway assessment process. The *Good practice guidelines for the specialist international medical graduate assessment process* aim to support specialist medical colleges in their role of assessing specialist international medical graduates. The guidelines were in effect from 2 November 2015 to 31 December 2020.

Following a review, the Board's *Good practice* guidelines have been replaced by the *Standards* for specialist medical college assessment of specialist international medical graduates. The *Standards* came into effect on 1 January 2021 and all IMGs who apply for the specialist pathway from this date will be assessed against the new *Standards*.

More information about the specialist pathway and the *Good practice guidelines* and the *Standards* are available on the <u>Board's website</u>.

#### 1.1 Reporting requirements

Reporting is annual by calendar year. This report covers the period 1 January – 31 December 2020.

Previous reports are available at:

www.medicalboard.gov.au/Registration/Internationa I-Medical-Graduates/Specialist-Pathway/Guidesand-reports

All colleges report against the same metrics. The data requested for 2020 includes:

- number and type of applications received in 2020 (application for specialist recognition, area of need or combined (specialist recognition and area of need))
- applicant's (IMG) country of training (for applications received in 2020)
- number of applications received which were incomplete on first submission
- number of applications withdrawn by the applicant (IMG)
- outcome of college's interim comparability assessment (i.e. IMG found to be not comparable, partially comparable or substantially comparable)
- outcome of college's area of need assessment (i.e. IMG found to be suitable or not suitable for the area of need position)

- outcome of final assessment for specialist recognition (i.e. IMG recommended for specialist recognition or not recommended for specialist recognition)
- time from interim assessment to final assessment (from the date of decision of interim assessment, to the date the decision of final assessment is made by college)
- total time on the specialist pathway (from the date that a complete application is received, to the date of final assessment decision (i.e. recommended/not recommended for specialist recognition)). This is a new metric
- number of fellowships awarded to IMGs on the specialist pathway
- number of appeals of college decision by IMGs.
- 1.2 Benchmarks

Since 2016, colleges also report against a number of performance benchmarks. These include:

Metric	Benchmark
Time to first available assessment interview for interim assessment <i>From the date a complete</i>	Interview available within 3 months
application is received to the date of first available interview that is offered.	
Time from interview to interim assessment decision	Interim assessment completed within 14
From the date the IMG attends interview to the date the decision of interim assessment is made by college.	days after interview
Time for specialist recognition interim assessment From the date a complete application is received to the date the decision of interim	Interim assessment completed within three months and 14 days
assessment is made by college.	
Time for area of need assessment	Area of need assessment
From the date a complete application is received to the date the decision of suitability for area of need position is made by college. Excludes combined assessments.	completed within two months

#### 1.3 Compliance measures

Colleges also reported against a set of compliance measures to confirm compliance with the *Good practice guidelines*. These include:

Metric	Compliance measure
Period of practice required by the college for substantially comparable IMGs	Up to 12 months FTE peer review
Period of practice required by	Up to 24 months
the college for partially	FTE supervised
comparable IMGs	practice
Requirement for substantially comparable IMGs to complete an examination	Only partially comparable IMGs may be required to complete an examination
Maximum timeframes for	Up to two years to
completing college	complete up to 12
requirements for substantially	months FTE peer
comparable IMGs	review
Maximum timeframes for	Up to four years to
completing college	complete 24 months
requirements for partially	FTE supervised
comparable IMGs	practice

# 1.4 How to interpret the data

The specialist college data report is a report of all college 'activities' during the period and reflects point in time reporting as IMGs are unlikely to complete all the processes within one reporting period. Therefore, denominators are unable to be defined and percentages cannot be calculated. A college may have more assessment outcomes than applications received for the period.

Delays can occur during the assessment process which are outside the control of the college, for example, an IMG may choose to defer their interview.

The data have been collated and summarised in graphs and tables.

Data are reported as provided by the colleges. Source data are not checked by Ahpra.

# 2 Highlights of the 2020 report

#### 2.1 Effect of COVID-19

The year 2020 was disrupted by a global pandemic caused by COVID-19. The data from colleges shows that COVID-19 had a significant effect on some colleges' specialist pathway processes and the IMGs that they assess.

The data appear to suggest that COVID-19 affected the number of IMGs applying for the specialist pathway. Compared with previous years, some colleges had significantly fewer applicants. However, some colleges experienced similar numbers or an increase.

The data shows that some colleges experienced significant disruption to their specialist pathway assessment processes. Assessing applications took significantly longer at some colleges in 2020. Some colleges reported that fewer IMGs were able to receive their interim assessment outcome, predominantly due to delays in running interviews. Some colleges had fewer IMGs able to finish the specialist pathway, predominantly due to cancelled exams and delayed assessments.

# 2.2 Data highlights

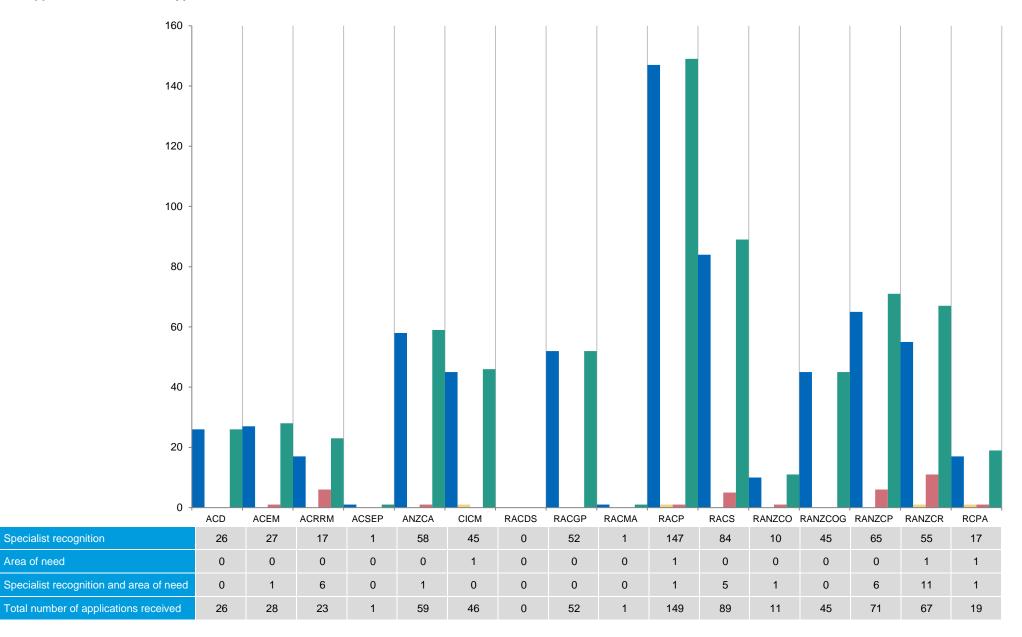
- IMGs have gained their specialist qualifications in a range of countries with highest numbers of applications from United Kingdom, India and South Africa.
- The colleges with the highest number of applications in the twelve-month period were the Royal Australasian College of Physicians (RACP) (149 applications) and the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons (RACS) (89 applications).
- The colleges with the lowest number of applications in the twelve-month period were the Royal Australasian College of Dental Surgeons (RACDS) (zero applications) and the Royal Australasian College of Medical Administrators (RACMA) (one application) and the Australasian College of Sport and Exercise Physicians (one application).
- Across all colleges, 78 per cent of IMGs from the UK and Ireland were assessed as substantially comparable.
- Across all colleges, 98 per cent of IMGs from the UK and Ireland who were assessed as partially comparable or substantially comparable fulfilled the college requirements and were recommended for specialist recognition.
- The majority of applicants for the specialist pathway area of need were found suitable for the position.

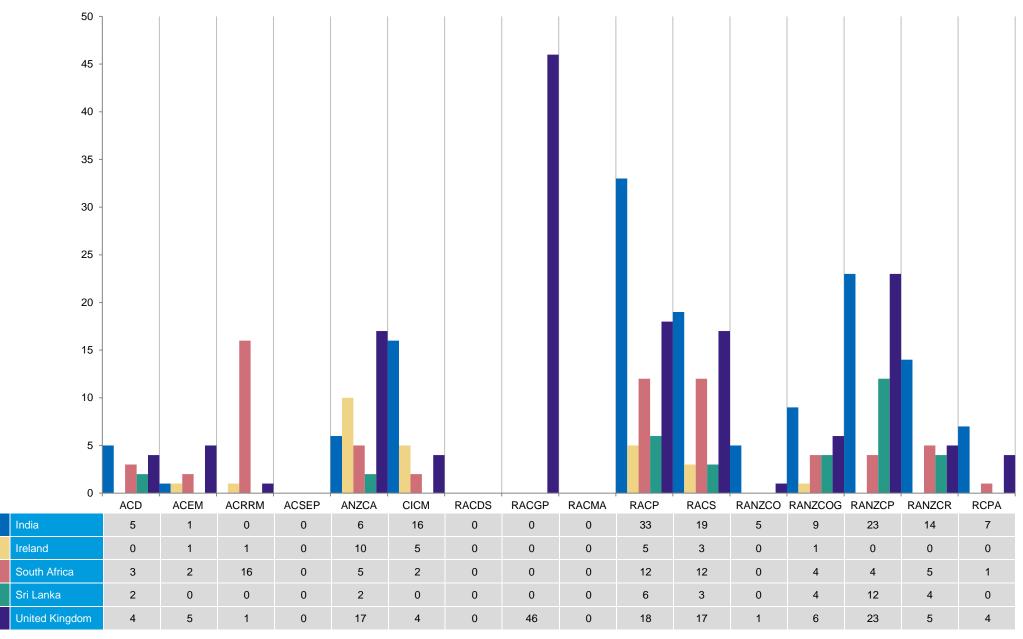
- The majority of requests for review/reconsideration and appeals relate to the interim assessment of comparability (i.e. IMG appealing assessment outcome 'not comparable' or 'partially comparable').
- 2.3 Performance benchmark highlights
- Across all colleges, 64 per cent of IMGs were offered an interview within the benchmark timeframe (three months from submission of a complete application).
- The time taken from the interview to the interim assessment decision varies with some colleges meeting the benchmark for all their IMGs and other colleges outside the benchmark for all their IMGs. For those colleges who don't meet the benchmark for any of their IMGs, the reason this was not met is because of the approval processes required within the college before the decision is confirmed.
- The time for interim assessment was within the benchmark timeframe for 59 per cent of IMGs (three months and 14 days). For those outside the benchmark, it may have been because the IMG chose to delay the interview, or there were delays due to college internal processes.
- Of the three colleges who assessed area of need only applications (excluding combined assessments), all the IMGs received their area of need assessment within the benchmark (two months).
- Across all colleges, all but one IMG received the outcome of their final assessment (recommended or not recommended for specialist recognition) within two months of completing their requirements.
- 2.4 Compliance highlights
- All colleges met the compliance measures for the period of peer review required for substantially comparable IMGs and for the period of supervised practice required for partially comparable IMGs.
- No colleges required their substantially comparable IMGs to complete a formal examination, thereby meeting the compliance measure.
- The majority of IMGs are completing the pathway process within the maximum timeframes set by the Board.
- 2.5 Total time on the pathway
- A new metric introduced in 2020 reports the total time that each IMG was on the specialist pathway, from application to recommendation for specialist recognition.

