



**Te Kaunihera Rata  
o Aotearoa**

Medical Council  
of New Zealand

## Consultation

### Consideration of eligibility requirements for the New Zealand Registration Examination

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#### Executive summary

The New Zealand Registration Examination (NZREX) provides an opportunity for international medical graduates to qualify for registration as a doctor in New Zealand. The examination is an objective, structured clinical examination pitched at the level of a recent Aotearoa New Zealand graduate. This provides a pathway to registration for doctors who are not eligible for any of the other available pathways to registration.

Currently, there is no requirement for applicants for this examination to have had any clinical practice experience. Feedback from prevocational training providers has highlighted that NZREX graduates have variable prior clinical experience and this may provide challenges in the readiness for clinical practice in Aotearoa New Zealand.

This consultation seeks views on the merits of introducing a requirement that individuals applying to sit the NZREX must have had clinical practice experience and if so, then what that should be.

We welcome your feedback. This will be considered carefully before we make any decisions.

#### About us

Te Kaunihera Rata o Aotearoa | the Medical Council of New Zealand (Council) is the professional regulator of doctors in Aotearoa New Zealand. Our primary purpose is to protect the public by providing mechanisms to ensure that doctors are competent and fit to practise.

One of our key regulatory functions under the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003 is the registration of doctors, both Aotearoa New Zealand-trained and from overseas.

#### Consultation on our proposal

We are seeking feedback on introducing a clinical practice requirement, and if so, what that requirement should be.

We must be assured that any proposed changes to criteria to sit this examination would not unnecessarily restrict the registration of individuals as doctors, or impose undue costs on those practitioners.

This consultation poses questions to help us identify both the potential benefit and any potential unintended consequences of change.

## Background

### The provisional general and the general scopes of practice

Doctors who sit and pass NZREX are eligible to apply for registration in the provisional general scope of practice. Once registered, they must complete a two-year internship, within an accredited prevocational medical training programme.

In the provisional general scope, doctors must practise in a Council-approved position, under Council-approved supervision.

Our pathways to registration in the provisional general and general scopes are described in full on [our website](#). Further information about scopes of practice and requirements for registration is in Appendix 1.

### Examinations pathway

The examinations pathway to registration in the provisional general scope requires the applicant to have sat and passed the NZREX. Passes are valid for five years.

This pathway is used by doctors who are not eligible for any other pathway to registration as a medical practitioner in Aotearoa New Zealand.

The examination is an objective, structured clinical examination (OSCE), pitched at the level of a recent Aotearoa New Zealand medical graduate.

This pathway is one of our less commonly used pathways by international medical graduates. Of the 1,380 IMGs newly registered during 1 July 2021 to 30 June 2022, the vast majority (1,316 or 95.4 percent) gained registration without needing to sit the NZREX. 64 gained registration after passing NZREX.

#### *Validity of pass*

We have recently considered the duration an NZREX pass should be valid for, and reconfirmed that it is valid for five years. We consider that an applicant who has passed NZREX is competent and safe to practise in terms of knowledge and basic clinical skills, as it is set at the level of a new graduate of Aotearoa New Zealand's medical schools.

Our view is that a five-year period is a reasonable length of time to remain assured that a doctor is competent and fit to practise.

### Requirements to sit NZREX

To sit NZREX, an applicant must:

- hold an [acceptable primary qualification](#)
- satisfy our [English language requirements](#)
- have passed one of the following examinations within five years of the examination date they are allocated to:
  - Professional and Linguistic Assessments Board (PLAB) test Part 1 (run by the UK General Medical Council)

- Medical Council of Canada Qualifying Examination (MCCQE) Part I
- Australian Medical Council MCQ
- United States Medical Licensing Examination (USMLE) Steps 1 and 2 (Clinical Knowledge)

## Proposal – Introduction of a ‘clinical practice’ requirement

We invite feedback on four questions.

