



Medical Board of Australia (MBA) expedited Specialist International Medical Graduate (SIMG) pathway for specialist anaesthetists - Information update

As at 19 March 2025, Version 1

Executive summary:

About

- Specialist anaesthetists from the United Kingdom and Ireland that meet relevant criteria are able to apply to the expedited specialist pathway for SIMG recognition in Australia to gain specialist registration with Ahpra.
- Designed to accelerate the assessment and recognition of overseas-trained specialist who demonstrate that they meet the specific Medical Board of Australia (MBA) eligibility criteria. However, bypasses existing medical college assessment processes.

Items to note

- **Pathway to ANZCA fellowship:** The expedited pathway offered by the MBA does not lead to an ANZCA fellowship (i.e. FANZCA), in the same manner the ANZCA standard SIMG pathway and assessment process does. Therefore, ANZCA has developed a pathway to ANZCA fellowship that can be undertaken concurrently by MBA expedited specialist pathway applicants if they choose which, if successful, will lead to specialist medical registration and ANZCA fellowship.
- **Undertaking the MBA expedited pathway OR college fellowship pathway – new or transition applicants:** The college has received queries and encountered situations where applicants who qualify for the MBA expedited pathway instead choose to apply or continue their application for the ANZCA standard SIMG pathway and assessment. We are seeking confirmation with the MBA whether the expedited pathway is mandatory and if there any impacts to registration (unintended or otherwise).
- **Importance of ANZCA as CPD Home:** The MBA requires expedited SIMGs to have a CPD Home (regardless of fellowship intentions), conduct 50 hours of CPD each calendar year, and to choose a specialist medical college or non-college as their CPD Home. ANZCA has requested Australian governments encourage and promote ANZCA as the CPD Home for anaesthesia specialists undertaking this pathway, as a CPD Home that is closely aligned to the relevant speciality medical college is crucial.
- **Expedited pathway SIMGs must complete a period of supervised practice:** The college has strongly recommended that Australian governments encourage supervisors of doctors on the expedited pathway to be a fellow of their relevant college. There is still considerable uncertainty about the supervision level, requirement to supervise at a site, speciality alignment (i.e. assume the supervisor must be a specialist practicing in the same speciality), what tools will be used to assess supervisor performance, and the legal liability/responsibility of expedited SIMG supervisors under the MBA expedited pathway.

This document

Information update on the MBA expedited SIMG pathway for specialist anaesthetists - known information on the pathway, pathway options, queries ANZCA or other stakeholders have raised, impacted processes and next steps, as of March 2025.

Context:

In late December 2024 the MBA announced that specialist anaesthetists from the United Kingdom and Ireland that meet relevant criteria, could apply to the [expedited specialist pathway](#) for SIMG recognition in Australia to gain specialist registration with Ahpra. This is in addition to the disciplines of general practice, obstetrics and gynaecology and psychiatry specialists launched in 2024, with additional specialities to be added during 2025. ANZCA is seeking confirmation from the MBA about if, when and the process for adding to the current list of accepted qualifications for the expedited process for anaesthesia.

With the implementation of this pathway now under way for anaesthesia, the college would like to provide the anaesthesia community with relevant and known information on the pathway as of March 2025. We will continue to provide additional updates, either on the ANZCA website or via similar distributed information updates, when they become apparent.

Please note that from an ANZCA perspective there remains uncertainty about aspects of this new pathway that, despite raising these questions and concerns with the MBA, remain unclear. We will continue to provide as much current information as is available.

About the MBA expedited pathway:

This pathway is designed to accelerate the assessment and recognition of overseas-trained specialist who demonstrate that they meet the specific MBA eligibility criteria. However, it bypasses existing medical college assessment processes, with the MBA to conduct paper-based assessment of SIMGs and then approve them for specialist registration (with conditions) in Australia. The requirements include:

- Completion of six months of supervised practice in Australia*.
- A workplace-based assessment, including:
 - A multi-source feedback assessment.
 - One of mini-clinical evaluation exercise (Mini-CEX), direct observation of procedural skills (DOPS) or case-based discussion (CBD)*.
- Orientation to the Australian healthcare setting. The MBA's orientation requirements for specialist registration is included [here](#).
- Cultural safety education. The MBA's cultural safety education requirements for specialist registration is included [here](#).
- Successful completion of an Effective Management of Anaesthetic Crisis (EMAC) course for anaesthetists.

