



AGPT COVID-19 SUPPORT POLICY 2020

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Audience:	Registrars enrolled on the AGPT Program, Regional Training Organisations Stakeholders

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1 Purpose of Policy

- 1.1 The purpose of this Policy is to specify the provisions registrars enrolled on the Australian General Practice Training (AGPT) Program are able to access to support them through the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on their training progression.
- 1.2 This Policy is time limited and will be reviewed periodically as the COVID-19 pandemic unfolds to ensure the available provisions can support registrars as intended.

2 Definitions

Word/Term	Definition (with examples if required)
ACRRM	Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine
Chief Executive Officer (CEO)	The CEO of the Regional Training Organisation (RTO) or equivalent or their nominated delegate.
Core Vocational Training	Core Vocational Training refers to GPT1, GPT2, GPT3 and Extended Skills Training for FRACGP registrars and Core Generalist Training (with the exception of first hospital year for PGY 2 registrars) and Advanced Specialised Training for FACRRM registrars
Education and Training Requirements	The requirements placed on a registrar working towards fellowship of the RACGP, ACRRM or both. These requirements are specified by the Relevant College(s) and the RTOs.
Extenuating and Unforeseen Circumstances	<p>Extenuating and Unforeseen Circumstances are defined as circumstances which were unforeseen and outside a registrar's control when they accepted a place on the AGPT Program. These circumstances will not be considered as unforeseen if it can be determined that the circumstances were known or reasonably should have been known by the registrar prior to the acceptance of their place on the AGPT Program.</p> <p>Examples of extenuating circumstances may include, but are not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ill-health (other than minor illnesses);• Deterioration of an existing medical condition that can no longer be managed in the current location;• Bereavement;• Acute personal/emotional circumstances;• Hospitalisation;• Illness of an Immediate Family Member;• A major change to a registrar's personal circumstances; or• An involuntary change in a spouse's employment. <p>All applications and requests pertaining to Extenuating and Unforeseen Circumstances of the registrar will be considered on a case by case basis.</p>
FARGP	Fellowship in Advanced Rural General Practice through the RACGP. Registrars must be enrolled in FARGP to undertake Advanced Rural Skills Training.
Full-Time Equivalence (FTE)	Under this Policy the term FTE is defined to mean 38 hours per week and includes all practice time, AGPT education and Program activities – the composition of which will vary depending upon a registrar's stage of training and College requirements.
Immediate Family Member	Immediate Family Member means the registrar's parents (mother, father, and step-parents), siblings, spouse/partner/de facto/fiancé, child/children and anyone for whom the registrar has primary carer responsibility.

Word/Term	Definition (with examples if required)
RACGP	Royal Australian College of General Practitioners
Relevant College	The GP College with which the registrar is enrolled - RACGP, ACRRM or both.
RIDE	Registrar Information Data Exchange – the information management system used to record the training and education of registrars on the AGPT Program.
Training Facility	Includes any facility accredited by the Colleges to provide training under the AGPT Program.
Training Time	The length of time required to complete training on the AGPT Program as specified by the Relevant College.

3 Application and Scope

- 3.1 This Policy applies to all registrars enrolled on the AGPT Program.
- 3.2 This Policy will come into effect as of 15 May 2020.

