

AGPT Applicant Rural Pathway Exemption Guide

Introduction

This guide provides information for prospective AGPT applicants who are subject to 19AB of the *Health Insurance Act (Cth)1973* and are only eligible for the Rural Pathway. Where these AGPT applicants are experiencing extenuating circumstances, they may apply for an exemption to allow them to apply for a General Pathway placement. This guide defines extenuating circumstances and gives examples. This guide details how to apply for consideration of extenuating circumstances and outlines how these applications are assessed and the support the RACGP provides.

Definition

Extenuating Circumstances means circumstances that are outside your control and have a direct and significant impact on your ability to accept a rural training placement. Extenuating Circumstances may be experienced either by you or a member of your immediate family.

Extenuating Circumstances may prevent you from:

- completing the entry requirements to the program
- participating in the program (eg being able to work in general practice at least 14.5 hours per week over at least two days)
- meeting an assessment submission deadline or engaging in a clinical assessment

When should I apply?

If you believe you have Extenuating Circumstances that will prevent you from training on the Rural Pathway, you should apply for a Rural Pathway Exemption prior to or during the AGPT application period.

Once you have commenced a training program you can apply to change pathways, however after you have accepted a training place the transfers policy requires registrars to establish that they have *extenuating and unforeseen* circumstances. Any circumstances that existed or were foreseeable at the time of applying to the program will not be sufficient to support a pathway transfer after a registrar has accepted a training place.

How are applications assessed?

The assessor(s) of your application may grant full pathway exemption, partial pathway exemption or decline your application. An exemption may be granted subject to conditions. You will receive a Rural Pathway Exemption Outcome letter advising you of the outcome of your application.

When considering your application, the assessor(s) may consider any relevant factors which may include the following:

- Have the extenuating circumstances have been substantiated?
- Are the circumstances time limited?
- How are the circumstances impacting your participation in the program?
- The availability of services accessed by people with similar circumstances in rural (MMM 2-7) locations.
- The availability of funded places

An exemption may be granted subject to conditions, for example where you advise the reason you are requesting an exemption is because you cannot leave a specific MMM 1 location for family reasons, the exemption may be granted on the condition that you remain in that location.

Circumstances that may be considered Extenuating Circumstances for a Rural Pathway Exemption

Category	Circumstances
Medical circumstances	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A medical diagnosis requiring access to services or treatment only available in MMM1 location. • A medical diagnosis requiring treatment or frequent attendance at an MMM1 medical facility. • A serious illness of an immediate family member
Acute adverse life or family circumstances	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Court mandated custody arrangements • Spouse has a career and employment only available in MMM1 locations • Court orders preventing relocation of a child from an MMM1 location • Court orders relocating a child to an MMM1 location • Other factors sufficiently impactful

Circumstances that won't be considered Extenuating Circumstances

Category	Circumstances
Medical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any self-certified illness or medical circumstances. • A medical diagnosis for which is reasonably manageable in a rural location. • A minor illness that would not normally cause a reasonable and responsible employed person to take sick leave.
Acute adverse life or family circumstances	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bereavement. • Getting married or attending a wedding, festival or other personal event. • Divorce or relationship breakdown. • Financial hardship. • Stress* or emotional isolation not associated with a diagnosed mental health condition. • Geographic isolation in an MMM 2–7 location. • Personal preference to be placed in a metropolitan area or preference due to age, religion, ethnicity or language skills. • A desire to access additional or specified services (e.g. childcare, education for children) in a metropolitan area. • Other circumstances for which the RACGP can make reasonable adjustments. • Circumstances that a reasonable person would view as preventable.

*If you experience stress while on your training program, RACGP encourages you to seek support. RACGP also encourages reducing working hours (but maintain the 14.5-hour minimum) so that you have time for other responsibilities including self-care.

How to apply for consideration of Extenuating Circumstances

If you, or an immediate family member, experience extenuating circumstances that have a significant impact on your ability to train in a rural or remote location, you can submit an AGPT Rural Pathway Exemption Application. Applications are considered on a case-by-case basis.

To make an application, follow these steps:

1. Complete the [Rural Pathway Exemption Application](#)
2. Gather your supporting documents (i.e. letters from doctors, relevant legal documents)
3. Submit a completed Rural Pathway Exemption application for the AGPT program with all supporting documents to exemptions@racgp.org.au

If you can't communicate with us

If you're unable to personally communicate with us, another person may submit an application and communicate with us on your behalf. In this case, evidence must be provided as to why you can't personally make the application, and if possible, you should provide your consent for the other person to act on your behalf.

What supporting documents to provide

With your application, you'll need to provide reasonable evidence of the Extenuating Circumstances and their impact on you.

Any medical evidence you provide must be from a registered health professional (eg a GP or other relevant specialist) who is independent and objective. The medical practitioner/ health professional must:

- be an AHPRA-registered GP or treating specialist directly involved in the diagnosis or treatment of you or your significant family relation.
- **Not** work in your current general practice workplace nor be a former or prospective employer.
- **Not** be related to you nor have a personal connection or close relationship with you.
- **Not** have any material or other interest in the outcome of the application.

The types of evidence that you must submit with your application are listed below.