- Time on the pathway is the result of many factors. Some relate to college processes, such as a prolonged interim assessment. Others relate to factors controlled by the applicant such as the IMG postponing their assessment interview, the IMG having difficulty securing a position and IMG performance issues including failing exams.
- For substantially comparable IMGs (who complete up to 12 months peer review), the total time on the pathway ranged from 'less than one year' to 'six to eight years' with 68 per cent taking less than two years.
- For partially comparable IMGs (who complete up to 24 months supervised practice), the total time on the pathway ranged from 'less than one year' to 'more than eight years' with 65 per cent taking less than four years.

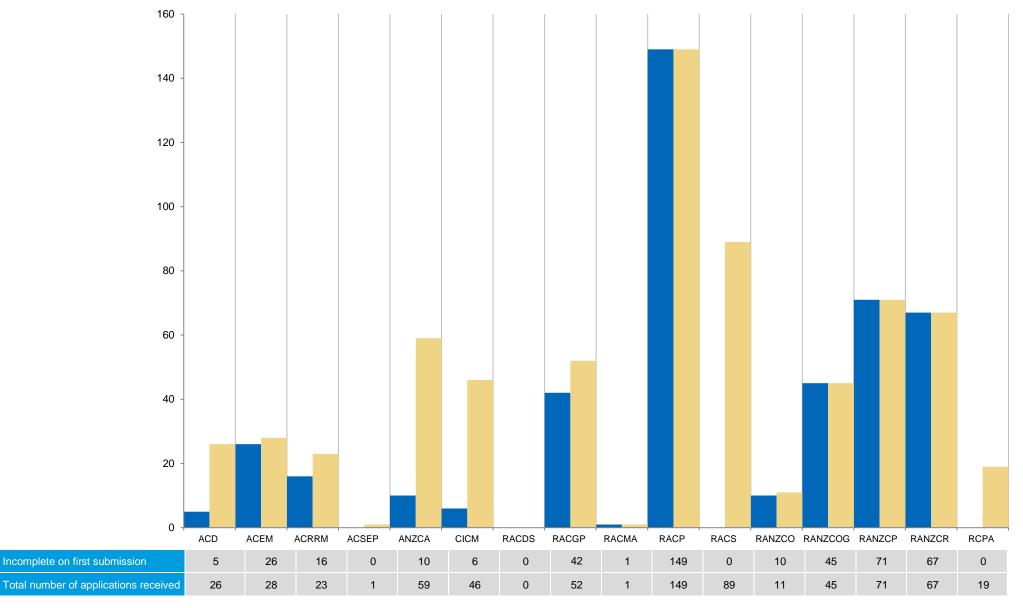
# 3 List of college abbreviations

ACD	Australasian College of Dermatologists
ACEM	Australasian College for Emergency Medicine
ACSEP	Australasian College of Sport and Exercise Physicians
ANZCA	Australian and New Zealand College of Anaesthetists
ACRRM	Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine
CICM	College of Intensive Care Medicine of Australia and New Zealand
RACDS	Royal Australasian College of Dental Surgeons
RACS	Royal Australasian College of Surgeons
RACGP	The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners
RACMA	The Royal Australasian College of Medical Administrators
RACP	The Royal Australasian College of Physicians
RANZCP	The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists
RANZCOG	The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists
RANZCO	The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Ophthalmologists
RANZCR	The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Radiologists
RCPA	The Royal College of Pathologists of Australasia

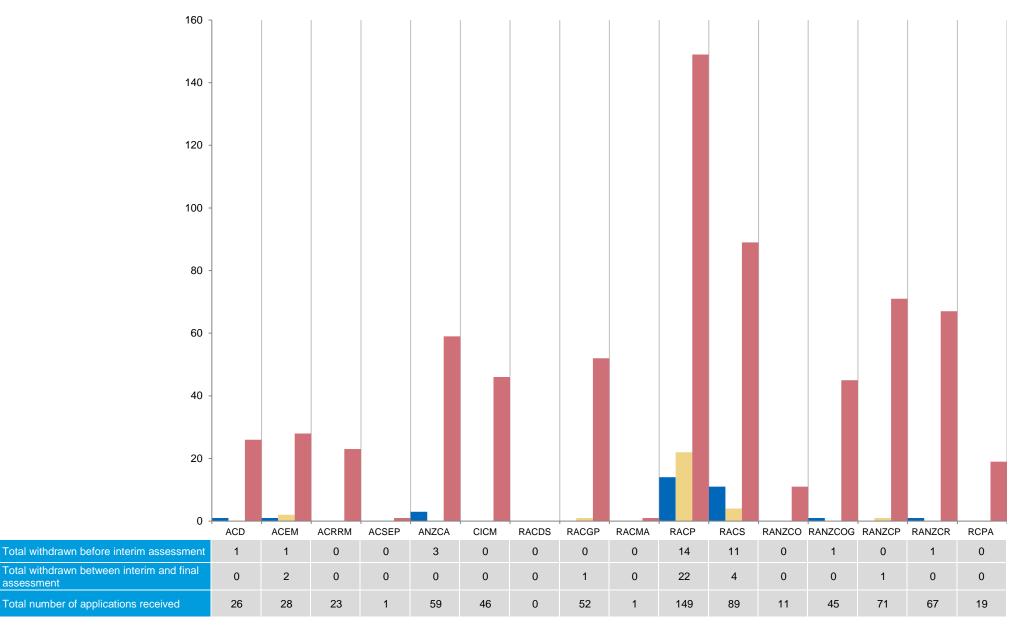




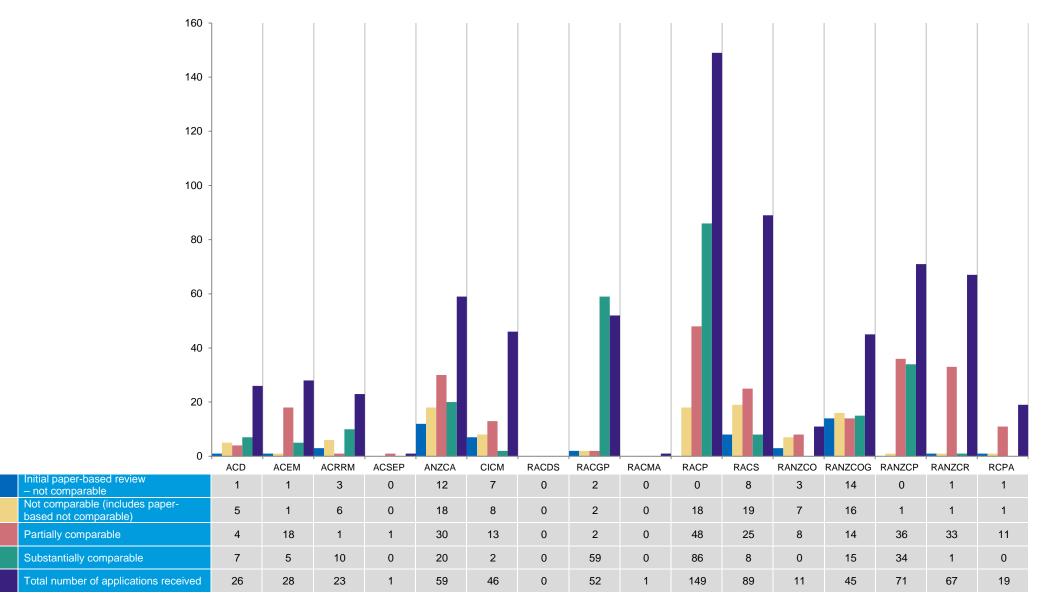
# 4.2 Applications: Top five countries by number of applications received



Note: Some colleges require documentation from a third party for applications to be complete.



Note: Some withdrawls relate to applications received before 2020.