4 Policy Principles

- 4.1 The global COVID-19 pandemic is having significant impacts across the AGPT Program.
- 4.2 It is recognised that registrars will be impacted by this pandemic both personally and professionally.
 - 4.2.1 The impacts on the registrar's training and scope or volume of practice may be voluntary (a decision made by the registrar) or involuntary (at the discretion of the training practice or due to circumstances outside of the registrar's control).
- 4.3 In order to support registrars through this challenging and evolving situation the provisions of this Policy have been developed.
- 4.4 The provisions set out in this Policy have been developed to provide registrars with flexibilities in addition to the provisions already available in the suite of 2020 AGPT Program Policies.
- 4.5 During the COVID-19 pandemic the GP Colleges and Regional Training Organisations (RTOs) will work to support registrars through this time of uncertainty. Registrars are also encouraged to contact their RTO or the Relevant College should they require further support during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 4.6 RTOs are monitoring the financial impact on training practices of changed patient flows and working conditions. RTOs are encouraged to flexibly manage registrar placements in ways that optimise income security for registrars and practices, having regard to the Australian Government income support initiatives available, for example, minimising registrar movements between practices.
- 4.7 Registrars who are impacted by COVID-19 and are supported under the provisions of this Policy will be able to exceed their training time cap (as specified in clause 5.13 and 5.14 of the *AGPT Training Obligations Policy 2020*) without repercussions.
 - 4.7.1 The provisions specified in this Policy that extend a registrars training time on the AGPT Program will not be counted towards a registrars training time cap.
- 4.8 Specific application forms do not need to be used in order to apply for the provisions under this Policy, however the AGPT forms may be utilised if desired.

5 COVID-19 Extension of Training Time

- 5.1 Extensions of training time are available to support registrars who have had their progression through their training on the AGPT Program impacted by the effects of COVID-19.

- 5.2 COVID-19 extensions of training time apply when the registrar is undertaking clinical work which may not be able to contribute towards the registrar's training.
- 5.3 COVID-19 extensions of training time can be approved as follows:
 - 5.3.1 Initially up to six calendar months can be approved by the registrar's RTO; and
 - 5.3.2 If a further COVID-19 extension of training time beyond six calendar months is required, this can be approved by the Relevant College where supported by the registrar's RTO.
- 5.4 Documentation will need to be provided to confirm that the extension is required due to the impact of COVID-19. Registrars are encouraged to discuss the documentation requirements with their RTO and/or the Relevant College.
- 5.5 Requests for COVID-19 extensions of training time can be sent to the relevant College via email as follows:
 - 5.5.1 For ACRRM the application should be sent to training@acrrm.org.au; and
 - 5.5.2 For RACGP the application should be sent to AGPTAdmin@racgp.org.au
- 5.6 COVID-19 extensions of training time can be applied for at any stage of training.
- 5.7 COVID-19 extensions of training time should be utilised in circumstances including, but not limited to:
 - 5.7.1 The registrar's duties have narrowed in scope so that they no longer contribute sufficiently to the registrar's training (for example extended periods in fever clinic or respiratory clinic; reduced rotations in junior hospital roles);
 - 5.7.2 The volume of the registrar's clinical practice has narrowed and no longer contributes sufficiently to their training (for example sustained periods of time with low numbers of patients in a general practice setting, the registrar or a member of their immediate family contracting COVID-19 or needing to quarantine during the COVID-19 pandemic, the registrar taking on other non-clinical roles in their setting or other settings to support COVID-19 responses thereby reducing their clinical work);
 - 5.7.3 The registrar's specific learning needs cannot be addressed due to the COVID-19 pandemic (for example a registrar undertaking a skills training post which is unable to continue such as anaesthetics which leads to the registrar needing to undertake other clinical practice); and
 - 5.7.4 The registrar being unable to undertake their education and training activities including exams/assessments directly due to COVID-19, either due to the exam/assessment being unavailable or the registrar being unable to prepare for the exam/assessment.
- 5.8 COVID-19 extensions of training time will typically not be counted towards a registrar's active training terms.
 - 5.8.1 However, practice undertaken while on an approved COVID-19 extension of training time may, with relevant evidence and supporting documentation, be retrospectively counted towards a registrar's training. This will be at the discretion of the Relevant College.
 - 5.8.1.1 In order for practice undertaken during a COVID-19 extension of training time to be considered and retrospectively counted towards a registrar's training time, the practice should cover a sufficiently broad scope and volume of general practice, as defined by the Relevant College.
 - 5.8.2 If the Relevant College approves this practice being counted towards the registrar's training, the RTO will ensure the registrar's training profile is updated to reflect this (for example amending COVID-19 extension term to GPT3 or Core Generalist Training (CGT) in RIDE retrospectively).
- 5.9 Extensions of training time for reasons not directly related to the impacts of COVID-19, should be applied for as per clause 5 of the *AGPT Extension of Training Time Policy 2020*.
- 5.10 If registrars require COVID-19 extensions of training time this will not count towards the registrar's training time cap and allowances for extensions of training time.

