

COMMONWEALTH MEDICAL INTERNSHIPS (CMI) 2016

Frequently Asked Questions for Medical Students

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THE CMI APPLICATION PROCESS

What happens during the CMI application process?

Step by step guide.

1. If you are interested in being considered for a CMI internship, applications open 9.00am (AEST) on Monday, 24 August 2015. You will need to email your fully completed application to CMI2016@health.gov.au by 5.00pm (AEST) on Monday, 7 September 2015. Emails time-marked after this will not be accepted and you will not be considered for a CMI internship unless exceptional circumstances can be proven.
2. When applications close, your application will be assessed for eligibility. If you are eligible, your name, along with the names of all other eligible applicants, will be sent to hospitals offering CMI places in 2016. This is expected to occur by late October. All applicants will be notified of their eligibility to participate in the CMI 2016.
3. Hospitals will review the applications and decide to whom they would like to offer an internship. If a hospital would like to talk to you about an internship, they will contact you directly. It is important that you provide current contact details, including phone number, in your application. Offers are expected to be made during a recruitment period, which is expected to occur during October or November. (Note - applicants will not be given the contact details of hospitals).
4. Applicants who are offered an internship by a hospital will have until the end of the recruitment period to accept. Once the applicant has accepted an offer, both the hospital and the applicant must send an email to CMI2016@health.gov.au indicating that an agreement has been reached. Acceptance of an offer occurs when both emails have been received by the Commonwealth. The applicant will then have up to 28 days to sign a Deed of Agreement with the Commonwealth Government; this commits the applicant to completing the internship and a 48 week return of service obligation. After this is completed, the Commonwealth will be able to provide the funding for your internship to the hospital. (This is why it is very unlikely that a hospital will sign an employment contract with you before you have completed a Deed of Agreement with the Commonwealth.) Start dates and relocation issues will be a matter for the hospital and the intern.
5. When the recruitment period has closed, it is unlikely that any further CMI 2016 internships will be available. However, if a successful applicant subsequently withdraws before commencing their internship, the hospital may be able to recruit a replacement from the list provided by the Commonwealth.

I'm not eligible but I think I have a special case.

The eligibility requirements are clear and all eligibility criteria must be met. Applicants must:

- be a full-fee paying international student completing their medical degree during the current calendar year from an onshore medical school in Australia, having completed all of their medical degree in Australia (short-term elective rotations completed offshore will not exclude applicants provided rotations have university approval); and
- have met the Medical Board of Australia (MBA) English language competency requirements for registration purposes (*provisional registration as a medical practitioner cannot be obtained without meeting this standard*); and
- not be an Australian Citizen; and
- commit to obtaining an appropriate visa to work in Australia during the internship year and as long as necessary to complete the return of service obligation (refer to the Department of Immigration and Border Protection website for details www.immi.gov.au).

Applicants who do not meet **all** eligibility criteria will be ruled ineligible.

I won't be able to meet the Medical Board of Australia (MBA) English language competency requirement until I complete my medical degree. Can I apply for the CMI?

The Department recognises that some applicants will only meet the MBA English language competency for registration purposes upon completion of their medical degree and not at the time of submission of their application.

The Department will accept a CMI application from applicants intending to use the MBA *English language competency through the Combined secondary and tertiary pathway and/or the Extended education pathway*, provided they meet all other eligibility criteria and provide evidence at the time of application which may include secondary qualifications (where these are being used to meet MBA requirements) and must include written advice from an authorised person representing the medical school that states completion of the medical degree is expected to occur in 2015.

An applicant's eligibility, provided they have met all other criteria, will be conditional on them meeting the MBA English language competency upon completion of their medical degree. Failure to meet this requirement will mean these applicants are ineligible for the CMI.

If I withdrew from my CMI place last year can I re-apply this year?

Eligible CMI applicants from the previous calendar year who executed a Deed of Agreement and could not commence or needed to withdraw during their first rotation due to exceptional circumstances may be given approval by the Approver to participate in the current CMI programme on a case by case basis.

An exceptional circumstance is something beyond the control of the applicant, which was not reasonably foreseeable at the time the Deed of Agreement was signed, including but not limited to illness or temporary incapacity.