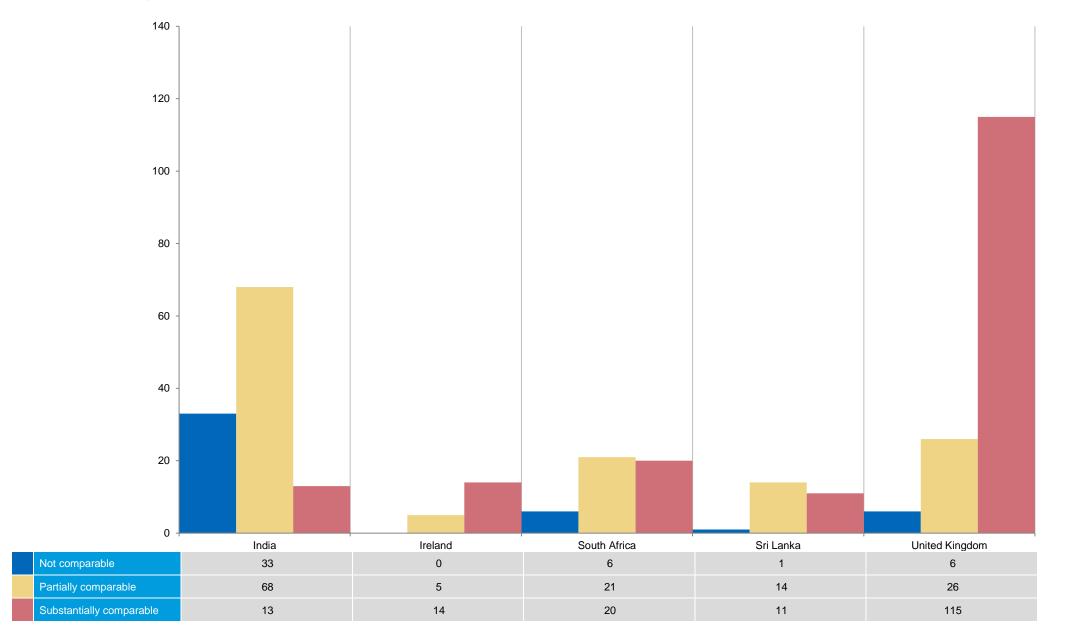


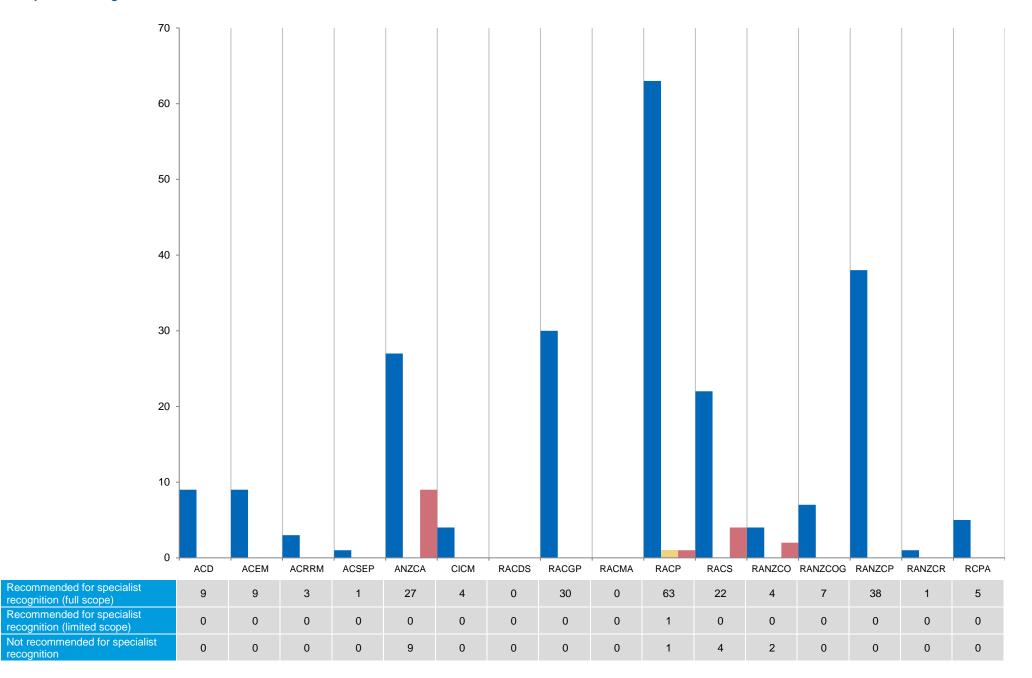
Note: Some colleges allow IMGs who were not comparable after a paper-based assessment to opt for interview. Outcomes of assessment may not total 'Total number of applications received' as some assessments were still in progress.

# 5.1.1 Specialist recognition outcomes: Outcome of interim assessment: By country of highest specialist qualification – all colleges

Country	Not comparable	Partially comparable	Substantially comparable	Country	Not comparable	Partially comparable	Substantially comparable	Country	Not comparable	Partially comparable	
Argentina	1	1	1	Iraq	1	0	1	Poland	0	2	Ì
Austria	0	1	0	Ireland	0	5	14	Qatar	0	4	
Bangladesh	0	2	0	Israel	0	6	1	Saudi Arabia	0	2	
Belgium	0	2	2	Italy	0	3	1	Singapore	1	1	
Brazil	5	6	4	Japan	3	1	1	South Africa	6	21	
Brunei	0	1	0	Jordan	1	3	0	South Korea	0	1	
Canada	0	4	7	Kenya	1	1	0	Spain	2	1	_
Chile	0	1	1	Lebanon	2	0	1	Sri Lanka	1	14	
Colombia	0	1	0	Libya	1	0	0	Sudan	0	1	
Croatia	0	1	0	Lithuania	0	0	1	Sweden	2	1	
Denmark	0	2	1	Malaysia	0	7	2	Switzerland	0	1	
Egypt	2	9	5	Mauritius	1	0	0	Syria	1	2	
France	0	1	0	Nepal	0	1	1	Taiwan	0	1	
Germany	2	0	0	Netherlands	1	4	2	Turkey	2	3	
Greece	1	0	0	New Zealand	0	0	4	United Arab Emirates	0	4	
Hong Kong	1	7	12	Nigeria	2	4	1	United			-
Hungary	1	0	0	Norway	0	0	1	Kingdom	6	26	_
India	33	68	13	Pakistan	7	4	3	United States of America	5	4	
Iran	8	9	6	Philippines	2	4	1	Zimbabwe	1	2	

5.1.2 Specialist recognition outcomes: Outcome of interim assessment: Top five countries by number of applications

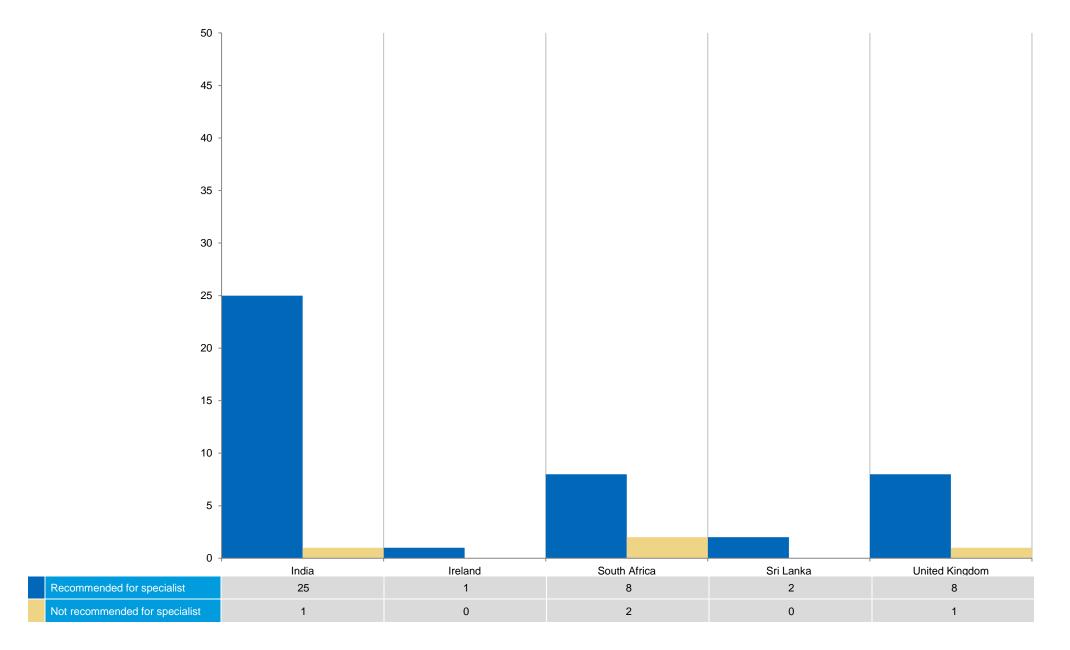




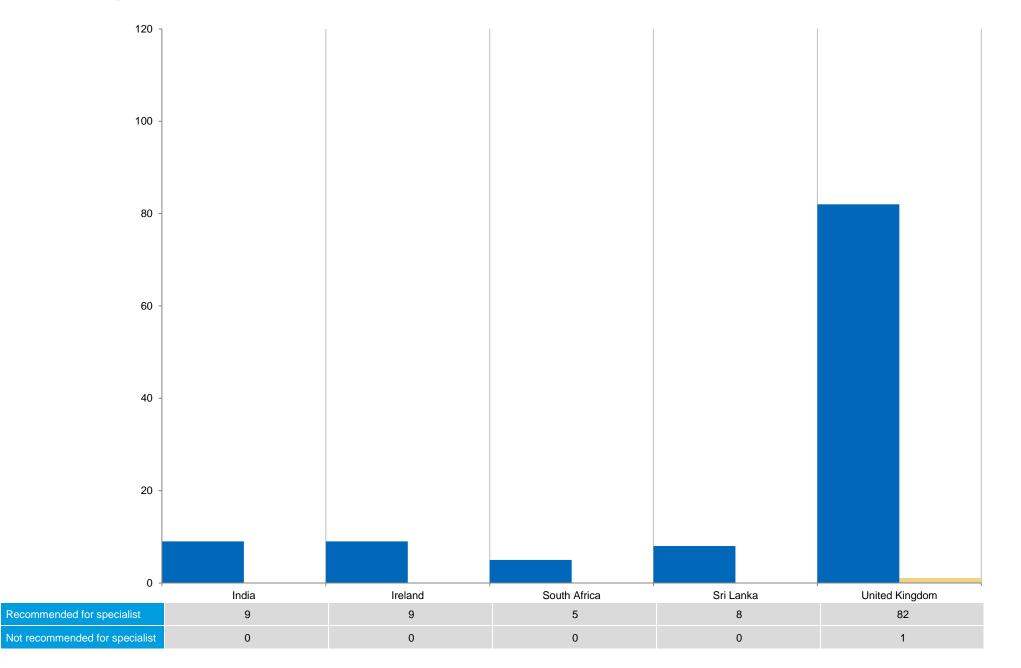
# 5.2.1. Specialist recognition outcomes: Outcome of final assessment: By country of highest specialist qualification - all colleges

