



**College of Intensive Care Medicine  
of Australia and New Zealand**  
ABN: 16 134 292 103

<b>Document Reference</b>	T-27	2020
<b>Document Type</b>	Policy	
<b>Document Category</b>	Training	
<b>Date Established</b>	1998	
<b>Date Last Reviewed</b>	2020	

## ASSESSMENT OF SPECIALIST INTERNATIONAL MEDICAL GRADUATES

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### PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy document is to outline the requirements and processes to be followed when a Specialist International Medical Graduate (SIMG) wishes to obtain recognition in Australia or vocational registration in New Zealand as a specialist in intensive care medicine.

### INTRODUCTION

Graduates of medical schools outside Australia and New Zealand are not automatically eligible for unconditional medical registration in Australia or New Zealand. Graduates must ordinarily pass examinations set by the AMC or the MCNZ and must fulfil a variety of conditions set by the respective Councils.

Medical practitioners who have satisfied all the training and examination requirements to practice in their field of specialty in another country have been granted alternative pathways to **specialist recognition** in Australia or **vocational registration** in New Zealand. If a case for consideration is requested, the College will assess the training, assessments, experience, recent specialist practice and continuing professional development (CPD) activity of the applicant. An offer of employment by a hospital or public health authority outside the AMC/MCNZ pathway is no guarantee of specialist recognition.

In Australia, under an agreement between the Specialist Medical Colleges, State Medical Boards and the Australian Medical Council (AMC), the application is made directly to the College of Intensive Care Medicine (the College/CICM). For New Zealand applicants, the application is made to the Medical Council of New Zealand (MCNZ) before being processed by the College.

## 1 SPECIALIST RECOGNITION/VOCATIONAL REGISTRATION

The College's trainee pathway to Fellowship in General or Paediatric Intensive Care Medicine requires the completion of structured supervised training, various assessments and courses. An applicant for specialist recognition/vocational registration is not required to complete all requirements of the trainee pathway but may be required to complete certain aspects in order

to demonstrate a standard of care comparable to an Australian or New Zealand specialist commencing practice (at the level of a newly qualified Fellow).

The SIMG pathway is not an alternative specialist training program and completion of this process does not automatically guarantee Fellowship of the College.

## **2 SPECIALIST INTERNATIONAL MEDICAL GRADUATE ASSESSMENT**

### **2.1 Assessment Process**

The assessment process determines whether an applicant can perform as an unsupervised specialist in intensive care medicine at a standard comparable to that of a CICM Fellow commencing practice (at the level of a newly qualified Fellow). It should be regarded as a recertification of specialists from non-Australian/New Zealand training backgrounds. The process is based on the principles of consistency, objectivity, accountability, transparency and procedural fairness.

The SIMG Committee is responsible for the assessment of all applications for specialist registration in Australia and New Zealand and the Committee's findings are recommended to the Censors' Committee that reports to the College Board.

The SIMG Committee consists of the following members:

- Censor (Chair)
- Deputy Censor
- New Zealand Board Member
- Paediatric Deputy Censor (if applicable)
- Director of Professional Affairs
- Assessments Committee Chair
- CICM Fellow who has completed the SIMG pathway (Australia)
- CICM Fellow who has completed the SIMG pathway (New Zealand)
- Community representative/stakeholder

The currently appointed members of the SIMG Committee are found on the College website: [Specialist International Medical Graduates](#).

In Australia, the assessment of comparability is a three-step process:

1. An interim assessment of comparability (substantially comparable, partially comparable or not comparable).
2. Where a SIMG is assessed as substantially comparable or partially comparable, the SIMG completes any additional requirements, for example supervised clinical practice and examinations or other assessments.
3. A final decision is made as to whether the SIMG is comparable to an Australian qualified intensive care specialist and therefore eligible for recognition as a specialist.

In New Zealand, the assessment of equivalence' process is outlined in the MCNZ *Policy on registration within a vocational scope of practice*. Refer to the MCNZ website for further information.

