

Alcohol and Other Drugs (AOD) GP Education Program

Handbook



Alcohol and Other Drugs (AOD) GP Education Program: Handbook

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Recommended citation

The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners. Alcohol and Other Drugs (AOD) GP Education Program: Handbook. East Melbourne, Vic: RACGP, 2020.

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ABN: 34 000 223 807
ISBN: 978-0-86906-553-2

Published October 2019, updated May 2020

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We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the lands and seas on which we work and live, and pay our respects to Elders, past, present and future.

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Developing the Alcohol and Other Drugs (AOD) GP Education Program

The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) received \$7.9 million from the federal government to deliver alcohol and other drugs (AOD) education to general practitioners (GPs) nationally.

The RACGP will deliver the Alcohol and Other Drugs (AOD) GP Education Program, which aims to strengthen the capacity of GPs to address alcohol and other drug use in their communities. The program will be tailored to meet the needs of GPs in different communities and settings.

The program delivery is multimodal, including live online workshops simulating face-to-face training, online self-directed learning modules, a small-group case-based learning series and a podcast series. The AOD GP Education Program will be developed to:

- be relevant to GPs and their practices nationally
- encourage participation from rural and remote GPs
- be contextualised to local circumstances and AOD treatment networks
- use best practice across the wide range of health domains impacted by alcohol and other drug use
- help GPs treat identified at-risk groups, such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, veterans, people in the justice system, people who have experienced abuse, violence and trauma, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or intersex (LGBTQI) individuals
- complement the high-quality education and resources currently available to GPs.

The RACGP drew upon the expertise of a wide range of GPs to develop the AOD GP Education Program, and established the AOD GP Education Program Reference Group, which consists of clinical representation from RACGP's Education Services and the following faculties:

- RACGP Specific Interests
- RACGP Rural
- RACGP Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health.

In addition, the RACGP approached a wide range of organisations and individuals to invite feedback on the program's proposed educational content, including:

- The Australasian Chapter of Addiction Medicine (AChAM) of the Royal Australasian College of Physicians
- Primary Health Networks (PHNs)
- Australian state and territory government departments of health
- leading academics and AOD subject matter experts

- healthcare education and training providers
- AOD service providers
- GP members of the relevant RACGP Specific Interests networks, faculties and councils.

The RACGP received over 70 responses from organisations and individuals across Australia. The feedback enabled the RACGP to be responsive to the different education needs of GPs and the different treatment pathways in each state and territory.

As a result of this feedback, the RACGP has:

- increased the number of places available in the Treatment Skills Training pathways
- broadened the program's eligibility criteria to include GPs treating a wider range of identified patient groups at risk of alcohol and other drug use
- improved access for rural GPs by ensuring that face-to-face alternatives are provided
- increased the facilitator-to-participant ratio across program activities to allow for more interactive case-based discussion and sharing of feedback, consistent with the best clinical educational principles.

The education program

Overview

During the course of a working week, every GP will see patients who, to varying extents, use AOD. According to the National Drug Strategy Household Survey 2016:¹

- one in 20 Australians have misused a prescription drug
- once a month or more, one in four Australians exceed the single-occasion risk guidelines for consumption of alcohol
- those in rural and remote regions, unemployed people, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and people who identify as homosexual or bisexual are more likely to drink excessively and use illicit drugs than those in other population groups.

According to the Australian Drug Foundation:

People use drugs for many reasons; to relax, for enjoyment, to be part of a group, out of curiosity, as a coping mechanism or to minimise physical and/or psychological pain and trauma.²

Although the vast majority of those using AOD will not become dependent, many Australians are regularly putting themselves and others at potential harm as a result of their alcohol and drug use.¹

GPs currently have access to a range of high-quality, evidence-based educational resources about AOD and the harms associated with occasional and dependent use. However, patients will usually visit a GP for reasons other than their alcohol or drug use and will often not recognise its impact on their reason for visiting. Initiating a conversation about a patient's alcohol and drug use, then managing the outcomes of that conversation safely and effectively within the time constraints of general practice, can be extremely challenging.

The identified gap in AOD education currently available is in provision of practical ways GPs can support patients who are presenting in their practice, usually with comorbidities that may be exacerbated by alcohol and other drug use.

The RACGP has therefore developed the AOD GP Education Program to help GPs:

- explore alcohol and other drug-related issues with their patients
- work collaboratively with colleagues to develop a whole-of-practice approach to the prescribing of pharmaceuticals to treat pain, insomnia and anxiety
- implement best practice approaches to safely and effectively support patients presenting with alcohol and other drug use to minimise harm and improve health and wellbeing.