To apply for exceptional circumstances the applicant must have been offered and accepted a CMI place in the previous calendar year. A written request that sets out the exceptional circumstances and evidence to support claims must be submitted, along with an application form, to the CMI2016@health.gov.au email address during the standard CMI open application period. The request will then be assessed and the applicant will be notified of eligibility at the same time all other CMI applicants are notified.

If I decline a CMI internship, can I still get a state or territory internship offer?

Information about CMI applicants will be shared with state and territory government bodies with responsibility for internship recruitment. It is up to each state and territory to decide whether you are eligible for one of their internships if you decline a CMI internship offer.

Can I pull out of a CMI internship offer at any time?

You are not considered to have made a commitment until you and the hospital have separately written to the Department of Health advising that you have accepted an offer. That means that a hospital can make you an offer but you are only committed when you have agreed to accept that offer.

An acceptance occurs when both you and the hospital inform the department by e-mail that you have accepted the offer of internship.

The act of the hospital simply making you an offer creates no obligation on your part.

However, once you have accepted the offer and the department has received official separate confirmation from you and from the hospital, this represents a commitment. If you withdraw after that stage, you will no longer be eligible for a CMI internship.

If you withdraw after you have signed a Deed of Agreement, you will no longer be eligible for a CMI position and you will have breached the Deed of Agreement. In this case, the Commonwealth may seek to recover the cost of funding the internship, which may be up to \$140,000 (GST inclusive).

If you are considering accepting a CMI position and then leaving during your internship, you are strongly urged to consider whether a CMI position is suitable for you. Interns who depart during their internship (for example, to take up a position overseas) will have wasted a valuable internship position that another graduate would have appreciated and will have denied their hospital and community an additional doctor. In addition, the Australian Government may take action to recover the funds that were spent on your internship. Even if you leave an internship early in the year, this may amount to tens of thousands of dollars.

Individuals who are forced to leave their internship due to exceptional circumstances will have their outstanding liability to the Commonwealth considered on a case by case basis. Please note that leaving to take up another position will not be considered an exceptional circumstance.

“An exceptional circumstance is something beyond the control of the applicant, which was not reasonably foreseeable at the time the Deed of Agreement was signed, including but not limited to illness or temporary incapacity.”

What if a hospital offers me a CMI internship and I don't want it?

The list of eligible CMI applicants will be provided to participating hospitals at the same time. Participating hospitals are responsible for filling their CMI places and will determine which eligible CMI applicants they would like to offer a position to. Hospitals will have the opportunity to interview potential applicants and it would be expected that both the hospital and applicant would get some sense from that process whether an offer would be welcome.

However, an offer is only officially accepted when a hospital advises the department that an offer has been made and accepted, and the applicant also advises the department that an offer has been made and accepted. If the hospital advises the department that an offer has been made and accepted, and you have changed your mind, you can inform the department accordingly.

If only one party - the hospital or the applicant - advises the department that an offer has been accepted, it is not official. Both parties must separately confirm this in writing for an acceptance to be confirmed by the department. Once both emails have been received, the department will write back and acknowledge receipt of this confirmation.

THE INTERNSHIPS

Where exactly are these internships located?

Most of the CMI placements are likely to be based in regional areas or have a regional placement component. At this stage the hospitals involved in the CMI 2016 have not been finalised. However for the CMI 2015 initiative, internships are based in Brisbane, Perth, Sydney, Bundaberg, Townsville and Mackay with interns also doing rotations in Joondalup and Mandurah (WA), Tweed Heads and Wagga Wagga (NSW) and Kingaroy, Bundaberg, Noosa, Hervey Bay and Mt Isa (QLD).

For a private hospital to be able to host internships under the CMI initiative, it must:

- be accredited to train interns by a state or territory postgraduate medical council; and
- be large enough to provide the required internship rotations in-house or be willing and able to rotate interns to other hospitals accordingly.

Priority will be given to funding hospitals that are able to offer CMI places located in rural or regional areas or be able to offer interns a regional, rural or remote training component. The number of private hospitals which can offer these requirements is limited.

Will I have a choice in where I go?

At the time of applying for the CMI, applicants have the option to select preferred regions for completion of their internship. If offered a position, you decide to either accept or decline the offer. Nobody will be forced to take a CMI internship. If you are assessed as an eligible applicant for CMI,

a list of participating hospitals will be made available to you prior to commencement of the recruitment period.

What are the pay and conditions like?

Hospitals involved in the CMI initiative are required to offer interns salary and conditions at least equivalent to those which exist in public hospitals in their state or territory.

