

HONG KONG ACADEMY OF MEDICINE

Guidance Notes for Certification for Specialist Registration (CSR) / Certification for Specialist Qualification (CSQ)

(for non-locally trained doctors or dentists
without a Fellowship awarded by the Academy)

A. Preamble

1. In these Guidance Notes, the term “non-locally trained” refers to doctors or dentists who have received undergraduate medical or dental studies outside Hong Kong.
2. The Hong Kong Academy of Medicine (the Academy) is a statutory body governed by the Hong Kong Academy of Medicine Ordinance (Cap. 419), currently with 15 constituent colleges of different specialties (the Academy Colleges). The Academy has the statutory power to provide, assess and monitor all medical and dental specialist training and to oversee the provision of postgraduate medical and dental education.
3. The names of registered medical practitioners or registered dentists (including those with full registration, limited registration and special registration etc.) are included in either or both of the *General Register* and the *Specialist Register* maintained by the Registrar of Medical Practitioners (i.e. the Director of Health) (the Registrar). The Medical Council of Hong Kong (the MCHK) and the Dental Council of Hong Kong (the DCHK) play a key role in deciding who may or may not be included in the said Registers. The list of registered medical practitioners or registered dentists can be found on the website of the MCHK or the DCHK.
4. Under the Medical Registration Ordinance (Cap. 161) (MRO), registered medical practitioners are entitled to be known as “registered medical practitioners of the Medical Council of Hong Kong”¹, and they may apply for the inclusion of their names in the Specialist Register according to the MRO.² Under the Dentists Registration Ordinance (Cap. 156) (DRO), registered dentists may apply for the inclusion of their names in the Specialist Register according to the DRO.² For registered medical practitioners or registered dentists who have received specialist training in Hong Kong and wish to have their names included in their respective Specialist Register, they need to show to the Registrar that they have been awarded a Fellowship of the Academy and received a certificate by the Academy that they have completed the postgraduate medical or dental training and satisfied the continuing medical education requirements / continuing education requirements determined by the Academy for the relevant specialty.³

¹ Section 13A of MRO.

² Section 20K(2) of MRO, Section 12B(2) and Section 12B(3) of DRO.

³ Section 20K(2)(a) of MRO and Section 12B (3)(a)(i) of DRO.

5. On the other hand, for registered medical practitioners or registered dentists who have received specialist training outside Hong Kong and wish to be included in the Specialist Register, the Registrar has to be satisfied that they have been certified by the Academy to have achieved a professional standard comparable [or *equivalent* in the case of an application under DRO] to that recognised by the Academy for the award of its Fellowship and have completed the postgraduate medical or dental training and satisfied the continuing medical education requirements comparable to those recommended by the Academy [or continuing education requirements determined by the Academy in the case of an application under DRO] for the relevant specialty.⁴ These applicants, being registered medical practitioners or registered dentists, may apply for **Certification for Specialist Registration (CSR)** from the Academy. In other words, **only registered medical practitioners or registered dentists may apply for CSR.**
6. After the Medical Registration (Amendment) Ordinance 2021 became effective on 29 October 2021, certain non-locally trained doctors wishing to practise in Hong Kong may apply for *special registration* as a stepping stone to ultimately obtain full registration in Hong Kong if they meet certain requirements under MRO. If these applicants for special registration: -
- (a) are **not** Hong Kong permanent residents⁵ and are not registered medical practitioners; **or**
 - (b) (regardless of whether they are Hong Kong permanent residents or not) have been engaged in full-time employment as medical practitioners with limited registration in one or more than one specified institution for a total of at least 5 years,⁶

they have to be certified by the Academy to have (i) completed the training, and obtained the qualification, comparable to that required of Fellows in a specialty by the Academy and (ii) satisfied the continuing medical education requirements for the specialty.⁷

After the Dentists Registration (Amendment) Ordinance 2024 being taken effect from 1 January 2025, certain non-locally trained dentists wishing to practise in Hong Kong may apply for limited registration or special registration as a stepping stone to ultimately obtain full registration in Hong Kong if they meet certain requirements under DRO.

