



health

Department:
Health
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



**POLICY GUIDELINE ON THE REQUIREMENTS FOR PRACTICE OF MEDICAL PROFESSIONALS IN
SOUTH AFRICA**

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INTRODUCTION

1. PURPOSE

This policy guideline clarifies the processes to be followed for the approval of applications by South African citizens and non-South African citizens to qualify for independent practice as medical professionals, and outlines the regulatory and legislative frameworks that apply.

2. SCOPE

This policy guideline will be applicable to both South African citizens and non-South African citizens wishing to register as medical practitioners in South Africa.

3. DEFINITIONS

- 3.1. South African citizen In terms of the South African Citizen Act, 1995 (Act 88 of 1995) an individual acquires South African citizenship by birth, descent and naturalisation.
- 3.2. Non-South African citizen The term non-South African refers to a broad category of people who are not South African citizens as defined in the South African Citizens Act. Categories of non-South African citizens are as follows:
- 3.2.1 **Permanent resident** - In accordance with the Immigration Act, 2002 (Act 13 of 2002), permanent residents have necessary authorisation to live in South Africa on a permanent basis. The holder of a permanent residence permit has all the rights, privileges, duties and obligations of a citizen, save for those rights, privileges, duties and obligations which a law or the Constitution explicitly ascribes to citizenship for example a right to vote.
- 3.2.2 **Refugee** - The Refugees Act, 1988 (Act 130 of 1988) defines a refugee as a person who has a well-founded fear of being mistreated because of his/her race, tribe, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership of a particular group. The Refugees Act sets out the rights that refugees are entitled to - the right to security of person, to study, to seek employment, to freedom of movement
- 3.2.3 **Critical skills visa** - this visa (Immigration Act, Section 19(4)) is a temporary residency visa issued to non-South African citizens that allows the applicant with skills, that are required for the South African Government to achieve its service delivery objectives, to legally live and work in South Africa for a period of up to five years. Critical skills visas are granted based on the applicant holding the prerequisite experience and qualifications to address skills shortages as published from time to time.

4. LEGAL AND POLICY FRAMEWORK

All the acts and policies that forms the legislative framework for this policy guideline

- 4.1 Health Professions Act, 1974 (Act 56 of 1974)
- 4.2 The National Health Act. 2003 (61 of 2003)
- 4.3 The South African Citizen Act, 1995 (Act 88 of 1995)
- 4.4 The Immigration Act, 2002 (Act 13 of 2002)
- 4.5 The Refugees Act, 1988 (Act 130 of 1988)

5. SOUTH AFRICAN UNIVERSITY GRADUATES (PRESCRIBED QUALIFICATION)

This section describes the registration pathway for students who have graduated from South African universities accredited by the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA).

5.1 SOUTH AFRICAN CITIZENS WHO COMPLETED MEDICAL DEGREES AT RECOGNISED SOUTH AFRICAN UNIVERSITIES

5.1.1 Internship programme

- (a) Upon successful completion of their medical degree and meeting the requirements as prescribed by Section 24 of the Health Professions Act, 1974 (Act 56 of 1974), applicants must undertake an internship programme as provided for in Section 61 of the Act and associated regulations relating to the registration and training of interns in medicine.

Implications - Institutions training medical students will on an annual basis, by the end of April of each year, provide a list of students who will potentially be eligible for internship for the coming year.

- (b) Regulations require medical interns to complete a continuous internship for a prescribed period at accredited facilities to meet the requirements of the Medical and Dental Professions Board of the HPCSA.

Implications - A list of accredited facilities will be published annually by the end of April each year.

5.1.2. The Community Service Policy

- (a) The Community Service Policy, implemented since 1998, requires health professionals to complete 12 months community service through remunerative work in the public sector. The purpose of the policy is to achieve better distribution of human resources for health to underserved areas.
- (b) The national Department of Health will allocate applicants to facilities published in the Government Gazette by the Minister of Health in accordance with guidelines for a period of 12 months.

Implications - A list of posts available for allocation will be published annually by end of May each year.

5.1.3. On completion of internship and community service

Upon successful completion of the prescribed period of internship and 12 months community service, applicants will be permitted to work as independent practitioners in the public or private sectors.

5.2 NON-SOUTH AFRICAN CITIZENS WHO ARE PERMANENT RESIDENTS AND COMPLETED A MEDICAL DEGREE AT RECOGNISED SOUTH AFRICAN UNIVERSITIES

5.2.1 This section describes the procedures for non-South African citizens who have, in accordance with the Immigration Act, been granted permanent residence status.