*The college is seeking clarification on:

- *How the six months is defined (i.e. 38 hours of clinical time)? Is leave included? Is orientation and mandatory training included in that six-month period? How will the SIMG be listed within Ahpra in the first six months? Defining processes if the SIMG needs additional clinical or other support.*
- *How the workplace-based assessments will be conducted to ensure objectivity and lack of bias. The advantage of the ANZCA SIMG Performance Assessment is that it's conducted by people external to the hospital to ensure objectivity and avoid bias.*

Once these are all completed, the SIMG is eligible for full specialist registration.

Essentially, the MBA expedited pathway enables recognised applicants in an approved position to fast track the Ahpra SIMG registration process, illustrated in the diagram on the right.

However, the expedited pathway offered by the MBA does not lead to an ANZCA fellowship (i.e. FANZCA), noting the ANZCA standard SIMG pathway and assessment process leads to a FANZCA designation.

To be eligible to apply for the specialist registration through the expedited specialist pathway, SIMGs must hold recognised overseas specialist qualifications on the MBA's [Expedited Specialist pathway: accepted qualifications list](#) and be appointed to a specialist level position.

Potential pathways:

With the implementation of the expedited pathway, we understand there has been confusion, including for employers, on the options available to overseas specialist anaesthetists considering working in Australia. The possible specialist anaesthetist pathways include the following:

Pathways leading to ANZCA fellowship:

- ANZCA standard SIMG pathway and assessment process.
- Pathway to ANZCA fellowship (the ANZCA process leading to fellowship if undertaken in conjunction with the MBA expedited pathway, listed below).

Non-fellowship pathway:

- MBA expedited specialist pathway.

Further clarification of these pathways is included in Attachment A, including a visual depiction of these three pathways.



Undertaking the MBA expedited pathway OR college fellowship pathway – new or transition applicants:

The college has received queries and encountered situations where applicants who qualify for the MBA expedited pathway instead choose to apply or continue their application for the ANZCA standard SIMG pathway and assessment.

We are seeking confirmation with the MBA on whether the expedited pathway is mandatory and if there are any unintended impacts or other factors that need to be taken into consideration.

The [MBA website](#) wording regarding “Transitional arrangements for SIMGs currently registered on the specialist pathway” is below:

If you are a SIMG who is currently registered on the Specialist pathway and you are eligible for the Expedited Specialist pathway and:

- *you hold limited registration, you can apply for specialist registration through the Expedited Specialist pathway when it opens OR wait to apply until your limited registration is due for renewal and surrender your limited registration when your specialist registration is approved. If you have not met the relevant supervised practice requirements, your specialist registration will be subject to conditions that enable you to meet this requirement*
- *you hold provisional registration, you can stay on the Specialist pathway with provisional registration OR apply for specialist registration when the Expedited Specialist pathway opens. If you have not met the relevant supervised practice requirements, your specialist registration will be subject to conditions that enable you to meet this requirement. When all requirements are met, you may be eligible for both general and specialist registration.*

If you have an application for limited registration pending when the Expedited Specialist pathway opens (including an application for renewal), Ahpra will contact you to discuss your options.

The college’s understanding is that choosing the ANZCA standard SIMG pathway (compared to the MBA expedited pathway, either as a new or transition applicant) is allowed. The MBA website wording indicating “can” rather than “must” above aligns with this understanding, however we are seeking confirmation with the MBA whether SIMGs wanting to continue on the pathway to FANZCA along the standard ANZCA SIMG pathway will have any impacts to their registration.

Importance of fellowship:

The college and the medical community recognise the importance of fellowship in providing high-quality and safe patient care. ANZCA fellowship provides a meaningful and ongoing supportive community of practice as well as opportunities for supervision and training roles and the collegiality of the college and all it has to offer.

As the MBA expedited pathway will not lead to fellowship of ANZCA (i.e. FANZCA), ANZCA has developed a pathway to ANZCA fellowship that can be undertaken by MBA expedited specialist pathway applicants if they choose. This can run concurrently with the MBA expedited pathway, and if successful will lead to specialist medical registration and ANZCA fellowship. The concurrent pathway to ANZCA fellowship comprises the following requirements:

- Completion of all MBA expedited specialist pathway requirements including EMAC course participation, AND
- Undertaking six months full-time equivalent [clinical practice assessment](#) (including the supervised practice required for the MBA expedited specialist pathway), AND
- Successfully completing the [SIMG performance assessment](#), AND
- Participating in the [ANZCA Continuing Professional Development \(CPD\) Program](#).