⁴ Section 20K(2)(b) of MRO and Section 12B (3)(a)(ii) of DRO.

⁵ Section 14C(10)(a)(iii) of MRO.

⁶ Section 14C(10)(c) of MRO.

⁷ Sections 14C(10)(a)(iii)(A) and 14C(10)(c)(ii) of MRO.

If these applicants are for special registration, they have to be:

- (c) awarded a Fellowship of the Academy of Medicine in the specialty of dental surgery; or
- (d) certified by the Academy of Medicine to have attained a professional standard equivalent to that recognized by the Academy for the award of a Fellowship of the Academy in the specialty of dental surgery⁸.

7. For applicants for special registration who are not Hong Kong permanent residents and are not registered medical practitioners (i.e. applicants specified in paragraph 6(a) above only), they are **not** eligible to apply for CSR because they are not registered medical practitioners. Nevertheless, in response to the introduction of this new pathway to full registration, the Academy has also introduced the **Certification for Specialist Qualification (CSQ)** to cater for the need of these applicants. For applicants specified in paragraph 6(b) above, the certificate they need from the Academy should be CSR and not CSQ.

The CSQ is also applicable to applicants for special registration who are not registered dentists in Hong Kong, as specified in paragraph 6(c) or 6(d) above.

8. In summary, both CSR and CSQ aim to assess and facilitate suitably qualified doctors or dentists (whether registered medical practitioners or registered dentists or not) who have received specialist training outside Hong Kong with professional standard comparable [or equivalent in the case of an application under DRO] to specialist qualifications recognised by the Academy to obtain applicable registration status and/or practise in Hong Kong. The Academy's certification will not take into consideration matters of professional conduct (including whether the applicant has been found guilty of (i) an offence punishable by imprisonment, or (ii) misconduct in a professional respect by MCHK or DCHK or other disciplinary bodies outside Hong Kong).

B. General

9. Doctors or dentists who have received specialist training outside Hong Kong (i.e. non- Academy Fellows) should refer to the following eligibilities for CSR or CSQ, and apply for **either (and not both) of them** for the applicable certification: -

(a) *Certification for Specialist Registration (CSR)*

Applicable to registered medical practitioners or registered dentists whose names are already included in the General Register (including full registration, special registration and limited registration etc.) who apply for (i) their names to be included in the **Specialist Register** or (ii) **special registration** where they are registered medical practitioners by way of limited registration.

⁸ Section 9K(2)(c) of DRO

(b) Certification for Specialist Qualification (CSQ)

Applicable to medical practitioners or dentists whose names are not already included in the General Register (i.e. who are not registered medical practitioners or registered dentists) but would like to apply for **special registration**.

10. Since both CSR and CSQ refer to the certification at the “specialist” level, the same vetting standards would be applied for both CSR and CSQ. **In general, the Academy adopts a holistic approach with different relevant aspects taking into account, and clinical competency is the basis. Fair, objective and transparent mechanisms are in place, with the following broad principles adopted in vetting: -**

- (a) **In assessing a CSR/CSQ application, the postgraduate training and examinations, which the applicant has undergone, should first be assessed by reference to the requirements of at least 6 years of supervised post-registration training and of passing intermediate and exit examination as laid down in Bylaw 2.4 of the Academy.**
- (b) **All other relevant aspects, which show the professional standard and postgraduate training the applicant has achieved, should also be assessed and, in this regard, assistance may be obtained from the Academy Colleges.**
- (c) **Through (a) and (b), an overall assessment is reached as to whether or not the applicant has achieved a professional standard comparable [or equivalent in the case of an application under DRO] to that recognized by the Academy for the award of its Fellowship.**
- (d) **For those non-comparable applications [or non-equivalent applications in the case of those under DRO], they would be classified in the following two categories: -**
 - (i) **“Not comparable, with major deficiencies identified” (or “Not equivalent, with major deficiencies identified” in the case of an application under DRO), abbreviated as “NC (Major)”/“NE(Major)” in the case of an application under DRO, meaning that the applicant has major deficiencies or gaps identified in his/her training or qualifications as compared to the standard required for an Academy Fellowship in the relevant specialty, with substantial training/experience required and such could not be readily addressed by supplemental training/assessment.**
 - (ii) **“Not comparable, with minor deficiencies identified” (or “Not equivalent, with minor deficiencies identified” in the case of an application under DRO), abbreviated as “NC (Minor)”/“NE(Minor)” in the case of an application under DRO, meaning that the applicant has minor deficiencies or gaps identified in his/her training or**

