

Background

The Committee for Specialist International Medical Graduate Education (CSIMGE) recently reviewed the processes of Pathway Progress Review and extension of time on the Specialist Pathway for Partially Comparable Specialist International Medical Graduates (SIMGs), with a view to further refine and simplify these processes for candidates who are unable to complete their requirements in the stipulated time of 24 months.

In accordance with the [Maintenance of Comparability Status on the Specialist Pathway Policy](#), 'If any candidate has exceptional circumstances and has a delay in their progress toward Fellowship, OR is otherwise unable to meet the specified time requirements, then CSIMGE may consider an application from the candidate for an extension of time'. The [Partial Comparability Requirements for RANZCP Fellowship](#) policy requires candidates to submit an application for Pathway Progress Review if they fail three attempts at a summative assessment or fail to successfully complete two six-month terms on the specialist pathway.

The Education Committee and the RANZCP Board have given in principle approval to the following changes regarding extension of comparability status and approval to sit a summative assessment after three failures at that assessment. It believes that the following steps would offer a more streamlined, fair and an objective process where decisions can be taken in a timely manner.

A. Extension of Comparability Status

All candidates are expected to complete all partial comparability requirements within 24 FTE months. As per the MBA Good Practice guidelines, the maximum time on the specialist pathway provided to partially comparable candidates is 'a total of four years to complete up to 24 (FTE) calendar months of supervised practice / upskilling with associated assessment including formal examinations where required'

Possible reasons for seeking extension after 24 months

1. Failure to successfully complete either one or both summative assessments within the 24 month time granted on the specialist pathway
2. Failure of one ITA and need to repeat the failed ITA
3. A combination of 1 & 2 above

Process for seeking extension after 24 months

- Closer to the expiry of 24 months of their comparability status time, candidates should review their progress in relation to their partial comparability requirements. If candidates believe, they might require an extension of time, they should apply for the first extension via the application for [Extension of comparability status and Area of Need support](#) [PDF; 500 KB].
- The application for extension must include:
 - o the completed application form including the relevant extension fee;
 - o a cover letter outlining any extenuating circumstances that have prevented the completion of requirements;
 - o the End-of-term In-training Assessment (ITA) form for each term completed
 - o all results and feedback received from previous examination attempts

- o a *Progression Plan 1* (formerly called an Educational Plan) – see section C of this communiqué for details;
 - o a letter of support from the employer which includes reference to work performance during the last twelve (12) months;
 - o an up to date CV;
 - o a current certificate of registration status from the relevant medical board;
 - o evidence of any participation in Continuing Medical Education (CME);
 - o additional documentation as required for continued Area of Need support, if applicable.
- Referee reports will no longer be required. Instead feedback from ITAs and the employer support letter will be reviewed when considering the extension.
 - The Partial Comparability Assessment Review Panel (PCARP) will review the application and the plan – if satisfied, an extension will be granted for 12 months. Where extension is being sought for a failed ITA, a six-month extension will be granted.
 - Extensions will be noted at the next scheduled CSIMGE meeting

Process for seeking a second extension after 36 months

- The PCARP will review any extension beyond 36 months on a case by case basis.
- Where a candidate has still not progressed to fellowship after 36 months, they can submit an application for extension beyond 36 months.
- The application for extension must include:
 - o the completed application form including the relevant extension fee;
 - o a cover letter outlining any extenuating circumstances that have prevented the completion of requirements;
 - o the End-of-term In-training Assessment (ITA) form for each term completed
 - o all results and feedback received from previous examination attempts
 - o a detailed *Progression Plan 2* – see section C of this communiqué for details;
 - o a letter of support from the employer which includes reference to work performance during the last twelve (12) months;
 - o an up to date CV;
 - o a current certificate of registration status from the relevant medical board;
 - o evidence of any participation in Continuing Medical Education (CME);
 - o additional documentation as required for continued Area of Need support, if applicable.
- Only if the PCARP is satisfied with the application and the Progression Plan 2 will an extension be granted for a further 12 months
- It is important to note this will be the final extension – if the candidate fails to successfully complete the pathway requirements during this extension, the PCARP will recommend that the CSIMGE commence the process for withdrawal from the Specialist Pathway.
- If PCARP decides not to grant the second extension, the Chair, PCARP will write to the CSIMGE recommending that the candidate be withdrawn from the specialist pathway, providing reasons for the recommendation.

