

PURPOSE

This document provides guidance on the infrastructure that is recommended to support RANZCP trainees undertaking their fellowship training and Specialist International Medical Graduates (SIMG) completing their placement in rural areas, which aligns with the following:

- RANZCP Accreditation Standards
- RANZCP *Rural Psychiatry Roadmap 2021-2031*
- Australian Medical Council Limited *Model Standards for specialist medical college accreditation of training settings* – August 2025.

SCOPE

- RANZCP trainees undertaking their training in rural locations
- SIMG completing their placement in rural locations
- Consultant Psychiatrists supervising trainees
- Training settings, jurisdictions and health services employing trainees in rural locations.

BACKGROUND

The lack of appropriate infrastructure can be perceived as one of the main barriers to pursuing psychiatry training in a rural location^{3,6}. A study undertaken by the Australian Medical Students Association (AMSA) in 2024 noted that access to quality Information Technology (IT) infrastructure and education facilities were areas which require continuous improvement, particularly for training sites in a rural location². Numerous other studies note that there remains an evident and continuing need for quality and appropriate infrastructure for trainees in a rural location and to support psychiatry training and high-quality practice^{1,4,5}.

The *National Medical Workforce Strategy 2021 – 2031*⁴ provides a critical framework for addressing the medical workforce's challenges. The Strategy highlights the importance of improving the cultural competency of the medical workforce, particularly in supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander medical students and practitioners. There is an emphasis on increasing representation and ensuring that training includes a focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mental health care and is respectful of diverse cultural identities. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander trainees should feel respected, supported and able to thrive in their learning environments.

The development of the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists (RANZCP) *Rural Psychiatry Roadmap 2021 – 2031* (the Roadmap) involved a comprehensive scoping project in late 2020, with input from more than 200 representatives. Stakeholder consultation reported that in some locations, rural education activities were adversely impacted by poor IT infrastructure and the lack of appropriate education facilities and resources⁷.

Drawing on this evidence, Item 42 of the Roadmap requires the RANZCP to:

Ensure that appropriate infrastructure (dedicated education facilities and IT) is available for rural trainees to access education, supervision and peer support.

The following guidelines have been developed following a review of contemporary best practice, current literature and grey literature, and stakeholder consultation. They are proposed as Best Practice standards

for resources for trainees and SIMG in a rural location and are recommended for use by sites when accommodating a psychiatry trainee in a rural location.

These Guidelines are intended to be complementary to RANZCP Accreditation Standards and AMC Model Standards.

AMC MODEL STANDARDS

An assessment of the *AMC Model Standards for specialist medical college accreditation of training settings* revealed some broad alignment with the proposed Best Practice Guidelines outlined below. However, these Guidelines offer more detailed and context specific recommendations tailored to the unique challenges of rural training environments. The relevant AMC standards have been interpreted and expanded upon to inform the development of these Guidelines.

GUIDELINES

To support and enhance the educational development of a psychiatry trainee or SIMG in a rural location, the following is required and considered best practice.

Cultural Safety

Services to include culturally safe mechanisms designed and provided at a regional level, consistent with local cultural needs and landscapes.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health content and cultural safety should comprise a part of site-specific training, particularly for Specialist International Medical Graduates.

Information Technology

As a minimum standard, services should provide a portable electronic device (laptop preferred) for educational purposes. Further recommendations for devices include:

- Devices should be less than 4 years old running on a current supported operating system
- Devices should be of a practical weight and size
- Device battery life should provide a minimum of 4-6 hours under normal use
- Cognisant that trainees in a rural location are often more mobile, trainees should be provided with an accompanying device travel case/bag and a set of headphones equipped with a microphone.

It is further recommended that trainees have access to:

- High-speed, reliable broadband internet connection equipped with failover provisions if the primary connection is compromised.
- Devices should have functional in-built video conferencing capabilities
- Appropriate software products (such as email, word processing, etc.) and cloud storage capabilities equipped with appropriate security.

There should be appropriate frameworks in place for data storage and stewardship.

Education Facilities

Services should ensure healthy and safe learning and working environments that promote wellbeing.

Facilities for consideration may include but are not limited to:

- Appropriate room(s) available for specific functions/activities relevant to training/supervision.
Room(s) should have the following:
 - A minimum of a desk and chair

- Workstation set-up should be healthy and ergonomically safe
- A lockable door
- Digital meeting facilities to support online meetings and consultations
- Access to clean and private facilities for lactation, that have refrigeration capabilities if required
- Access to food on duty or provision of appropriate storage for food
- Access to a room for prayer if required
- Accommodations for trainees with disabilities if required.

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