



**RANZCO**

The Royal Australian  
and New Zealand  
College of Ophthalmologists

# RANZCO Area of Need Specialist International Medical Graduate Pilot Pathway

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**Approved by:** Board  
**Version:** Current  
**Department:** Advocacy

**Next review date:** December 2025  
**Approval date:** 10 December 2022  
**Policy inventory number:** 212.2022.12 01

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to outline the process for a pilot program aimed at the development and trialing of a pathway for SIMGs based in the designated areas of need (AoN) of Alice Springs and Broome to attain fellowship utilizing workplace-based assessments (WBA) as an alternative to the clinical examinations to assess SIMGs' clinical skills and knowledges.

### 1.2. Who is it prepared for?

This policy is intended as guidance for applicants, supervisors, assessors, relevant Committees and College staff to facilitate and govern the pilot program.

### 1.3. Scope

This policy only applies to SIMG placements in Broome and Alice Springs, and does not extend to any other locations in Australia.

The process outlined in this policy constitutes a trial of WBA as a more practical way of assessing SIMGs' performance in everyday clinical practice and tracking their progress towards qualifying to be a comprehensive ophthalmologist in the two RANZCO Board approved locations.

### 1.4. Definitions

An **Area of Need (AoN)** is a geographical location where the medical needs of its population are going unmet. State and territory governments determine their own AoN locations.

**Comparability** means Not Comparable, Partially Comparable or Substantially Comparable as the case may be. Comparability Assessment mean

**Specialist International Medical Graduates (SIMG)** are medical practitioners who have satisfied all the training and examination requirements in their field of specialty in another country.

**Workplace based assessments (WBA)** is the assessment of a specialist trainee's working practices based on what they actually do in the workplace, which is performed during work hours in the workplace itself.

## 2. Strategic Alignment

This policy aligns with the RANZCO Strategic Plan, supporting the attainment of the goal of achieving equitable access to eye health services in regional and remote Australia and should be read in conjunction with the RANZCO Specialist International Medical Graduate (SIMG) Comparability and Area of Need (AoN) Suitability Assessment Policy and Procedures (Australia).

This policy also reflects the Medical Board of Australia's *Standards: Specialist medical college assessment of specialist international medical graduates*, which enables SIMGs to work in an area of need while upskilling to meet the requirements for fellowship.

### 3. Background and issues

Recognising the projected significant shortage of ophthalmologists by 2030, particularly in regional, rural and remote areas, the College has been working with the Department of Health and jurisdictions to increase training numbers and also established a regionally enhanced training network.

However, more needed to be done in the short to medium term to provide much needed services in regional and remote locations. Specialist International Medical Graduates (SIMGs) are a vital part of ophthalmic service provision, particularly in remote areas.

Therefore, a working group under the auspices of the RANZCO Australian Ophthalmology Workforce and Services Committee, in consultation with the chair of the SIMG Committee developed an alternative RANZCO AoN SIMG Pathway to Fellowship (hereafter referred as 'Pathway'), which is designed to retain ophthalmologists in regional areas, and to help address the workforce shortage and maldistribution issues.

The RANZCO Board has approved the Pathway to be trialled in Broome and Alice Springs.

The Pathway is underpinned by the following principles:

- The Pathway is targeted at SIMGs who are already working in Australia and is not accessible to those who apply from overseas. The candidate needs to have at least one year ophthalmology experience in Australia/New Zealand in any capacity with appropriate references from RANZCO Fellows.
- The SIMG candidate will be associated with a public hospital in an appropriately defined Area of Need. The advertised positions are consultant posts and not eligible for Australian registrars. By local jurisdiction's definition, these AoN posts are typically the ones that have not been able to be filled with RANZCO Fellows during recruitment campaigns.
- The SIMG candidate will undertake an assessment of comparability by submitting the relevant completed RANZCO application form (combined SIMG comparability and AoN suitability assessment application), and needs to be deemed partially comparable to undertake the Pathway. Areas for upskilling will be outlined to guide supervision during the 2+2-year post in the AoN location.
- The SIMG candidates will be properly supervised and assessed against comprehensive ophthalmology competency, using Workplace-Based Assessments (WBA).
- The high standards of Australian ophthalmology are not compromised. RANZCO will ensure robust governance structure and rigorous assessment process is in place to facilitate independent reviews of the candidate.

### 4. Objectives

To guide the development of an alternative robust process for assessing SIMGs in two designated locations.

## 5. Process

The candidate submits the completed RANZCO application form (combined SIMG comparability and AoN suitability assessment application) and pays the assessment fee. Details on form and application process are accessible via the RANZCO Specialist International Medical Graduate (SIMG) Comparability and Area of Need (AoN) Suitability Assessment Policy and Procedures (Australia).

RANZCO SIMG Committee determines the comparability of all SIMG candidates including Pilot Pathway (PP) candidates.

Once determined as partially comparable or higher, PP candidates become eligible for the Board approved Pilot Pathway (i.e. placements in Broome and Alice Springs).

Application is made to RANZCO (CEO) by the relevant location for the candidate to be placed and to be working under the direction of the AoN SIMG PP Working Group and they will be working towards their Fellowship with WBA being the tool for assessment (not the RACE).

The candidate will be supervised locally and their progress will be assessed by AoN SIMG PP Working Group – whose role it is to provide the structure around the working arrangements including the WBA process and implementation.

Candidate progress is the responsibility of the AoN SIMG PP Working Group who report directly to the Board.

## 6. Monitoring and Evaluation

The pilot will commence in Broome and Alice Springs in 2023. The AoN SIMG PP WG will report to the Board at six-monthly intervals.

The process will be reviewed by the Australian Ophthalmology Workforce and Services Committee in consultation with the AoN SIMG PP WG every 12 months.