



**Australian Government**

**Department of Health**

Medicare Provider Number Application Guide

Australian General Practice Training Program

Semester 1, 2017



**AGPT**

## Purpose

This document explains how the Department of Health (Health) and the Department of Human Services (DHS) will assess Medicare provider number (MPN) applications for the first semester of the Australian General Practice Training Program (AGPT) in 2017. This document:

1. explains how the Medicare eligibility requirements apply to GP registrars;
2. explains the MPN application process for the AGPT;
3. defines the responsibilities of each of the parties involved in making AGPT placements and assessing related MPN applications;
4. confirms the handling strategy for processing *Request for an AGPT Placement Forms*; and
5. provides contacts in Health and DHS for further advice regarding the Medicare legislation and the AGPT placement process

Registrars must read this document in tandem with the AGPT Handbook, which explains the training pathways that are currently offered under the AGPT. The handbook is available online from <http://www.agpt.com.au/About-Us/Publications/Publications>

## The AGPT and the MPN restrictions

A registrar requires a MPN to perform the following functions while undertaking their training placement:

- claim Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) rebates for their services or have rebates claimed on their behalf by their employer;
- refer their patients to other specialists through the Medicare system; and
- request services on behalf of their patients.

The *Health Insurance Act 1973* (the HIA) sets the conditions for granting an MPN and includes several provisions that prohibit the backdating of an MPN to trainees, including registrars on the AGPT. Registrars must ensure that they have a valid MPN before they consult patients as part of an approved training placement under the AGPT.

To get an MPN, registrars must satisfy the conditions of ss19AA and 19AB of the HIA. These restrictions apply to all doctors once they are registered with the Medical Board of Australia.

All registrars who were first registered in Australia on or after 1 November 1996 are subject to Medicare restrictions under s19AA of the HIA. S19AA compels doctors to obtain vocational qualifications as a GP, a specialist or a consultant physician to qualify for access to the MBS. S19AA also provides that a doctor may be granted access to Medicare benefits if they are working towards vocational qualifications in their specialty through a recognised training program. The AGPT is a recognised general practice training program and therefore allows participant registrars to apply for an MPN to claim MBS rebates while they work towards Fellowship of either the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (FRACGP) or the Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine (FACRRM).

Some registrars are also subject to the restrictions under s19AB depending on where they obtained their primary medical degree (equivalent of the Bachelor of Medicine/Bachelor of Surgery qualification). These are registrars who meet the definition of either:

- an overseas trained doctor (OTD) – a doctor who obtained their primary medical degree outside Australia or New Zealand; or
- a foreign graduate of an accredited medical school (FGAMS) – a doctor who was not a citizen or permanent resident of Australia or New Zealand on the day they enrolled to do their primary medical degree.

S19AB has a workforce distribution objective and establishes a broad requirement for OTDs and FGAMS to practise in a recognised district of workforce shortage (DWS) to qualify for access to the MBS. This requirement is called the ‘ten year moratorium’ because it applies for a minimum of ten years from when the doctor is first registered in Australia. When considering the AGPT against the s19AB restrictions, Health considers that:

- the general pathway does not satisfy the workforce distribution intent of s19AB and is therefore generally not available to OTDs and FGAMS; and
- the rural pathway satisfies the workforce distribution intent of s19AB and is therefore available to OTDs and FGAMS who meet the eligibility requirements for joining the AGPT.

Health does not apply DWS to OTDs and FGAMS who meet the rural pathway requirement.

Registrars who meet the definition of an OTD or FGAMS can undertake rural pathway placements in a DWS area.

**Table: S19AB Restrictions and registrars**

	<b>General Pathway</b>	<b>Rural Pathway</b>	<b>Extended Skills</b>
<b>Registrar (Not s19AB)</b>	Eligible	Eligible	Eligible
<b>Registrar (s19AB)</b>	Not Eligible (unless prior approval)*	Eligible	Eligible (after s19AB assessment by Health)

\* the process for s19AB restricted registrars to seek approval from Health so that they may be assessed for placements under the general pathway is explained in the Frequently Asked Questions section of this document.

## Understanding the *Request for an AGPT Placement Form*

To participate on the AGPT, a registrar requires both an approved training placement and an MPN. The *Request for an AGPT Placement Form* serves as both the training placement request and MPN application for most registrars. The registrar is ultimately responsible for ensuring the AGPT placement form is correctly completed for each of their placements.

Commencing on 17 October 2016, the Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) will generate the *Request for an AGPT Placement Form*. This form will be pre-populated with RTO information, the registrar's personal details and the relevant training placement information. Upon receipt of this document, the registrar must:

1. check the pre-populated information to confirm that it is correct. Please note that this form will always use the registrar's name as it appears on Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) website, as DHS relies on these records to generate an MPN.
2. contact their RTO immediately if any details are incorrect;
3. sign and complete the remainder of the placement form;
4. have the form signed by their supervisor; and
5. return the completed form to their RTO.

## Completing the *Request for an AGPT Placement form*

To ensure the MPN process can be applied correctly and efficiently, the *Request for an AGPT Placement Form* requires the registrar to confirm:

1. if they are subject to the s19AB restrictions using the definitions of an OTD and an FGAMS provided above (questions regarding s19AB status can be directed to: [19AB@health.gov.au](mailto:19AB@health.gov.au));
2. that the correct pathway (general or rural) has been marked on the form; and
3. in addition to the pathway identify if the placement is an extended skills opportunity.

