

Division:	Fellowship Engagement	Ref. No.	REG-3008
Department:	Fellowship Services		
Title:	Admission to Fellowship		

1. PURPOSE AND SCOPE

This policy establishes the process for admission to Fellowship of the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons (RACS).

The College awards Fellowship in nine surgical specialties. Awarding Fellowship of the RACS recognises that a person has attained the skills and competencies defined through the training program for each of the specialties.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following policies:

- Subscriptions Policy
- Specialist Assessment of International Medical Graduates in Australia
- Vocational Assessment of International Medical Graduates in New Zealand
- New Zealand Vocationally Registered Doctors Applying for Fellowship

2. KEYWORDS

Admission to Fellowship, Fellowship entrance fee, Fellowship certificate, convocation, International Medical Graduate, surgical education and training.

3. BODY OF POLICY

3.1. Eligibility to apply for Admission to Fellowship (by examination)

3.1.1. Eligibility

To be eligible for admission to Fellowship by examination applicants must have successfully completed:

- a. The RACS Fellowship Examination in the relevant specialty; and
- b. The RACS Operating With Respect eLearning module; and
- c. All components of a RACS Surgical Education and Training (SET) program with endorsement from the relevant Specialty Board; or
- d. All components, with endorsement from the relevant Specialty Board Chair, of a designated period of assessment under supervision and/or oversight in accordance with the RACS policies on the Specialist Assessment of International Medical Graduates.

Admission to Fellowship by examination is not an automatic process and must be initiated by the applicant. There are two application pathways for admission to Fellowship by examination, a standard pathway available to all eligible applicants (see 3.1.2) and an expedited pathway available to applicants who satisfy additional requirements (see 3.1.3).

3.1.2. Standard Application Pathway

Following successful completion of all eligibility requirements outlined in 3.1.1 applicants may initiate the admission process. To initiate this process applicants must submit the relevant application form available on the RACS website, including any accompanying documentation specified within the form.

Applications are processed on a monthly cycle. The closing date for consideration of an application in a given monthly cycle is the first day of

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that month. Applications received after the closing date will be held over to the following month.

Applicants approved for Fellowship will be notified in writing, and will become Fellows on receipt of the subscription fee and associated Fellowship documentation. For this application pathway, the date a person is admitted to Fellowship is the date when all admission to Fellowship requirements detailed in section 3.4 have been fulfilled.

3.1.3. Expedited Application Pathway

Applicants who are undertaking a Surgical Education and Training (SET) program and who satisfy the following requirements may be eligible for the expedited application pathway. Applicants must:

- a. Be in their final term of the surgical training program; and
- b. Have successfully completed all other components of the surgical training program including the Fellowship Examination; and
- c. Have received satisfactory assessment reports for all terms undertaken in the eighteen months prior to the scheduled completion date; and
- d. Submit a satisfactory mid-term assessment report for the current term.

To initiate this process applicants must submit the relevant application form available on the College website, including any accompanying documentation specified within the form.

Applications are processed on a monthly cycle. Applicants for the expedited pathway may submit an application two monthly cycles prior to their scheduled completion date.

Applicants who are eligible for expedited approval will be admitted to Fellowship on their scheduled completion date, subject to confirmation of completion of their final term by the Surgical Supervisor and receipt of the subscription and associated Fellowship documentation. Failure to complete the final term of the SET program will result in the automatic withdrawal of approval for Fellowship. The application may then be reprocessed in accordance with this policy.

3.2. Eligibility to apply for admission to Fellowship (by assessment)

To be eligible for admission to Fellowship by assessment applicants must be an International Medical Graduate (IMG) who has successfully completed all components, with endorsement from the relevant Specialty Board, of a designated period of assessment and any other specified requirements in accordance with the RACS policies on the Specialist Assessment of International Medical Graduates. In addition, the IMG must have completed the RACS Operating with Respect eLearning module within the 12 months prior to applying for Fellowship.

3.2.1. Defined Scope of Practice Fellowships

On occasions an IMG may be assessed as exceeding the standard of substantial comparability to an Australian or New Zealand surgeon at the time of completion of training but within a defined scope of practice and

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whose surgical services are considered valuable to the community and contribute to the goals of the College and the Specialty discipline.

