

Indigenous Interns Pathway

Procedure for the 2022 Clinical Year

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Context

The Townsville Hospital and Health Service acknowledge the Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of this nation. We acknowledge and respect the traditional custodians of the land on which we work to support the provision of safe and quality healthcare. We pay our respects to ancestors and Elders, past, present and emerging. The Townsville Hospital and Health Service is committed to honouring Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' unique cultural and spiritual relationships to the land, waters, and seas and their rich contribution to society.

The Townsville Hospital and Health Service (THHS) has a geographic footprint of 148,000 square kilometres and is home to approximately 238,614 people. The region covers from Cardwell in the north, Richmond in the west, and Ayr and Home Hill in the south¹. Given the magnitude of this footprint, the THHS cares for a large diversity of patients and recognises the importance of ensuring a safe space for healing.

The THHS, in conjunction with Queensland Health, is committed to closing the health gap for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Queensland. This requires a workforce that is culturally capable and appropriate². To achieve this, the THHS is committed to building a workforce that is inclusive of all our nation's people and provides supported avenues for medical officers who identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.

The implementation of an Indigenous Interns Pathway by the Medical Education and Workforce Services (MEWS) of the THHS is supported by key stakeholders of the THHS community, James Cook University Medical School and local Indigenous Australians.

Queensland Health, local Hospital and Health Services, and other Queensland Health organisations have a commitment to increasing the employment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people at all levels and disciplines within Queensland Health's workforce. Queensland Health acknowledges this as a fundamental enabler of closing the health gap in Queensland³.

¹ [Northern Queensland Regional Training Hubs](#)

^{2,3} [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workforce Strategic Framework 2016-2026](#)

Introduction

The THHS recognises that there are significant inequalities in health outcomes for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples (hereafter respectfully referred to as Indigenous Australians).

The MEWS team facilitates the recruitment of medical graduates from accredited universities seeking to train as medical officers. The Indigenous Interns Pathway offers a two-year curated prevocational medical officer pathway for Indigenous Australians within the Townsville University Hospital (TUH).

The THHS recognises the need for increased representation of Indigenous Australian medical officers within the Queensland Health workforce. This pathway will facilitate the improvement of culturally competent services to Indigenous Australians and support the national agenda of closing the health gap of the Indigenous Australian population and support the goal of increasing Indigenous Australians within the medical workforce.

The MEWS team provides prevocational medical officers with a range of assistance regarding term allocation, mentoring, and support. The team coordinates and monitors formal teaching programs, provides career decision support, facilitates workshops and simulation lab sessions, and runs the Doctors for Doctors peer-mentoring program. The MEWS team are passionate about supporting the professional development and career progression of prevocational medical officers. The team works with medical officers to plan their term rotations and provide support throughout the process. The team has career guidance experts to best help medical officers reach their career goals.

The Indigenous Interns Pathway will provide prevocational medical officers the support network and clinical skills to achieve General Registration (as per AHPRA) at the end of their first-year of prevocational training. The pathway will then support them through PGY2 and allow for a bespoke combination of terms curated around their interests, while maintaining a strong focus on Indigenous mentorship and support.

The underpinning principles of the development and maintenance of the Indigenous Interns Pathway are as follows.

- Indigenous medical graduates are provided support to obtain a prevocational training position in a hospital with access to support, both culturally and clinically.
- Processes regarding the allocation of applicants transparent and fair.
- Cultural support and mentorship are provided to Indigenous medical graduates throughout their prevocational training.
- Numbers of Indigenous doctors within Queensland Health to ensure improved cultural safety built upon.
- Through support of the Closing the Gap initiative, increasing the number of Indigenous doctors within the Queensland Health workforce to aid in the cultural improvement and service provision to both Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to advise potential applicants about the allocation process when choosing the Indigenous Interns Pathway with the THHS and to provide an overview of what is offered within the Indigenous Interns Pathway.

This pathway is designed to support Indigenous medical graduates during their internship and PGY2 to achieve a successful career in their chosen specialty, within the Queensland Health workforce. This is achieved by offering a bespoke prevocational training position within a Tertiary Hospital and Health Service located in a regional area. This pathway differs from others in that there is a high focus on mentorship specifically by engaging with Indigenous mentors and professional mentors, who are equipped to advise not only on the clinical/learning aspects of prevocational training, but are also able to relate to the nuances faced by Indigenous medical officers.

The pathway will provide prevocational medical officers with extensive career counselling, career integration and support from the Medical Education Unit (MEU). They will also be provided advice and support from

senior consultants who are aligned with various speciality colleges. The THHS will provide support and additional educational opportunities for prevocational medical officers on the Pathway.