## 2.2 Documentation

SIMG applicants are encouraged to visit the following websites (if applicable) prior to applying to understand the requirements:

- CICM: [Specialist International Medical Graduate](#)
- AMC: [Overview of assessment pathways](#)
- MCNZ: [Pathways to registration in a vocational scope](#)

Applicants are required to have their medical qualifications verified through the Educational Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates (ECFMG), Electronic Portfolio of International Credentials (EPIC) or International Credentials Services (EICS). This process is called Primary Source Verification (PSV), is administered by the AMC in Australia and MCNZ in New Zealand and may be completed prior to, or concurrently with the application to the College. An application for assessment will not be allowed to proceed unless the applicant has an EPIC or EICS number. For further information on the PSV application process, please visit <http://www.amc.org.au/index.php/ass/psv>.

In the application to the College, applicants must provide evidence attesting to qualifications, past employment and training. For applicants for specialist recognition in Australia, the SIMG application form and a standardised curriculum vitae form (consistent with that used by AHPRA) can be downloaded from the CICM website. All documentation must adhere to the College's requirements on verification. In New Zealand, the VOC3 application form is sourced from the MCNZ website.

Applicants for specialist recognition in Australia and New Zealand will also be required to submit proof of English language proficiency in their application. The College will accept test results from standards or tests accepted by the MBA or the MCNZ. The test results must have been obtained no more than two years prior to application. Applications will not be reviewed without evidence of English language proficiency.

Applicants who are working in Australia and have limited registration with AHPRA are not required to submit proof of English language proficiency as this is required for registration.

## 2.3 Comparability definitions (Australia)

In Australia, the SIMG assessment process determines if the applicant's qualifications, training and experience are one of the following:

### Substantially Comparable

Substantially comparable applicants have been assessed as suitable to undertake their intended scope of practice, taking full responsibility for individual patients with only oversight

of their practice by a supervisor approved by the College. The SIMG must satisfy the College that they are at the standard of an Australian/New Zealand trained specialist commencing practice (at the level of a newly qualified Fellow) taking into account the applicant's intended scope of practice as well as their previous training and assessment, recent specialist practice, experience and CPD.

#### Partially Comparable

Partially comparable applicants have been assessed as suitable to undertake their intended scope of practice under the supervision of a College approved supervisor. The SIMG must satisfy the College that they will be able to reach the standard of an Australian/New Zealand trained specialist within a maximum period of 24 months FTE practice. The standard expected is that of an Australian/New Zealand trained specialist commencing practice (at the level of a newly qualified Fellow) taking into account the applicant's intended scope of practice as well as their previous training and assessment, recent specialist practice, experience and CPD.

#### Not Comparable

Applicants that do not satisfy the College that they are at the standard of an Australian/New Zealand trained specialist commencing practice (at the level of a newly qualified Fellow) having taken into account the applicant's intended scope of practice as well as their previous training and assessment, recent specialist practice, experience and CPD or who are assessed as unable to reach comparability within 24 months FTE practice will be assessed as not comparable.

### **2.4 Assessment of equivalence (New Zealand)**

Pursuant to the requirements of the MCNZ, SIMGs are assessed for their equivalence to a New Zealand-trained specialist in intensive care medicine for the purposes of obtaining vocational registration. In New Zealand the terms used are 'equivalent', 'as satisfactory as' or 'neither equivalent to nor as satisfactory as.'

For further information, refer to the MCNZ *Policy on registration within a vocational scope of practice*.

Note: For the practice of intensive care medicine in Australia and New Zealand, there are no limited scopes of practice as the College does not have sub-specialities.

#### **2.4 Interim assessment**

##### **2.4.1. Preliminary Review**

In Australia, upon receipt of the application and payment of the application submission fee, a paper-based review will be conducted to determine the eligibility of an applicant to proceed to the interview. In New Zealand, applicants have the right to proceed to an interview even if they are initially assessed as neither equivalent to nor as satisfactory as at the preliminary advice stage.