Such applicants may be recommended for Fellowship by assessment with a defined scope of practice. To be recommended for Fellowship with a defined scope of practice, the IMG must:

- a. Have been trained and qualified by examination and practised overseas at a level of substantial comparability in the relevant specialty, although this may have been earlier in their career.
- b. Be practicing a more limited scope of the specialty at a significantly higher level than would be expected of an Australian or New Zealand trained surgeon at the time of completion of training.
- c. Be providing surgical services that are of significant value to the community.
- d. Have professional and personal qualities that would be of significant value to RACS when they are accepted as Fellows.
- e. Where such doctors are recommended for admission to Fellowship, the defined scope of practice will be recorded in the RACS database

3.3. Approval for Admission to Fellowship

The RACS Council has delegated to the Education Board the authority to approve admissions to Fellowship by examination or assessment, including those with a defined scope of practice. The minimum time frame for an application to be approved, once

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received by the College, is 17 working days (i.e. approximately three weeks), from the first working day of the month.

Further information regarding the application process and timelines for approval is available on the College website.

3.4. Admission to Fellowship Requirements

Following approval for admission to Fellowship by the Education Board, both standard and expedited applicants will be issued an Admission to Fellowship Kit within 3 working days from date of payment being successfully processed.

The Admission to Fellowship Kit is issued by the Manager, Professional Standards, confirming admission to Fellowship subject to:

- 3.4.1. Confirmation of completion of final hospital rotation for the SET Program by the surgical supervisor (expedited applicants only)
- 3.4.2. Payment of all outstanding monies
- 3.4.3. Payment of the Fellowship Entrance Fee and College subscription
- 3.4.4. Return of a signed and witnessed Fellowship pledge.

The Admission to Fellowship Kit also extends an invitation for newly admitted Fellows to present at the annual convocation held in conjunction with the Annual Scientific Congress, occurring May each year (refer to section 3.8).

All of the above admission to Fellowship requirements must be fulfilled in order for persons to be admitted to Fellowship of the College.

3.4.5. Fellowship Entrance Fee

All applicants are required to pay the Fellowship Entrance Fee. Applicants can elect to pay the amount in full, receiving a ten percent discount. Alternatively, applicants may wish to make five equal payments over a five year period, processed at the same time as the annual College subscription. Fellows who are being awarded a second specialty are not required to pay an additional entrance fee.

3.4.6. College Subscription

Applicants are required to pay the annual College subscription. Fellows admitted between 1 January and 30 June are required to pay the current year College subscription in full. Fellows admitted between 1 July and 31 October are required to pay the current year College subscription at fifty percent of the full subscription rate. Fellows admitted between 31 October

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and 31 December are not required to pay the annual subscription for the current year.

Applicants undertaking a subsequent RACS Fellowship and paying a training fee to the College are not required to pay a subscription fee until this training is completed or ceased.

Applicants who commence training in a different surgical specialty in the SET Program are not required to pay a subscription fee until this training is completed or ceased.

The annual College subscription amount, subscription categories and admission fees are available on the College website.

3.4.7. Fellowship Pledge

The Fellowship pledge represents the commitment that Fellows make to patients, to surgery and to the community at large. Applicants are required to read, sign and return the below pledge to the College as part of the admission to Fellowship requirements.

Fellowship Pledge:

I pledge to always act in the best interests of my patients, respecting their autonomy and rights. I undertake to improve my knowledge and skills, evaluate and reflect on my performance. I agree to continue learning and teaching for the benefit of my patients, my trainees and my community. I will be respectful of my colleagues, and readily offer them my assistance and support. I will abide by the Code of Conduct of this College, and will never allow considerations of financial reward, career advancement, or reputation to compromise my judgement or the care I provide. I accept the responsibility and challenge of being a surgeon and a Fellow of the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons.

3.4.8. Return of Admission Documents

New Zealand applicants return the completed Admission to Fellowship Kit to the New Zealand Regional Office. Upon receipt of the Fellowship Entrance Fee, College subscription and signed and witnessed Fellowship

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Pledge, the New Zealand office advises the Fellowship Officer that all admission requirements have been fulfilled.

Australian applicants return the completed Admission to Fellowship Kit to the Fellowship Officer.

3.5. Confirmation of Fellowship

Subject to the admission of all Fellowship requirements in section 3.4 being fulfilled, confirmation of Fellowship is issued by the Manager, Professional Standards, within three working days.

