

Registrars Exhausting Training Time Without Attaining Fellowship **Frequently Asked Questions**

These Frequently Asked Questions should be read in conjunction with the new approach for registrars who have exhausted their available training time without attaining fellowship outlined in clause 6 of the *AGPT Training Obligations Policy 2019*.

1. What is the purpose of the new approach?

The new approach was introduced to assist the small number of registrars who have exhausted their available training time, but are expected to attain fellowship of their chosen GP College with access to additional support. The new approach only applies in circumstances where the RTO has assessed that, with additional support, the registrar has a high likelihood of attaining fellowship.

The new approach does not supersede or replace the existing provisions of the AGPT Program Policies, rather it provides options for additional support on top of the existing provisions for eligible registrars.

2. Who is eligible to seek additional support under the new approach?

Registrars are eligible to apply to be supported under the new approach if they meet the following criteria:

- They are approaching the end of their available training time (including approved extensions of training time);
- They do not have extenuating or unforeseen circumstances that would warrant the approval of an extension of training time;
- They have demonstrated a willingness to meet the requirements of the AGPT Program and engage with their RTO; and
- They have not successfully completed all required fellowship assessment/exam components by the relevant College.

The new approach is available to all eligible registrars, including Australian Defence Force registrars and registrars who identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders.

3. Under what circumstances can registrars access the additional supports available under the new approach?

Registrars will be able to access the additional support available under the new approach if:

- They meet the eligibility criteria specified above;
- Their RTO has determined they will have a high likelihood of attaining fellowship if they approved additional support under the new approach; and
- The relevant College approves the registrar accessing this additional support.

Registrars who RTOs determine to have already been offered sufficient support during their training and who are unlikely to be successful in attaining fellowship, even with additional support, should not be considered for support under this approach. These registrars may need to be withdrawn from the AGPT Program as per the *AGPT Withdrawal Policy 2019*.

4. What kinds of scenarios has this new approach been designed to cater for?

The new approach has been designed to cater for those registrars who:

- have shown improvement in their successive attempts at their fellowship assessment/exams;
- have shown a willingness throughout their training to engage with their RTO;
- have demonstrated a willingness to take action to improve their chances at successfully attaining fellowship; and
- do not have circumstances that would enable them to be supported under the existing provisions of the Policies (i.e. extenuating and unforeseen circumstances that would warrant a further extension of training time).

For example, a registrar could be supported under the new approach if they have worked with their RTO and supervisor to prepare for their fellowship assessments/exams and then failed due to an unexpected event (i.e. a virus or illness impacting a family member or the registrar) which disrupted their preparation and impaired their performance on the day of the assessment/exam.

5. What are the options for additional support available under this new approach?

Eligible registrars are able to work with their Regional Training Organisation (RTO) to develop a plan for approval by the relevant College. This plan can include the following options:

- Transition from the AGPT Program to the RACGP's Practice Experience Program (PEP) or ACRRM's Independent Pathway (IP);
- A period of remediation (maximum of six calendar months) with the option of a further extension of training time following the successful completion of the remediation term;
- A further extension(s) of training time; or
- A combination of the above options (for example a period of remediation followed by an extension of training time and/or transition to the PEP or IP).

6. Does the new approach mean that registrars are able to remain on the AGPT Program indefinitely?

No. Registrars being supported under the new approach are expected to continue to progress through to fellowship. Access to support under the new approach does not mean that registrars are able to remain on the AGPT Program indefinitely.

Even though the additional support available under the new approach will enable registrars to exceed the prescribed training time cap, it is still expected that registrars will proceed to fellowship or withdrawal from the AGPT Program.

7. What happens to registrars who are about to reach the end of their available training time, but are not supported by their RTO and/or the relevant College under the new approach?

It is possible that not all registrars who apply for additional support under the new approach will be supported by their RTO and/or the relevant College. The RTOs and the Colleges' consideration of each registrar's circumstances will be undertaken on a case-by-case basis. Their consideration will be based on whether the additional support available under the

new approach would be likely to lead to a registrar achieving their fellowship qualification with their chosen College. Their assessment may also be informed by a registrar's record of compliance with training requirements, their demonstrated willingness to progress through the training program, participation in learning activities and interventions suggested by their medical educator, reports from their supervisor and/or training practice and any other factors that may be relevant.