qualifications as compared to the standard required for an Academy Fellowship in the relevant specialty, which could possibly be made up by supplemental training / assessment.

11. While being on the relevant specialist register in the applicant's country of training or practice may be regarded as an indication of comparability in professional standard, the applicant will be assessed on all aspects of his/her postgraduate training and experience. Potential differences in postgraduate training arrangements in other places would be taken into consideration. In this regard, the applicant will be required to submit information including, but not limited to, academic, clinical, operative and administrative aspects of the applicant's experience and training. A logbook of training and/or surgical procedures, or equivalent document, certified by the respective training institutions should be provided for inspection, where appropriate. The applicant may be invited to attend an interview to facilitate the assessment, when necessary.
12. An applicant shall have satisfied the Continuing Medical Education / Continuous Professional Development (CME/CPD) requirements comparable to those determined by the Academy for the relevant specialty. In this regard, the applicant will be required to submit evidence of his/her CME/CPD activities.
13. CSR/CSQ applications must be submitted directly to the Academy. The CSR/CSQ vetting may be assisted by the relevant Academy College. Academy Colleges will normally finish the vetting and make their recommendation to the Academy's Education Committee (EC) no later than 3 months from the date of application, provided that the applicant has submitted all necessary materials required for the vetting.

C. Information required for application

14. An applicant is required to provide the necessary information to enable the Academy to assess his/her application.

I. Postgraduate Training

15. The Academy shall require proof of the applicant's training. The usual format shall be a letter or a certificate from the institution or training unit, confirming the starting and ending date of employment, and the institution and qualification for which the training was recognised. The certificate should also state clearly whether the employment was on a full time basis, or how the period of training was calculated.
16. Certification shall be required for each separate period of training, with the following information to be provided as far as possible: -
 - (a) Description of the training / employer institutions, with details of available relevant training facilities / supportive services, etc. of the institutions.
 - (b) Description of the training unit, with details of workload, types of cases, whether the unit is recognised for postgraduate training, the institution that recognises and supervises the training unit, qualification of the trainers, etc.

II. Qualifications

17. The Academy shall require proof of the applicant's qualifications. The Academy staff cannot certify proof for applicants.
18. Proof as stipulated in paragraph 17 above should be certified by a barrister, a solicitor, a notary public, a Fellow of the Academy, or a commissioner for oaths (if the applicant is resident of Hong Kong).
19. Evidence for the following should be produced, whenever possible: -
 - (a) The pre-requisite requirements for examination;
 - (b) The nature of the examination, and how the questions are set and validated;
 - (c) The institution that supervises the examination, and how this was done;
 - (d) The qualification and selection of examiners;
 - (e) The way the examinations are marked, and the pass rate for the examinations.
20. An appropriate certificate from the institutions which supervise the examinations, detailing these and any other required information should be produced. Separate certification is required for each qualification.

III. Continuing Medical Education / Continuous Professional Development

21. The applicant shall submit evidence of his/her: -
 - (a) being CME/CPD compliant in the country/countries of their current practice;
or
 - (b) in the case that CME/CPD is not mandatory in the country/countries of their practice, participation in CME/CPD activities comparable to the requirements of the relevant specialty of the Academy for a period of up to 3 years prior to the CSR/CSQ application.