The THHS will also provide additional cultural training and education to term supervisors to ensure prevocational medical officers are appropriately supported during their training.

The Indigenous Interns Pathway has been formed with extensive consultation between the Medical Education Unit (MEU) at TUH, education leaders at James Cook University, and members of the general medical community at TUH, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous.

Distribution

The procedure will be distributed to relevant groups and persons via the THHS Medical Recruitment website. Groups include:

- Queensland Health Intern Recruitment Campaign,
- Several University Medical Schools across Queensland,
- Queensland Rural Generalist Pathway.

Procedure statements

Prevocational training positions

The THHS has 75 prevocational training positions in Townsville for the 2022 clinical year and these are to be applied for via the Intern Recruitment Campaign on the Queensland Health website. In the 2022 clinical year there will be two positions, allocated from within these 75, available for the Indigenous Interns Pathway within the THHS. As the program grows and more mentors are identified, the THHS hopes to be able to offer this pathway to more applicants.

Eligibility criteria

Medical graduates wanting to apply for the Indigenous Interns Pathway will be:

- Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.
- A medical graduate from an Australian University Medical School.

Mentor allocation

Medical graduates successful in the Indigenous Interns Pathway will be matched with up to two mentors. The pathway will utilise a cultural mentor in the way of an Indigenous Australian with working knowledge of government organisations, and a professional mentor who can guide them through their medical internship. To better match mentees and mentors, medical graduates will be:

- Asked to provide a short personal biography of no more than 500 words. The biography should include career goals and aspirations if known.
- Asked to provide a short response as to why they have chosen the THHS as their preferred training facility. To aid applicants, answers may include:
 - I have family in the area, e.g.
 - Immediate or extended family ties
 - I have an established relationship with the community within the area, e.g.
 - Family/extended family
 - Work based
 - Schooled or educated in area
 - I have a connection to country in the area, e.g.

- Family
- Never lived there but have family ties
- One/both of the above ancestral ties
- I have a current relationship with:
 - A mentor in this area
 - The Hospital and Health Service
 - I feel the training I could receive in this area aligns with my career aspirations
 - I am aware of a targeted program/support network specific to the Indigenous Australian workforce which will benefit my training.
- Asked to provide any associations/memberships to organisations such as AIDA, IAHA, NATSIHWA, etc.

Application process

Application procedure

Applications for Queensland Health internships must be submitted via the online application portal before the closing date of the Intern Recruitment Campaign. Late applications will not be accepted. Important dates for the Intern Recruitment Campaign are available on the [Queensland Health website](#).

Group A applicants wishing to partake in the THHS Indigenous Interns Pathway are asked to apply via the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Intern Allocation Initiative and list Townsville as their first preference. For further information about this initiative please see page 10 of the [applicant guide](#).

All other groups should apply through the regular Intern Recruitment Campaign, preferencing Townsville first.

Application form

Upon allocation to the Townsville University Hospital, applicants should contact the MEWS team and express their interest in the Indigenous Interns Pathway by completing the Indigenous Interns Pathway Application Form and submitting via email - TSV-MEDED@health.qld.gov.au.

The application form can be found on the Intern Recruitment Campaign [website for Townsville](#).

Supporting documentation

Group A applicants who have applied through the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Intern Allocation Initiative will have already submitted documentation supporting their Indigenous status, and therefore only need to fill out and submit the Indigenous Interns Pathway Application form.

Applicants who cannot apply through the Queensland Health Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Intern Allocation Initiative will be asked to include in their submission certified copies of supporting documentation that verifies their Indigenous status along with the Indigenous Interns Pathway Application form. See '[Proof of Aboriginality](#)' for further information and assistance regarding this.

The THHS and Queensland Health recognise that there may be barriers to gaining access to documentation stating Indigenous status, and therefore will also accept the [Evidence of Attribute – Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Identified Roles form](#), which requires a statutory declaration and a letter of confirmation from a community organisation from the individual applying for the pathway.

If a statutory declaration is submitted, it must be signed by an authorised witness. More information on who can be a witness can be found [here](#).

Communication with applicants

The THHS MEWS team will communicate with applicants via telephone and email. It is advised that all applicants have and maintain a valid contact number and email address. The applicant should be able to

access their phone and email during the recruitment phase to ensure they do not miss any important communications. Failure to respond to communications may result in applications/offers being withdrawn.

Assessment of applications

Applications to the Indigenous Interns Pathway are assessed by the THHS MEWS team in conjunction with:

- An Indigenous representative from James Cook University,
- An Indigenous medical officer from the THHS.