The preliminary review will consider evidence of:

- A basic medical qualification that is recognised by the AMC or the MCNZ;
- A completed recognised specialist training program to practice intensive care medicine in their country of training (including assessments);
- Recognition as an intensive care specialist in their country of training;
- Previous work experience as an intensive care specialist;
- Continuing Professional Development (CPD).

The preliminary review will factor in gaps/deficiencies in the applicant's training compared to the College's training program to determine the applicant's comparability or equivalence. It will also make an assessment of the applicant's previous specialist practice, including its duration, the number, severity of illness and case mix of patient's treated, experience with procedures and therapies etc.

The Summary of the Preliminary Review (SPR) is a summary of the information provided by the SIMG in their application mapped against the assessment criteria. It will be provided to all applicants in Australia by email no more than 21 calendar days after the Preliminary Review. The SIMG will have a further 21 days from the date of the SPR (or an extended period agreed between the College and the SIMG) to provide clarification or submit additional evidence if they believe there are errors of fact or omissions, so that this information can be considered in the interim assessment. If no response is received from the applicant within the defined or negotiated time frame, then the assessment will move to the next step.

In Australia, if the Preliminary Review reveals that more than 24 months FTE practice is required to meet the standard of an Australian/New Zealand trained specialist commencing practice, the interim assessment will be that the applicant is deemed to be not comparable. The applicant will be ineligible to proceed further along the SIMG pathway but may apply for the training pathway and will be eligible for some recognition of prior learning (RPL). These applicants should contact AHPRA for further guidance of their options for practising in Australia as a medical practitioner.

If the Preliminary Review finds that 24 months or less FTE practice is required to meet the standard of an Australian/New Zealand trained specialist commencing practice, the applicant will be invited to attend a face-to-face interview that may, in some circumstances and with appropriate safeguards, take place by videoconference.

In New Zealand, all applicants going through the MCNZ process have the right to proceed to interview. If an applicant is assessed as 'equivalent' or 'as satisfactory as' in the preliminary advice CICM provides to MCNZ, MCNZ can grant the SIMG provisional vocational registration, which allows them to practise in the provisional vocational scope of intensive care medicine under approved supervision in New Zealand. The requirements for vocational registration for these SIMGs will be determined at interview.

### 2.4.2 Interview

In Australia, the interview will be conducted by selected members of the College's SIMG Committee. In New Zealand, the interviewing panel consists of members of the CICM New Zealand National Committee, a community stakeholder, and may include a College Board Member. A member of the MCNZ may be present as an observer only.

In Australia, the interview dates are predetermined by the College and advertised on the website. If the applicants cannot attend the first available interview offered to them by the College, they are permitted to postpone to the next available date. Places are limited for each date and once at capacity, the applicant will be deferred to the next available interview date. The applicant is required to make their own travel arrangements and is responsible for all associated costs.

In New Zealand, interviews are scheduled in response to MCNZ requests and timeframes, so that a report is produced within the agreed timeframe of the receipt of documentation from the MCNZ.

Proceeding to interview will not guarantee a partially or substantially comparable assessment in Australia or an equivalent or as satisfactory as assessment in New Zealand.

### 2.4.3 Interview criteria

The interview panel will create an interview plan based on the structured report templates. The templates are found on the College website: [Specialist International Medical Graduates Resources](#).

Assessment of comparability will be based on the following criteria:

- Specialist degree and previous practice of intensive care medicine in the country of training

There must be documentation of specialist qualifications in intensive care medicine and details of specialist practice in intensive care medicine. Consideration is given to the curriculum vitae, references, and any other documents that portray the candidate's previous practice as an intensive care medicine specialist. Evidence of completed specialist exit and other examinations or formal assessments should be included. Stated experience and qualifications must be substantiated by statements of training and original or certified copies of diplomas from relevant bodies.

- Overseas training in intensive care medicine is equivalent to the College's training program

The overseas training program is similar in its duration, structure and content, assessments and supervision. Details of the various components of examinations and/or assessments will assist the panel to assess comparability.