As part of the AOD GP Education Program, the RACGP will provide information to members about the range of AOD education and other resources available to GPs in each state and territory. The RACGP will also collaborate closely with Primary Health Networks (PHNs), Local Health Districts and other AOD treatment service providers to ensure local treatment pathways are promoted and used on a regional level.

How does the program structure work?

GPs are able to enter the AOD GP Education Program at three distinct points:

- Essential Skills Education
- Treatment Skills Training
- Advanced Skills Training

The education program has been structured to enable GPs to progress from one level to the next should they consider this relevant and appropriate to their practice. For example, GPs who undertake the Essential Skills Education may then wish to access Treatment Skills Training.

However, GPs can enter the program at any level. GPs applying for Treatment Skills Training and Advanced Skills Training will need to meet program eligibility requirements.

Refer to [Appendix A: AOD GP Education Program training pathways and payments](#).

Essential Skills Education

Essential Skills Education provides a skills update for GPs wanting to improve their approach to conversations about alcohol and drug use, identify at-risk groups and safely and effectively manage difficult patient behaviours that can arise during GP consults.

This education supports GPs to better screen for alcohol and drug use, assess patients' readiness for change and determine appropriateness of referring to AOD treatment services.

This education is now available online to all RACGP members via [gplearning](#).

Completion of the Essential Skills Education takes approximately two hours and is accredited in the RACGP Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Program for the 2020–22 triennium.

Upon completion of Essential Skills Education, eligible GPs can apply for Treatment Skills Training.

Treatment Skills Training

Treatment Skills Training is designed for GPs who would like to enhance their ability to engage in safe, open and effective dialogue with patients about their alcohol and drug use, gain their patient's confidence, assess patient readiness for change and determine an appropriate treatment plan.

In the Treatment Skills Training pathways, GPs are encouraged to build upon their knowledge and skills in the management of complex health conditions, using language and therapeutic techniques that develop and maintain patient trust.

The training aims to help GPs assess why a patient is using AOD, determine approaches to managing any physical or mental health comorbidities and, where appropriate, identify if the patient has a mild, moderate or severe substance use disorder.

Throughout the training GPs will have the opportunity to familiarise themselves with treatment options most readily available to GPs and their practices. These could include harm minimisation strategies, safe implementation of GP-led home detox for alcohol or methamphetamine withdrawal, and pharmacotherapy for opioid dependence. The training would also support treatment pathways and how to correctly and appropriately refer to local AOD treatment services.

Each training pathway will take a minimum of six hours to complete and will be accredited in the RACGP CPD Program for the 2020–22 triennium.

Limited places are available for the Treatment Skills Training pathways. Eligibility criteria apply (refer to page 8).

Treatment Skills Training: Pathway no. 1 – AOD Live

Treatment Skills Training: Pathway no. 1 – AOD Live will be delivered as a series of three 90-minute workshop sessions via Zoom videoconferencing. This education provides participants with the opportunity to listen to presenters, interact and discuss cases in small groups and receive feedback from AOD expert GPs.

Participants will be required to complete a baseline survey, predisposing activity, attend three online workshops, and complete a reinforcing activity and post-event survey.

Any GP wishing to take Pathway no. 1 must apply to be a part of the AOD GP Education Program. Successful applicants will receive an invitation to select an AOD Live series to attend. All three workshops in a series must be completed in order to complete the training.

Table 1. Treatment Skills Training: Pathway no. 1 – AOD Live 2020 schedule

Intake	Dates	Timeslot (AEST/AEDT)
1	Saturday 16, 23, 30 May	10.30 am – 12.00 pm
2	Friday 5, 12, 19 June	8.30–10.00 am
3	Saturday 13, 20, 27 June	12.00–1.30 pm
4	Sunday 28 June, 5, 12 July	9.30–11.00 am
5	Wednesday 1, 8, 15 July	5.30–7.00 pm
6	Saturday 11, 18, 25 July	8.30–10.00 am
7	Sunday 26 July, 2, 9 Aug	12.00–1.30 pm
8	Friday 7, 14, 21 Aug	8.30–10.00 am
9	Saturday 22, 29 Aug, 5 Sept	10.30 am – 12.00 pm
10	Sunday 6, 13, 20 Sept	9.30–11.00 am
11	Wednesday 16, 23, 30 Sept	6.30–8.00 pm
12	Saturday 26 Sep, 3, 10 Oct	8.30–10.00 am
13	Sunday 11, 18, 25 Oct	12.00–1.30 pm
14	Friday 23, 30 Oct, 6 Nov	8.30–10.00 am
15	Saturday 7, 14, 21 Nov	12.00–1.30 pm

Treatment Skills Training: Pathway no. 2 – Self-directed learning

Treatment Skills Training: Pathway no. 2 – Self-directed learning is designed for those GPs who would like to access a wide range of AOD educational content and best practice toolkits that they can complete at their own pace.

