Specialist Recognition Assessment

Specialist Recognition Assessment evaluates the training, qualifications and experience of SIMGs for comparability with Australian trained ophthalmologists. Australian trainees graduate as specialists equipped to undertake safe, unsupervised, comprehensive, general ophthalmology practice with experience in each of the 12 clinical areas of ophthalmology. It is recommended that SIMGs familiarise themselves with the RANZCO Vocational Training Program and its Curriculum Standards in order to make an informed decision prior to application.

SIMGs are required to be recognised as specialists in ophthalmology in their country of training in order to be eligible for Specialist Recognition Assessment.

Before a SIMG can apply for Specialist Recognition Assessment an application must first be submitted to the Australian Medical Council (AMC) for primary source verification of their medical qualifications.

Specialist Recognition Assessment is conducted in stages, outlined below. At each stage a determination is made and the assessment is either concluded, or the requirements to progress to the next stage set out.

RANZCO will not support any application for registration to practice as a specialist ophthalmologist in Australia unless and until a determination of ‘Substantially Comparable’ has been reached under the Specialist Recognition Assessment Process.

Document Review

SIMGs are required to submit a completed application form (/education-and-training/specialist-international-medical-graduates/how-do-i-work-in-australia/definitions-of-comparability), resulting in either of two possible outcomes:

**Determination of ‘Not Comparable’**

RANZCO informs the applicant and the MBA (via the AMC online portal) that the SIMG’s training, qualifications and experience is ‘Not Comparable’ with the training and qualifications of specialists trained in Australia. The assessment is concluded at this point.

**Determination of ‘Substantially Comparable’**

The applicant is invited to attend an interview with members of the SIMG Committee.

**Determination of ‘Partially Comparable’**

Applicants determined as ‘Partially Comparable’ will be required to attend in interview with members of the SIMG Committee.
Interview

Interviews are conducted in Australia by a panel of SIMG Committee members, and applicants are required to attend in person. The purpose of the interview is, in conjunction with the documentation, to further determine the applicant's level of comparability. After completion of the interview the interim determination is either confirmed or modified ('Not Comparable', 'Partially Comparable' or 'Substantially Comparable') and both the applicant and the MBA are informed.

Determination of ‘Not Comparable’

RANZCO informs the applicant and the MBA (via the AMC online portal) that the SIMG’s training, qualifications and experience is ‘Not Comparable’ with the training and qualifications of specialists trained in Australia. The assessment is concluded at this point.

Determination of ‘Partially Comparable’

Applicants determined as ‘Partially Comparable’ will be required to undergo further assessment. The SIMG Committee will decide on one of two pathways for such applicants following the interview:

Pathway 1

- Sit the written and clinical components* of the RANZCO Advanced Clinical Examination (RACE). The written component must be sat within the first two sittings from date of the partially comparable determination, and the clinical component must be attempted at the first sitting available following a satisfactory performance in the written component; AND/OR
- Complete a short term supervised clinical assessment on site in a hospital; AND/OR
- Other appropriate assessment tools as required.

Pathway 2

- Complete a period of ‘top-up training’ (no longer than 24 months) to prepare for the RACE and other possible assessment; AND/OR
- Sit the written and clinical components* of the RACE. The written component must be sat within the first two sittings from date of the ‘partially comparable’ determination and the clinical component must be attempted at the first sitting available following a satisfactory performance in the written component; AND/OR
- Complete a short term supervised clinical assessment on site in a hospital; AND/OR
- Other appropriate assessment tools as required.

*Applicants will only proceed to the clinical component where a satisfactory standard has been reached in the written component.

RANZCO will determine which combinations of these components in each pathway will be undertaken by the applicant. The applicant and the MBA (via the AMC online portal) will be notified of the required assessment components and the required timeframe for completion.
Once the assessment tasks have been completed there are two possible outcomes:

- The applicant is determined ‘Not Comparable’. The assessment is concluded at this point.
- The applicant may be invited to attend a final interview after which the interim determination on comparability is either confirmed or modified. Further assessment tasks may be required before the application can be finalised.

**Determination of ‘Substantially Comparable’**

Applicants determined as ‘Substantially Comparable’ will be either advised they have completed the assessment process and been determined ‘Substantially Comparable’, or required to complete up to a 12-month Period of Oversight, after which the determination on comparability is again either confirmed or changed:

- The applicant is determined ‘Not Comparable’. The assessment is concluded at this point.
- The applicant may be invited to attend a final interview after which the interim determination on comparability is either confirmed or changed. Further assessment tasks may be required before the application can be finalised.
- The applicant is advised they have completed the assessment process and have been determined ‘Substantially Comparable’.

The determination of ‘Substantially Comparable’ following interview or upon having completed assessment tasks concludes the specialist recognition assessment. RANZCO informs the applicant and the MBA (via the AMC online portal). Applicants may then be eligible to apply to the MBA for registration as a specialist ophthalmologist in Australia and may be invited to apply for Fellowship of RANZCO.

**Timeframe**

Timeframes for completion vary due to differing requirements for individual applicants. The following should be taken as a guide to the time required for the various stages and assessment tasks:

- Document Review – four to six weeks from submission of complete application.
- Interview – may be conducted up to three months following the outcome of the Document Review.
- RANZCO Advanced Clinical Examination (RACE) – dependent on the timing of the outcome of the interview. The written component must be sat within the first two sittings from date of determination, and the clinical component must be attempted at the first sitting available following a satisfactory performance in the written component.
- Any period of ‘top up training’, supervision, or oversight – as detailed at the time of determination.

SIMGs must only apply when they are ready to be assessed. Upon receipt of an application RANZCO considers the individual should be available to undergo assessment tasks as required. Extensions to timeframe may only be granted under exceptional circumstances.
Fees

For a list of application fees, please click here.

MBA Annual Report

The Medical Board of Australia (MBA) publishes an annual report on specialist medical colleges specialist pathway data. The report provides information on applicants’ comparability to Australian trained specialists including the number of overseas trained physicians assessed by RANZCO each year by specialty, country and level of comparability.

To find ophthalmology workforce data, please visit the Health Workforce Data section on the Australian Government Department of Health website.

Appeals

If an applicant wishes to appeal the decision of RANZCO they must do so in accordance with the revised Reconsideration, Review and Appeals Policy.

Please read the guide to the specialist pathway, good practice guidelines for the specialist international medical graduate assessment process, and frequently asked questions on the MBA website before submitting an application. Further information is available on the AMC website.

Specialist Recognition Assessment Chart

Concurrent Specialist Recognition and Area of Need Assessment

Area of Need (AoN) positions are declared by the relevant State or Territory Health Department when the provision of a particular service is considered to be inadequate for the need, and an employer wishes to provide such services but is unable to recruit an Australian-recognised specialist to the position.

For Employers: Details of the AoN Declaration Process

Concurrent Specialist Recognition and AoN Assessment allows SIMGs to seek RANZCO’s recommendation for limited registration in order to commence practice in an AoN position whilst undergoing Specialist Recognition Assessment. If at any time an SIMG is found to not be satisfactorily progressing through the assessment process RANZCO’s recommendation will be removed.
The AoN Assessment itself evaluates a SIMG’s training, qualifications and experience for suitability to work in a specific AoN position. Whilst AoN Assessment is a separate process, it must be undertaken concurrently with Specialist Recognition Assessment.

Specialist International Medical Graduate (SIMG) Comparability and Area of Need (AoN) Suitability Assessment Policy and Procedures (Australia)

Australia Area of Need