1. Do you agree or disagree with the introduction of an additional requirement for an applicant for NZREX to have recent clinical practice experience?
2. If you agree, what is your suggested requirement?

An example of a recent clinical practice requirement is:

*The applicant must have practised medicine clinically for at least [...] year/years, within the last [...] years, prior to applying to sit NZREX.*

3. Do you agree or disagree with the introduction of a requirement for the applicant to have completed a minimum period of practice in the country in which they gained their primary medical qualification?
4. If you agree, what is your suggested requirement?

An example of a minimum period of practice requirement in country of medical qualification is:

*The applicant must have practised clinically for at least [...] months in the country from which they gained their primary medical qualification.*

## Rationale for proposal

We have received feedback from prevocational medical training providers that, due to individuals who have passed the NZREX either not having practised at all, or having their practice experience a long time ago, they are not necessarily ready to practise in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Some training providers have introduced hiring requirements that individuals, in addition to passing the NZREX, must also have practised clinically in recent years.

A period of recent clinical practice in an overseas jurisdiction is likely to better prepare candidates to pass the NZREX examination, and it may also support them for entry to the medical workforce in Aotearoa New Zealand. It may give employers confidence that applicants have the recency of clinical experience to successfully complete the prevocational training programme.

A recent clinical practice requirement may also better align with employer’s expectations of doctors seeking PGY1 positions.

**Question 1:** Do you agree or disagree with the introduction of an additional requirement for an applicant for NZREX to have recent clinical practice experience?

Strongly agree / agree / neither agree nor disagree / disagree / strongly disagree

Please provide comments and the reasons for your response.

**Question 2:** If you agree, what is your suggested requirement?

*The applicant must have practised medicine clinically for at least [...] year/years, within the last [...] years, prior to applying to sit NZREX.*

Please provide any additional comments including the reasons for your response.

**Question 3:** Do you agree or disagree with the introduction of a requirement for the applicant to have completed a minimum period of practice in the country in which they gained their primary medical qualification?

Strongly agree / agree / neither agree nor disagree / disagree / strongly disagree

Please provide comments and the reasons for your response.

**Question 4:** If you agree, what is your suggested requirement?

*The applicant must have practised clinically for at least [...] months in the country from which they gained their primary medical qualification.*

Please provide any additional comments including the reasons for your response.

## **Submissions**

We invite you to provide feedback. This will be considered carefully before we make any decisions.

Please provide written submissions by completing the survey questions online by close of business on **Wednesday 24 August 2022**.

Any decision made as a result of this consultation will be shared with stakeholders and all consultation respondents.

## **Publication of submissions**

We publish submissions at our discretion on our website. Published submissions will include the names of the individuals and/or the organisations that made the submission, unless confidentiality is requested.

Please advise us if you do not want all or part of your submission published.

We will not place on our website, or make available to the public, submissions that contain offensive or defamatory comments or which are outside the scope of the subject of the consultation.

## **Appendix 1: Scopes of practice and pathways**

In Aotearoa New Zealand, medical practice comprises into several scopes of practice. These reflect the different aspects of medical practice in Aotearoa New Zealand while still ensuring the maintenance of high standards of medical practice. Doctors applying for registration in Aotearoa New Zealand will generally apply for registration in a specific scope of practice. There are several scopes of practice, and 'pathways' to registration within those scopes.

Each pathway has its own requirements for registration, formally known as the 'prescribed qualification'.

A qualification, in this context:

- does not relate solely to degrees or diplomas awarded following completion of an educational or training programme
- can include a pass in a specified examination or any other assessment set by Council, or another organisation approved by Council
- can also include experience in the provision of health services.

These scopes of practice and prescribed qualifications are published in the [New Zealand Gazette](#).

To be registered, an applicant must:

- hold the 'prescribed qualification' for the relevant scope of practice and pathway
- be fit for registration
- be competent to practise within the scope of practice they're applying for.