5.2.2 Internship programme

- (a) Upon successful completion of their medical degree and meeting the requirements as prescribed by Section 24 of the Health Professions Act, applicants must undertake an internship programme as provided for in Section 61 of the Act and associated regulations relating to the registration and training of interns in medicine.

Implications - Institutions training medical students will on an annual basis, by the end of April of each year, provide a list of students who will potentially be eligible for internship for the coming year.

- (b) Regulations require medical interns to complete a continuous internship of 24 months at accredited facilities to meet the requirements of the Medical and Dental Professions Board of the HPCSA.

Implications - A list of accredited facilities will be published annually by the end of April each year.

5.2.3 Limitations on internship posts

Posts for internship are not guaranteed, and will be offered to permanent residence applicants within available resources:

- (a) only after all South African citizens (3.1 and 4.1) have been accommodated
- (b) in the event that accredited internships positions are available but not funded, applicants will be permitted to provide self-funding for the internship programme for a period as prescribed in internship regulations as a supernumerary

5.2.4 The Community Service Policy

- (a) The Community Service Policy implemented in 1998, requires health professionals to complete 12 months community service through remunerative work in the public sector. The purpose of the policy is to achieve better distribution of human resources for health to underserved areas.
- (b) The national Department of Health will allocate applicants to facilities published in the Government Gazette by the Minister of Health in accordance with guidelines for a period of 12 months.

Implications - A list of posts available for allocation will be published annually by end of May each year.

5.2.5 On completion of internship and community service

Upon successful completion of the prescribed period of internship and 12 months community service, applicants will be permitted to work as independent practitioners in the public or private sectors.

5.3 NON-SOUTH AFRICAN CITIZENS WITH WORK VISA OR REFUGEE'S STATUS WHO COMPLETED A MEDICAL DEGREE AT SOUTH AFRICAN UNIVERSITIES RECOGNISED TO PROVIDE MEDICAL TRAINING

- 5.3.1 This section provides guidance for non-South African citizens who in terms of the Immigration Act have been issued a temporary residency visa to study or have been granted refugees status in terms of the Refugees Act and have completed a medical degree at a South African university recognised to provide medical training.

- 5.3.1.1 The review of an application for an endorsement letter for a work permit, as applicable, will be considered in terms of the current guidance issued by the Department of Health.
- 5.3.1.2 Applications for endorsement letters must indicate whether the intention is to complete internship or proceed to medical practice.
- 5.3.1.3 Endorsement letters for internship will be limited to the prescribed period for internship and may be extended for a period as determined by the HPCSA for that individual.
- 5.3.1.4 Endorsement letters for community service, where appropriate, will be for a period of five years.

5.3.2 Internship programme

- (a) The internship programme is not an automatic progression for Non-South Africans who have completed a medical degree at a South African university recognised to provide medical training and limitations apply.
- (b) Where applicable, upon successful completion of a medical degree and meeting the requirements as prescribed by Section 24 of the Health Professions Act, applicants must undertake an internship programme as provided for in Section 61 of the Act and associated regulations relating to the registration and training of interns in medicine.
- (c) The internship programme must be for the prescribed minimum period at an institution accredited by the HPCSA.

5.3.3 Limitations on internship posts

- (a) Posts for internship are not guaranteed, and will be offered to non-South African citizens within available resources once all South African citizens (3.1 and 4.1) and permanent residents who studied at South African Universities (3.2) have been accommodated.
- (b) In the event that there are HPCSA accredited posts for internship that are not funded and all South African citizens (3.1 and 4.1) and permanent residents who studied at South African Universities (3.2) have been accommodated, applicants will be permitted to provide self-funding for the prescribed period for the internship programme as a supernumerary. Funding for the salary for internship must be for the cost of the sponsor and formal confirmation of self-funding will be required prior to registration with HPCSA.
- (c) Endorsement letters for critical skills work permits for community service are not an automatic progression from internship, as in some instances the intention of providing endorsement letters for internship is on the basis of completing training requirements for registration in the applicant's country of origin and not for the purposes of immigration to South Africa.

5.3.4 Community service

- (a) Community service is only required for those interns who have been granted approval to work in South Africa.
- (b) On successful completion of the stipulated period for internship, applicants who had indicated their intention to register for medical practice, are required to complete community service for a period of 12 months.
- (c) The national Department of Health will assign foreign national applicants to approved facilities for community service, once all South African citizens (3.1 and 4.1) and permanent residents (3.2) have been accommodated. Availability of community service posts are not guaranteed.