- Previous experience as a specialist

There should be broad experience in terms of management of patients with adequate case mix and severity of illness, use of equipment and procedures, and compliance with standards of best practice in intensive care medicine. The standards must be equivalent to CICM's standards for hospitals accredited for training in intensive care medicine. Refer to IC-2 Guidelines on Intensive Care Specialist Practice in Hospitals Accredited for Training in Intensive Care Medicine.

- Participation in continuing education and quality assurance activities

Evidence and experience must be similar to the College's Continuing Professional Development Program (CPD). A recent continuous involvement will be highly considered.

- Assessment of non-technical professional attributes

This will include the SIMG's understanding of culturally safe and respectful practice for the community, including towards Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, and Māori peoples.

#### **2.4.4 Interim assessment of comparability decision (Australia)**

At the conclusion of the interview, the Panel will decide whether the SIMG is substantially comparable, partially comparable or not comparable, and record the findings on the reporting templates (Report 1) developed by the Medical Board of Australia, and the applicant is referred to the SIMG Committee for the confirmation of the interim assessment decision.

The final interim assessment report (Report 1) is uploaded to the AMC secure portal for use by AHPRA for the purposes of registration. This report outlines the interim assessment of the SIMG's comparability and, if found to be substantially comparable or partially comparable, the additional requirements that must be met by the SIMG.

In addition to the additional requirements, the SIMG will be informed that they will need to obtain prospective approval of any position(s) to satisfy the requirements of the period of supervised clinical practice, and the steps required to obtain approval.

If found to be non-comparable, the applicant will be ineligible to proceed further along the SIMG pathway but may apply for the training pathway and will be eligible for some RPL.

#### **2.4.5. Assessment of equivalence (New Zealand)**

At the conclusion of the interview, the Panel will provide advice to the MCNZ, including whether it assesses the applicant as 'equivalent to', 'as satisfactory as' or 'neither equivalent to or as satisfactory as' a New Zealand trained and qualified intensive care specialist, and recommendations about requirements the applicant should meet to become vocationally registered. The MCNZ takes this advice into account when making its independent decision and response to the application for vocational registration.

As part of the interview, the Panel will also assess the applicant for comparability in the CICM SIMG process, which can lead to fellowship of CICM. The applicant will receive advice directly from CICM about their comparability and the additional requirements necessary to become eligible for Fellowship of the College.

## **2.5 ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS**

### **2.5.1 Supervised Clinical Practice**

The additional requirements include a period of supervised clinical practice. This is to assist the applicant with the transition into the Australian/New Zealand health system and provide professional support. In certain circumstances this period may be completed on a part-time basis, subject to prospective approval from the Censor.

Following approval of the post, the SIMG may commence the supervised clinical practice period. Work in Australia before the interim assessment is completed cannot be considered retrospectively. In exceptional circumstances, following satisfactory completion of a performance evaluation, the period of supervised clinical practice may be reduced.

A Supervisor will be nominated to provide oversight during the candidate's Clinical Practice Assessment Period. These Supervisors are responsible for completing supervision reports that in Australia are usually In-Training Evaluation Reports (ITERS). Based on these reports, the SIMG Committee may review the interim assessment decision of the applicant.

For further information on the ITER, please refer to: [ITER User Guide for Intensive Care Supervisors](#).

### **2.5.2 Additional requirements for SIMGs assessed as substantially comparable/equivalent to**

In Australia, substantially comparable SIMGs will be required to undertake up to a maximum of 12 months (with a minimum of three months) full time equivalent (FTE) supervised clinical practice. This may involve the satisfactory completion of workplace-based assessments. In Australia, the College may reduce the period of supervised practice to no less than three months based on the performance of the individual SIMG.

In New Zealand, SIMGs considered to be 'equivalent to' will be eligible to apply for registration within a vocational scope of practice after a period of 6 to 12 months of satisfactory supervised practice.