B. Failure of three attempts at a summative assessment/ failure to successfully complete two ITAs

Process for granting a further attempt at a summative assessment

- Where a candidate is unsuccessful in three attempts at the OSCE or three attempts at the Essay-Style Written examination, the candidate is responsible for writing to the PCARP requesting approval to sit the assessment for a fourth time, and to seek an extension of time on the Specialist Pathway (as per the extension process outlined in section A of this communiqué) if applicable. This request must be

submitted within 21 days of receiving the unsuccessful assessment outcome, and must be accompanied by a comprehensive Progression Plan.

- A letter of support from the employer is required for all requests to undertake a summative assessment for the fourth time.
- The PCARP will review the Progression plan and if it is found to be satisfactory, the candidate will be granted *one further attempt* at the assessment within a period of next 12 months, or prior to the candidate's current Comparability status expiry date.
- If the candidate fails to successfully complete either the OSCE or the Essay-style Written examination on a fourth attempt, the PCARP will recommend that the CSIMGE commence the process for withdrawal from the Specialist Pathway

Process for granting an extension to repeat failed ITAs

- If a candidate fails one (1) or two (2) ITAs, the candidate needs to write to PCARP seeking an extension (as per the extension process outlined in Section A of this communiqué) to enable the failed ITA(s) to be repeated, thus completing the time requirements of the Specialist Pathway.
- The application for extension must include:
 - o the completed application form including the relevant extension fee;
 - o a cover letter outlining any extenuating circumstances that have prevented the completion of requirements;
 - o the End-of-term In-training Assessment (ITA) form for each term completed
 - o a detailed *Progression Plan* addressing the failed ITAs – see section C of this communiqué for details;
 - o a letter of support from the employer which includes reference to work performance during the last twelve (12) months;
 - o an up to date CV;
 - o a current certificate of registration status from the relevant medical board;
 - o evidence of any participation in Continuing Medical Education (CME);
 - o additional documentation as required for continued Area of Need support, if applicable.

Please note:

- **No further time extension will be provided if a candidate fails four (4) attempts at a summative assessment or two (2) ITAs.**
- Once candidates are withdrawn due to failure to progress, they cannot return to the RANZCP specialist pathway.

Candidates failing to make any attempt at an assessment

- The Maintenance of Comparability Status on the Specialist Pathway Policy states that the candidates must make an attempt at an assessment within the 24 months on the specialist pathway. Failure to do so may result in not being granted any extension and withdrawal from the specialist pathway.

C. Requirements of a Progression Plan

The underlying principle for submitting the Progression Plan remains relevant as per Section 9.1 of the Maintenance policy. In accordance with this section, candidates are required to submit an achievable plan focused on successful completion of their outstanding requirement(s). It is important that the Progression Plan is supported by the candidate's employer and supervisor and is duly signed by the supervisor.

In addition to the guidance provided in section 9.1 of the Maintenance Policy, the Progression Plan should address in detail:

- What progress has been made to date?
- What requirements are outstanding?
- Results from previous failed attempt(s) including feedback – clearly identifying the domains, topics, areas where the candidate did not meet the standard expected of a junior consultant
- A self-reflection on previous examination attempts, with clear actions to address each area needing improvement – these may be non-content related, such as anxiety, time management issues, inter-personal skills.
- Consideration of any other potential issues that may impact the candidate's progression towards Fellowship.
- Action plan clearly outlining what measures and strategies will be put in place to ensure improvements in areas of weakness.
- Time frames to complete all outstanding requirements and/or assessments
- Identification of support resources such as trial and practice exam sessions, attendance at workshops and appropriate preparation opportunities, especially in areas of practice where the candidate previously did not perform well.

When submitting a Progression Plan 2, the candidate must provide additional reflection on the successful and unsuccessful aspects of their Progression Plan 1.

The Progression Plan must be submitted within three (3) weeks of the date of an unsuccessful assessment outcome letter. This timeframe ensures that the candidate has the best opportunity to successfully complete requirements within the MBA time frames.

As these changes are to the advantage of the SIMG candidates and more streamlined, these will be implemented with immediate effect.

Friday, 8 May 2018