From our 30-year experience of supporting and assessing SIMGs, we do not believe these requirements will add significant burden or delay to the SIMG expedited pathway. In fact, undertaking the pathway to ANZCA fellowship in conjunction with the expedited speciality pathway helps SIMGs gain fellowship in the most efficient timeframe, supports them better integrating to the Australian health system, provides valuable resources and support from the college, and offers access to long term career benefits.

ANZCA has requested that Australian governments encourage and promote the value of fellowship to both the expedited SIMGs and the broader Australian community.

Further information on this parallel pathway is located on our [website](#), as well as the [benefits of ANZCA fellowship](#).

Importance of ANZCA as CPD Home:

The MBA has included a new question on the expedited pathway application form that seeks the applicants consent for sharing their contact details with the relevant Australian specialist medical college. This has been included to encourage SIMGs to engage with colleges as a CPD Home and to explore opportunities for fellowship and/or membership.

The importance of a CPD Home that is closely aligned to the relevant speciality medical college is crucial. The MBA requires expedited SIMGs to have a CPD Home (regardless of fellowship intentions), conduct 50 hours of CPD each calendar year, and to choose a specialist medical college or non-college as their CPD Home.

ANZCA has requested that Australian governments encourage and promote ANZCA as the CPD Home for anaesthesia specialists undertaking this pathway, as the CPD Home that sets the standard for CPD for anaesthetists. It is a meaningful integration into the Australian health system with practical CPD assistance.

Supervisors of expedited SIMGs:

Expedited pathway SIMGs must complete a period of supervised practice, with the MBA supervisor requirements being the [following](#):

- *Be specialists who hold specialist registration in the same specialty field.*
- *Have practised in Australia for a minimum of 12 months full-time equivalent experience as a specialist in Australia with specialist registration. (Noting that supervisors of SIMGs on the ANZCA standard pathway must have at least three years fulltime-equivalent practice in Australia and have completed the MBA's online education and assessment module).*
- *Can show that they have the demonstrated skills and competency to supervise specialists on this pathway. The college is unsure how this component will be assessed and will seek further information from MBA.*

The SIMG will need to submit a supervised practice plan which nominates a supervisor and a proposed specialist position, for MBA to approve.

While holding conditional specialist registration and completing the supervised practice, the applicant and supervisor will need to complete an orientation report and a supervised practice report and provide it to MBA after three months' practice. At the end of the supervision period, the applicant will need to provide a final supervision report when applying to have the conditions removed. Further supervision information is on MBA's [website](#).

The college has recommended that Australian governments encourage supervisors of doctors on the expedited pathway to be a fellow of their relevant college. Understanding the unique cultural and health system environment of Australia is much more than a qualification assessment – specific training and support from suitable supervisors is required to integrate smoothly into hospital operations, particularly in regional and rural Australia.

There is still considerable uncertainty about the supervision level, requirement to supervise at a site, speciality alignment (i.e. assume the supervisor must be a specialist practicing in the same speciality) and legal liability/responsibility of expedited SIMG supervisors under the MBA expedited pathway. The college is seeking to confirm relevant supervision details with MBA.

Expedited SIMGs supervising trainees:

The rules about who can provide supervision of clinical experience for vocational trainees in anaesthesia was raised as an issue that especially affects departments in regional areas that employ a high proportion of SIMGs.

Supervision related rules are set by the ANZCA education committees and documented in the [ANZCA Handbook for Training](#) (item 2.5.3) and [Regulation 37](#) (item 37.23, 37.24 and 37.25).

The college acknowledges that historically some SIMGs were not permitted to supervise ANZCA trainees, with this rule creating additional burden for supervision and participation in on-call rosters for FANZCAs in departments that employed high proportions of SIMGs.

In response, in August 2024, a recommendation from the ANZCA SIMG Sub-Committee to simplify the rules was approved. The revised rules (set out below) are expected to increase the likelihood that SIMGs who are appointed to a senior staff or a provisional fellowship post by an ANZCA-accredited department are eligible to supervise trainees:

- Those SIMGs who are asked to undertake the SIMG performance assessment are eligible to supervise vocational trainees in anaesthesia. When a trainee is supervised by a SIMG, the SIMG is then in turn supervised by a full specialist.
- Those SIMGs who are asked to present for the SIMG examination are NOT eligible to supervise vocational trainees in anaesthesia.