Can I have assistance with moving expenses and finding accommodation?

These issues need to be taken up with the hospital which will employ you. Relocation, ongoing living and accommodation costs will not be covered under the CMI programme.

Who do I work for?

You will sign an employment contract with the hospital so you will be an employee of the hospital. You will not be an employee of the Commonwealth Government at any time, including when you are fulfilling your return of service obligation.

Private hospital internships aren't as good as public hospital ones are they?

Private hospitals offering internships attain the same level of accreditation as public hospitals do for training interns. A private hospital cannot train interns unless it has been appropriately accredited to do so. The quality of training you receive in a private hospital should be at least equivalent to that you would receive in a public hospital. Previous CMI interns have reported that their rural placements often result in closer relationships being formed with clinical mentors and a greater degree of hands-on medicine than expected.

Can I swap my place?

No. You cannot swap your intern place.

Can I defer my place?

No. Internships must be completed in 2016 and return of service within 4 years after that.

Can I do a part-time internship?

No. Internships must be completed in 2016 and return of service within 4 years after that.

RETURN OF SERVICE

Why is there a return of service obligation?

The return of service obligation recognises that CMI internships are provided through public funding and that this should deliver benefits to the Australian community. Improving medical services in rural and regional Australia are priorities for the Government and are effective ways to ensure a benefit to the Australian community from the investment in the CMI programme.

Successful applicants under the CMI are required to work in a rural or regional area for 48 weeks in exchange for their internship. This assists with ensuring all Australians have access to the health services they need.

What is the return of service obligation?

By accepting a CMI position you will need to enter into a Deed of Agreement with the Commonwealth to complete your internship and return of service obligation. The Deed of Agreement requires you to complete:

1) your internship within 12 months of commencing it, and

2) 48 weeks return of service in an approved location within 5 years of commencing your internship.

If you do not complete both requirements, you will have breached your Deed of Agreement. For work to count towards the return of service period it must be completed in an Australian Standard Geographical Classification - Remoteness Areas (ASGC-RA) 2-5 location. The return of service obligation is to be completed within five years of commencing the internship.

Do I need to get legal advice on the Deed of Agreement?

The Deed of Agreement is a legally binding contract with potentially significant ramifications for those who breach it. All applicants are encouraged to seek independent legal advice before signing the Agreement. A sample of the Deed of Agreement can be found at <http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/content/work-commonwealth-medical-internships>.

Can my internship count towards my return of service?

For a CMI place to count towards the return of service it must be completed in full or in part in an approved return of service location (an ASGC-RA 2-5 location). The period of your internship completed in an approved return of service location will count towards the 48 week return of service period.

If your internship is based in a hospital in an ASGC-RA 2-5 location, then the whole internship will count towards the return of service obligation, even if part of it may have been served in a rotation in an urban centre (for example, to complete a mandatory rotation that wasn't available elsewhere).

For internships based in hospitals in an ASGC-RA 1 location, only those components served in an ASGC-RA 2-5 location can be counted towards the return of service obligation.

What happens if I cannot complete my internship and/or the return of service?

Failure to complete the internship year or the return of service period will result in a breach of the Deed of Agreement and may require you to repay to the Commonwealth the cost of providing the internship place. The cost of an internship place is more than the intern salary, it usually includes recruitment costs, training costs, supervision costs, on-costs and other costs hospitals incur in order to train medical interns. This may be up to \$140,000 (GST inclusive).

If a CMI candidate resigns from their Commonwealth funded internship place and leaves Australia without resolving a breach of their Deed of Agreement there may be immigration implications in relation to future visa applications. It may also result in Medicare benefits not being payable in respect of professional services rendered by you or on your behalf in Australia for up to a period of two years.

If you are considering accepting a CMI position and then leaving during your internship, you are strongly urged to consider whether a CMI position is suitable for you. Interns who depart during their internship (for example, to take up a position overseas) will have wasted a valuable internship position that another graduate would have appreciated and will have denied their hospital and community an additional doctor. In addition, the Australian Government may take action to recover the funds that were spent on your internship. Even if you leave an internship early in the year, this may amount to tens of thousands of dollars.

Individuals who are forced to leave their internship due to exceptional circumstances will have their outstanding liability to the Commonwealth considered on a case by case basis. Please note that leaving to take up another position will not be considered an exceptional circumstance.