- 5.3.5 Non-South African citizens will be permitted to work as independent practitioners in the public service or private sector provided:
- 5.3.5.1 they have a letter of recommendation from the national Department of Health's Director-General or designee, and
 - 5.3.5.2 have accumulated service of five years in the public service, and
 - 5.3.5.3 meet the requirements for, and are granted permanent residence in South Africa.

Provided that, where relevant, government-to-government bilateral agreements make provisions for immigration.

6. GRADUATES WHO STUDIED AT UNIVERSITIES ABROAD (QUALIFICATIONS NOT PRESCRIBED)

This section describes the registration pathway for students who have **not** graduated from South African universities accredited by the HPCSA.

6.1 APPLICANTS WHO ARE SOUTH AFRICAN CITIZENS AND GRADUATED OUTSIDE SOUTH AFRICA, AT FOREIGN UNIVERSITIES

- 6.1.1 South African citizens contemplating enrolment at a foreign university as a student with the intention of registering as a health professional in South Africa after July 2018:
- 6.1.1.1 must register as a student studying abroad with the HPCSA
 - 6.1.1.2 must ensure that the university selected for enrolment is recognised by the HPCSA
- Implications** - A list of universities recognised by the statutory council will be published and updated annually*
- 6.1.2 A student wishing to study at a foreign university that has not been recognised, must first furnish the HPCSA with information about the qualification in the prescribed format and await approval prior to registration at the selected foreign university.
- 6.1.3 Graduates of foreign universities that are not recognised or approved by the HPCSA, will not be considered as holding a qualification suitable for the purposes of registering as a health practitioner in South Africa. This requirement is necessary to ensure sound planning to facilitate the availability of available positions in the internship and community service programmes.
- 6.1.4 Transitional arrangements for South African citizens who registered or graduated with a medical degree at a university abroad that has not been recognised by the HPCSA prior to July 2018:
- 6.1.4.1 students who were enrolled at a university abroad that has not been recognised by the HPCSA with the intention of registering with the HPCSA prior to July 2018, will be granted a period of one year from July 2018 to register with the HPCSA as a student studying abroad
 - 6.1.4.2 South African citizens who graduated with a medical degree obtained at a university abroad that has not been recognised by the HPCSA prior to July 2018, will not be required to have registered with the HPCSA as a student studying abroad

- 6.1.5 Applicants must have completed their undergraduate medical training in accordance with Section 25(1) of the Health Professions Act and associated regulations.
- 6.1.6 A certificate of good standing (COS) must be issued by the relevant registering authority in the country of training where that country's health professional statutory or regulatory body makes provision for registrations as a student.
- 6.1.7 To meet the requirements prescribed by Section 25 of the Health Professions Act, students who completed their medical degree at foreign universities recognised by the HPCSA, and who registered as a student prior to studying abroad must:
 - 6.1.7.1 successfully meet the requirements as prescribed by the HPCSA to register as a student intern
 - 6.1.7.2 undertake a clinical bridging programme of duration not less than one year determined in consultation with the South African Committee of Medical Deans
- 6.1.8 Upon successful completion of both the assessment, as prescribed by the HPCSA, and the clinical bridging programme, applicants must undertake an internship programme as provided for in Section 61 of the Health Professions Act and regulations relating to the registration and training of interns in medicine.
- 6.1.9 The internship programme must be for a period as prescribed in regulations at institutions accredited by the HPCSA.
- 6.1.10 On successful completion of an internship as prescribed in regulations, applicants are required to complete community service for a period of 12 months. The national Department of Health will assign applicants to approved facilities for community service.
- 6.1.11 Upon successful completion of the prescribed period of internship and 12 months community service, applicants will be permitted to work as independent practitioners in the public or private sectors.

6.2 NON-SOUTH AFRICAN CITIZENS WITH WORK VISA OR REFUGEE'S STATUS WHO STUDIED AT UNIVERSITIES OUTSIDE SOUTH AFRICA THAT ARE RECOGNISED BY THE HPCSA AND ARE REGISTERED WITH THEIR STATUTORY COUNCIL IN THEIR COUNTRY OF STUDY OR ORIGIN

- 6.2.1 This section provides guidance for non-South African citizens who in terms of the Immigration Act, have been issued a temporary residency visa based on critical skills or have been granted refugees status in terms of the Refugees Act.
 - 6.2.1.1 The review of an application for an endorsement letter for a work permit, as applicable, will be considered in terms of the current guidance issued by the Department of Health.
 - 6.2.1.2 Applications for endorsement letters must indicate whether the intention is to complete internship or proceed to medical practice.
 - 6.2.1.3 Endorsement letters for internship will be limited to the prescribed period for internship and maybe extended for a period as determined by the HPCSA for that individual.
 - 6.2.1.4 Endorsement letters for community service, where appropriate, will be for a period of five years minus the period of internship.