However, only fellows are eligible for appointment to other supervisory roles such as supervisor of training.

College advocacy to date:

The college, and other medical colleges, continue to hold considerable concerns about the readiness of this pathway, our lack of involvement in the design and utilisation of our expertise, insufficient communication on the process and status, and the potential risks to patient safety from a non-anaesthetist paper-based assessment.

During October 2024, ANZCA issued a [media release](#) and [wrote to all Australian health ministers](#) calling for an urgent and immediate pause in these plans to fast-track the registration of overseas-trained doctors, without the involvement of medical colleges. This resulted in productive meetings with some government departments. It should be noted that prior to the implementation of the MBA expedited pathway, ANZCA met or exceeded all MBA key performance indicators for the timeframes to process SIMG applications. In fact between 2023 and 2024 ANZCA increased SIMG assessments by 11 per cent.

However, now that the pathway is operational our priority is to ensure foreseeable implementation and operational risks are minimised and that safety concerns are considered and managed. We are also acutely aware of the complexities and confusion this new process has created for many heads of departments and the FANZCA community. We have written to the Australian Government requesting support for the following four practical solutions:

1. ANZCA involvement in assessment.
2. Supervisors be FANZCAs.
3. Promoting importance of fellowship and ANZCA as the CPD Home to anaesthesia applicants.
4. Implementing a review/evaluation of the pathway, as would happen with any new government pilot or initiative.

To date our calls for these practical solutions have gone unanswered by government or the MBA.

Moving forward, the college will conduct regular meetings with the MBA to discuss relevant expedited pathway items.

Contact point:

Contact simg@anzca.edu.au for any queries relating to the SIMG assessment process or policy@anzca.edu.au for any related policy or advocacy items.

Attachment A: Specialist anaesthetist pathway options available to overseas specialist anaesthetists considering working in Australia

Further clarification of the pathways available is provided below, with a visual depiction of these pathways provided on the following page.

ANZCA standard Specialist International Medical Graduate (SIMG) pathway and assessment process

The standard SIMG assessment pathway where SIMGs are assessed for comparability to an Australian trained specialist commencing practice, taking into consideration the SIMG's intended scope of practice as well as their previous training and assessment, recent specialist practice, experience and continuing professional development (CPD). This pathway is not a specialist training program. Successful completion of the SIMG pathway will enable applicants to practise as an unsupervised specialist anaesthetist and to apply for fellowship of ANZCA. This pathway provides a comprehensive preparation to working in Australia and community of practice support, leading to membership of an organisation that is world-renowned for promoting safe and high-quality care.

Further information on the pathway is available here: <https://www.anzca.edu.au/education-and-training/specialist-international-medical-graduates/simg-assessment-process>.

MBA expedited specialist pathway

The new expedited specialist pathway is intended to be a streamlined process designed to accelerate the assessment and recognition of overseas trained specialists who demonstrate that they meet specific eligibility criteria if they hold recognised overseas specialist qualifications on the 'expedited specialist pathway: accepted qualifications list'. However, this pathway will bypass existing medical college assessment processes, with the MBA to conduct a paper-based assessment of SIMGs and then approving them for specialist registration in Australia. The expedited pathway does not lead to an ANZCA fellowship.

Further information on the pathway is available here: <https://www.medicalboard.gov.au/Registration/International-Medical-Graduates/Expedited-specialist-pathway.aspx>.