Participants will be required to complete a structured self-directed online education program on *gplearning* that includes case studies and self-reflection exercises. They must also complete a baseline survey, predisposing activity, the online education program, and a reinforcing activity and post-education survey.

At the completion of the AOD GP Education Program, this education pathway will become available to all RACGP members as free, structured, self-directed AOD GP education, with ongoing reviews, and it will be included in RACGP Curriculum for Australian General Practice resources to embed these skills in future registrars.

Upon completion of Treatment Skills Training, eligible GPs can apply for Advanced Skills Training.

Advanced Skills Training

Treatment options for AOD practitioners

Advanced Skills Training is for GPs who wish to undertake advanced training to the equivalent of 20 hours of CPD to support treatment of alcohol and drug use in their community. Applicants to this pathway will be required to take on a leadership role and share their learning with others in their practice, in their region or in the supervision of general practice doctors in training.

Participants will be required to complete a predisposing activity and baseline survey, attend one 1.5-hour small-group online education session specifically designed for Advanced Skills Training participants, participate in the relevant education and/or mentoring sessions, and complete a reinforcing activity and post-event survey.

Limited places are available for the Advanced Skills Training. Applicants must provide evidence that they meet the eligibility criteria.

Successful applicants will receive an invitation to complete their Advanced Skills Training session in accordance with their nominated training preferences.

To determine eligibility for Advanced Skills Training, the RACGP will consider prior learning and evidence of practice-based experience. RACGP members may be eligible to access this training via one of two entry points.

Entry Point A

Entry Point A is for RACGP members who have successfully completed all components of Treatment Skills Training (refer to [Appendix A](#) for a map of training pathways and payments).

Entry Point B

RACGP members who provide evidence that they are currently treating patients for alcohol and drug use, and that they have prior learning in AOD, may be eligible to apply for Advanced Skills Training.

Those wishing to access this training will need to make a separate grant application.

Successful applicants are eligible to receive payment for only one Advanced Skills Training activity (refer below).

On a case-by-case basis, applicants may be able to undertake a second training activity but will not receive any further payments for AOD GP Education Program completion.

Possible Advanced Skills Training activities

- Completion of at least one of the Treatment Skills Training pathways
- Completion of a training program on alcohol and other drug use within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities
- Introducing GP-led home detox for alcohol dependency
- 'Train the Trainer' participation to introduce systems, processes and discussion groups to safely and effectively support patients with their alcohol and drug use at a whole-of-practice/regional level
- AOD mentoring program for GPs practising in custodial medicine
- 'Train the Trainer' participation to enhance educational outcomes for supervisors of general practice doctors in training

Project ECHO sessions and AOD podcasts

The AOD Project ECHO (Extension for Community Healthcare Outcomes) sessions provide an opportunity to join a free weekly small-group online case discussion series. AOD ECHOs will blend short, didactic evidence-based content with interactive case-based discussion.

Participants will learn from each other and participate in case discussions facilitated by a panel of AOD expert GPs, addiction medicine specialists, nurse practitioners, pain medicine specialists, psychiatrists, pharmacists, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workers and patient representatives.

Project ECHO is an educational framework used in over 30 countries to increase knowledge transfer among clinicians. GPs who regularly participate in a Project ECHO network have reported increased treatment capacity and positive patient outcomes.

AOD Project ECHO sessions will be scheduled at a regular time each week and be available to all RACGP members from mid-2020. Participants dial into sessions via Zoom videoconferencing software, which is free to download and use.

Each AOD Project ECHO session will be 60 minutes in duration and capped at 25 participants.

The RACGP will also introduce an AOD podcast series for all members. The podcasts will provide helpful tips and resource links from AOD expert GPs on how to effectively treat alcohol and drug use at a time of crisis. The RACGP's AOD podcast series will launch in June 2020.