- 6.2.2 Applicants must have completed their undergraduate medical training ***and*** internship (*in their respective foreign countries where medical training occurred*) in accordance with Section 25(1) of the Health Professions Act.
- 6.2.3 In addition to completion of their medical training and internship, applicants must provide proof of registration in the country of training as well as confirmation of completion of an internship programme recognised by the relevant health professional statutory or regulatory body in the country where they obtained their medical qualification.
- 6.2.4 Applicants must obtain and submit proof of a certificate of proficiency in English that is recognised by the HPCSA.
- 6.2.5 A certificate of good standing (COS) must be issued by the registering authority in the country of training and internship recognised by the HPCSA.
- 6.2.6 Applicants will then be permitted to register with the HPCSA and work within the public sector.
- 6.2.7 Where the COS is recognised by the HPCSA, the medically qualified applicant will be permitted to register with the HPCSA for independent practice, provided they have:
 - 6.2.7.1 a letter of recommendation from the national Department of Health's Director-General or designee, and
 - 6.2.7.2 have accumulated service of five years in the public service, and
 - 6.2.7.3 meet the requirements for, and are granted permanent residence in South Africa.

Provided that, where relevant, government-to-government bilateral agreements make provisions for immigration.

6.3 NON-SOUTH AFRICAN CITIZENS WITH WORK VISA OR REFUGEE'S STATUS WHO STUDIED AT UNIVERSITIES OUTSIDE SOUTH AFRICA THAT ARE NOT RECOGNISED BY THE HPCSA AND ARE REGISTERED WITH THEIR STATUTORY COUNCIL IN THEIR COUNTRY OF STUDY OR ORIGIN

- 6.3.1 This section provides guidance for non-South African citizens who in terms of the Immigration Act, have been issued a temporary residency visa based on critical skills or have been granted refugees status in terms of the Refugees Act status who studied at universities outside South Africa that are not recognised by the HPCSA and are registered with their statutory council in their country of study or origin.
 - 6.3.1.1 The review of an application for an endorsement letter for a work permit, as applicable, will be considered in terms of the current guidance issued by the Department of Health.
 - 6.3.1.2 Applications for endorsement letters must indicate whether the intention is to complete internship or proceed to medical practice.
 - 6.3.1.3 Endorsement letters for internship will be limited to the prescribed period for internship and maybe extended for a period as determined by the HPCSA for that individual.
 - 6.3.1.4 Endorsement letters for community service were appropriate will be for a period of five years minus the period of internship.

- 6.3.2 Applicants must have completed their undergraduate medical training ***and*** internship (*in their respective foreign countries where medical training occurred*) in accordance with Section 25(1) of the Health Professions Act.
- 6.3.3 In addition to completion of their medical training and internship, applicants must provide proof of registration in the country of training as well as confirmation of completion of an internship programme recognised by the relevant health professional statutory or regulatory body in the country where they obtained their medical qualification.
- 6.3.4 Applicants must obtain and submit proof of a certificate of proficiency in English that is recognised by the HPCSA.
- 6.3.5 A certificate of good standing (COS) must be issued by the registering authority in the country of training and internship that has not been recognised by the HPCSA.
- 6.3.5.1 In the event that the COS is not recognised by the HPCSA, the applicant will be subjected to a board exam, provided they meet set criteria and comply with prescribed requirements as set out in Section 25(3) of the Health Professions Act and its regulations.
- 6.3.5.2 Where the HPCSA determines that the holder of a COS that is not recognised by the HPCSA requires an internship programme, such programme must be for the prescribed period at a facility accredited by the HPCSA.
- 6.3.6 Posts for those required to undertake internship are not guaranteed, and will be offered to non-South African citizens and refugees within available resources once all South African citizens (3.1 and 4.1) and permanent residents (3.2) and non-South African citizens who graduated from South African universities (3.3) have been accommodated.
- 6.3.6.1 In the event that there are HPCSA accredited posts for internship that are not funded and all South African citizens (3.1 and 4.1) and permanent residents (3.2) have been accommodated, applicants will be permitted to provide self-funding for an internship for a period as prescribed in regulations programme as a supernumerary.
- 6.3.6.2 Upon successful completion of both an internship for a period as prescribed in regulations programme and one-year community service, non-South African applicants will be considered for independent practice, subject to:
- 6.3.6.2.1 a letter of recommendation from the national Department of Health's Director-General or designee
- 6.3.6.2.2 five years public service
- 6.3.6.2.3 permanent residence status
- Provided that, where relevant, government-to-government bilateral agreements make provisions for immigration