

## *Information about program variation*

### **Planning your program and how to get the most out of your program**

As a result of the ICSA you will have a recommended program. However, this is a guide only and you have input into the length of your program time and what learning units you will complete.

#### **How your program can change?**

- The amount of time spent in the program can be increased or decreased by one term so long as that time is within the minimum and maximum program times.
- Learning units that are not core can be changed to those that you think will be most valuable to you. If you add one term to your time, you will need to add the equivalent of required learning units. If you reduce your program time you will need to remove some of your learning units.

You can start the core units in your first term then have a discussion with a medical educator from the RTO or RVTS at the end of your first term about your program to finalise your program time and units. Take into consideration all the information available in order to decide on what is the best program for you.

#### **What can't be changed?**

- There are certain limits to the program time. The minimum time in the program is two terms and the maximum is five terms. The educational program is done full time – there are no provisions for part-time study, but you may work full or part time in practice during your program.
- The core units need to be completed by all participants and cannot be changed.
- The number of learning units to be completed each term is five per term.
- Assessments all need to be completed. As there are a certain number of assessments each term, the number of assessments you complete will vary with the length of your program.

#### **What should I think about when deciding on my program?**

There are many factors to consider in making your decision about what is the best program for you. Some of the factors to consider include:

- What is the feedback from my assessments about my performance (ICSA, WBA, learning units)? Am I at the level expected to sit the Fellowship exams or has my RTO or RVTS suggested that I need extra time?
- What are the best learning units for me to complete in terms of my strengths, weaknesses, personal interests and practice needs?
- What is the advice from my medical educator mentor and my RTO or RVTS regarding my program?
- How will changing my program time affect my exam eligibility?

- Are there any other consequences if I change my program time on my exams? In particular, what will be the effect if I decrease my program time and am not successful in the exams?
- What are the costs? Consider the cost of increasing/decreasing program time and the possible costs if you leave the program early but wish to re-join later.
- Is there any effect on my provider number?

## Are there any other things I should think about when planning my program?

As well as your program time and units, there are other considerations you might want to think about in while you are in the program:

- The type of work you do (your scope of practice). The best preparation for achieving fellowship is to work in comprehensive practice with exposure to a wide variety of patients and conditions. Narrow scope of practice reduces your ability to learn the breadth of practice which will be tested in the fellowship exams. In addition, many of the activities in the learning units are based on work in comprehensive general practice; limited scope of practice may make it difficult to complete some of them.
- The time commitment and hours worked. You can work part or full time, but the learning program is fulltime. Too little clinical work reduces your chance to apply what you learn and to prepare for the exams but too many work hours will affect your ability to study.
- Spreading the workload. Try to keep up to date with the program requirements which means completing five learning units per term as well as the assessments. If you want to do extra learning units, that is fine, but you need to complete the minimum.
- Your previous experience with training programs for example AGPT or overseas training. The PEP is different to some other programs as it is largely self-directed and online and you may not be familiar with this. Some tips about online learning and reflective practice can be found in the online module. The assessments may also follow a format that is new to you.
- Your expectations of the program. Gaining a fellowship is about being a competent GP able to practise anywhere in Australia. What you get out of a program depends on what you put in. There are some exam resources in the program, and it might provide some feedback about how you are tracking in terms of the standard expected in the exam, but it is not an exclusively exam preparation program. In addition, completing a program does not mean that you will automatically pass the exams – it will still depend on you having the required skills and knowledge to pass the exams.
- The types of support available. This will be largely through contact with medical educators and mentors in your RTO or RVTS. Some will be direct and some online; there may also be the opportunity to be part of a peer support group. Whether you engage in online groups that are optional is up to you and depends on personal preferences – some people find these helpful while others do not. Extra support in the form of remediation may be recommended by your RTO or RVTS but this is optional and includes an extra cost. Lastly, you may be able to access other support yourself such as through a peer or colleague.
- The consequences of not completing the program. Completing the program involves reaching a certain standard. Not doing this can impact your ability to access a provider number after the program. Being able to continue to work in practice helps in passing the exam. Not working in practice can also affect your exam eligibility in terms of your general practice time. In addition, if you do not complete the program but wish to re-enrol in the future, you will no

longer be eligible for a government co-funded placement so will need to pay the full cost of your program.

### Tips:

- Explore what support and educational activities are available to you while in the program.
- Think about what you want to get out of the program and talk to others about how you will achieve this.
- Plan your program from the start – think about what you need to do and make sure you allow time to complete all the components.

### Finalising your program

During your first term, you will be able to confirm your program plan in terms of time and units to complete.

You should discuss your progress and talk about your program with your medical educator from your RTO or RVTS.

As you need information from your assessments in making this decision, you should wait for workplace based assessments for the term to be completed before finalising your program. You will also need to finalise your program before the last month of the term to allow any changes to be processed and for you to be enrolled in the relevant units.

When deciding on either increasing or decreasing your program, you should consider the benefit of adding or removing the learning units that you will choose. Think carefully about your current clinical level and the level you will be expected to be performing at the time of sitting your Fellowship exams.

We strongly recommend you refer to all the resources you have available, from your ICSA results, to your learning plan and the results of the WBA and discuss with your medical educator to make an informed decision.

Once a decision has been made, you will need to communicate this in writing by filling out the 'Program confirmation form' on the PEP portal.