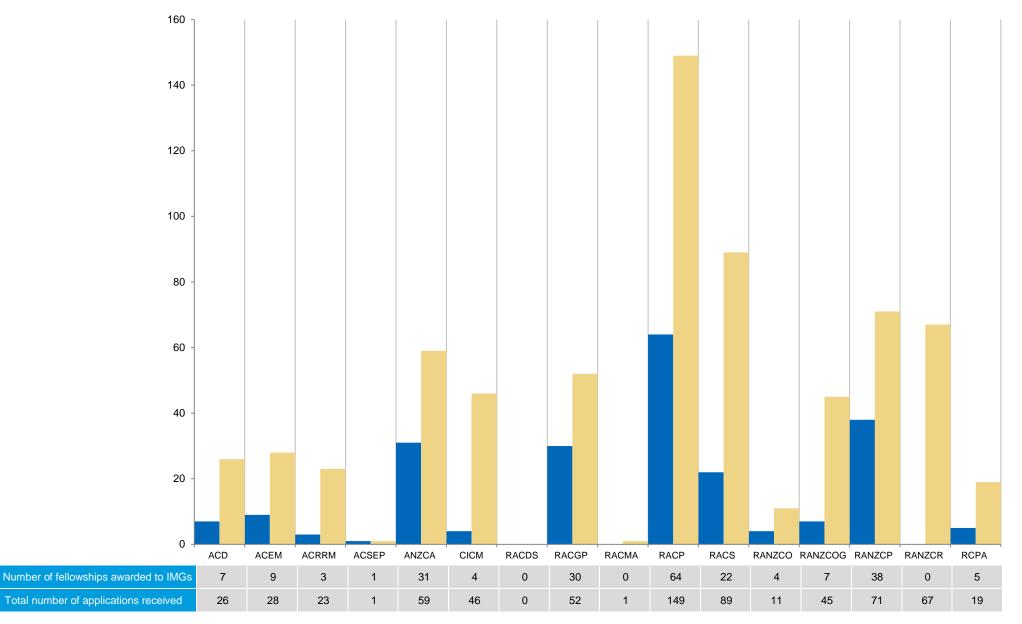
	Partially c	omparable	Substantially comparable		
Country	Recommended	Not recommended	Recommended	Not recommended	
Austria	0	0	1	0	
Belgium	0	0	1	0	
Brazil	3	1	2	0	
Canada	2	0	4	0	
China	0	0	1	0	
Colombia	1	0	0	0	
Denmark	1	0	0	0	
Egypt	0	1	1	0	
France	0	1	1	0	
Germany	2	1	0	0	
Greece	0	0	1	0	
Hong Kong	0	0	5	0	
India	25	1	9	0	
Iran	1	1	2	0	
Ireland	1	0	9	0	
Israel	0	0	1	0	
Italy	1	0	0	0	
Japan	1	2	0	0	
Jordan	0	0	1	0	

	Partially c	omparable	Substantially comparable		
Country	Recommended	Not recommended	Recommended	Not recommended	
Malaysia	3	0	2	0	
Mexico	1	0	1	0	
Netherlands	5	0	0	0	
New Zealand	0	0	3	0	
Pakistan	3	0	1	0	
Philippines	0	0	1	0	
Poland	0	1	0	0	
Romania	1	1	0	0	
Singapore	0	0	3	0	
Slovakia	0	0	4	0	
South Africa	8	2	5	0	
South Korea	0	0	1	0	
Spain	1	0	2	0	
Sri Lanka	2	0	8	0	
Syria	0	0	1	0	
United Kingdom	8	1	82	1	
United States of America	2	1	6	1	
Yugoslavia	1	0	0	0	



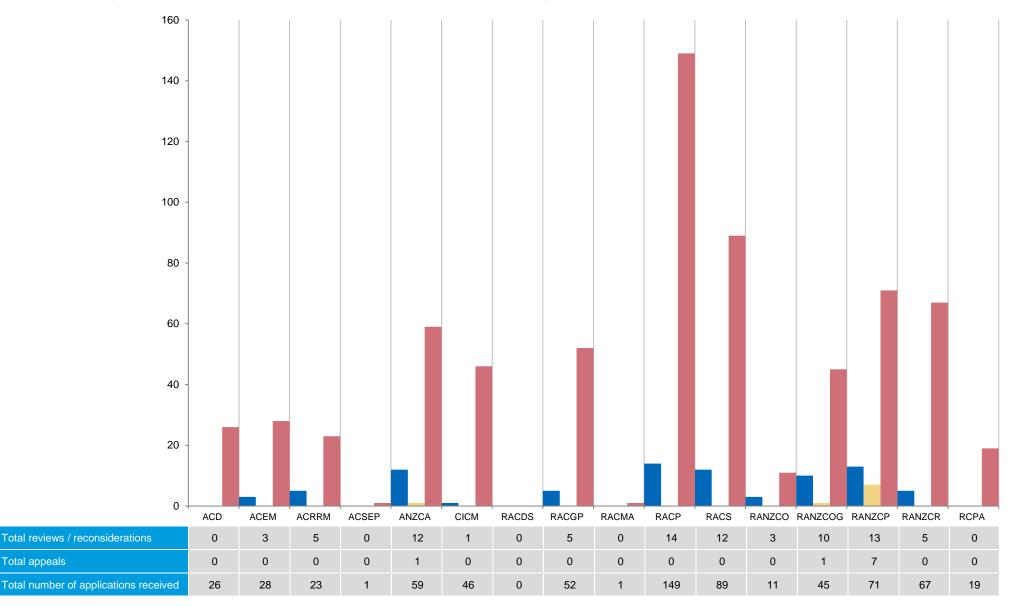
5.2.3 Specialist recognition outcomes: Outcome of final assessment: Top five countries by number of final assessments – interim assessment – substantially comparable





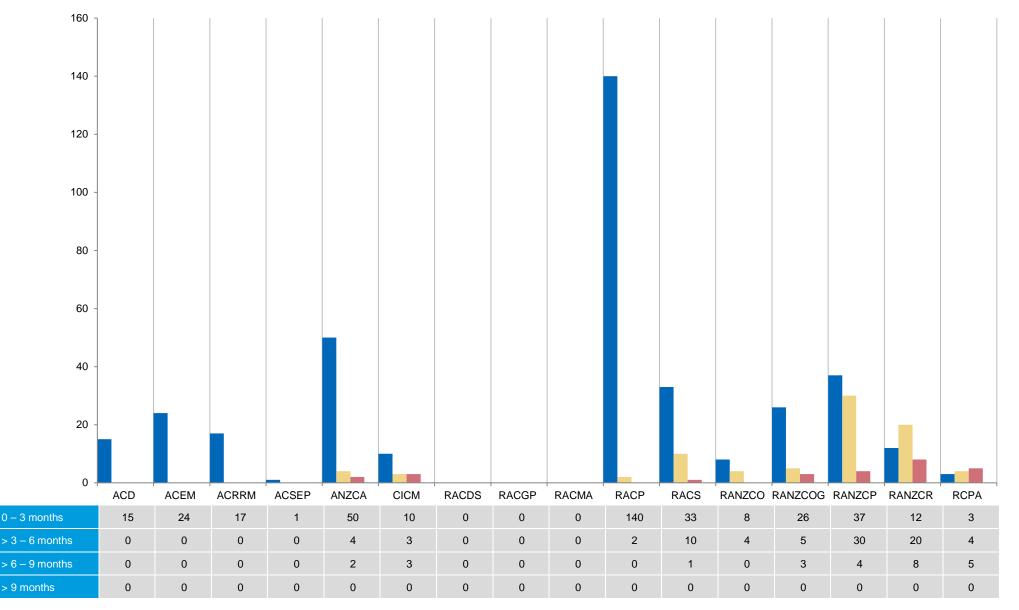
Note: The number of applications is provided as an indication of application volume; data includes IMGs who applied before 2020 and does not include IMGs who applied in 2020 period and are still in progress.

5.4 Specialist recognition outcomes: Number of reviews/reconsiderations and appeals of college decision requested by IMGs

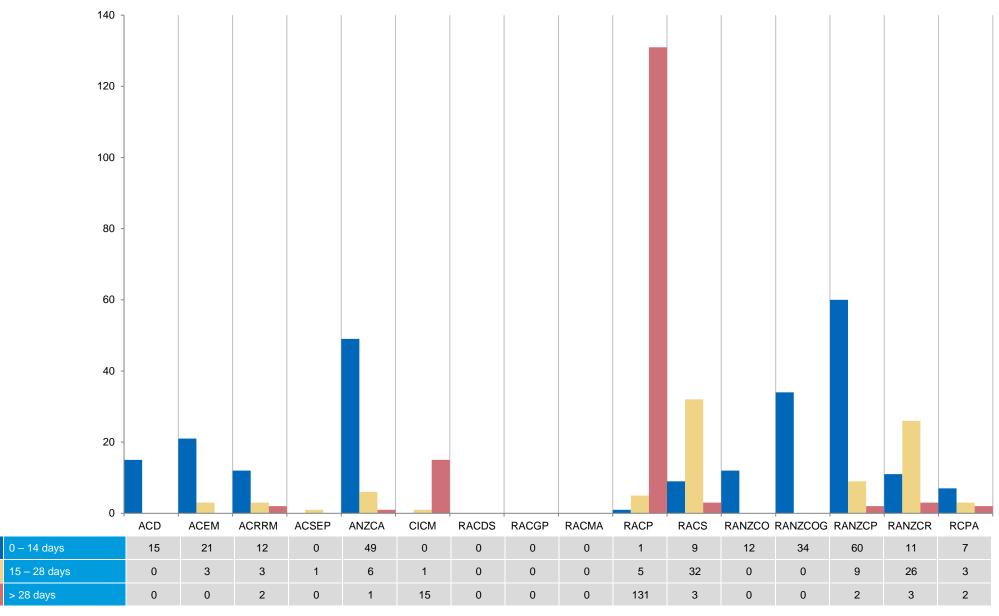


Note: Colleges have different appeals process and classification of 'reviews/reconsideration and appeals' vary. The number of applications is provided as an indication of volume, appeals may relate to IMGs who applied in 2020 or before 2020.

# 6.1.1 Specialist recognition timeframes and requirements: Interim assessment: Time to first available interview



Note: RACGP do not interview to assess comparability.