### **2.5.3 Additional requirements for SIMGs assessed as partially comparable/as satisfactory as**

In Australia, partially comparable or as satisfactory as SIMGs have been assessed as having a gap in either knowledge or skills or both and require further training and assessments. The SIMG will be required to undertake up to 24 months FTE of supervised clinical practice with a minimum of 6 months.

In New Zealand, the required period of supervision on the provisional vocational assessment pathway is 12-18 months. The SIMG may also be required to complete a formal examination or an another assessment such as a practice assessment.

For further information on Second Part Examination requirements, refer to College website: [Second Part Examination: Resources](#).

The examination may be attempted again if the examination results are unsatisfactory. A candidate who presents for either the written or oral component has a maximum of five attempts. For further information, refer to T-13 Guidelines for assisting trainees identified as requiring additional support.

#### **2.5.4 Maximum timeframes for completing additional requirements**

In Australia, the maximum timeframes allowed for the additional requirements to be completed part time are as follows:

1. For substantially comparable SIMGs – a total of two years to complete up to 12 months of supervised clinical practice.
2. For partially comparable SIMGs – a total of four years to complete up to 24 FTE months of supervised clinical practice with associated assessments including formal examinations when required.

The starting point for the maximum timeframe is the date a SIMG starts practice in a position approved for supervised clinical practice. No more than 12 months can elapse between the interim assessment decision being advised to the applicant and commencement of the supervised clinical practice period. Failure to commence within this timeframe will result in the original assessment lapsing. Applicants based overseas should factor this in should they choose to apply while based outside of Australia.

Leave granted for exceptional circumstances is not counted as part of the maximum time frame. All leave requests for exceptional circumstances must be disclosed to and approved by the College. Refer to Leave and Interrupted Training in the College's Regulations.

When a partially comparable SIMG has successfully completed the additional requirements except for formal examinations and wishes to continue to practice within the maximum time frame, they may do so provided that they will continue to be on the specialist pathway, continue to be supported by the College, meet the requirements of their limited or provisional registration and comply with College policies.

In New Zealand, SIMGs considered eligible for registration in the provisional vocational scope of intensive care medicine will have 2 years to commence practising in New Zealand before their eligibility expires.

### **2.5.5 Final decision of comparability (eligibility for specialist recognition)**

When all of the additional requirements have been successfully completed within the necessary time frame, the College (through the SIMG and Censors' Committees) will recommend that the applicant be granted recognition as a specialist in intensive care medicine. The SIMG will also be informed of the decision.

In Australia this is done by documenting the decision on the reporting template (Report 2) and uploading it to the AMC secure portal for use by AHPRA for the purposes of registration.

In New Zealand the process is that applicants are recognised as specialists in intensive care medicine when, having met the requirements set by the Medical Council of New Zealand, they are vocationally registered in the scope of intensive care medicine.

Upon recommendations of the SIMG Committee, SIMGs in both Australia and New Zealand are eligible to be considered by the College Board for possible admission to the Fellowship of the College if they have completed all College requirements. Refer to the College website: [Admission of Fellowship](#).

### **2.5.6 Lapsed Assessments**

In Australia, in circumstances in which the College is not recommending specialist recognition, the candidate has chosen not to complete the additional requirements or the SIMG did not meet the additional requirements within the maximum time frames, Report 2 should also be completed and submitted. In these situations, the original assessment will lapse, and the candidate will be removed from the SIMG Pathway and referred to AHPRA, where necessary, to explore options for the standard pathway. The SIMG may apply for the College's general or paediatric training program if they meet the eligibility criteria.

Any applicant whose assessment lapses will not be eligible to reapply for the pathway for 12 months. The applicant will be required to undergo a new interim assessment and interview, with all associated fees payable.

In New Zealand the MCNZ monitors the completion of the requirements it sets for attainment of vocational registration. For further information on timeframes, refer to the MCNZ *Policy on registration within a vocational scope of practice* found on the MCNZ website.

