

2.10 Overseas Trained Specialists

This section describes the systems for assessing overseas trained specialists (OTS) that were in place at the time this submission was prepared. In 2006 the Board of Directors established a task force to review the policies and processes for assessing OTS for the purposes of determining equivalence to an Australian trained dermatologist and for area of need (AON) positions. The College will inform the accreditation team of the outcomes of this review.

2.10.1 Process for Assessing Overseas Trained Specialists (OTS)

The ACD has a formal process for assessing the training and clinical experience of OTS applicants against those of a dermatologist trained in Australia. The process is based on the AMC Application Procedures and Requirements for Specialist Assessment (2005) and the AMC/CPMC Assessment of OTS Template for Colleges (2003). The process is described below:

2.10.1.1 Initial Assessment

After a completed application form and the fee for initial assessment of documentation is received, the applicant is sent a preliminary letter and asked to confirm in writing that they have received and understood the advice in that letter. When confirmation has been received by the College, the Board of Censors makes an initial assessment to determine whether the applicant will be interviewed. This initial assessment is based on the information provided on the application form and the documentation provided by the applicant to the AMC. More detailed information may be requested if the committee does not feel able to make a decision based on the information provided. An applicant who is already approved by the AMC to practice in Australia may apply directly to the College.

The Board of Censors considers the content and duration of specialist training undertaken, the levels of assessment undertaken during training, the quality of post-qualification experience in dermatology, participation in relevant continuing professional development programs and contribution to the field in terms of teaching, research and publications in order to determine eligibility for interview.

If the applicant is determined to be clearly not equivalent in standard of training and experience to an Australian-trained dermatologist and/or requires more than two years of additional training to reach this standard, they are not offered an interview and the AMC is advised accordingly.

If the applicant is considered to be potentially equivalent to an Australian-trained dermatologist or likely to be able to reach equivalency within two years, they are invited to an interview. They are advised in writing of the date and location of their interview and the composition of the interview panel.

2.10.1.2 Collection of Further Documentation

Once payment of the interview fee has been received, the College requests referees' reports from the first two referees listed on the OTS's application, using a structured form (Attachment 32).

2.10.1.3 Interview

Interviews are generally held at the College premises in Sydney. The applicant is interviewed by an Interview Panel comprised of the Director responsible for overseeing the educational development of Fellows, Chief Censor, senior College Fellow, health jurisdiction representative, and a layperson to represent the public interest.

The Interview Panel members are sent a copy of the OTS's application in full and the completed referees' reports.

The aim of the interview is to determine and confirm the nature and quality of the applicant's training and experience, and to ensure the applicant understands the standards of competence and safety expected of an Australian trained dermatologist. The Interview Panel seeks to determine whether the applicant's specialist training and experience considered in totality is comparable to those of an Australian trained dermatologist.

In relation to training, the Interview Panel considers the adequacy and quality of clinical exposure and experience, the academic environment of the training and the comparability of the training or otherwise to that undertaken by Australian trainees.

In relation to experience, the Interview Panel considers at what level the applicant has been practising and other factors that indicate that the person was engaged in lifelong learning, including participation in a continuing professional development program, evidence of research and publications, evidence of undergraduate and postgraduate teaching and evidence of leadership at a local, national or international level in dermatology.

The interview focuses on the following:

- i Undergraduate/prevocational/vocational training and examinations

This aspect of the interview looks at what training the OTS has had, with particular emphasis on specialist training and final exit examinations. This should be comparable with the training and examination requirements of the College. Differences in training and examinations are carefully documented. In particular, experience in conditions common in Australia, such as skin cancers and solar damaged skin will be determined.

- ii Post-specialisation experience

The interview looks at the history of the OTS after attaining their specialist qualification. In particular:

- **Clinical Experience:** the applicant is asked about the settings in which he/she has worked since obtaining specialist qualifications, and the range of clinical material seen. In particular, the applicant is asked, via both direct questioning and clinical scenario-based questions, about their experience in the management of conditions common in Australia. This is essential to determine how much and what type of extra clinical training may be necessary.
- **Research:** the applicant should be prepared discuss past and ongoing research interests.
- **Education and Teaching:** the applicant's involvement in undergraduate and postgraduate teaching is explored, particularly the teaching methods he/she may have used.
- **Current Issues:** this is an opportunity for the Interview Panel to explore and assess the applicant's awareness and knowledge of major current issues in dermatology and whether he/she has maintained a documented continuing professional development program.
- **Recency of Practice:** the applicant's recent work history will be discussed.

The applicant has the opportunity to ask questions about the interview and assessment process.

The interview is minuted and recorded, and applicants are advised of this well before the interview. The recording is stored with the applicant's file at College.