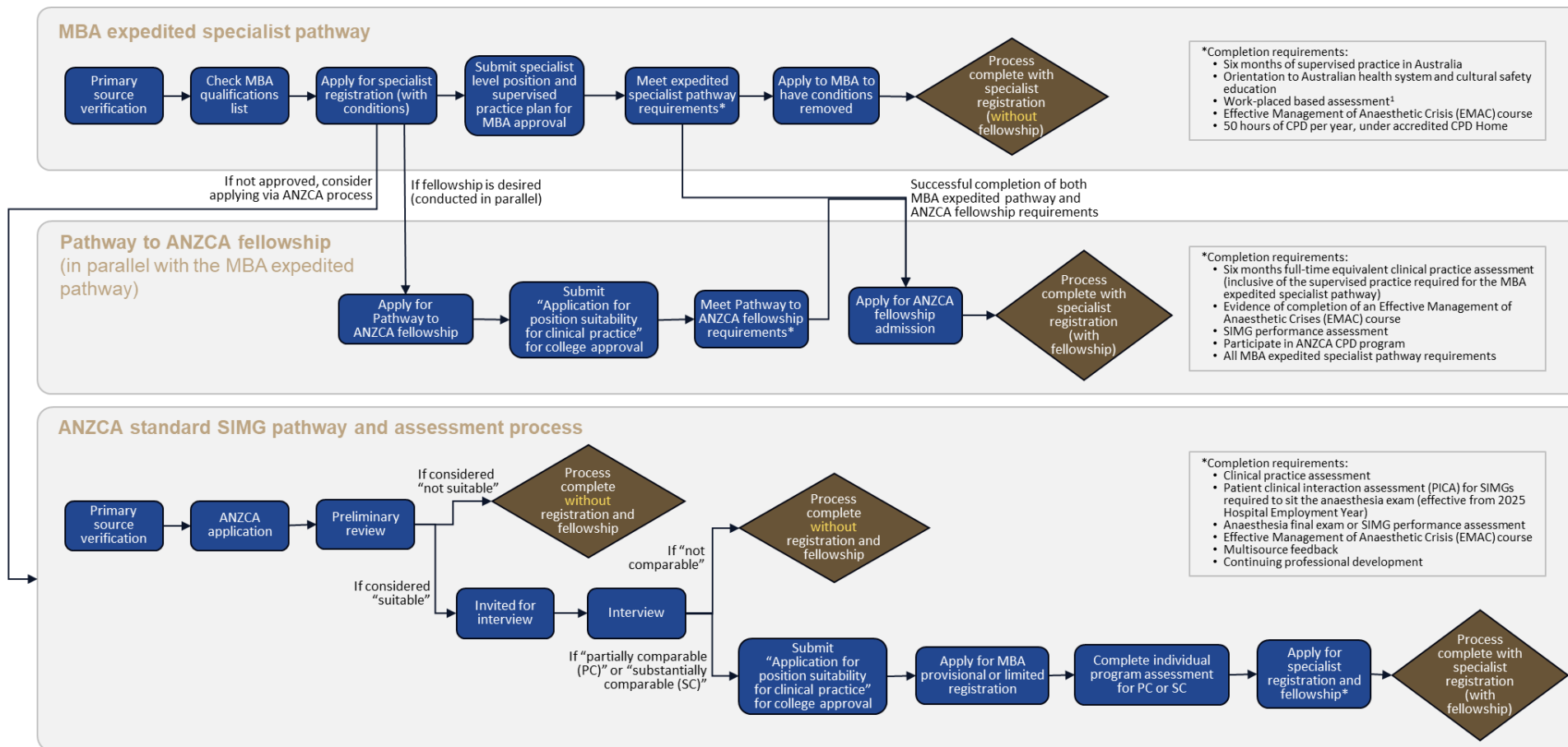
Pathway to ANZCA fellowship

As the MBA expedited pathway will not lead to ANZCA fellowship (i.e. FANZCA), ANZCA has developed a pathway to ANZCA fellowship that can be undertaken by expedited specialist pathway applicants if they choose, to run concurrently with the expedited pathway, and if successful will lead to ANZCA fellowship. Once accepted onto the expedited specialist pathway, applicants can contact the college at simg@anzca.edu.au to apply. Applicants who are not eligible for the MBA expedited specialist pathway should apply through ANZCA's standard SIMG pathway.

This pathway comprises the following requirements:

- Undertaking six months full-time equivalent [clinical practice assessment](#) (inclusive of the supervised practice required for the MBA expedited specialist pathway), AND
- Evidence of completion of an [Effective Management of Anaesthetic Crises \(EMAC\) course](#), AND
- Successfully completing the [SIMG performance assessment](#) , AND
- Participating in the [ANZCA CPD program](#), AND
- Completion of all MBA expedited specialist pathway requirements.

Further information on the pathway is available here: <https://www.anzca.edu.au/education-and-training/specialist-international-medical-graduates/medical-board-of-australia-expedited-specialist-pathway>.



¹**Workplace-based assessment:** The assessments include a multi-source feedback assessment conducted by a MBA-approved provider, and one other additional assessment. The additional assessment must be appropriate for the speciality and SIMGs can choose one of a mini-clinical evaluation exercise (Mini-CEX), direct observation of procedural skills (DOPS) or case-based discussion (CBD). They will need to specify the additional assessment to be undertaken as part of the supervised practice plan.