



Specialist Training Program COVID-19 Update

Specialist Training Program operations during COVID-19

We are writing to provide an update on COVID-19 as it impacts specialist medical training supported through the Specialist Training Program (STP) and to advise you of steps the Department is taking to consult with the sector and respond to emerging issues.

Specialty training activities/trainee rotations/specialty training programs

We understand that there is the possibility of trainees in STP funded rotations being redeployed within their health services to support the medical response to COVID-19. This may mean disruptions that potentially impact the continuity of specialty training more broadly. In recognition of this, the Department will ensure continued support to colleges and those trainees and health services currently involved in STP funded specialty training.

We understand that the situation is changing very rapidly with colleges following the national guidance very closely and actively supporting the response. As part of the measures to combat COVID-19 we may see the re-deployment of trainees to areas potentially outside the usual scope of practice; this may mean that trainees are required to help in ward-based or frontline settings. This is an unprecedented situation and we fully acknowledge that this will affect everyone in some way.

There may be concern about the Department's position regarding potential funding implications and approach to training targets if these are not met in 2020. The Department's approach is to be flexible in considering training targets. We understand that program performance in 2020 is going to be impacted by health service imperatives and their response to COVID-19.

The Department supports the continued delivery of structured training rotations where this can be maintained; recognising continuity and capacity of health service provision, in particular for rural communities. Should the response to COVID-19 require it, the redeployment of any specialist medical trainee away from a rural health service must be carefully considered to ensure rural health services are not disadvantaged.

STP funding

We want to assure you that STP funding will continue in line with your current agreements as we recently announced, for the 2021 calendar year. We understand that funding continuity is important for colleges and health services and this is particularly important for the rural communities in which specialist medical training occurs. This is in line with the Government's approach to support as much as possible any specialty training that can continue during this time. The Department will continue to ensure that resources are available to contribute to critical services, while also enabling the impacted program activity to quickly recommence once the crisis has passed.

2021 Specialty training activities/trainee rotations/specialty training programs

We understand that the disruption to specialty training programs for trainees this year will be a priority for colleges to manage, and that this may affect performance in 2021. We seek advice from colleges on the impact of the current situation on the 2021 academic year in relation to selection, recruitment and allocations of trainees.

We do ask that you keep us up-to-date on the steps you are taking by emailing the Department at Postgraduate.Training@health.gov.au by COB 3 April 2020, so that we have an understanding of each college's approach. The delivery of specialty training, where it is possible to do so, should continue. While recognising the current challenges, we encourage colleges to support health services in recruitment activities for the 2021 academic year to support the continuity of specialty training.

Given that this is a particularly busy and difficult time, if you have any queries, please contact us at Postgraduate.Training@health.gov.au. We will continue to keep colleges informed as new information emerges including addressing Frequently Asked Questions.

Thank you for your ongoing support.

David Meredyth

A/g Assistant Secretary



Health Workforce Division | Health Training Branch
Australian Government Department of Health
GPO Box 9848, Canberra ACT 2601, Australia

The Department of Health acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of Australia and their continued connection to land, sea and community. We pay our respects to all Elders past and present.