The Chair of the Interview Panel, prepares a report detailing the panel's findings. There are three possible recommendations:

- The applicant is equivalent to an Australian-trained dermatologist;
- The applicant is near equivalent to an Australian-trained dermatologist but requires additional training and/or assessment;
- The applicant is not equivalent to an Australian-trained dermatologist.

The Honorary Secretary reviews the interview panel's recommendation and advises the AMC of the outcome of the assessment. The AMC writes to the applicant, advising them of the outcome of the interview.

2.10.1.4 Additional Training and/or Assessment

Applicants who have been assessed as requiring further training and/or assessment are asked to advise the AMC whether or not they intend to

complete the College's requirements. If the applicant advises that they intend to complete the College's requirements for specialist recognition, a letter is forwarded containing contact details of each State Faculty, and the applicant is advised to contact the Faculty of the state in which they intend to reside regarding the creation of a suitable training position.

The College also sends a memorandum to each State Faculty advising them that they may be contacted by any of the interviewed candidates who require further training/examinations, and enclosing a copy of the *Procedure for Supervised Training of an OTS Who Has Been Assessed as Near Equivalent* (Attachment 33).

Once the program has been approved and the OTS starts their training, they are added to the College's database as an "OTS Trainee" and are required to pay the trainee levy. The OTS Trainee then receives all information from College that is provided to College trainees (e.g. *Australasian Journal of Dermatology*, *The Mole*, notices regarding training) and receives the same access to educational activities as College trainees.

OTS trainees undertaking additional supervised training are required to undergo the same processes of in-training assessment as regular trainees in the College training program, and those who are required to pass examinations sit identical examinations.

2.10.2 Testing the Strengths of the Experience of OTS

Clinical experience both during specialist training and after completion of training is examined in detail during the assessment process. During the initial assessment, the curriculum and range of training experiences, as well as the duration and range of post qualification experience are reviewed. These are further examined during the interview processes, which obtains more detailed information regarding patient mix and dermatological conditions managed and includes clinical scenarios based on conditions commonly managed in dermatological practice in Australia.

2.10.3 Performance of Fellows if they Underwent an OTS Assessment

Assessment of OTS applications is based on the knowledge, skills and abilities required by Fellows to practice safely in the Australian context, as defined in the College's Training Program. Assessments are conducted by senior Fellows of the College with a clear understanding of the requirements of practice. Any examinations which may be required are clinically-oriented and it is expected that, with preparation, College Fellows would be likely to pass. However, data to support this is inherently difficult to obtain.

2.10.4 Information and Assistance Given to OTS

The College endeavours to provide comprehensive information to OTS about all stages of the assessment process.

The College website www.dermcoll.asn.au is often the starting point for information for prospective applicants. The website publishes information about assessment and interview fees, assessment procedures, required documentation, interview procedures, appeal processes and assessment outcome data. Prospective applicants can also be sent this information by mail if necessary. They are welcome to contact the college via telephone, email, post or fax at any point of the assessment process. Such enquires are dealt with by designated staff within office hours.

2.10.5 Assistance in Identifying and Obtaining Posts for Further Training

As outlined in 2.10.1, OTS applicants who are required to complete additional supervised training and who have indicated their intention to complete such training, are sent contact details for each Faculty and advised to contact the state in which they wish to undertake this training. The state Faculties are also advised that they may be contacted by any of the interviewed candidates who require further training/examinations, and forwarded a copy of the *Procedure for Supervised Training of an OTS Who Has Been Assessed as Near Equivalent* (Attachment 33).

State Faculties are encouraged to develop positions for OTS trainees where at all possible, taking into account the specific deficiencies in training which must be rectified according to the interview panel's report. However, funding limitations often limit the availability of such positions.

2.10.6 Suitability for 'Area of Need' Positions and Conditions Applying to Such Registration

Assessments for 'area of need' positions are undertaken in line with the requirements set out in the AMC's *Users Guide to Assessment Process for Area of Need (AoN) Specialists*. Applicants for AoN positions are assessed using an identical process to standard OTS applicants, with the exception that they are assessed for 'fitness for task' of practicing in a specified position rather than equivalence to an Australian-trained dermatologist, and bearing in mind that assessment should be completed within 8 weeks of receiving the completed application.

College recommendations to State Medical Boards regarding registration are based on the assumption that registration will be limited to practicing in the specific position for which the applicant was assessed. The College does not have a further role in applying conditions to medical registration. However, the College does conduct ongoing assessment of the AoN as required by the AMC, and reports the outcomes of these assessments to the relevant Medical Board.

2.10.7 Requests for Postgraduate Training and Experience by Junior Doctors on Occupational Trainee Visas

The College has limited involvement in this area. If a potential candidate contacts the College they are referred to the Heads of Departments of major teaching hospitals. Should an appropriate post be available for the candidate, a copy of his/her CV is sent to the Honorary Secretary of the College. If the candidate is deemed to be appropriate for the position, the College will support the application for an occupational trainee visa.