The team will review all applications and provide a response based on their decision.

The team will either mark the application as:

- Successful,
- Unsuccessful, or
- More information required.

If more information is required it may mean that the applicant, to be properly assessed, will be asked to provide the team with additional information or the applicant may be asked to do an interview with the team. Applicants will be contacted if this is the case and will be given a timeframe of five working days to fulfill the request.

Offer of allocation

Notification, position offers and acceptance

Notification and intern allocation timeframes will be provided as per the important dates published on the Queensland Health Intern Recruitment Campaign website. If interns apply through the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Intern Allocation Initiative (Queensland Health initiative) they will receive offers as per the [Round 1 Offers: Applicant Group A](#). All other applicants will receive offers as per the [Round 2 Offers: Applicant Groups B-D](#).

It is the applicant's responsibility to accept the position offer within the allocated period as detailed in the email.

Once successful applicants are identified, they will need to complete the Indigenous Interns Pathway application form should they wish to participate. MEWS will notify the applicant when they are accepted onto the Indigenous Interns Pathway.

The THHS will contact successful intern applicants, complete the pre-employment paperwork and commence pre-employment checks. Upon completion, the THHS will formally offer an intern position noting acceptance onto the Indigenous Interns Pathway.

Responsibilities

Commitments to the prevocational medical officer

For participants of the pathway, the THHS commits to provide additional support in the following five areas:

- Two-way cultural immersion: immersion in medical training and immersion in culture.
- Mentoring support for the prevocational medical officer by way of a professional mentor and a cultural mentor.
- Career counselling and support.
- Additional support for supervisors of prevocational medical officers.
- Additional education opportunities for prevocational medical officers.

Mode of delivery

THHS will deliver two-way cultural immersion to pathway participants by:

- Providing a dedicated professional mentor to the prevocational doctor who will assist them in acquiring skills, accessing training and progressing their career.
 - The professional mentor will be a senior clinician, who will either be of Indigenous background or have completed additional dedicated cultural training.
 - The professional mentor will be introduced to the prevocational doctor by the MEU and will be available for planned meetings throughout the term as arranged between the mentor and mentee.
 - The professional mentor will attend the Mentor Education Program run by the MEU with the MEU to provide guidance throughout the year as required.
- Providing a dedicated cultural mentor to the prevocational medical officer, who will assist them in balancing cultural responsibilities and pressures with delivering medical care and accessing training and will also act as a personal support to the intern.
 - The cultural mentor will be from an Indigenous background.
 - The cultural mentor will be introduced to the prevocational doctor by the MEU and will be available for planned meetings throughout the term as arranged between the mentor and mentee.
 - The cultural mentor will attend the Mentor Education Program run by the MEU with the MEU to provide guidance throughout the year as required.
- Reviewing the quality, scope and comprehensiveness of the immersion of prevocational medical officers by:
 - Conducting yearly evaluations of the program as to determine the quality of two-way immersion.
 - Responding to the evaluation data as a part of the MEU's quality improvement activities.

THHS will provide career counselling and dedicated career integration and support to prevocational trainees by:

- Providing an initial career advice session prior to commencement and thereafter once per term, or a schedule otherwise agreed upon, to facilitate the necessary skills/rotations for career progression as a prevocational medical officer.
 - The initial career advice session will aim to map out the two-year pathway with career goals in mind.
 - These career advice sessions can be provided by the following trained staff:
 - Members of the MEU,
 - Professional mentors.
- Facilitating placement into terms which will align with career goals over the course of the two-year pathway.

- The MEU will be available for career counselling and will provide guidance on rotations required/preferred during prevocational training.
- These terms may consist of any accredited training positions in the THHS subject to availability.
- The THHS will help facilitate Indigenous prevocational doctors into preferred terms over the two-year pathway, where service delivery allows.
 - As some terms can prove to be highly sought after, to ensure fairness to all where competition is high, prevocational doctors may be asked to provide a statement as to why they should be chosen for a particular term.
- Should service delivery issues arise, THHS would aim to work with the prevocational medical officer to ensure terms were facilitated at a later date (3rd year).
- Providing additional education and training opportunities to Indigenous prevocational medical officers by:
 - Identifying key courses, education opportunities, research opportunities and scholarship opportunities with prevocational doctors through their career advice sessions or medical mentor sessions.
 - Negotiating with key stakeholders including specialty colleges, training providers, education providers and tertiary partners who may provide educational, training or scholarship support to Indigenous prevocational medical officers to ensure they are provided with optimal access to courses and opportunities.

