

ROYAL AUSTRALASIAN COLLEGE OF SURGEONS REVIEWS SECRETARIAT

Mrs Anne Kolbe
President
Royal Australasian College of Surgeons
College of Surgeons' Gardens
Spring Street
MELBOURNE VIC 3000

REVIEW OF THE ASSESSMENT OF OVERSEAS-TRAINED SURGEONS

Dear Mrs Kolbe

Please find enclosed a copy of the report of the Review of the Assessment of Overseas-Trained Surgeons.

In accordance with the terms of reference, the review has examined the processes for the assessment of overseas-trained surgeons (OTS) seeking to practise in Australia, used by the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons.

The Review Committee has considered information received from submissions, responses to the draft report and draft final report, consultations and other sources. The report has been developed with reference to issues raised by stakeholders, and specific issues arising from the terms of reference for the review.

Key recommendations relate to:

- improving the assessment process
- a proposed new assessment test of “competence for the intended scope of surgical practice” and its application for registration purposes
- processes and timeframes for developing competency requirements for surgical specialties and publishing assessment guidelines
- streamlining assessment by recognising surgical qualifications gained overseas
- improving processes for identifying and addressing training needs of individual overseas-trained surgeons.

The report also proposes the establishment of an external oversight body, within the framework of the Australian Medical Council, to monitor implementation of the review recommendations and the College OTS assessment process. It is proposed that this body and other consultative mechanisms be used to aid communication between relevant parties on issues related to the assessment of overseas-trained surgeons.

The Review Committee noted particular implementation issues identified by the College in its response to the draft final report, notably those concerning funding requirements, the proposed new assessment model and the category of ‘partial comparability’, and the use and definition of key terms in the report.

The Review Committee recognised that implementation of the report recommendations will have resourcing implications. The Review Committee has recommended a process to consider resource requirements and how these may be met, which could be used to address the funding issues raised in the College’s response.

The views expressed by the College in relation to the proposed new assessment model, in particular the category of 'partial comparability', were also noted by the Review Committee. While acknowledging the concerns raised by the College, the Committee believes that its recommendations will assist to improve the assessment of overseas-trained surgeons. The Committee expects that applicants assessed as partially comparable would have demonstrated a level of competence for the intended scope of practice similar to that which the College currently assesses as 'close to' substantial comparability. The Committee has sought to clarify the report text on this matter.

With regard to the use of key terms in the report, the Review Committee noted that it had endeavoured to clarify its use of terms in the text of the report, but did not consider a glossary was required.

On behalf of the Review Committee, I would like to thank the College and its staff for their cooperation and assistance to us in undertaking this review.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Ron Paterson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping tail on the final letter.

Mr Ron Paterson
Chair of the Review of the Assessment of Overseas-Trained Surgeons
15 April 2005