

RACGP Policy Position Statement

AGPT Program Advanced Rural Skills Training (ARST)

AGPT registrars seeking Rural Generalist (RG) Fellowship are required to undertake ARST. The unique characteristics of rural and remote Australia offer diversity in terms of complex health presentations, and GPs with ARST can provide holistic specialist medical services (such as emergency medicine, mental health, anesthesia and obstetrics) to their communities.

The RACGP recommends that registrars undertaking FRACGP or RACGP-RG complete their ARST towards the end of their Fellowship journey, after completion of their GP terms. The reasoning for this recommendation is because registrars who undertake their ARST earlier in their training often do not revisit the advanced clinical skills gained until after GPT3, through an extended skills post or other means. This leaves a gap of at least 1.5 years or more, which could lead to deskilling and potentially loss of competency in these areas.

However, the RACGP recognises that a registrar may be required or motivated to complete their ARST early, such as during their hospital year. In these cases, the RACGP supports a more flexible approach to their GP training to ensure that the registrar continues developing and consolidating the advanced skills learned. *Ultimately, the registrar must balance the consolidation of ARST undertaken during training in the AGPT Program with all the other training requirements, including that relating to undertaking sufficient clinical general practice.*

The principles which the RACGP will enforce include:

- Completion of no less than the 27 hours/week face-to-face, rostered, patient consultation time undertaking general practice activities (as per the full time definition currently in place – see clause 4.f of the [Vocational Training Pathway – Requirements for Fellowship Policy](#)). The rationale is that the RACGP does not recommend any further dilution of core GP training time in the AGPT Program.
- Full time training is defined by a minimum of 38 working hours/week. Outside of the 27 hours/week stated above, a registrar can allocate the remaining time to consolidation of advanced skills. This equates to a maximum of 11 hours/week which is roughly two standard sessions of 3.5 – 4 hours duration. Traditionally these 11 hours are allocated to non-consulting activities in general practice (such as administrative time, teaching and release sessions).
- The RACGP will still recognise registrars who meet the two abovementioned conditions as having worked full time in clinical general practice as per the AGPT Program training requirements.

If a registrar is undertaking part time training, the amount of time spent in consolidating advanced skills that the RACGP will accept as part of the registrar's GP training will be assessed pro rata against full time hours. For example, a registrar undertaking the AGPT Program at 0.5 FTE (ie 19 hours/week) may spend up to 5.5 hours/week in consolidation. The registrar may take on additional consolidation shifts, but the RACGP will not recognise this towards GP time.

In order to have time spent in consolidation of ARST recognised as time spent in clinical general practice, the registrar must work with their RTO and the RACGP and have a targeted training plan developed and **prospectively approved** by all parties. Such a plan will need to include consideration of factors including:

- The registrar is not working much more (if at all) than 38 hours/week in total;
- The consolidation posts are directly related to the registrar's GP training and career in general practice;
- The registrar will have ongoing support throughout their training by their supervisor/s and RTO.

The RACGP will assess and approve training plans on a case-by-case basis. The RACGP has discretion to grant further flexibilities in the registrar's GP training, if required.

NB: As per the [Vocational Training Pathway – Requirements for Fellowship Policy](#), extended skills training may be made up of a single post or a combination of posts in a variety of non-general practice settings provided that at least 50% of total hours within the post (or in the concurrent combination of extended skills posts) is in clinical general practice. Therefore, a registrar may consolidate ARST during their extended skills term and have this time recognised by the RACGP provided that at least half of their total hours is in clinical general practice.

For further information or advice, please contact the RACGP National Rural Faculty Censor via educationpolicy@racgp.org.au.

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