- 5.11 Registrars who are receiving Salary Support (as per the *AGPT Program Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Salary Support Program Policy 2018*) and who are approved for a period of COVID-19 extension of training time may be able to continue accessing Salary Support for the duration of this extension.
- 5.11.1 Continuation of Salary Support for these registrars will be considered on a case by case basis by the RTOs in line with their available Salary Support funding.

6 COVID-19 Leave from the Program

- 6.1 Registrars who have had their progression through training disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic may need to take a period of leave from the AGPT Program.
- 6.2 COVID-19 Leave can be approved as follows:
- 6.2.1 Initially up to six calendar months of COVID-19 Leave can be approved by the registrar's RTO;
- 6.2.2 If a further COVID-19 Leave is required beyond an initial six calendar months this can be approved by the Relevant College where supported by the registrar's RTO.
- 6.2.3 Documentation will need to be provided to confirm that the Leave is required due to the impact of COVID-19. Registrars are encouraged to discuss the documentation requirements with their RTO and/or the Relevant College.
- 6.3 Requests for COVID-19 Leave can be sent to the Relevant College via email as follows:
- 6.3.1 For ACRRM the application should be sent to training@acrmm.org.au; and
- 6.3.2 For RACGP the application should be sent to AGPTadmin@racgp.org.au
- 6.4 COVID-19 Leave is applicable to any stage of training.
- 6.5 If a registrar is undertaking work in direct relation to the COVID-19 pandemic (e.g. respiratory clinics), the registrar may apply for a period of COVID-19 Leave through their Regional Training Organisation to carry out this work.
- 6.5.1 If the registrar, in consultation with their RTO, determine that their practice may be within the scope of GP training it may be more appropriate for them to apply for a COVID-19 extension of training time as specified in clause 5 above.
- 6.6 Registrars may require leave from the Program due to, but not limited to:
- 6.6.1 Their clinical practice being disrupted or suspended;
- 6.6.2 Their skills are redirected to an area of need affected by the COVID-19 pandemic; and
- 6.6.3 Due to the registrar or a member of their immediate family contracting COVID-19 or requiring isolation or quarantine.
- 6.7 If registrars require COVID-19 Leave from the Program this will not count towards the registrar's training time cap and leave allowances.

7 COVID-19 and Transfers (Between RTO/Training Regions and/or Pathways)

- 7.1 Registrars who require transfers, either between RTOs and/or Training Regions, due to the impacts of COVID-19 can apply for these transfers under this Policy.
- 7.2 All transfers approved under this Policy should be on a temporary basis and should not extend beyond the end of the 2020 training year initially. If a further transfer is required, this can be considered by the Relevant College for pathway transfers and by RTOs for RTO/Training Region transfers.
- 7.3 An application for a COVID-19 pathway transfer must be supported by the registrar's RTO and needs to include supporting documentation or evidence to show the transfer is required due to the impacts of COVID-19. The application can be submitted to the Relevant College via email as follows:
- 7.3.1 For ACRRM the application should be sent to training@acrmm.org.au; and

- 7.3.2 For RACGP the application should be sent to AGPTadmin@racgp.org.au.
- 7.4 Applications for a COVID-19 RTO/Training Region transfer can be considered and approved by the RTOs concerned. These applications must include supporting documentation or evidence to show the transfer is required due to the impacts of COVID-19.