The correspondence confirming admission to Fellowship includes:

- 3.5.1. The date of admission to Fellowship
- 3.5.2. Welcome letter
- 3.5.3. Confirmation that the Fellowship Certificate will follow
- 3.5.4. Confirmation of Fellowship, stating the date of admission and the specialty as interim evidence of the award of Fellowship
- 3.5.5. Correspondence addressed to Medicare Australia, to assist with application for recognition as a specialist (Australia only)
- 3.5.6. Access to a range of College publications, including current guidelines and information about the Continuing Professional Development program, Code of Conduct and privacy policies is available via the RACS website
- 3.5.7. Payment receipt for the Fellowship Entrance Fee and (where applicable) annual subscription payment (Australia and overseas only, New Zealand receipts are issued by the College's New Zealand Office separately)

Section 3.12 details how the effective date for admission to Fellowship is determined. This date will be known as the Fellow's 'admission date' and will be the date that appears on the Fellowship Certificate, annual Fellows Transcript and on future letters issued by the College confirming Fellowship (for registration, credentialing or employment purposes).

3.6. Fellowship Certificate

The Fellowship Certificate is documentary evidence of a person's Fellowship of the College, of their specialty and their admission date. The certificate states the Fellow's membership number and certifies that the holder is entitled to use the suffix FRACS.

The Fellowship Certificate is signed by the College's Chief Executive Officer, Court of Examiners Chair, Censor in Chief and College President. The Fellowship Certificate is issued within 30 days of admission to Fellowship, dependent on the availability of the above office bearers.

3.7. Fellow Identification Card

Newly admitted Fellows receive a Fellow Identification Card, as evidence of College membership. The Fellow Identification Card is designed to facilitate entry to the main entrance of the College headquarters in Melbourne, Victoria. Fellows visiting the

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Melbourne office are able to present their card to reception to gain convenient access. The Fellow Identification Card is issued at the same time that Fellowship is confirmed.

3.8. Convocation

Newly admitted Fellows are encouraged to present at the College Convocation held in conjunction with the Annual Scientific Congress (ASC), which occurs in May each year.

New Fellows receive a letter from the ASC Secretariat extending an invitation to present at the convocation. Letters of invitation to convocate are sent on 31 January each year. For Fellows admitted after 31 January, the invitation relates to convocating in the following year. Fellows can present at Convocation once only, within five years of admission to Fellowship. The registration fee to attend the ASC is waived in the year that new Fellows convocate.

3.9. Confirmation of Fellowship to External Organisations

On request from the Fellow, RACS will inform Medicare Australia of award of Fellowship for Trainees and International Medical Graduates. Medicare is informed of the admission date and specialty.

The New Zealand office of RACS informs the MCNZ of award of Fellowship for Trainees and International Medical Graduates. The MCNZ is informed of the admission date and specialty of each new Fellow.

3.10. Award of Fellowship with a Defined Scope of Practice

The Education Board determines whether Fellowship is to be awarded with a defined scope of practice. This decision is made at the time of approval for application for admission to Fellowship.

When a Fellow is admitted with a defined scope of practice, the details of the defined scope are included on the Fellowship Certificate. The Education Board determines what wording is included on the Fellowship certificate.

3.11. Award of Fellowship in a Second Specialty

Fellows awarded Fellowship in a second specialty have the same requirements for admission to Fellowship as described above, however the Fellowship Entrance Fee is not charged. The confirmation of Fellowship issued by the Manager, Professional Standards (section 3.5) states the specialty and date of admission for both Fellowships.

3.12. Time Delay for Admission to Fellowship

Fellows who are approved for Fellowship who do not meet the admission to Fellowship requirements outlined in section 3.4 within two years of eligibility are required to provide evidence of further training or continuing professional development, in order for admission to Fellowship to be granted.

This applies particularly to approved applicants who undertake a further Fellowship or training outside Australasia and choose not to meet the admission to Fellowship requirements until their further Fellowship or training is completed. In any circumstance

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of delay, the 'admission date' is the date when all admission to Fellowship requirements detailed in section 3.4 have been fulfilled.

4. ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTS

Admission to Fellowship Procedure

Privacy of Personal Information policy

Subscriptions policy

Approver Professional Development and Standards Board
Authoriser Council