## **3. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

### **3.1 Area of Need (Australia only)**

Special consideration in the assessment process is given to an applicant appointed to an Area of Need post. After the applicant completes his or her post, the College will only grant specialist recognition when the SIMG assessment is complete and there has been a final decision of comparability. Refer to document T-28 Intensive Care Services for Areas of Need.

### 3.2 Fees

All SIMG applications are subject to fees during the assessment process and throughout training with the College. Refer to the College website: [Overseas Trained Specialists Fees](#).

### 3.3 Appeal Procedure

All applicants may appeal against a decision on a matter of process. Refer to IC-23 Appeals, Review and Reconsideration Processes.

## 4 REVIEW

The College will review this policy every five years. However, the College may modify or amend the policy at any time to ensure it meets its objectives. Any amendments to this policy shall be made known to staff and College members by posting an updated version on the College's website.

### References and sources

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- IC-2 Guidelines on Intensive Care Specialist Practice.
- IC-4 Guidelines on the Clinical Supervision of Vocational Trainees in Intensive Care Medicine.
- Guide to CICM Training: Trainees.
- T-28 Intensive Care Services for Areas of Need.
- College Regulations.
- IC-23 Appeals, Review and Reconsideration Processes.
- Medical Board of Australia's *Good practice guidelines for the specialist international medical graduate assessment process*.
- Medical Council of New Zealand, *Policy on registration on a vocational scope of practice – Doctors who do not hold the approved New Zealand or Australasian postgraduate qualification*.
- The College of Intensive Care Medicine of Australia and New Zealand, Overseas Trained Specialist: Fees at <https://cicm.org.au/Trainees/International-Medical-Graduates/Overseas-Trained-Specialists#Fees>
- The College of Intensive Care Medicine of Australia and New Zealand, Admission to Fellowship: <https://cicm.org.au/Trainees/Admission-to-Fellowship>
- The College of Intensive Care Medicine of Australia and New Zealand, Second Part Examination: Resources: <https://www.cicm.org.au/Trainees/Assessments-and-Examinations/Second-Part-Exam#Resources>
- The College of Intensive Care Medicine of Australia and New Zealand, Guide to CICM Training: Trainees: [http://cicm.org.au/CICM\\_Media/CICMSite/CICM-Website/Trainees/Training%20Program/Guide-to-CICM-Training\\_Trainees-\(April2015\).pdf](http://cicm.org.au/CICM_Media/CICMSite/CICM-Website/Trainees/Training%20Program/Guide-to-CICM-Training_Trainees-(April2015).pdf)
- The College of Intensive Care Medicine of Australia and New Zealand, <https://www.cicm.org.au/Trainees/International-Medical-Graduates/Specialist-International-Medical-Graduate>

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- The College of Intensive Care Medicine of Australia and New Zealand, Becoming a Trainee: <https://www.cicm.org.au/Trainees/Becoming-a-Trainee>

### Acknowledgments

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CICM Overseas Trained Specialists Committee.  
 Community Advisory Group.  
 Censor's Committee.  
 New Zealand Committee.

### Document Control

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Promulgated by FICANZCA	1998
Revised by JFICM	2003, 2004, 2007, 2008
Revision frequency	5 years
Revised by CICM	2014, 2015, 2020,
Next review	2025

### Revision History

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Date	Pages revised/ Brief explanation of revision
2020	Generalised English test standard requirements, updated based on MBA's revised standards, cultural safety requirement, included detail of the assessment of SIMGs in New Zealand.

### Further Reading

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### Publishing Statement

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Published by CICM: November 2020. This Training Document has been prepared with regard to general circumstances, and it is the responsibility of the practitioner to have regard to the particular circumstances of each case, and the application of this document in each case. The College's Training Documents are reviewed from time to time, and it is the responsibility of the practitioner to ensure the current version has been obtained. Training Documents have been prepared according to the information available at the time of their publication, and the practitioner should therefore have regard to any information, research or material which may have been published or become available subsequently. Whilst the college endeavours to ensure its Professional Documents are as current as possible at the time of their preparation, it takes no responsibility for matters arising from changed circumstances or information or material which may have become available subsequently.

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