Medical circumstances

If your extenuating circumstances relate to a medical diagnosis affecting either you or an immediate family member you will need to provide evidence in the form of a letter from your treating doctor confirming:

- Patient details to which the medical letter relates:
 - Full Name
 - Date of Birth
- Date of first Medical diagnosis relevant to this application
- Length of time a relevant specialist has been providing treatment
- Treatment, treatment frequency, location and duration
- Expected duration of illness/ condition
- Other relevant supporting information
- Medical Professional's
 - Full name
 - Qualification
 - Address
 - Medicare Provider Number
 - Doctors Signature
 - Date Signed by your Doctor

Impact of condition on you

You (the applicant) will also need to explain why the medical circumstances regularity of treatment or access to services would prevent you from accepting a Rural Pathway offer of place in an MMM 2–7 location (e.g. specialist services, such as radiotherapy are required but not available locally)

If you're providing care to an immediate family member

If your extenuating circumstances relate to the care you provide to an immediate family member with a medical diagnosis you will need to provide evidence in the form of a letter from their treating doctor confirming:

- Patient details to which the medical letter relates:
 - Full Name
 - Date of Birth
 - The Patients relationship to you
- The place of residence of the significant family relative
- The reason the significant family relative is reliant on your care
- Number and frequency of medical services visits the significant family relative requires assistance with
- Number of hours you personally spend providing care
- Forms of care and assistance provided
- Care arrangements while you are working
- Medical Professional's
 - Full name

- Qualification
- Address
- Medicare Provider Number
- Doctors Signature
- Date Signed by your Doctor

If the required medical services are situated in another location

- A letter of support (or similar) from a GP or other relevant specialist noting that the treatment is:
 - either not available or not suitable in your current location
 - required more than once every two months
 - generally recognised as appropriate for the medical condition.

Note that if treatment is less frequent than once every two months, it will not be considered sufficiently impactful without the presence of other mitigating factors.

Acute adverse life or family circumstances

In the case of acute adverse life circumstances, you should include supporting documentation such as:

- Statutory declaration detailing the circumstances and their impact on you.
- Evidence of mandatory employment relocation (eg for ADF mandatory postings)
- Statutory declaration detailing the circumstances and their impact on you.
- Court mandated custody arrangements.
- Court orders preventing relocation of a child from an MM1 location.
- Court orders relocating a child to an MM1 location.

Please note that you must include all supporting documents with your application. A decision can be made to decline an application because it is incomplete. Documents that are not provided at the time of the application may not be considered.

Outcome of your application

When you will receive an outcome

RACGP will assess your application against the criteria outlined in this guide. RACGP may request additional information. Generally, we'll let you know the outcome of your application in the following time frames:

- Rural Pathway Exemption applications may be received anytime by prospective AGPT applicants via email to exemptions@racgp.org.au
- Applications take 20 business days to process from the time a full application (including all required evidence have been provided).
- Applications received prior to 31 December 2023 will not receive an outcome before 2 February 2024.
- Exemption applications must be received on or before the relevant closing date for the intake you are applying for.

If your application is approved

If RACGP determine your application meets the criteria for Extenuating Circumstances, you will receive a Rural Pathway Exemption Outcome letter which will outline the exemption and any conditions. The outcome letter will also identify over what period the exemption may be used to apply to the AGPT program.

If your application is denied

If RACGP determines that your application doesn't meet the criteria for Extenuating Circumstances, RACGP may offer you alternative options, such as a reduction in working hours (subject to you continuing to meet the minimum part-time program requirements).

Support for your wellbeing

The RACGP recognises that from time-to-time doctors may experience circumstances that can cause feelings of distress and of being overwhelmed. RACGP encourage you to use the GP Support Program, which is a free service available to all RACGP members.

You can access professional advice through the GP Support Program to support you through personal and work-related issues that can impact on your wellbeing, workplace morale, performance and safety, and psychological health. For more information, refer to the [GP Support Program](#) webpage.

Glossary

Acute adverse life or family circumstances	Personal circumstances recognised by the RACGP that are substantiated by the applicant with evidence that may prevent an applicant from participating in the AGPT program in an MMM2-7 location (rural).
Conflict of Interest	A situation in which it is reasonable to conclude that an individual's or group of individuals' personal interests directly conflict with the best interests of the GPiT or where individuals' actions may appear to be influenced or are in fact influenced by their personal or financial interests. A Conflict of Interest includes, but is not limited to, when an individual's actions appear to be influenced by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. close personal or family relationship, ii. the potential of financial gain or some other form of advantage, or iii. prior agreements or allegiances to other individuals or agencies.
Extenuating Circumstances	Circumstances that are outside the candidate's control and can be shown to have a direct and significant impact on the candidate such that they may not be able to accept a Rural Pathway AGPT place if it were offered. The RACGP considers Extenuating Circumstances on a case-by-case basis.
Medical Circumstances	The existence of medical diagnosis that would prevent an applicant from participating in the AGPT program in an MMM2-7 location (rural).
Minimum part-time program requirements	The combined time spent in practice and undertaking out-of-practice education. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time in practice is calculated pro-rata against the definition of full-time general practice experience. • Part-time general practice must comprise: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ a minimum of 14.5 hours in a working week, over a minimum of two days per week ○ a minimum of 10.5 hours in face-to-face, rostered, patient consultation time undertaking general practice activities. • Work periods of less than three consecutive hours, or of less than four calendar weeks in any one practice, will not be considered. Out-of-practice education hours may be in addition to time in practice.
Modified Monash Model (MMM)	The Modified Monash Model (2019) is a classification system that categorises metropolitan, regional, rural and remote areas according to both geographical remoteness and town size. The MMM classification for any given area can be found by using the locator tool on the DoctorConnect website .
Registrar	The medical practitioner enrolled in the Australian General Practice Training (AGPT) Program.
Immediate family	A registrar's immediate family includes their spouse; DeFacto partner; child, parent grandparent grandchild or sibling and community member.

Related documents

[Training Transfer Policy](#)

[AGPT Registrar Handbook](#)

Version History

Version	Date of effect	Amended by
1	15/12/2023	Executive Officer, GP Training
Amendment details	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Document developed to support AGPT applicants to the Australian General Practice Training Program impacted by extenuating circumstances.	