



Guide to intern training in Australia

Introduction – What is intern training?

In Australia, all medical graduates must successfully complete an internship before becoming generally registered with the Medical Board of Australia. Your internship is a key part of the transition from medical school to independent practice and specialty training, and focuses on practical (on the job or work based) training under supervision from senior colleagues, who also provide you with support, feedback, teaching, and assessment. You will have the opportunity to apply, consolidate and expand your clinical knowledge and skills, and progressively increase your responsibility for providing safe, high-quality patient care. By the end of your internship, you should be able to demonstrate the skills and knowledge described in *Intern training – Intern outcome statements*. The outcomes focus on ensuring the provision of safe, high-quality patient care.

In this guide you will find information about intern training common to all sites across Australia, including the program structure, supervision, assessment, completion, and how to be involved in your training.

Some aspects of intern training differ between states, territories and health services. You will need to make local enquiries for further information about the application process (including prioritisation and allocation systems), industrial arrangements (such as pay and leave entitlements) and individual program specifications (such as available rotations and future training options). The health service or postgraduate medical council (listed at the end of the document) may have a local guide for interns.

What are my rights and responsibilities?

As a provisionally registered medical practitioner, you have responsibilities defined by the Medical Board of Australia and its registration standards.

The internship is also most medical graduates first period of employment as a medical practitioner. You have rights and responsibilities as an employee. You will need to understand the terms and conditions and obligations of your employment, including your responsibility for safe patient care. You have the right to a safe workplace free from bullying, harassment and discrimination.

How is intern training structured?

The Medical Board of Australia sets the broad structure for intern training in its *Registration standard*. The total duration of internship is 47 weeks (full-time equivalent), which excludes annual leave but may include professional development leave, depending on local policies. It may be undertaken part-time, but once started, it must be completed within three years.

An intern training program may be provided by one or more health service, but during internship you will usually be employed through one facility. You may complete terms in public and private hospitals, general practices and community-based facilities.

A senior clinician, often called the Director of Clinical Training, will oversee the intern training program. They also play an important role in supporting interns and liaising with term supervisors on remediation.

What terms will I complete?

The Medical Board of Australia requires you to complete a series of terms (sometimes known as rotations or placements) in a range of specialties to ensure you have a broad-based introduction to working as a doctor. Each term will include orientation, supervised practice, education, and assessment.

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How will I be supervised?

During internship, you will be supervised at a level appropriate to your experience and responsibilities at all times. In each term, the supervision arrangements (who supervises you, and for which activities) should be clear and explicit. You will usually have a number of supervisors with different functions:

- A *Term Supervisor* – the person responsible for your orientation and assessment.
- A *Primary Clinical Supervisor* – a consultant or senior medical practitioner with experience managing patients in the term's discipline.
- An *Immediate Supervisor* – a doctor (usually a registrar) who is at least postgraduate year three, and who has direct responsibility for patient care

If you receive an 'unsatisfactory' rating for a particular term, it does not necessarily mean that you will be unable to complete your internship within the 47 week period. However, your Director of Clinical Training and the Medical Board of Australia will need to be satisfied that your performance has improved, and that you have acquired the skills and knowledge described in *Intern training – Intern outcome statements*. If you have not demonstrated satisfactory performance, your general registration may be delayed.

What if I need help?

Your welfare through the intern training program, and as you progress further in your medical career, is important. Internship can be physically, intellectually and emotionally challenging. Specific local resources are outside this scope of this national guide, but if you are feeling pressured or stressed, seek support. Starting points include speaking with your fellow interns, supervisor, Director of Clinical Training, and looking for government services that may be available in your facility.

Doctors' health programs also exist in all states and territories, and you can refer to your Medical Education Officer (MEO) (or equivalent) as the local support person.

If you witness or experience bullying, harassment or discrimination your employer will have confidential pathways for reporting, addressing the issue and providing support.

How is the quality of intern training programs assured?

What opportunities are there to be involved?

You have many opportunities to be involved in how your intern training program operates. Taking an active interest in your education and training will benefit both you and your fellow interns. Talk to your Director of Clinical Training to find out how to be involved. Suggested ways include:

Providing feedback to your intern training provider

You can do this for both your term, and the intern training program itself (including formal sessions). This feedback is crucial for improving the quality of intern experiences.

Participating on committees or councils

Each facility will have a local intern education and training (or similar) committee, which will

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Term A component of the intern training program, usually a nominated number of weeks in a particular area of practice. Also called clinical rotation, post, or placement.

Term Supervisor The person re