Combined FRANZCO – PhD/MD pathway

Approved by: QEC
Version: Current
Department: Education

Next review date: April 2022
Approval date: 5 April 2019
Policy inventory number: 176. 2019.04. 04
1. Purpose and scope

This policy describes the pathway by which a trainee undertaking the RANZCO Vocational Training Program may concurrently complete a research higher degree at doctoral level (Doctor of Philosophy or Doctor of Medicine).

2. Selection and Admission

2.1 Application Process

Candidates must apply to the College and to networks for selection to a first-year training post in the usual way. There are no dedicated posts for the clinician scientist stream.

Once appointed, a trainee may apply to the College and to a university for approvals to join this pathway.

The Progression Committee will assess the trainee's application and oversee the trainee for the duration of the combined program.

The College and the university department reserve the right whether or not to approve applications to this pathway.

2.2 Selection Criteria for Combined Pathway

A trainee seeking to undertake the combined pathway must meet the following selection criteria:

- meet all criteria of basic training in Year 1 and Year 2
- receive a minimum of “Satisfactory 5-6” in all Term Supervisor reports
- pass Advanced Pathology in Year 3
- apply for grants to carry out the research project and, if unsuccessful, have an alternative funding arrangement
- gain university approval for a PhD or MD topic

2.3 Structure of the Combined Pathway

The balance of ophthalmology training and PhD/MD candidature are conducted as follows:

**Years 1-3:** The trainee undertakes the VTP full time and must meet all the requirements of basic training and pass the advanced pathology examination. The trainee must also prepare a proposal for a PhD/MD project and apply for grants and scholarships with the aid of the university department.
**Years 4-5:** In each of these years, the trainee is required to satisfactorily complete 0.5 FTE clinical and surgical training, 0.5 FTE research and fulfill the same assessment and reporting requirements as a RANZCO 0.5 FTE part-time trainee. RANZCO anticipates that the trainee will sit and pass the RANZCO Advanced Clinical Examination (RACE) at the beginning of the fourth year of training. If the trainee fails the examination at this sitting, their training pathway may be adapted to ensure they have opportunities to engage in sufficient and appropriate clinical and surgical training experiences to improve their performance and the likelihood of passing the examination at their next attempt. The network in which the trainee is training must approve any changes to the trainee’s training pathway and timetable. RANZCO and the trainee understand that approval will be dependent on an appropriate clinical role being available.

**Years 6-6+:** The trainee may choose to split their time between clinical work and their PhD in any proportion, including fulltime work on the PhD, however, a trainee who does less than 0.2 FTE clinical work per week will be required to complete a Return to Work assessment conducted by the Trainee Progression Committee after they complete their PhD and before they are recommended for Fellowship of RANZCO.

**2.4 Minimum and Maximum Training Time**

The minimum training time for this training pathway is 6 years.

By the end of Year 6: The trainee is expected to have satisfactorily completed a minimum of 4 years of clinical ophthalmology training and a minimum of 2 years on the PhD/MD program.

A trainee requiring more time to complete the pathway must provide a proposal for extension not later than the middle of the sixth year, and this must be approved by both the College and the university.

RANZCO expects most trainees to complete the combined FRANZCO-PhD/MD in a maximum of twelve years. RANZCO will consider requests for an extension of time to complete the program on a case by case basis.

If the trainee does not complete the PhD/MD program they must satisfactorily complete the equivalent of four years of clinical and surgical ophthalmology training and a final (fifth) year of training. The trainee must submit a proposal for their final year of training to the Trainee Progression Committee for approval. The trainee may propose that the work completed on the PhD/MD, or other training experiences, be approved for their final year of training.

The trainee must complete the final year program approved by the Trainee Progression committee and submit the following reports to inform the Committee’s decision about the trainee’s satisfactory completion of the final year:

a) A trainee report detailing their research (if applicable) and their training experiences in each approved final year position.

b) Two supervisor reports from each approved final year position, to provide an assessment of their performance against the seven key roles – Ophthalmic Expert and Clinical Decision-maker, Communicator, Collaborator, Manager, Health Advocate, Scholar and Professional.

A trainee on the combined FRANZCO - PhD/MD pathway whose final year report(s) are not approved by the Trainee Progression Committee will be required to repeat the Final Year, or part thereof in accordance with the Trainee Performance Support Policy.
The Trainee Progression Committee’s acceptance of a trainee’s satisfactory completion of the Final Year of the VTP marks the trainee’s eligibility to apply for admission as a Fellow of RANZCO (FRANZCO).

2.5 Flexible Training

Trainees on the combined FRANZCO - PhD/MD training pathway may apply to undertake flexible training that complies with the provisions of RANZCO’s Flexible Training Policy.

2.6 Assessment

The trainee must follow the normal assessment process for all ophthalmology-related training. The trainee will undergo training through rotations and theatre experience and other work-based assessment reports must be completed and sent to the College, as required. RANZCO requires trainees to retain their surgical skills while on each stage of this training pathway.

Assessment of progress on the PhD/MD program occurs through six-monthly reports from the trainee to their academic supervisor, with copies to the College for consideration by the Trainee Progression Committee.

1. References

2. Related Documents

3. Record of Amendments

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