2.10.8 Template of the AMC/CPMC Joint Standing Committee on Overseas Trained Specialists

The College seeks at all times to follow the procedures in this template. Table 12 demonstrates how each of the template's requirements is met.

Table 12

AMC/CPMC TEMPLATE PROCEDURES	ACD PROCEDURES
<p>Documenting criteria for assessment and procedures for assessment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The AMC should be provided with a leaflet specifying the College's additional information requirements • The College should develop criteria against which they will assess the OTS • The procedures used to assess OTS should be stated in writing and copy given to the AMC and potential applicants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ACD currently has no additional information requirements. • The College is currently developing criteria against which it assesses OTS. • The procedures used to assess OTS applicants follow the AMC guidelines, are stated in writing and provided to applicants.
<p>Establishing a committee to undertake assessments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The College should establish a committee to undertake assessments. Members should have knowledge of and expertise in the assessment of local trainees should comprise 5 or more Fellows, with attention to gender and ethnic mix where possible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial assessments are undertaken by the Board of Censors comprised of 6 Fellows with an in depth knowledge of training requirements for local trainees. Interviews are conducted by a panel comprised of the Chief Censor, a member of the board of Directors, a senior College Fellow, health jurisdiction representative and a consumer representative. There is appropriate gender and ethnic mix where possible.
<p>Careful documentation of assessment process</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The College should keep full and accurate documentation of each stage of the assessment process. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documentation pertaining to the initial assessment is kept in writing. All assessment interviews are minuted, recorded and stored in the applicants file.
<p>Evidence used for assessment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The College should only use evidence in making its assessment which it has publicly documented that it will use. • If there is information adverse to the applicant, the applicant must be advised on this and must be entitled to make submissions in relation to the material. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The College only uses the material submitted by the applicant as part of the applicant process, and referees reports obtained with the permission of the applicant as evidence for the assessment. Applicants are informed of any adverse information and given the opportunity to make submissions.
<p>Action to be taken by the College on receipt of application</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The College should notify the applicant of the receipt of the application and indicate when he or she will receive the next communication for the College as to the assessment procedures to be undertaken. • There should be procedures to check that all documentation has been provided and to make a decision about whether the 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ACD follows these procedures (see 2.10.1 of this submission for details). • Where possible, assessment is completed within suggested time-frames.

<p>applicant will be interviewed. This should be communicated to the applicants, the date, time and place of interview given and the issues to be covered at interview outlined.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where practicable, Report 1, should be made available to the AMC within three months of receipt by the College of the application for assessment. 	
<p>The interview</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The interview should be undertaken by the Assessment Committee or at least a substantial number of its members. • The aim of the interview should be to confirm details of the training and experience provided in the written documentation. • Questions raised in the interview should be formalised as much as possible, and avoid questioning on irrelevant matters. • The interview will be subject to legal rules and principles, including the application of 'natural justice' or 'procedural fairness'. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Composition of the assessment committee and interview panel are currently under review. • Aims of the interview, which are detailed in 2.10.1 of this submission, are consistent with the aims suggested in the template. • The interview follows a semi-structured format, and irrelevant questioning is avoided. • The interview follows the rules of 'natural justice'. It is ensured that the applicant has adequate notice of the interview and any required submissions, the applicant is given the opportunity to respond to any adverse material, only relevant material is considered and every effort is made to ensure that the committee is free of bias.

<p>Further Training/Assessments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The College should nominate an appropriate person who can give general advice and assistance to the applicant about the types of posts that would be suitable and where they might be available. • The supervised clinical practice should parallel that required of local trainees. • Reasons for requiring specific areas of experience should be clearly documented. • Any examination should use the format of that used for local trainees. • The standard of the assessments required must be clearly enunciated to both applicant and examiners. • All further assessments should be completed within 2 years of the initial interview. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicants who require further training and/or assessment are directed to the Faculty Chair of the state in which they wish to undertake their training. When a position becomes available for OTS trainees, the training is essentially identical to that required by local trainees, but with an emphasis on the particular clinical areas in which the OTS has been assessed as requiring further training. • All assessments of OTS trainees follow the same format as those undertaken by local trainees and, in all but exceptional circumstances, are completed within two years of the commencement of additional supervised training.
<p>Mediation and Appeals process</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The applicant should have access to a mediation and appeals process at any stage of the assessment process and this should be made known to the applicant at the time of initial contact with the College. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicants have access to the College appeals process at all stages of the assessment process and this is published on both the College web site and on written information sent to potential applicants.

2.10.9 Appeals Process

The College appeals process is available to OTS applicants and any stage of the assessment process (see Attachment 22).