THHS will provide additional cultural support training and cultural awareness training to mentors and term supervisors of Indigenous trainees, and in particular provide personalised support and advice to term supervisors and mentors by:

- Ensuring senior clinicians, term supervisors and mentors have completed the THHS Cultural Capability Training Module and have received additional support and mentoring from the Cultural Practice Coordinator.

THHS will provide additional educational support to Indigenous prevocational medical officers by:

- Liaising with the Indigenous prevocational medical officers, as well as the medical mentors and cultural mentor, to identify educational and training opportunities for the intern; and support their participation in dedicated education.
- Supporting Indigenous prevocational medical officers in obtaining additional cultural education support by facilitating attendance at relevant national conferences.

Responsibilities of the Applicant

The responsibilities of the applicant, when applying to the Indigenous Interns Pathway are as follows:

- The applicant will read and ensure an understanding of the procedures governing the recruitment processes in Queensland and will seek clarification from the THHS MEWS team if required.
- The applicant will be required to complete the online application via the Queensland Health Intern Recruitment Campaign website before the closing date.
- The applicant will ensure contact details provided, particularly email addresses, are up to date and will regularly check for correspondence from the campaign.

- The applicant will, when requested, complete the necessary pre-employment checks and paperwork prior to commencement.
- The applicant will submit a completed Indigenous Interns Pathway form (with supporting documentation if required).

Responsibilities of the THHS

The responsibilities of the application review team are as follows:

- Assess all applications to the Indigenous Interns Pathway with respect to the given criteria.
- Make a clear and concise decision for each application.
- Ensure confidential treatment of all applications and documentation provided.
- Maintain a transparent assessment process ensuring the THHS ICARE values are adhered to, whilst assessing each application for the eligibility criteria.

The Medical Education team will:

- Ensure all THHS terms are appropriately accredited for prevocational training.
- Ensure all information pertaining to the recruitment process and Indigenous Interns Pathway is up to date and available on the Queensland Health Intern Recruitment Campaign website.
- Maintain communication with applicants throughout the application process.
- Ensure applicants are participating in terms that are accredited for prevocational training.
- Support Indigenous medical graduates during the transition to working in Queensland Health and provide them with a culturally safe workplace.

The THHS Medical Workforce team will:

- Coordinate the recruitment process.
- Ensure credentials and documentation are verified prior to offering internship positions.
- Follow all usual procedures regarding the recruitment of medical graduates in Queensland.
- Provide conditions of employment to applicants directly and advise on any employment conditions.
- Confirm with applicants the offer of employment and organise pre-employment checks and paperwork.

Glossary

AHPRA

The Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) is the national organisation responsible for implementing the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme across Australia. AHPRA works with the 15 National Boards to help protect the public by regulating Australia's registered health practitioners.⁴

Applicant

The applicant in this context is a medical graduate who applies for a prevocational training position within Queensland Health.

General Registration

General Registration is a type of registration given by the Medical Board of Australia to medical practitioners who have completed an approved medical degree and internship (PGY1) in Australia and New Zealand or have trained outside Australia and New Zealand and have demonstrated equivalence to Australian standards.

⁴ [The Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency](#)

ICARE values

The THHS has five core values – integrity, compassion, accountability, respect and engagement (ICARE) – that guide the organisation's behaviour.

Medical Graduate

The medical graduate is an individual who has completed their medical degree but has not commenced practicing as a doctor.

MEU

The Medical Education Unit (MEU) is the team at the THHS responsible for medical education and training of interns.

MEWS

The Medical Education and Workforce Services (MEWS) encompasses the Education team and Workforce team responsible for junior doctor education and whole of health service medical recruitment.

PGY1/PGY2

Postgraduate year 1 (PGY1) and postgraduate year 2 (PGY2) are the first two years of medical practice undertaken by the prevocational trainees upon completion of medical school. PGY1 is the first year of training which is referred to as an internship.

Prevocational Medical Officer

A prevocational medical officer is a supervised training doctor in PGY1 and PGY2 years.

Term

A rotation through a specified clinical term, unit attachment, etc. in which the trainee undertakes clinical training. Terms must be accredited for prevocational training.

THHS

The Townsville Hospital and Health Service (THHS) is the health service that encompasses a region extending to Hughenden in the west, Cardwell in the north and south to Home Hill.

TUH

The Townsville University Hospital (TUH) is the tertiary hospital within the THHS which supports a referral catchment of almost 700,000 people.

Contact

For further information please contact Amy King, *Indigenous Pathways Coordinator*, Medical Education and Workforce Services.

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