

Policy

Subject: Scope of Practice Recognition
Approval Date: August 2006, August 2007, August 2008, November 2012, November 2017, May 2018, June 2018
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Review By: BPPQ
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Background

Scope of practice recognition refers to the process by which the College recognises a Fellow's credentials to practise in the various disciplines of pathology. It complements but does not, and cannot, replace the credentialling process undertaken by employers to evaluate a practitioner's credentials, which is an organisational governance responsibility. It also differs from revalidation, but could provide a benchmark against which assessments can be made as to competence and currency for revalidation purposes.

Credentials are defined as *the qualifications, professional training, clinical experience, and training and experience in leadership, research, education, communication and teamwork that contribute to a medical practitioner's competence, performance and professional suitability to provide safe, high quality health care services.*¹

Fellowship of RCPA is a major component of a pathologist's credentials, but Fellowship alone does not demonstrate the range of skills and experience a pathologist brings to a position. Furthermore, Fellowship is generic. It does not indicate the discipline in which the Fellow has been trained and qualified through the College.

Role for College in recognising scope of practice

Fellows are concerned about the ethical and legal implications of working beyond the scope of their qualifications and training. Insurers are alert to the risks such practice engenders, and may refuse to provide cover to pathologists supervising outside their specialty area.

Defining a pathologist's scope of practice clarifies expectations for both the pathologist and the service in which he/she works, and thus seeks to help manage these expectations so that neither party has unjustified expectations of the scope of the pathologist's practice in that position.

Recognising scope can assist in providing advice to credentialling committees, with the anticipated benefit that the clinical privileges and supervisory responsibilities allocated to pathologists by employers will be appropriate. The utility of the RCPA database is also enhanced with accurate, up to date details of Fellows' disciplines.

It is acknowledged that this process of recognising scope of practice is done in the context of needing to maintain laboratory supervision that meets legislative and regulatory requirements in the midst of a pathology workforce crisis. It is the College's view that a Fellow cannot be asked to supervise in a discipline in which they have not trained.

¹ Australian Council for Safety and Quality in Health Care "Standard for Credentialling and Defining the Scope of Clinical Practice" July 2004

NATA/RCPA accreditation will support this mechanism by identifying any laboratories that are not being adequately supervised.

Scope of practice recognition procedure

- 1) Existing and new Fellows are to be issued with a document that identifies the discipline(s) in which they trained and were examined by the College.
- 2) Where Fellows attained Fellowship before the College offered training and examination in their particular discipline, and so by necessity they did not obtain their training in their discipline from the College, such Fellows may apply to the College for recognition of their scope of practice by demonstrating appropriate qualifications and/or training.
- 3) These Fellows are asked to contact the College if they seek a correction to the details documented on the certificate.
 - Additional credentials demonstrating subsequent training and experience are required to back up such requests (e.g. evidence of other formal training and education, audits and logs of work undertaken demonstrating relevant experience, participation in peer review processes and continuing medical education, involvement in teaching, research, supervision and quality improvement initiatives).
- 4) The Board of Education and Assessment will examine these applications, with reference to a subcommittee as required, and make a recommendation to the Board of Directors.
 - This may be a paper-based exercise; however, where necessary, verbal clarification or expansion will be sought or further assessment arranged. External expert advice may also be sought.
 - Consideration will be given to the length and nature of experience the Fellow has attained in that discipline.
- 5) The Board of Directors determines whether a Fellow's request for amended scope of practice is approved, taking into account recommendations from the Board of Education and Assessment as required. The College database is updated with the amended scope of practice.
- 6) Fellows may appeal to the Board of Directors to review a decision where approval is not given to a proposed amendment. The Board of Directors will be the final arbiter in the appeals process, and the decision may entail an assessment comparable in standard to the Part II examination for the discipline in question.
- 7) Fellows should indicate in their annual CPD return how they are maintaining their knowledge across their recognised scope of practice.
- 8) Subject to the exception noted in point 2 above, Fellows trained in one discipline who wish to add another must undergo training in that field. Trainees may also undertake training in areas pertinent to supervision of fields other than the discipline in which they are training.

Retraining programs in other disciplines, based on the new curricula, will facilitate this. The assessment required to demonstrate successful completion of training will be determined by the Board of Education and Assessment.

Scope of Practice Recognition for Supervision of Laboratory

As part of the NATA/RCPA accreditation process it may not always be evident if a Fellow

possesses the appropriate qualification and experience to supervise a particular type of testing. NATA may seek advice from the College in relation to this.

1. The College will first check the College records to assess what the Scope of Practice is for the Fellow.
2. If there is uncertainty as to whether the Fellow has the appropriate qualification and experience, the CEO/DCEO will send the request to the appropriate Chief Examiner, Chair of the Discipline Advisory Committee, Chair of BEA and seek further information from NATA and or the Fellow.
3. If there is agreement in relation to the advice, the CEO/DCEO will advise NATA of the outcome.
4. If there is no agreement, the matter will be referred to the Board of Education and Assessment for discussion.