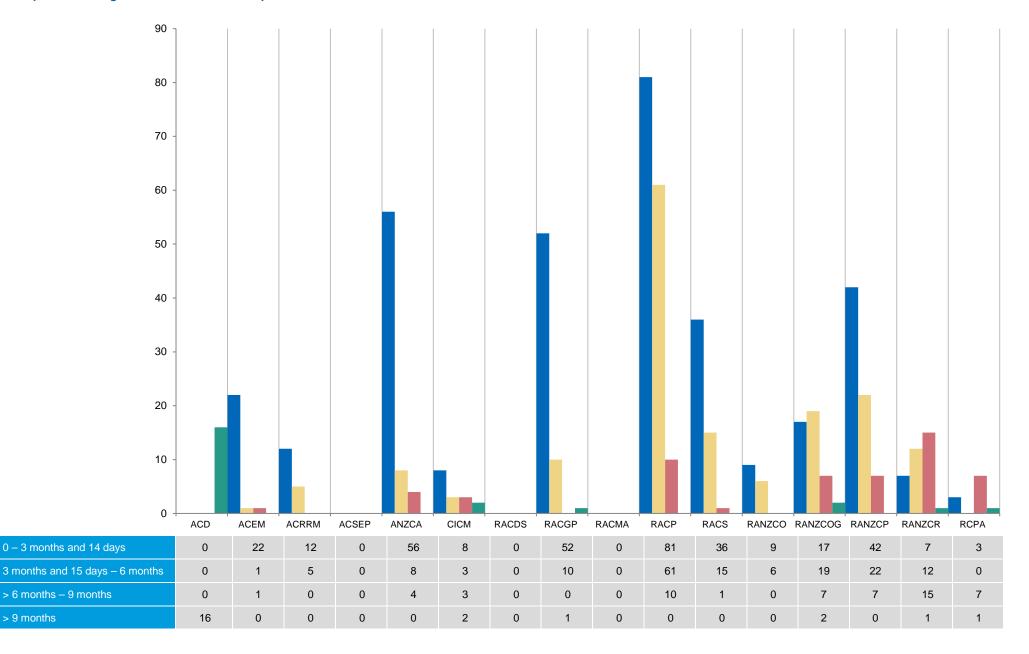


Specialist recognition timeframes and requirements: Interim assessment: Time from interview to interim assessment decision

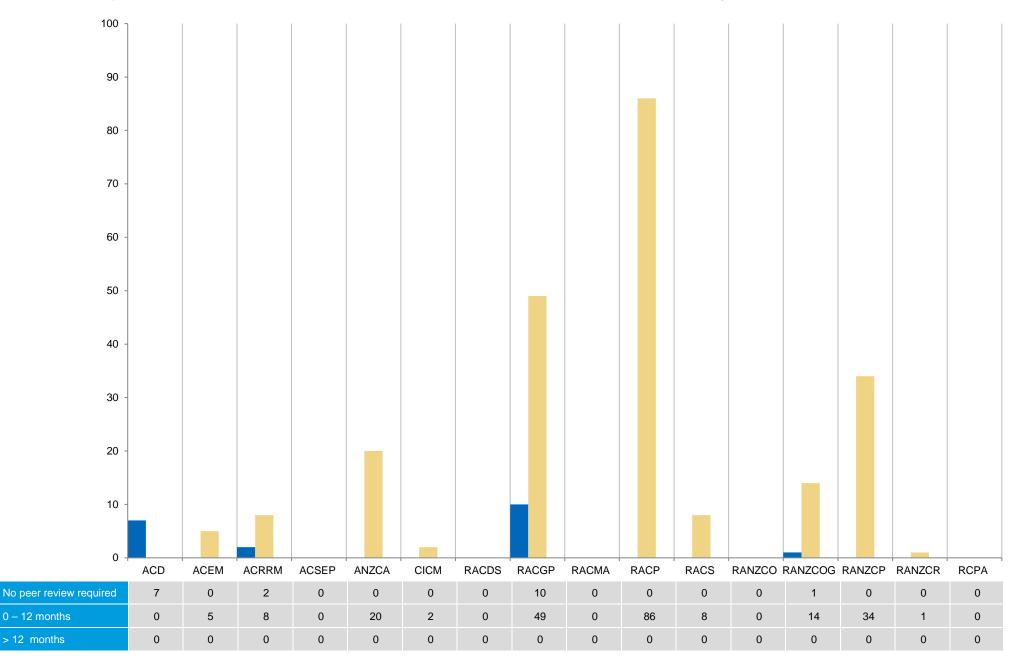
Note: RACGP do not interview to assess comparability.

6.1.2

# 6.1.3 Specialist recognition timeframes and requirements: Interim assessment: Total time for interim assessment



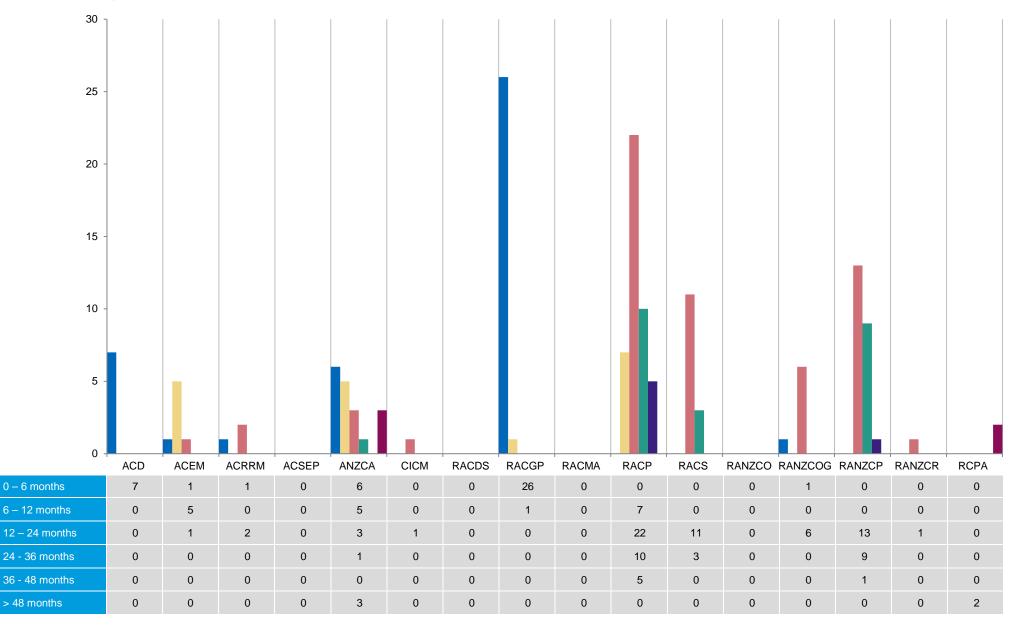
# 6.2.1 Specialist recognition timeframes and requirements: Substantially comparable IMGs: Period of peer review required by college



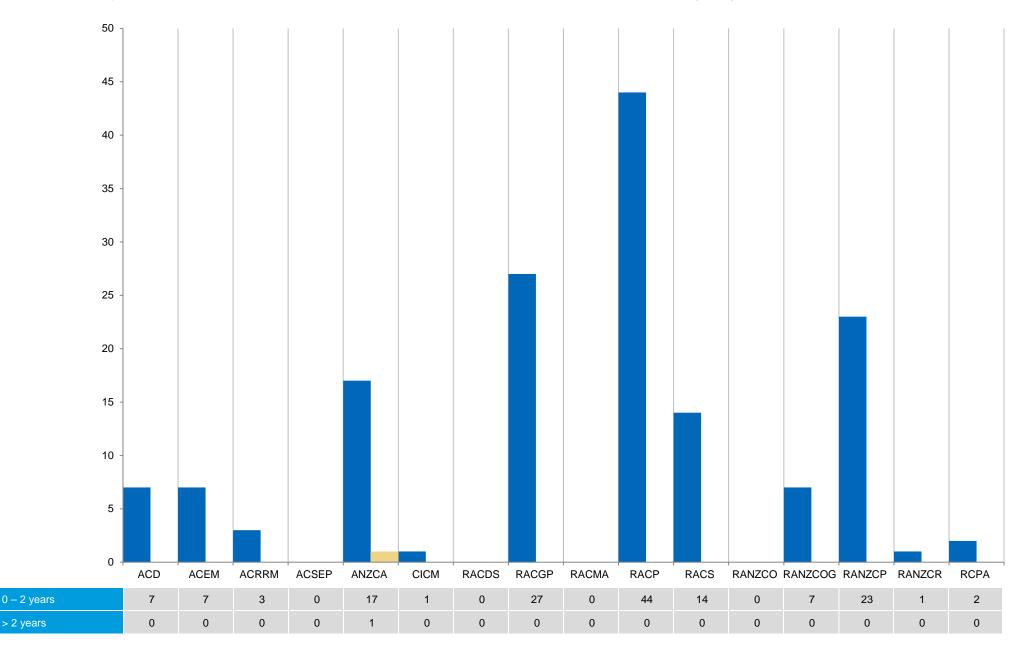
# 6.2.2 Specialist recognition timeframes and requirements: Substantially comparable IMGs: Number required to complete exam

All specialist medical colleges reported that no substantially comparable IMGs were required to complete a formal examination.