Applications to the AOD GP Education Program

Information-sharing protocols

During implementation of the AOD GP Education Program, the RACGP will share application and completion data with a number of third parties. By making an application to the AOD GP Education Program, GPs will be providing consent for information to be shared with the Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine (ACRRM) and PHNs.

ACRRM has received federal government funding to deliver a similar AOD GP Education Program for its members. Those GPs who are members of both the RACGP and ACRRM will be able to access only one AOD GP Education Program.

The RACGP will consider requests from RACGP members who would prefer to attend education offered by ACCRM, as well as requests made by ACCRM members who wish to complete Essential Skills Education, Treatment Skills Training or Advanced Skills Training offered by the RACGP. Accommodating these requests will be made on a case-by-case basis after mutual agreement has been established between ACCRM and the RACGP.

PHNs have received federal government funding to help the RACGP and ACRRM promote and market their AOD GP Education Programs. The RACGP will share application and completion data with PHNs to enable delivery of effective promotions and marketing activity.

AOD GP Education Program eligibility criteria

The AOD GP Education Program is available to RACGP members only.

AOD Project ECHO sessions and AOD podcasts

AOD Project ECHO sessions and AOD podcasts will be available to RACGP members at no additional cost to annual membership fees. Registration for AOD Project ECHO sessions will be capped at 25 participants per session.

Essential Skills Education

All RACGP members will be able to access the Essential Skills Education via *gplearning* at no additional cost to annual membership fees.

Treatment Skills Training

RACGP members must provide evidence that they are currently treating patients in general practice.

Priority access to Treatment Skills Training pathways will be given to GPs:

- whose practice is located within 2019 Modified Monash Model (MMM) areas MM 4–7
- who regularly locum for extended periods of time within 2019 MMM areas MM 4–7

- treating large numbers of patients from identified groups at risk of alcohol and other drug use, including
 - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
 - LGBTQI people
 - people in the justice system or custodial services
 - people experiencing homelessness or in unstable housing
 - people who have experienced abuse, violence and trauma
 - people who are veterans.

Those GPs treating patients in metropolitan and regional areas (MM 1–3) that are also areas of identified socioeconomic disadvantage (as per Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas [SEIFA]) may also be eligible to access the program. GPs will be asked to reflect on the needs of their patients and provide evidence of their need for Treatment Skills Training.

Advanced Skills Training

RACGP members who are able to provide evidence of prior learning and who are currently treating patients for alcohol and drug use will be invited to apply for the Advanced Skills Training pathway.

As part of the program, applicants will need to develop an implementation plan for how they will use and share their learning with colleagues within their practice and/or region.

Priority access to Advanced Skills Training will be given to those GPs treating patients in areas of identified socioeconomic disadvantage or identified groups at risk of alcohol and drug use, including:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
- LGBTQI people
- people in the justice system or custodial services
- people experiencing homelessness or in unstable housing
- people who have experienced abuse, violence and trauma
- people who are veterans.

Payments for AOD GP Education Program completions

Project ECHO sessions and AOD podcasts

The RACGP will offer Project ECHO sessions and AOD podcasts at no additional cost to annual membership fees. GPs may be eligible for CPD points by self-reporting participation in Project ECHO sessions. There are no payments at this level.

Essential Skills Education

The RACGP will offer Essential Skills Education at no additional cost to annual membership fees. CPD points will be allocated upon completion. There are no payments at this level.

Treatment Skills Training pathways

The RACGP will offer 1800 spaces in total across the two Treatment Skills Training pathways.

The education provided in the Treatment Skills Training pathways will be free of charge. Participants who successfully complete all components within their Treatment Skills Training pathway will be eligible to receive a one-off payment of \$1200, excluding GST and subject to relevant taxation, and will be provided with CPD points and a certificate of completion.

Advanced Skills Training pathway

The RACGP will offer 300 spaces in total for the Advanced Skills Training pathway.

The education provided in the Advanced Skills Training pathway will be free of charge. Participants who successfully complete all components within the Advanced Skills Training pathway will be eligible to receive a one-off payment of \$2500, excluding GST and subject to relevant taxation, and will be provided with CPD points and a certificate of completion.

