

ADF and Special Training Environments Fact Sheet

Special Training Environments

What are special training environments (STEs)?

Special training environments are posts offering excellent training opportunities but with a limited case mix and different operational arrangements. STEs therefore do not meet accreditation standards for comprehensive general practice training. RACGP Vocational Training standards allow for a maximum of 6 months of GP training in approved STE posts.

For approval of STE posts, health facilities and/or supervisors can apply using the RACGP Accreditation Application for recognition of their facility as an STE for GP Registrar training. This form can also be used to request that a registrar's role is recognised as general practice, if the caseload is sufficiently broad.

Why was the STE limit reduced from 12 to 6 months in 2018?

Registrars in the AGPT Program are required to undertake 18 months of general practice training. While this time is intensive, it is also considered quite brief. An ADF registrar undertaking an STE post lasting for 12 months would then only receive 6 months of comprehensive general practice training, which is not considered sufficient for a specialist GP.

The brevity of this training window also impacted registrars' performance in Fellowship exams, as they were not being provided with sufficient exposure to the full scope of demographics and presentations required for these assessments.

Are STEs recognised towards a registrar's training?

An STE will count for up to 6 months of a registrar's AGPT Program. ADF registrars will still be required to spend a minimum of 12 months in comprehensive general practice posts. RTOs and the ADF should work together to ensure that registrars can meet this requirement.

Sometimes deployments interrupt training in either STEs or in general practice posts, with the result that a registrar spends less than one month in a post (the RACGP's minimum time for recognition of a post is one month). If an ADF registrar's training is interrupted in this way, the time will be recognised if:

- a. the registrar returns after deployment to the same practice and both stints make up at least four weeks
- b. at least one calendar month (continuous, not cumulative) is spent in the practice during GPT1-3
- c. at least minimum part time hours (14.5 per week, 3 sessions, 2 days) are worked during each work period.

It will be the responsibility of the RTO and the ADF to facilitate this.

How are STEs accredited?

RTOs must apply for approval of registrar placement in STE post via the Special Training Environment Accreditation Application Form. This form is sent to adf@racgp.org.au, where it is assessed and approved by the State Censor. This form is also used for reaccreditation of the post, and for accreditation of new supervisors.

Are there ways for a registrar's time in an STE to be recognised as GP time?

Occasionally, a registrar's role in an STE will be broader in scope and may meet the accreditation requirements of comprehensive general practice – for example, working in a larger garrison health facility which treats families as well as service members themselves. If this is the case, the RTO may apply for that registrar's time to be recognised as general practice, rather than as an STE, which would permit them to spend more than 6 months in that post (practice diversity requirements must also be taken into account).

The RTO must fill in the Special Training Environment Recognition (Exemption) of General Practice Application Form and return it to adf@racgp.org.au. It will be assessed by the State Censor. If registrar time in an STE is repeatedly being approved as general practice time, the STE may apply for accreditation as a general practice post via the usual accreditation processes.

Useful documents

[Notice of changes impacting ADF registrars](#) – 7 February 2018

[RACGP Guidelines for implementing the RACGP Standards for GP Registrars in the Australian Defence Forces \(ADF\)](#)

[RACGP Standards for General Practice Training Second Edition](#) - Criterion 2.3.2.1, pages 47-48

[RACGP Guidelines for implementing the RACGP Standards for GP Registrars in the Australian Defence Forces \(ADF\)](#)

[AGPT Australian Defence Force Registrars Policy 2020](#)