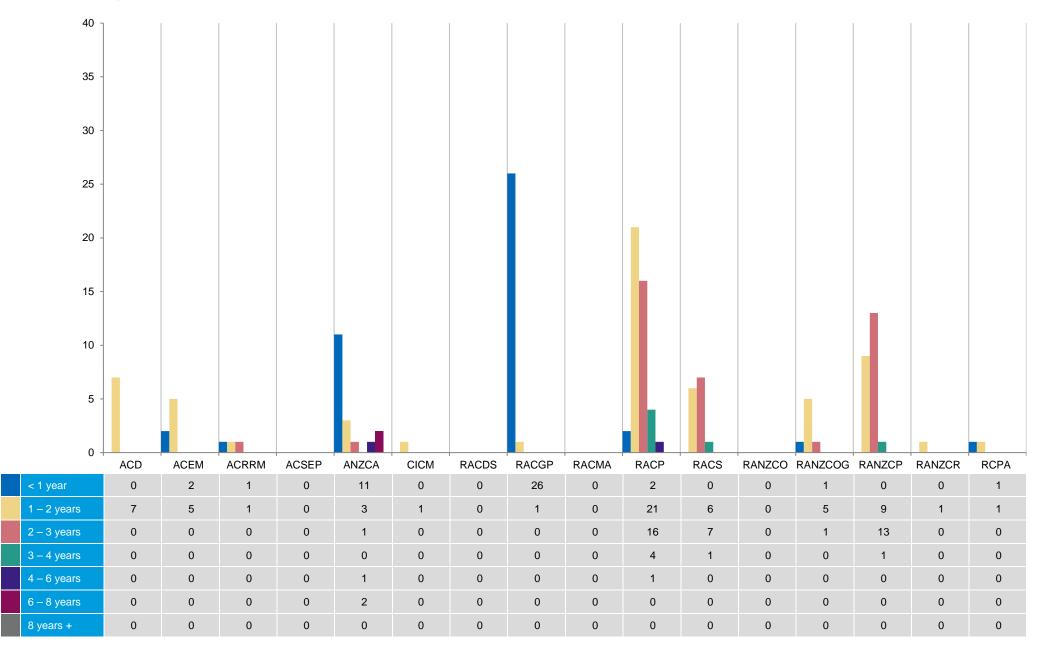




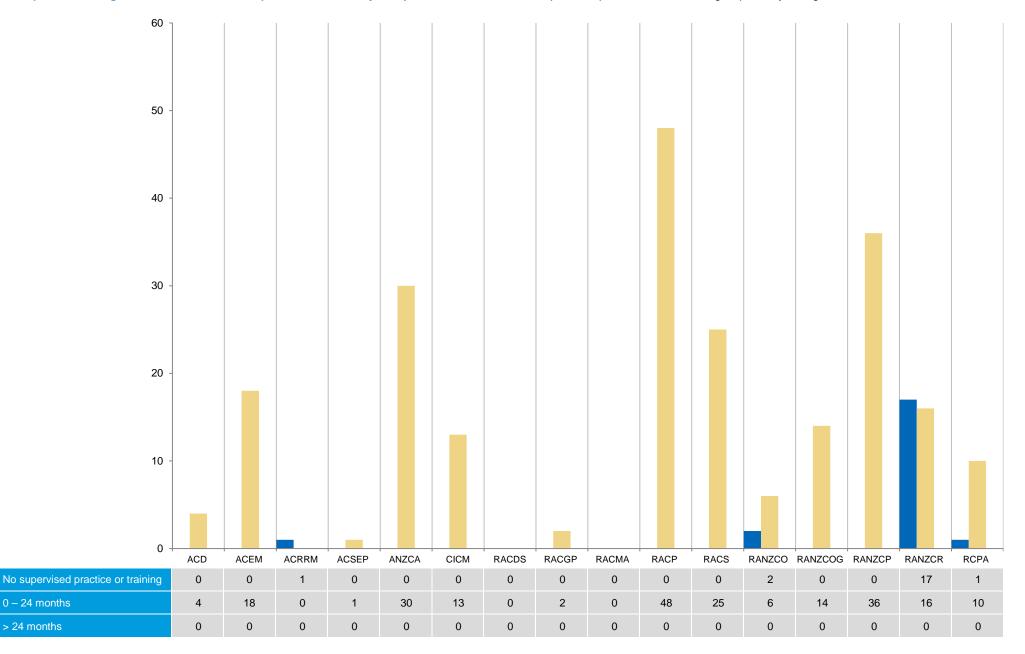
6.2.4 Specialist recognition timeframes and requirements: Substantially comparable IMGs: Maximum timeframe for completing college requirements



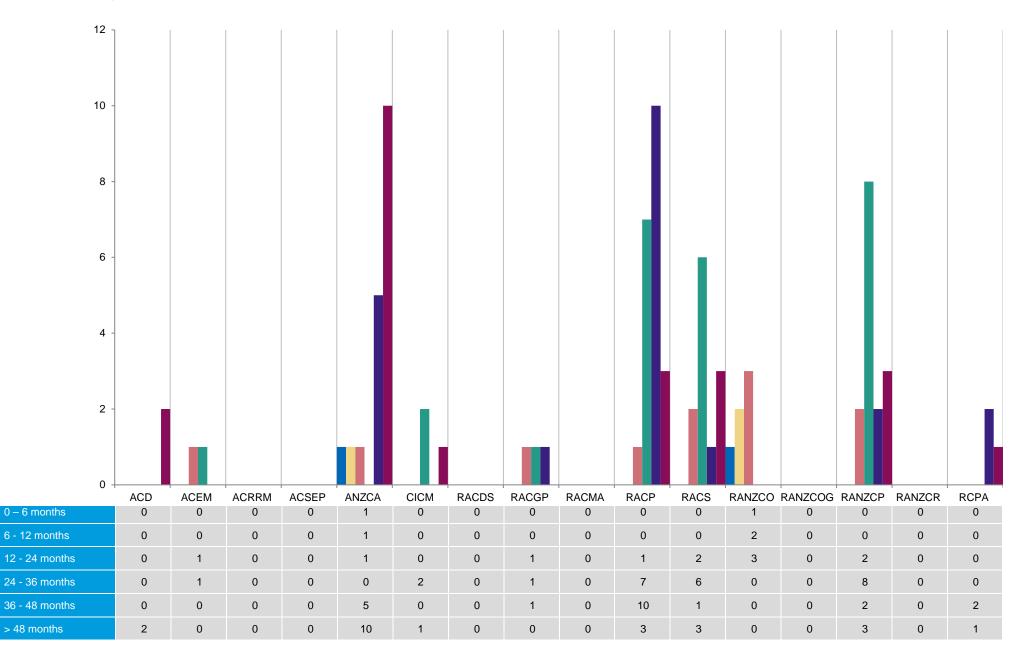
# 6.2.5 Specialist recognition timeframes and requirements: Substantially comparable IMGs: Total time on specialist pathway



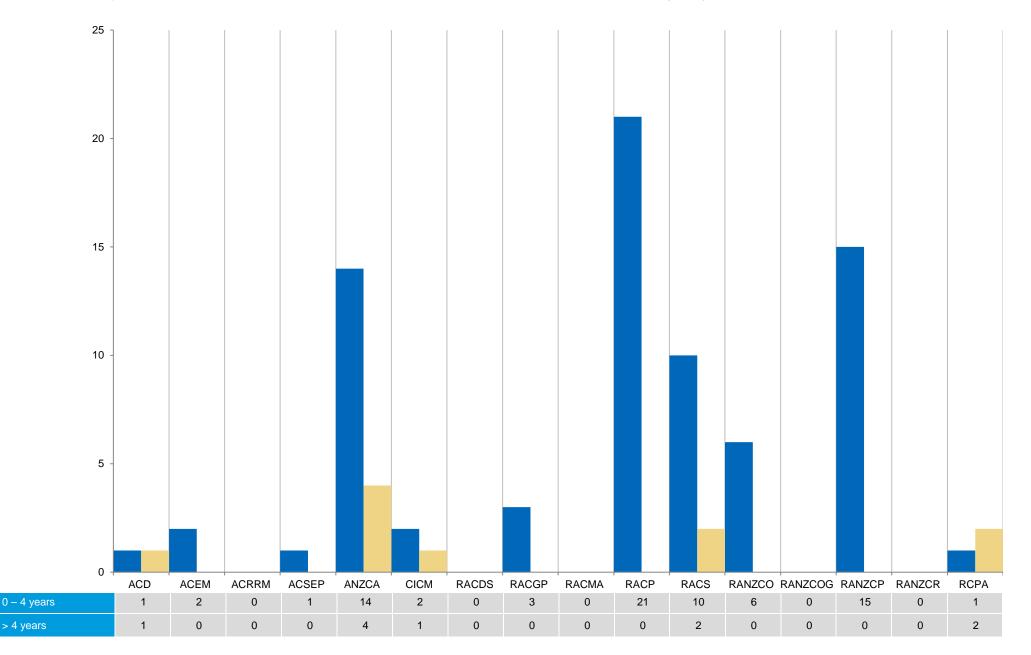
# 6.3.1 Specialist recognition timeframes and requirements: Partially comparable IMGs: Period of supervised practice and/or training required by college



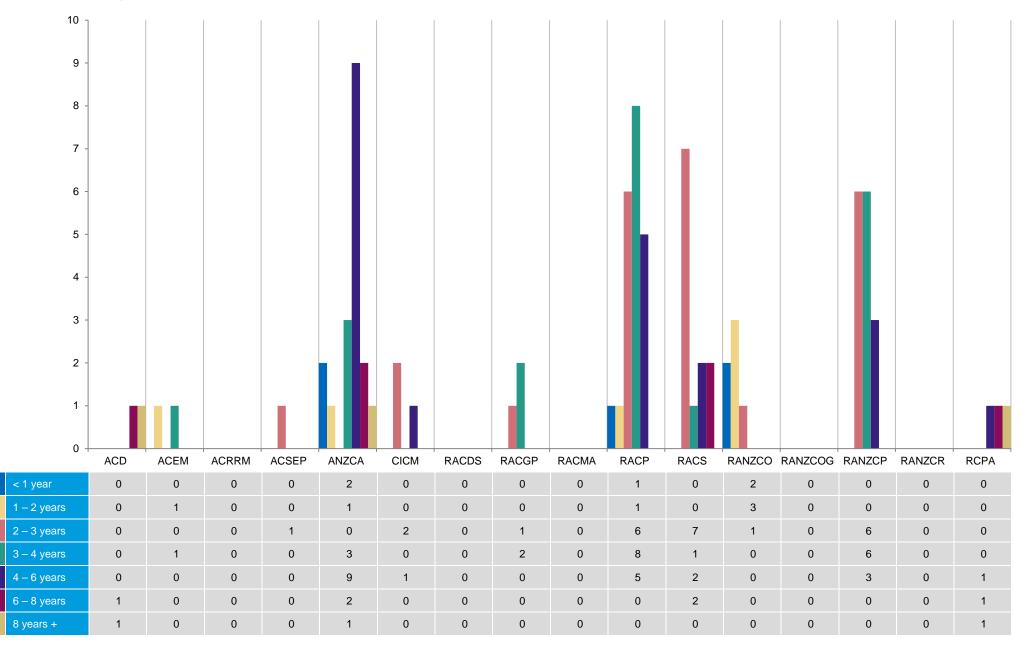
6.3.2 Specialist recognition timeframes and requirements: Partially comparable IMGs: Time for final assessment



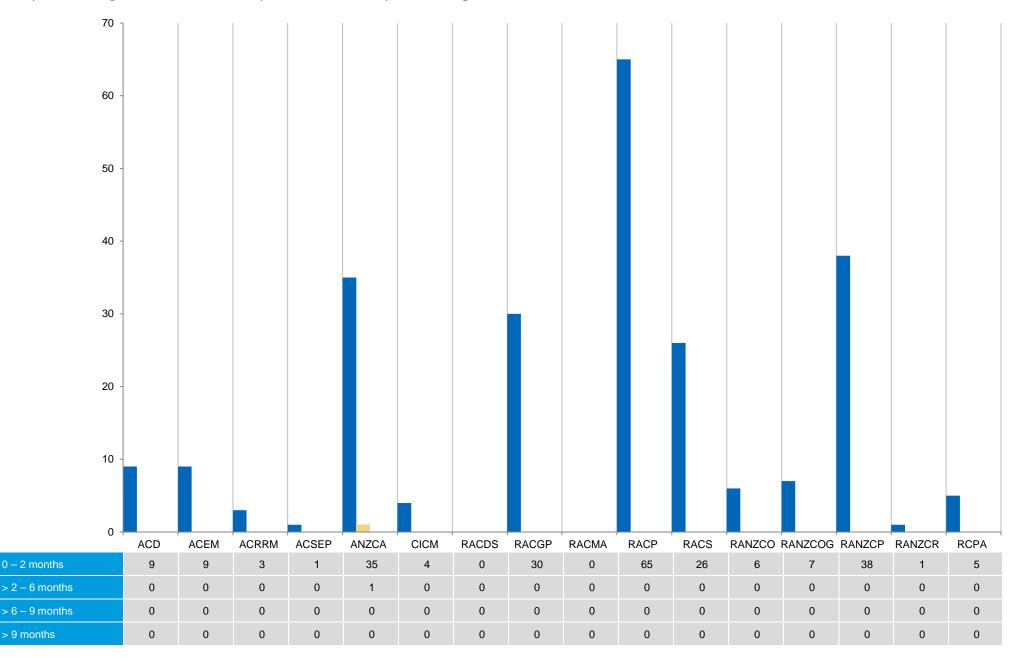
6.3.3 Specialist recognition timeframes and requirements: Partially comparable IMGs: Maximum timeframe for completing college requirements