Program implementation schedule

The RACGP will implement the AOD GP Education Program as follows

RACGP member applications to access Treatment Skills Training open	2 December 2019
Essential Skills Education available via <i>gplearning</i>	April 2020
Treatment Skills Training: Pathway no. 1 – AOD Live education commences	May 2020
RACGP member applications to access Advanced Skills Training open	June/July 2020
AOD Project ECHO sessions commence	June/July 2020
Treatment Skills Training: Pathway no. 2 – Self-directed learning available via <i>gplearning</i>	October 2020
Applications to the program close	July 2021
Program delivery concludes	December 2021

Contact

For more information about the Alcohol and Other Drugs (AOD) GP Education Program, please visit www.racgp.org.au/aod, email aod@racgp.org.au or phone 1800 472 247.

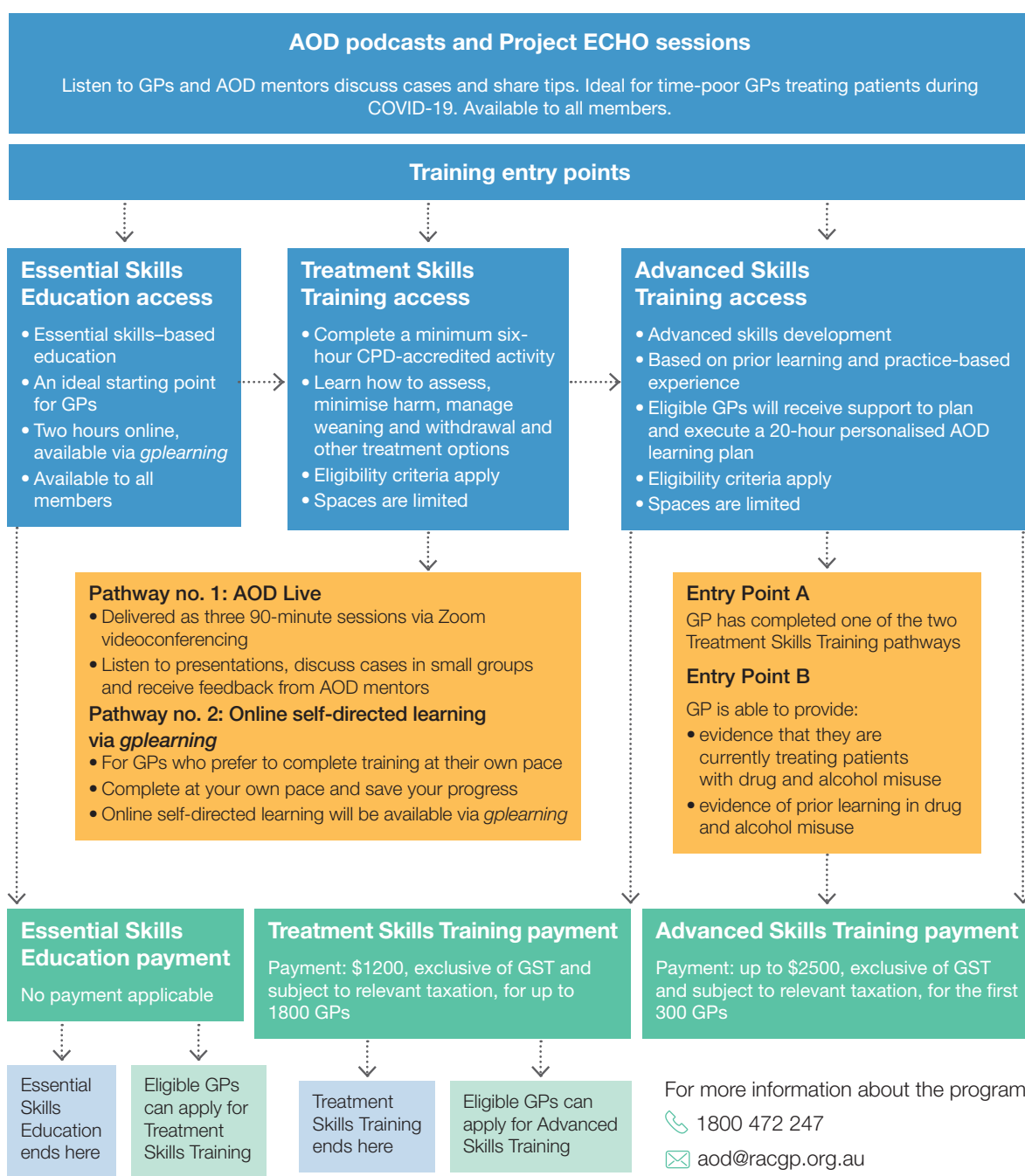
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Appendix A: AOD GP Education Program training pathways and payments

Alcohol and Other Drugs (AOD) GP Education Program

Training pathways and payments





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