



# **Policy:** Cultural safety education requirements for specialist registration

Effective date: 21 October 2024

# 1. Background

The Medical Board of Australia's (the Board) *Registration standard: Specialist registration* (the Standard) requires all individuals to have successfully completed cultural safety education to be eligible for specialist registration.

Ahpra is currently developing a multi-year National Cultural Safety Accreditation and Continuing Professional Development and upskilling Framework and Strategy that aims to protect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples by eliminating racism from the healthcare system.

The Framework and Strategy will develop nationally consistent standards, codes, and guidelines for registered practitioners on cultural safety for accreditation and continuing professional development. This reform project is a direct initiative from the Strategy.

Therefore, the Board has endorsed a transitional approach to enable individuals to evidence satisfactory completion of cultural safety education.

## 2. What is cultural safety?

Cultural safety is defined for the National Scheme as follows:

### 2.1 Principles

The following principles inform the definition of cultural safety:

- Prioritising the Ministerial Council's goal to achieve healthcare free of racism supported by the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan
- Improved health service provision supported by the Safety and Quality Health Service Standards User Guide for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health
- Provision of a rights-based approach to healthcare supported by the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
- Ongoing commitment to learning, education and training.

### 2.2 Definition

Cultural safety is determined by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals, families and communities. Culturally safe practice is the ongoing critical reflection of health practitioner knowledge, skills, attitudes, practising behaviours and power differentials in delivering safe, accessible and responsive healthcare free of racism.

### 2.3 How to

To ensure culturally safe and respectful practice, medical practitioners must:

- a. Acknowledge colonisation and systemic racism, social, cultural, behavioural and economic factors which impact individual and community health.
- b. Acknowledge and address individual racism, their own biases, assumptions, stereotypes and prejudices and provide care that is holistic, free of bias and racism.
- c. Recognise the importance of self-determined decision-making, partnership and collaboration in healthcare which is driven by the individual, family and community.
- d. Foster a safe working environment through leadership to support the rights and dignity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and colleagues.

## 3. Scope

The National Law amendments that commenced on 21 October 2022 introduced a new objective and guiding principle that acknowledges the National Scheme's role in ensuring the development of a culturally safe and respectful health workforce that is responsive to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and their health, and that contributes to the elimination of racism in the provision of health services.

The Board's Standard requires individuals to have successfully completed cultural safety education to be eligible for specialist registration.

Individuals are exempt from this requirement if they are currently registered or have previously been registered and practised as a medical practitioner in Australia within the past three years.

For individuals who are not exempt and do not meet this eligibility requirement, the Board may grant specialist registration with a condition that enables them to meet this requirement.

## 4. Minimum requirements

Culturally safe health practice requires the ongoing critical reflection of health practitioners' knowledge, skills, attitudes, practising behaviours and an awareness of existing power differentials.<sup>1</sup> Individuals must complete cultural safety education which builds on an introductory cultural awareness course<sup>2</sup> to satisfy the requirements of the Standard. Individuals will continue to incorporate these learnings throughout the career continuum through ongoing professional development (see figure 1).

Figure 1



To meet the Board's requirements for cultural safety education, individuals must complete a course that meets the minimum requirements set out in this policy. Appropriate cultural safety education courses will be approved by the Board, on the advice of Ahpra's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Strategy Group. Approved courses and providers will be published on the Board's website at [www.medicalboard.gov.au](http://www.medicalboard.gov.au).

## 5. Mode of delivery

### 5.1 Cultural awareness course

Individuals should complete a cultural awareness course before commencing any cultural safety education workshops. Cultural awareness courses provide a foundation for cultural safety education by introducing individuals to cultural awareness in Australia, the historical context to health realities, and the application to health practice of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals.<sup>3</sup> The training can be self-paced individual learning using online modules.

### 5.2 Cultural safety education

Cultural safety education courses must be interactive and in a face-to-face format (this can include online interactive elements). The course should cover the cultural safety outcomes as listed in this policy. The duration of the course should be, at a minimum, the equivalent of a full day workshop.

### 5.3 Continuing professional development

Cultural safety education should continue beyond the prescribed programs and be incorporated into the individual's continuing professional development (CPD) plan via their CPD Home.

All CPD should be undertaken and completed in accordance with the *Registration standard: Continuing professional development*<sup>4</sup> and the individual's CPD Home.

## 6. Evidence

Individuals must provide evidence of completion of cultural safety education through a course completion certificate or transcript issued by the training provider.

1 Australian Indigenous Doctors' Association: Cultural safety. <https://aida.org.au/cultural-safety-program>. Accessed 1 October 2024.

2 A cultural awareness course must be completed within the first three months of being granted registration (or before arriving in Australia) as part of an orientation to the Australian healthcare system.

3 Australian Indigenous Doctors' Association: Cultural Awareness – Online Training. <https://aida.org.au/cultural-safety-program/cultural-awareness-foundations-of-cultural-safety>. Accessed 1 October 2024.

4 Registration standards are available on the Board's website at [www.medicalboard.gov.au/Registration-Standards](http://www.medicalboard.gov.au/Registration-Standards).