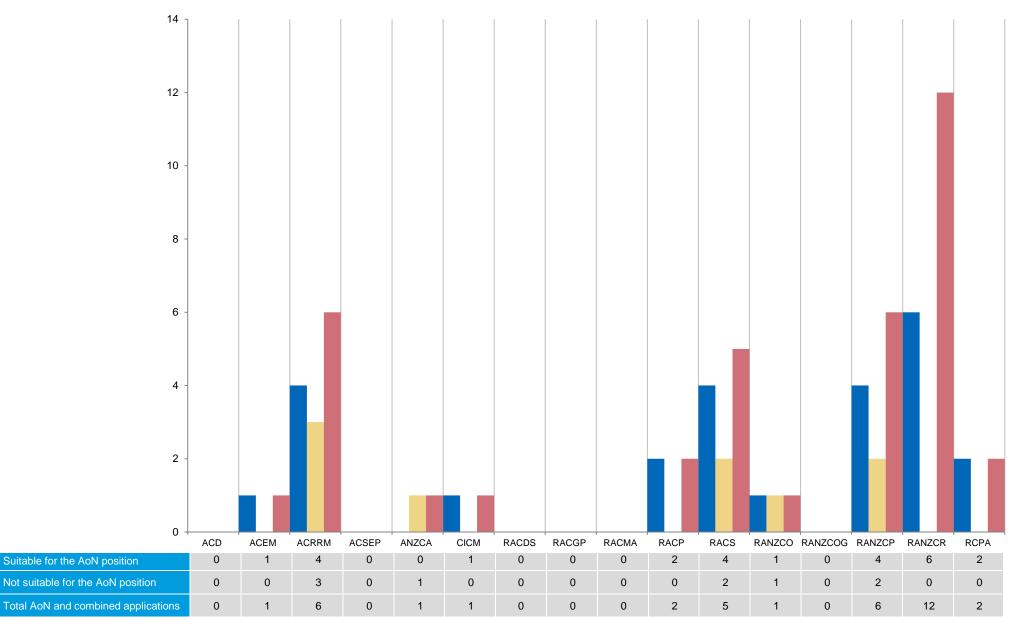


6.3.4 Specialist recognition timeframes and requirements: Partially comparable IMGs: Total time on specialist pathway

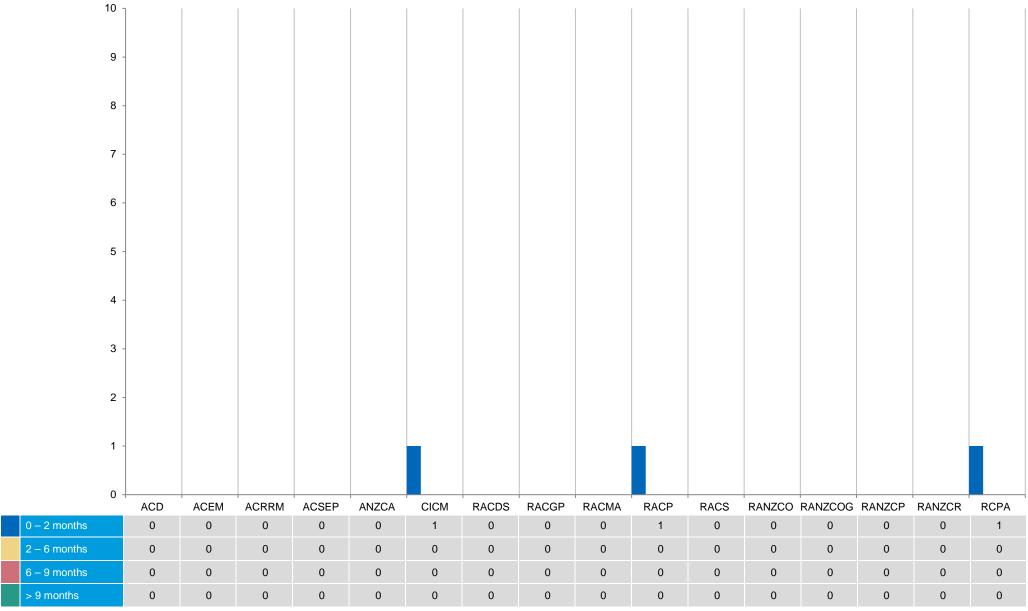


6.4 Specialist recognition timeframes and requirements: Time for specialist recognition final assessment decision





Note: Outcomes of assessment may not total 'Total number of applications received'; some assessments were still in progress and some relate to applications received before 2020.



Area of need outcomes and timeframes: Time for assessment

7.2

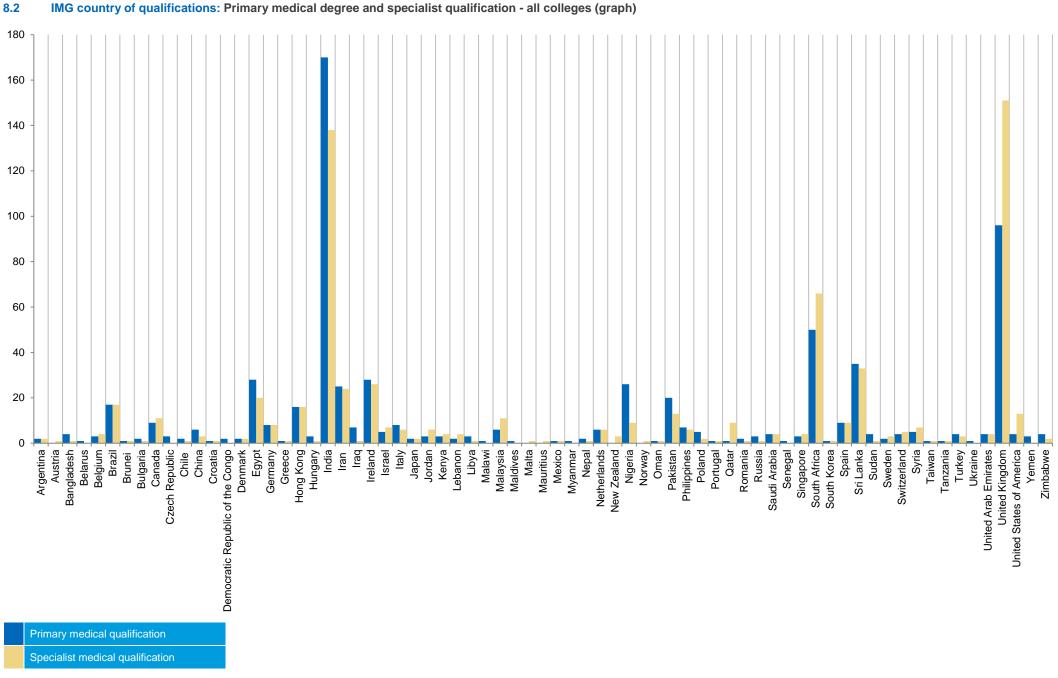
Note: Excludes combined assessments (where IMG applied for specialist recognition and area of need)

# 8.1 IMG country of qualifications: Primary medical degree and specialist qualification - all colleges (data)

Country	Primary	Specialist
Argentina	2	2
Austria	0	1
Bangladesh	4	1
Belarus	1	0
Belgium	3	4
Brazil	17	17
Brunei	1	1
Bulgaria	2	1
Canada	9	11
Czech Republic	3	0
Chile	2	1
China	6	3
Croatia	1	1
Democratic Republic of the Congo	2	0
Denmark	2	2
Egypt	28	20
Germany	8	8
Greece	1	1
Hong Kong	16	16
Hungary	3	1
India	170	138
Iran	25	24
Iraq	7	1

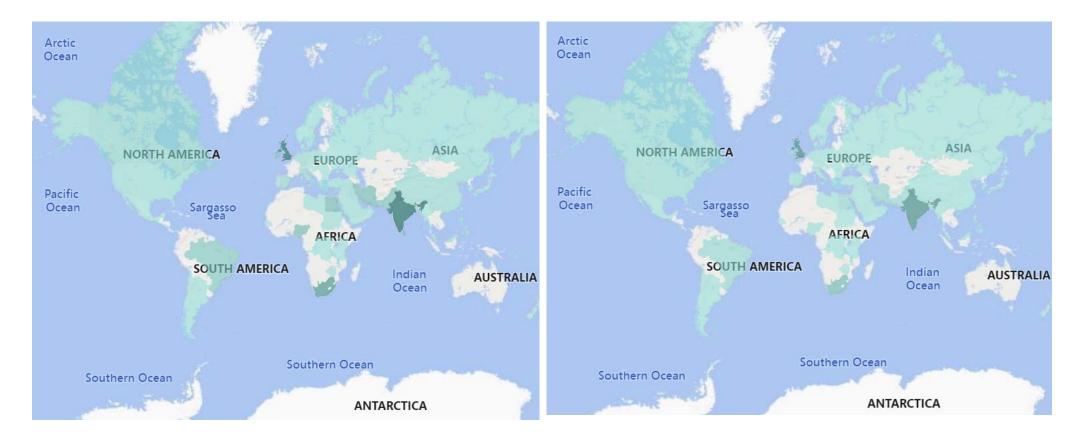
Country	Primary	Specialist
Ireland	28	26
Israel	5	7
Italy	8	6
Japan	2	2
Jordan	3	6
Kenya	3	4
Lebanon	2	4
Libya	3	1
Malawi	1	0
Malaysia	6	11
Maldives	1	0
Malta	0	1
Mauritius	0	1
Mexico	1	1
Myanmar	1	0
Nepal	2	1
Netherlands	6	6
New Zealand	0	3
Nigeria	26	9
Norway	0	1
Oman	1	1
Pakistan	20	13
Philippines	7	6