Registrars may be withdrawn under this new approach if it is determined by their RTO and the relevant College that they are not meeting the required standards to enable them to successfully attain fellowship of their chosen College.

8. Can registrars seek support (such as a further extension of training time) under the new approach if they don't achieve fellowship by the end of the plan approved by the College?

If registrars are unsuccessful in attaining fellowship by the end of the plan approved by the relevant College there would be two options available:

1. Registrars are withdrawn as per clause 5.4.7 of the *AGPT Withdrawal Policy 2019*; or
2. Registrars work with the RTO to develop a new plan for approval by the relevant College as per the process specified in clause 6 of the *AGPT Training Obligations Policy 2019*.

It should be noted that option 2 above should only be utilised if the RTO has assessed that registrars have shown improvement in their progression towards fellowship and that, with further additional support, they have a high likelihood of attaining fellowship.

9. Are registrars able to appeal decisions made by their RTO and/or the relevant College in relation to the new approach outlined in clause 6 of the *AGPT Training Obligations Policy 2019*?

Decisions Made by the RTO

Registrars are able to appeal the decision of their RTO to not support their request to seek additional support under the new approach. Registrars must first appeal the decision of their RTO through the RTO's dispute resolution process and procedure before submitting an appeal for consideration by the Department.

Appeal submissions against the RTO's decision to not support the registrar's request for additional support will be considered as appeals against a clinical decision and as such will be heard through the process for appeals against clinical decisions specified in the *AGPT Appeals Policy 2019*. It should be noted that the Department will uphold any recommendations made by the relevant College in their consideration of appeal submissions in relation to the new approach.

Decisions Made by the Relevant College

Registrars are unable to appeal the decision made by the relevant College in relation to the outcome of the plan submitted to the College under the new approach.

The Colleges are responsible for maintaining standards for quality practice, education and training in Australian general practice. As such, the Department would not overturn a decision made by the Colleges in relation to a registrar's likelihood of successfully attaining fellowship or the best way for the registrar to achieve it.

10. Can registrars seek additional support under this new approach if they have extenuating and unforeseen circumstances?

Registrars who have extenuating and unforeseen changes to their personal circumstances are able to apply to their RTO (or through their RTO to the Department) for an extension of training time for assessment purposes or a further extension of training time (as per clauses 5.3.1.2 and 7 of the *AGPT Extension of Training Time Policy 2019* respectively) of the AGPT Program.

11. How are extensions of training time reflected in the AGPT Program Policies under the new approach?

The AGPT Program Policies have been amended to incorporate the new approach. This includes two new types of extension of training time, Extension to Transition and further extensions of training time approved by the GP Colleges.

Further extensions of training time approved by the GP Colleges (see clause 8 of the *AGPT Extension of Training Time Policy 2019*) do not need approval by the Department and must be included in the plan submitted to the relevant College by the RTO. A separate application for this further extension of training time is not required as the College will either approve or decline this extension request in their consideration of the proposed plan. The further extension of training time approved by the GP Colleges will be reflected in the Registrar Information Data Exchange (RIDE) as 'Extension - Assessment'.

Further information regarding Extension to Transition can be found in question 10 below. This extension will be reflected in RIDE as 'Extension – Transition'.

12. At what point do registrars need to make contact with their RTO to request additional support under this new approach?

It is expected that registrars make contact with their RTO well before the end of their training time/current period of extension of training time. RTOs will need to work with the registrar to develop a plan and then seek approval from the relevant College (the Colleges have up to 20 business days to consider the plan and provide an outcome to the RTO). Time will also be required to apply for and be granted a Medicare Provider Number, if required, so the registrar must ensure that they allow sufficient time.

A specific timeframe for an eligible registrar to make contact with their RTO is to be determined by the RTO in consultation with the relevant College. Registrars should discuss this with their RTO.

The Department is not mandating a timeframe for registrars to make contact with their RTO as timeframes will depend on individual circumstances. Registrars should discuss their individual circumstances with their RTO.

13. Will registrars transitioning from the AGPT Program to the Practice Experience Program (PEP) be required to undertake the PEP Entrance Assessment or the ACRRM entrance assessment (the written application and the Multiple Mini Interviews)?

