



**Te Kaunihera Rata  
o Aotearoa**

Medical Council  
of New Zealand

## **Consultation: Advanced Cardiac Life Support (ACLS) certification Explanatory notes and rationale for options**

Te Kaunihera Rata o Aotearoa | the Medical Council of New Zealand (the Council) considers it important that all interns have the knowledge and skills to manage and supervise resuscitation events and therefore we have a longstanding requirement that interns hold New Zealand Resuscitation Council (NZRC) CORE Advanced certification.

### *NZRC CORE Advanced*

The NZRC CORE is a standardised curriculum providing essential skills and knowledge for managing life-threatening situations.

CORE Advanced is designed for advanced rescuers responsible for overseeing resuscitation events. The programme covers collapse management in adults, children, and infants, emphasising DRS ABCD (Danger, Response, Send, Airway, Breathing, CPR, Defibrillation) plans, including airway, breathing, and chest compressions. It includes automated external defibrillator and manual defibrillation, cardiac rhythm identification, trauma management, and skills like airway obstruction management and endotracheal intubation principles. More information can be found on the [NZRC website](#).

### *Certification validity period*

NZRC certificates are issued with a recommended validity period of one year from the time of successful completion of the assessment. However, credentialing requirements for health professionals are determined by employing organisations and accreditation bodies, which may extend this period. The NZRC advises against recognising certificates for more than three years due to skill retention decline and strongly recommends that organisations and accreditation bodies adhere to this guideline.

We have historically followed the NZRC's validity period; however, as this consultation highlights, there is a need for us to review the validity period we recognise.

## **Rationale for extending the validity of ACLS certification to 18 months – applicable to options one, two and three**

The shift in the start date of intern training from mid-November to mid-January has presented some challenges for prevocational training providers.

The primary issue arises because many training providers arrange for interns to complete ACLS courses during orientation in mid-January. However, the timing for the advisory panel to convene and recommend interns for registration in the General scope of practice has been delayed due to the festive period and senior staff leave. This delay often extends into late January or sometimes February, resulting in the ACLS certification falling outside its designated validity period of 12 months.

While the ACLS course can be completed at any time during PGY1, we encourage it to be done during an intern's initial orientation period and prior to an intern commencing a clinical attachment where having ACLS certification is particularly beneficial, such as cardiology.

We acknowledge the challenges presented by the change in the start date for intern training. As such, we are considering extending the validity period for ACLS certification to ensure that interns seeking to progress from PGY1 to PGY2 are not adversely affected.

***Rationale for requiring NZRC CORE Advanced certification to be completed while registered and practising in the Provisional General scope of practice – applicable to options one and two***

Due to rapid individual skills decay after tuition (within three to six months) and learner perspective changes during the transition from student to a registered PGY1 intern, there is positive benefit to clinician development of completing resuscitation training as a medical student and CORE Advanced as a PGY1 intern.

Completing CORE Advanced as a PGY1 intern also provides additional benefits, such as courses being taken alongside multidisciplinary groups of health care providers who mentor, role model and share their past experiences, and interns receive exposure to the processes and equipment specific to the clinical setting in which they are practising.

***Rationale for ceasing to accept alternative courses and only accepting certificates issued by the NZRC at the level of CORE Advanced – applicable to option one***

Some Health New Zealand | Te Whatu Ora districts have offered alternative ACLS courses for a number of years. Several factors have contributed to training providers offering alternative ACLS courses, including limited availability and resource constraints. Alternative ACLS courses may not be subject to external scrutiny or oversight in terms of course content or assessment, to demonstrate they are at the standard of CORE Advanced.

CORE Advanced training provides interns with a strong foundation in resuscitation skills. The NZRC CORE is a standardised curriculum providing basic skills and knowledge required to manage life-threatening situations. It is designed for health care responders who are expected to manage resuscitation events until advanced rescuers arrive or for those that respond as members of the advanced care response team.

Our primary purpose is to protect the health and safety of the public. It is important that interns are receiving the appropriate training and education to practice safely and at the level required when progressing to registration in the General scope of practice. This includes receiving appropriate training in ACLS, which satisfies our requirements.

Ceasing to recognise alternative courses avoids the need for us to develop a mechanism to review these courses to determine if they are at the standard of CORE Advanced, including engaging with appropriate medical expertise.

***Rationale for continuing to accept alternative ACLS courses – applicable to option two***

As mentioned above, some Health New Zealand | Te Whatu Ora districts have offered alternative ACLS courses for several years. We are aware that districts may find it difficult to deliver NZRC CORE Advanced to its PGY1 cohort due to limited availability and resource constraints. We aim to provide

viable and flexible registration options which are consistent across the motu and meet the expectations of small, medium and large districts while also ensuring that that interns are receiving the appropriate training and education to practice safely and at the level required when progressing to registration in the General scope of practice.

Alternative ACLS courses may not be subject to external scrutiny or oversight in terms of course content or assessment, to demonstrate they are at the standard of CORE Advanced. Therefore, if ultimately deciding on this option, it is important we can implement a formal mechanism for considering and determining the suitability of alternative ACLS courses.

### **Rationale for *accepting CORE Advanced completed by final year medical students* – applicable to option three**

Final year medical students in Aotearoa New Zealand complete a range of ACLS courses. As mentioned above, our primary purpose is to protect the health and safety of the public and it is important that interns are receiving the appropriate training and education to practice safely and at the level required when progressing to registration in the General scope of practice. This includes receiving appropriate training in ACLS, which satisfies our requirements and mitigates risks to patient safety.

Accepting CORE Advanced completed by final year medical students would mean these individuals would not need to complete further certification for the purpose of their General scope application.

Considering decay in skills and changes in learner perspective during the transition from student to a registered PGY1 intern, we are inviting feedback on whether the risks to public safety are mitigated by completion of ACLS courses in the final year of medical school or whether it is important that it is completed once interns commence clinical practice.