8 COVID-19 and Training Location Obligations

- 8.1 Registrars on the general pathway are required to adhere to the general pathway training location obligations specified at clause 4.1 to 4.4 of the *AGPT Training Obligations Policy 2020*.
- 8.2 Registrars on the rural pathway are required to adhere to the rural pathway training location obligations specified at clause 4.5 to 4.10 of the *AGPT Training Obligations Policy 2020*.
- 8.3 It is understood that there may be registrars who will have difficulty meeting these requirements due to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 8.4 If a registrar is unable to meet their training location obligations they can apply to the Relevant College to be exempt from these obligations.
- 8.5 Applications to be exempt from the training location obligations due to the impacts of COVID-19 must be supported by the registrar's RTO and must include supporting documentation or evidence to demonstrate that the exemption is due to the impacts of COVID-19. The applications can be submitted to the Relevant Colleges via email as follows:
- 8.5.1 For ACRRM the application should be sent to training@acrrm.org.au; and
- 8.5.2 For RACGP the application should be sent to AGPTadmin@racgp.org.au.

9 COVID-19 and Training Time Obligations

- 9.1 Registrars who require changes to their fulltime equivalent (FTE) status due to the impacts of COVID-19 are able to apply to their RTO to alter their FTE status.
- 9.2 All registrars who require changes to their FTE status need to apply in writing to their RTO, if possible at least 5 business days before they propose to commence training at less than 1.0 FTE.
- 9.3 Training at less than 1.0 FTE can only commence with the written approval of the RTO.
- 9.4 Registrars who are training at less than 1.0 FTE need to comply with the minimum part time requirements specified by the Relevant College.

10 Roles and Responsibilities

- 10.1 Registrars are responsible for:
- 10.1.1 Applying in writing to their RTO for access to the provisions of this Policy, including providing documentation confirming applications are required due to the impacts of COVID-19; and
- 10.1.2 Continuing to train in a College-accredited Training Facility that meets their pathway requirements if they require access to an AGPT Medicare Provider Number during an approved COVID-19 extension of training time.
- 10.2 RTOs are responsible for:
- 10.2.1 Considering requests for COVID-19 extensions of training time for the first six calendar months;
- 10.2.2 Considering requests for COVID-19 leave for the first six calendar months;
- 10.2.3 Submitting applications for requests for COVID-19 extensions of training time and COVID-19 leave beyond an initial six calendar months, pathway transfers, and exemptions to the Training Location Obligations to the Relevant College if supported by the RTO;
- 10.2.4 Considering and approving requests for changes to a registrar's FTE status from full time to part time due to the impacts of COVID-19;

- 10.2.5 Considering the continuation of registrars' Salary Support during an approved COVID-19 extension of training time, had they been receiving Salary Support prior to this extension. This will be considered on a case by case basis with consideration to the RTO's available Salary Support funding;
 - 10.2.6 Updating RIDE within ten business days of approval to reflect the provisions of the Policy which have been approved; and
 - 10.2.7 Amending RIDE if a registrars practice undertaken during a COVID-19 extension of training is retrospectively deemed to count towards their training.
- 10.3 The Relevant College is responsible for:
- 10.3.1 Assessing and approving requests for COVID-19 extensions of training time and COVID-19 leave beyond an initial six calendar months, as well as pathway transfers, and exemptions to the Training Location Obligations;
 - 10.3.2 Advising the RTOs of the outcome of applications under this Policy so that registrars can be informed and RIDE updated; and
 - 10.3.3 Assessing any submissions for practice undertaken during COVID-19 extensions of training time to be counted towards a registrar's training time.

11 Entering Data into RIDE for RTOs

- 11.1 Entering training units into RIDE:
 - 11.1.1 For registrars undertaking COVID-19 extensions of training time, record this in RIDE as 'COVID-19 Extension'.
 - 11.1.2 For registrars undertaking COVID-19 Leave, record this in RIDE as 'COVID-19 Leave'.

12 Related Documents

- 12.1 *AGPT Program Policies 2020 Overarching Document*
- 12.2 *AGPT Training Obligations Policy 2020*
- 12.3 *AGPT Extension of Training Time Policy 2020*
- 12.4 *AGPT Transfer Policy 2020*
- 12.5 *AGPT Program Leave Policy 2020*
- 12.6 *Health Insurance Act 1973*

13 Version Control and Change History

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