Country	Primary	Specialist
Portugal	1	1
Qatar	1	9
Romania	2	1
Russia	3	1
Saudi Arabia	4	4
Senegal	1	0
Singapore	3	4
South Africa	50	66
South Korea	1	1
Spain	9	9
Sri Lanka	35	33
Sudan	4	1
Sweden	2	3
Switzerland	4	5
Syria	5	7
Taiwan	1	1
Tanzania	1	1
Turkey	4	3
Ukraine	1	0
United Arab Emirates	4	4
United Kingdom	96	151
United States of America	4	13
Yemen	3	0
Zimbabwe	4	2



Medical Board of Australia report on specialist medical colleges' specialist pathway data 2020

8.2



Primary medical degree



**Specialist qualification** 





2

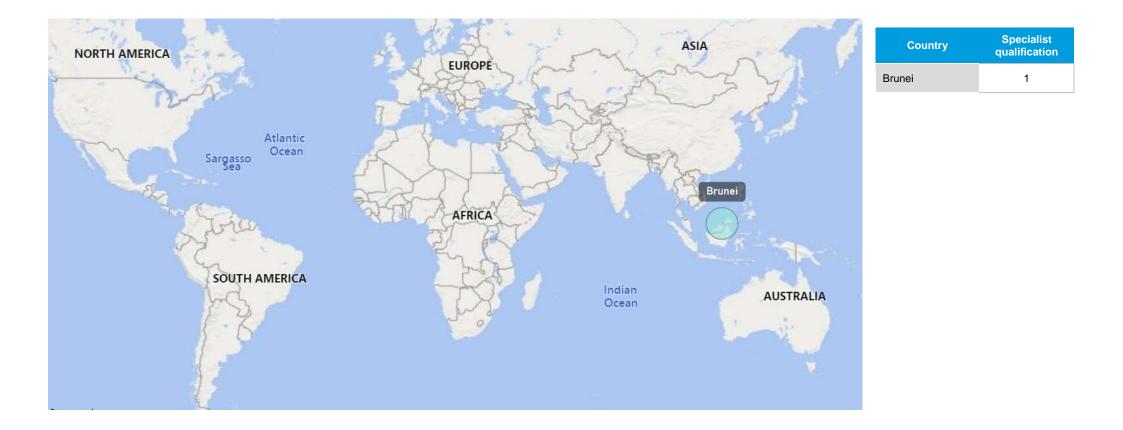
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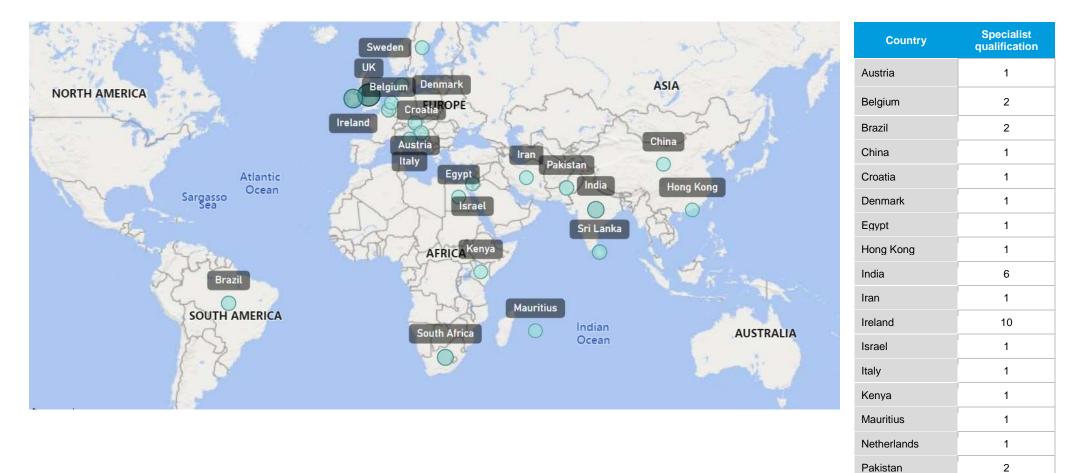
UK

USA

United Arab

Emirates





2

1

17

South Africa

Sri Lanka

Sweden

UK



Country	Specialist qualification
Canada	2
Ireland	1
New Zealand	1
Norway	1
South Africa	16
Sweden	1
UK	1

#### IMG country of qualifications: Specialist qualification: College of Intensive Care Medicine 8.4.6



1

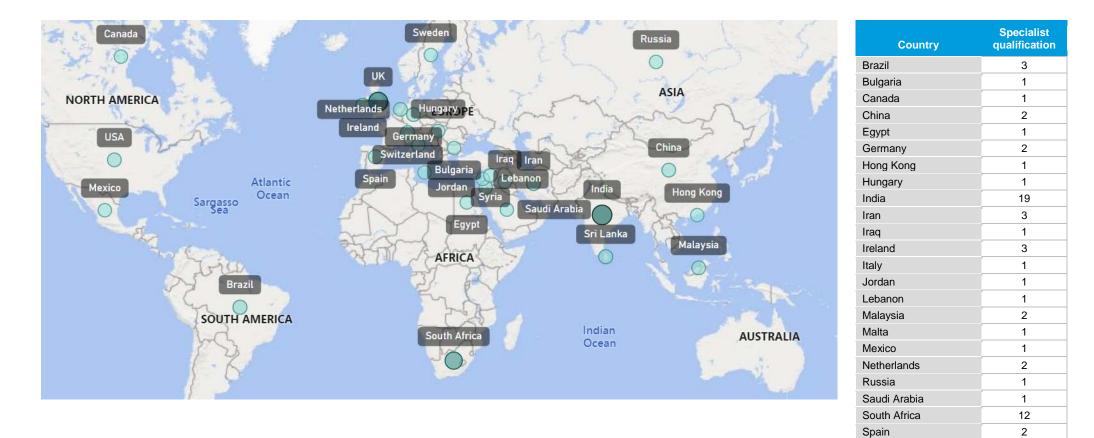
4

2

UK

USA





1

2

1

17

2

Sri Lanka

Switzerland

Sweden

Syria

UK

USA



Country	Specialist qualification
Canada	3
New Zealand	2
Spain	1
UK	46



# 8.4.11 IMG country of qualifications: Specialist qualification: Royal Australasian College of Physicians



Country	Specialist qualification
Bangladesh	1
Brazil	3
Canada	4
Egypt	6
Germany	6
Greece	1
Hong Kong	7
India	33
Iran	9
Ireland	5
Israel	2
Italy	1
Lebanon	3
Malaysia	4
Nigeria	1
Pakistan	5
Philippines	3
Poland	2
Saudi Arabia	2
Singapore	1
South Africa	12
South Korea	1
Spain	2
Sri Lanka	6
Switzerland	2
Syria	2
UK	18
United Arab Emirates	2
USA	4
Zimbabwe	1

# 8.4.12 IMG country of qualifications: Specialist qualification: Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists



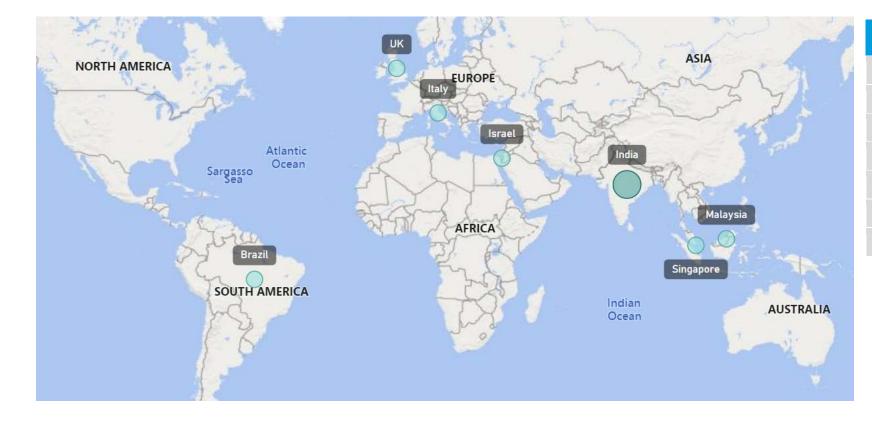
### 8.4.13 IMG country of qualifications: Specialist qualification: Royal Australian New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists



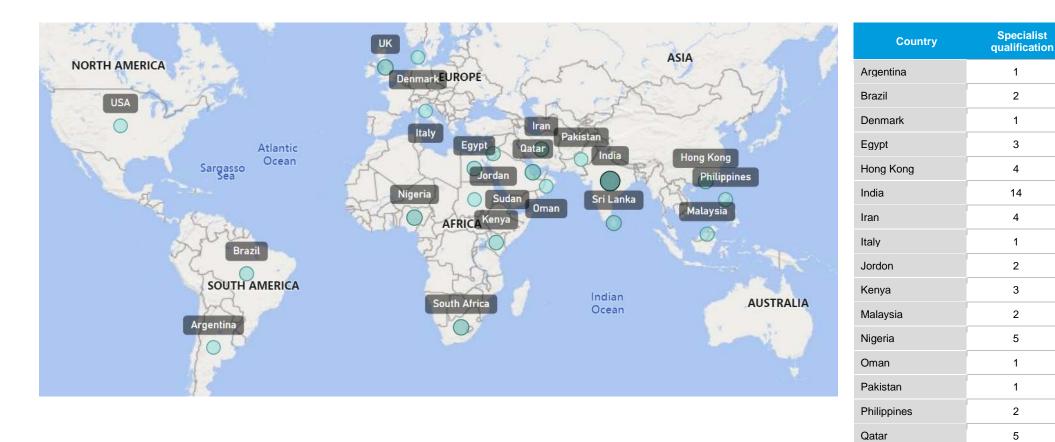
1

Zimbabwe

# 8.4.14 IMG country of qualifications: Specialist qualification: Royal Australian New Zealand College of Ophthalmologists



Country	Specialist qualification
Brazil	1
India	5
Israel	1
Italy	1
Malaysia	1
Singapore	1
UK	1



4

1

5

1

South Africa

Sri Lanka

Sudan

UK

USA