When applying the MPN application process, Health and DHS separates registrars into two groups based on whether they are subject to the s19AB. Registrars who are subject to s19AB are assessed according to:

- the restrictions that apply to their eligibility to train on the general pathway; and
- their requirement under s19AB to have an exemption and their eligibility to gain a MPN and access to the MBS.

When applying s19AB to restricted registrars, Health categorises AGPT placements into three categories – general pathway, rural pathway and extended skills. It is imperative that the completed *Request for an AGPT Placement Form* correctly identify the requested placement as:

- belonging to either the rural or general pathway; and
- if appropriate, whether the placement has an extended skills purpose.

## **Completing the MPN application component of the *Request for an AGPT Placement Form***

To participate on the AGPT, a registrar requires both an AGPT placement and an MPN. *The Request for AGPT Placement Form* includes an MPN application component, which means most registrars will not need to apply separately for an MPN.

Please note that the MPN application component of this form may only be completed by a registrar who has previously had an MPN (for example as an intern, hospital medical officer or temporary resident doctor working in private general practice). Registrars who have not had an MPN before joining the AGPT must make a complete MPN application for their first AGPT placement to DHS after their placement form has been submitted to Health for assessment. The complete application form is called the 'Application for an Initial Medicare Provider Number' and is available from the DHS website: <http://www.humanservices.gov.au/health-professionals/forms/hw019>

The MPN application component of a *Request for AGPT Placement Form* provides the information required by DHS to grant an MPN to a registrar and to set up their MBS billing account. This form allows each Regional Training Organisation (RTO) to submit MPN applications for registrars electronically to Health at: [agptmpnapplications@health.gov.au](mailto:agptmpnapplications@health.gov.au). These applications will then be referred to DHS once the placement is signed into effect.

### **Tips for completing the *Request for an AGPT Placement Form***

When completing a *Request for an AGPT Placement Form*:

- fill in all fields that are marked mandatory;
- ensure the name of the registrar matches your current registration details on the AHPRA website;
- ensure you correctly identify your status in regards to s19AB (either subject/not-subject) for all placements;
- identify the placement as belonging to either the rural or the general pathway;
- identify if the placement is an extended skills placement (in addition to rural or general pathway); and
- ensure you have a placement form for each location the registrar will be working.

### **Submitting your *Request for an AGPT Placement Form***

When a registrar has completed their *Request for AGPT Placement Form*, they must submit it to their RTO. The RTO is responsible for submitting the request to Health.

A registrar will have an approved AGPT training placement once it is signed by Health. However, the registrar is not eligible to access the MBS until they have been issued an MPN for their training placement.

## 2017 Semester 1 applications

The following cut-off dates will apply when lodging applications for AGPT Semester 1, 2017:

- **12 December 2016** for training semesters commencing between 16 and 23 January 2017; and
- **2 January 2017** for training semesters commencing between 30 January and 3 February 2017.

Registrars are encouraged to complete their documentation as soon as possible prior to these dates and submit it to their RTOs. Health and DHS will assess late requests. However, there will be no capacity to fast-track late AGPT requests.

## Frequently Asked Questions

*When can a registrar claim MBS rebates for their services?*

Submission of a completed AGPT placement form to Health does not mean that the registrar is eligible to claim MBS rebates for their services. Health and DHS must assess the registrar against the Medicare eligibility requirements and confirm in writing the MPN before the registrar can claim rebates. The HIA generally prohibits Health and DHS from backdating Medicare access for registrars, meaning rebates cannot be paid for services that are provided before this confirmation is received.

Accordingly, a registrar must wait until DHS has granted them an MPN and confirmed access to the MBS for their training practice(s) before they attempt to provide clinical services that attract rebates.

*How do I apply for an s19AB exemption to undertake competitive selection for the general pathway?*

As per the advice provided above, registrars who are subject to s19AB are generally restricted from training under the general pathway of the AGPT. However, Health does allow s19AB restricted doctors to seek discretionary approval to apply for the general pathway in their state or territory. These applications are made separately from the MPN application process, and generally before the doctor has applied to join the AGPT and been accepted as a registrar.

Health will continue to administer this separate application process and provide decisions in writing to assist the RTOs in assessing applications from doctors seeking to join the AGPT. The MPN process for the AGPT does not affect this separate application process or provide any special eligibility to s19AB doctor to train under the general pathway. Further information regarding the general pathway restrictions is provided in the AGPT Handbook.

*When do I complete the MPN application portion of the Request for an AGPT Placement form?*

The MPN application portion (2<sup>nd</sup> page) of the *Request for an AGPT Placement Form* should be completed for:

- all registrars who have an existing MPN and require an additional MPN for a new training practice; and
- registrars who are subject to s19AB and who are obtaining a new placement for their training practice (e.g. changing training semesters but staying with the same practice).

This section does not need to be completed for:

- Registrars who are not subject to s19AB and staying with the same practice (DHS can extend their Medicare access based on the training placement information); or
- Any registrar who has not held a MPN before their first AGPT training placement. When their *Request for an AGPT Placement Form* is submitted to Health, the registrar must completing an 'Application for an Initial Medicare Provider Number Form':  
<http://www.humanservices.gov.au/health-professionals/forms/hw019>

**Contacts:**

Submission of placement forms: [agptmpnapplications@health.gov.au](mailto:agptmpnapplications@health.gov.au)

Queries about the operation of s19AB: [19AB@health.gov.au](mailto:19AB@health.gov.au)

Queries about Medicare: 132 150

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