Registrars transitioning directly from the AGPT Program to the PEP under this new approach will not be required to undertake the PEP Entrance Assessment (PEPEA). Former AGPT Program registrars who apply for the PEP within three years of their withdrawal from the AGPT Program will be assessed by the RACGP on a case by case basis to be exempt from the PEPEA. After three years from their withdrawal from the AGPT Program, former registrars will be required to undertake the PEPEA.

Registrars who are exempt from sitting the PEPEA will be required to undertake the Initial Core Skills Analysis (ICSA) to ensure that an appropriate learning agreement can be developed for them to optimise their chance at successfully completing the RACGP fellowship exams. For further information regarding the ICSA please contact the RACGP. Similarly, registrars who are transitioning from the AGPT Program to the IP under the new approach will not be required to submit a written application or participate in the Multiple Mini Interviews (MMIs).

14. Are registrars transitioning from the AGPT Program to the PEP or IP eligible to receive the subsidy under the Non-Vocationally Registered (Non-VR) Fellowship Support Program (FSP)?

Yes, registrars who transition from the AGPT Program to the PEP or IP will be able to access the FSP subsidy available under the Non-VR FSP. The Non-VR FSP subsidy can only be accessed once, even if the registrar is enrolled in both the PEP and IP. Registrars will need to discuss this with the relevant College.

15. What is the process for registrars to transition from the AGPT Program to the PEP or IP?

Registrars who are approved by the relevant College to transition from the AGPT Program to either the PEP or the IP, will have access to a 12 calendar week extension of training time (Extension to Transition, clause 5.6 of the *AGPT Extension of Training Time Policy 2019*). This extension of training time will allow the registrar to continue seeing patients and earn an income using their AGPT Medicare Provider Number. This extension will also enable time for a PEP or IP Medicare Provider Number to be applied for and the registrar to undertake any College requirements, for example the ICSA for those transitioning to the PEP.

Where possible, registrars who are transitioning to the PEP or IP should be able to remain at their most recent AGPT accredited training practice with access to the support of their AGPT accredited supervisor. This will need to be agreed to by the RTO, practice and supervisor. While the preferred approach is that registrars remain in their AGPT accredited practice, it is understood that circumstances may dictate that this is unable to happen.

For practices that do not fulfil the PEP location requirements, this option will only be available if the registrar is working at the practice while enrolled in the AGPT Program at the time of their transition to the PEP.

If the RTO and/or training practice cannot accommodate the registrar to remain at their most recent AGPT accredited practice, they will need to document the reasons and provide this advice to the relevant College. The registrar would then need to secure alternative employment in line with the distribution requirements of the PEP or IP. For further information on the distribution requirements please contact the relevant College.

16. Can dual fellowship registrars access additional support under the new approach?

Registrars who are training towards fellowship of both RACGP and ACRRM are able to seek additional support under the new approach, provided they meet the eligibility criteria. The process for these registrars will be dependent on whether the registrar has failed the exams/assessments of one or both Colleges.

The options for additional support under the new approach are more limited for dual fellowship registrars if they wish to continue to pursue fellowship of both ACRRM and the RACGP. For example, if the registrar is progressing successfully through their ACRRM assessments, but have been unsuccessful in their RACGP exams, then the registrar would be unable to have the option of transferring to the PEP if they chose to continue pursuing their ACRRM fellowship through the AGPT Program. In this instance the registrar would be required to continue on the AGPT Program only training towards fellowship of ACRRM unless their plan included alternative supports (for example, remediation followed by a further extension of training time) to enable them to continue their training towards fellowship of RACGP and ACRRM on the AGPT Program.

If a dual fellowship registrar has failed the assessment/exam components of both Colleges, the plan developed with their RTO will be sent to both Colleges and the Colleges will determine the appropriate supports for the registrar.

17. Are registrars accessing additional support under the new approach able to seek a transfer between RTOs/training regions and/or pathways?

It is expected that registrars accessing additional support under the new approach would remain in the AGPT training region and pathway in which they are enrolled (unless they are transitioning to the PEP or IP and are unable to remain in their former AGPT accredited training practice). However, it is understood that there may be circumstances in which a transfer between RTOs/training regions and/or pathways may be required.

If a transfer is required registrars will need to discuss their circumstances with their RTO and seek a transfer as per the processes specified in the *AGPT Transfer Policy 2019*.

18. When will the new approach come into effect?

The new approach and the changes to the AGPT Program Policies came into effect on 1 October 2019.