D. Certification Procedures

22. The role of the Academy is to evaluate evidence that is available to it. The Academy Secretariat may give comments on the information provided by the applicant. However, the Academy is not in the position to pursue or secure the required evidence for or on behalf of the applicant.

23. The applicant shall present the necessary information to the Academy Secretariat, accompanied by a signed statement that the applicant undertakes to join the appropriate CME/CPD accredited programme (if the application is successful, and if the applicant's name is included in the Specialist Register), and pay the appropriate fees charged by the Academy and the Academy College.
24. The Academy Secretariat will assist in compiling the relevant available evidence, check non-controversial items against a checklist, and prepare a summary. The evidence and summary will then be presented to the appropriate Academy College that assists in the vetting.
25. The Academy College may be asked to assess whether the relevant postgraduate training, qualifications and CME/CPD of the applicant are comparable to that required of an Academy Fellow, and whether the applicant is eligible for admission to the CME/CPD programme of the Academy College.
26. If additional information is required, the applicant shall be so informed, and reasons will be given where appropriate. Evaluation will then proceed upon submission of the required information by the applicant.
27. The information and the recommendation of the Academy College shall be presented to the EC.
28. EC will submit successful CSR/CSQ applications to the Academy's Council for endorsement and final decision. A certification letter will then be issued upon the payment of the fee required. The certification is valid for 3 years.
29. EC will inform the applicant if his/her CSR/CSQ application is unsuccessful, and reasons will be given where appropriate. The unsuccessful applicant can appeal to the Academy's Appeal Committee within 30 days from the date of the notification letter.
30. For unsuccessful applications that are classified as "NC (Major)" / "NE(Major)" in the case of an application under DRO, as described in paragraph 10(d) above, e.g., the medical degree or postgraduate medical qualification could not be verified or records of the training experiences not available etc., applicants are expected to undergo / receive substantial training or experiences with necessary documentation before applying again for CSR/CSQ.
31. For unsuccessful applications that are classified as "NC (Minor)" / "NE(Minor)" in the case of an application under DRO, instead of being comparable with the required standard of specialist qualification, an applicant might be assessed to be only comparable with the pre-intermediate / intermediate qualification of respective specialty recognised by the relevant Academy College. Such applicant would be advised on the deficiencies of basic or higher training / experiences as required for the level of specialist. The applicant may approach the relevant Academy College to explore how the comparable standards at the specialist level could be attained by means of undergoing additional or supplemental basic and/ or higher training / assessment to make up the deficiencies where applicable.

32. The Academy and its relevant Academy Colleges are not obliged to provide training to unsuccessful applicants.
33. As the vetting standards for CSQ and CSR are the same, a successful applicant of CSQ is expected to be able to attain the CSR when the applicant aims to apply for specialist registration. A separate CSR application is still required, but no additional fee will be incurred for processing CSR applications from those who have already obtained CSQ.

E. Fees

34. The Academy shall charge a non-refundable processing/vetting fee before it undertakes to evaluate any CSR/CSQ application. This charge shall be determined by Council and may be changed without notice. In any case, the amount of the fee shall not be less than the fees required for Fellowship admission of the Academy.
35. Registered specialists shall be charged an annual CME/CPD supervision fee, the amount of which shall be determined by the Council and may be changed without notice, but it shall not be less than the yearly subscription fee of an Academy Fellow. The appropriate Academy College will levy further fees for the administration and monitoring of the CME/CPD records.
36. Registered specialists must pay the required fees to the Academy and the Academy College at the beginning of each year before the Academy would begin supervision for that year.
37. In summary, the following fees will be charged: -
 - (a) a non-refundable processing/vetting fee upon submission of a CSR/CSQ application;
 - (b) annual CME/CPD supervision fee (when the applicant's name is included in the Specialist Register). The Academy College will also charge separate CME/CPD joining and annual administrative fees, which are to be determined by the Academy College from time to time.

[Note: (b) is applicable to successful applicants only]

Approved by EC on 4 February 2025
Endorsed by Council on 20 February 2025