



The Royal Australasian  
College of Physicians

# Recognition of Prior Learning Policy Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

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This should be read in conjunction with the College's Recognition of Prior Learning Policy.

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### **1. What are the key changes introduced by the policy?**

The College's RPL policy is a revision of an earlier version which was approved May 2010. The new policy introduces nine principles of RPL: validity, authenticity, currency, reliability, comparability, continuity, timeliness, evidence-based and maximum time.

It also outlines four categories of learning which may be eligible for RPL: RACP training programs; non-RACP specialty training programs; relevant post-graduate coursework and research; experience undertaken outside a formal specialty training program.

Other key changes include that:

- i. Divisional Basic Trainees must apply prospectively for their first year of RACP training.
- ii. Experience within Australia or New Zealand prior to successful completion of the requirements for general registration (including the AMC certificate for Australian IMGs) will not be eligible for RPL.
- iii. This policy supersedes elements of the *Post-Fellowship Training Requirements (Divisions) Policy* which provided for an 'automatic' RPL arrangement; Fellows who had completed one Divisional training program could reduce their training time if they wished to return to train in an additional Divisional specialty.  
Under the Post-Fellowship Policy, only the core training years were required of post-FRACP trainees. This arrangement was considered to be no longer appropriate due to the changing nature of Divisional Advanced Training. Therefore, the revised RPL Policy allows for post-Fellowship trainees (in the Divisions, Faculties and Chapters) to apply for both core and non-core training requirements, aligning all RPL under one set of guiding principles and process.  
Additional information formerly contained within the Post-Fellowship policy can now be found within the PREP Program Requirement Handbooks.
- iv. This policy supersedes the Divisional Advanced Training and AFRM practice of retrospective acceptance (or retrospective certification/accreditation), which was also referred to as cross-accreditation in New Zealand.  
This practice allowed for training which had been satisfactorily completed under the supervision of one Advanced Training Committee to be recognised by a second (or third) Advanced Training Committee, if the trainee wished to change (or add another) specialty training program.  
All trainees who wish to have prior training or experience recognised must formally apply for recognition of prior learning under the RPL Policy.<sup>1</sup>
- v. Up to 24 months of RPL may be granted for experience undertaken as part of a specialty training program.
- vi. All applications must be received within 3 months of commencing training program.

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<sup>1</sup> Any training prospectively approved as part of a dual training program will not need to be claimed through the RPL process.

Under the RPL policy v.1, some training programs required trainees to have completed 12 months of prospectively certified training time, and / or other requirements prior to submitting an application for RPL. These stipulations no longer apply under the new policy. All trainees are encouraged to consider their prior experience and plan their training program in advance, taking into account all future training requirements, as soon as possible upon entry to the training program.

During the 12 month communication period prior to implementation of the RPL Policy v2, all trainees were/are advised to contact their College Officer to discuss the timing of their RPL application.

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## **2. Who can apply for RPL?**

Any current trainee, including Fellows in training, of RACP training programs (Division, Faculty and Chapter) in Australia and New Zealand can apply for RPL. This policy also applies to international medical graduates (IMGs) who have gained entry to a College training program, including IMGs with specialist qualifications who have been assessed by the RACP as Not Comparable. This policy does not apply to overseas trained specialists who may apply to the RACP through the specialist recognition pathway.

The College can provide only generic advice regarding an RPL application to trainees who have not yet joined a training program. No formal review of an RPL application is possible unless you have registered with the College and entered a training program. We encourage you to refer to the relevant training program curriculum and PREP Program Requirement Handbook to assess the equivalency of your skills, knowledge and experience.

*I'm a second year advanced trainee in General Medicine, and I want to start dual training next year in Neurology.*

Yes, you can apply for RPL to be counted toward your Neurology program, after entry to the Neurology training program, as this is counted as a separate program to your General Medicine training.

## **3. Can I request RPL for the same training experience twice?**

*I had RPL granted for training in Geriatric Medicine I completed overseas toward my RACP Basic Training. I'm now entering the Geriatric Medicine Advanced Training program.*

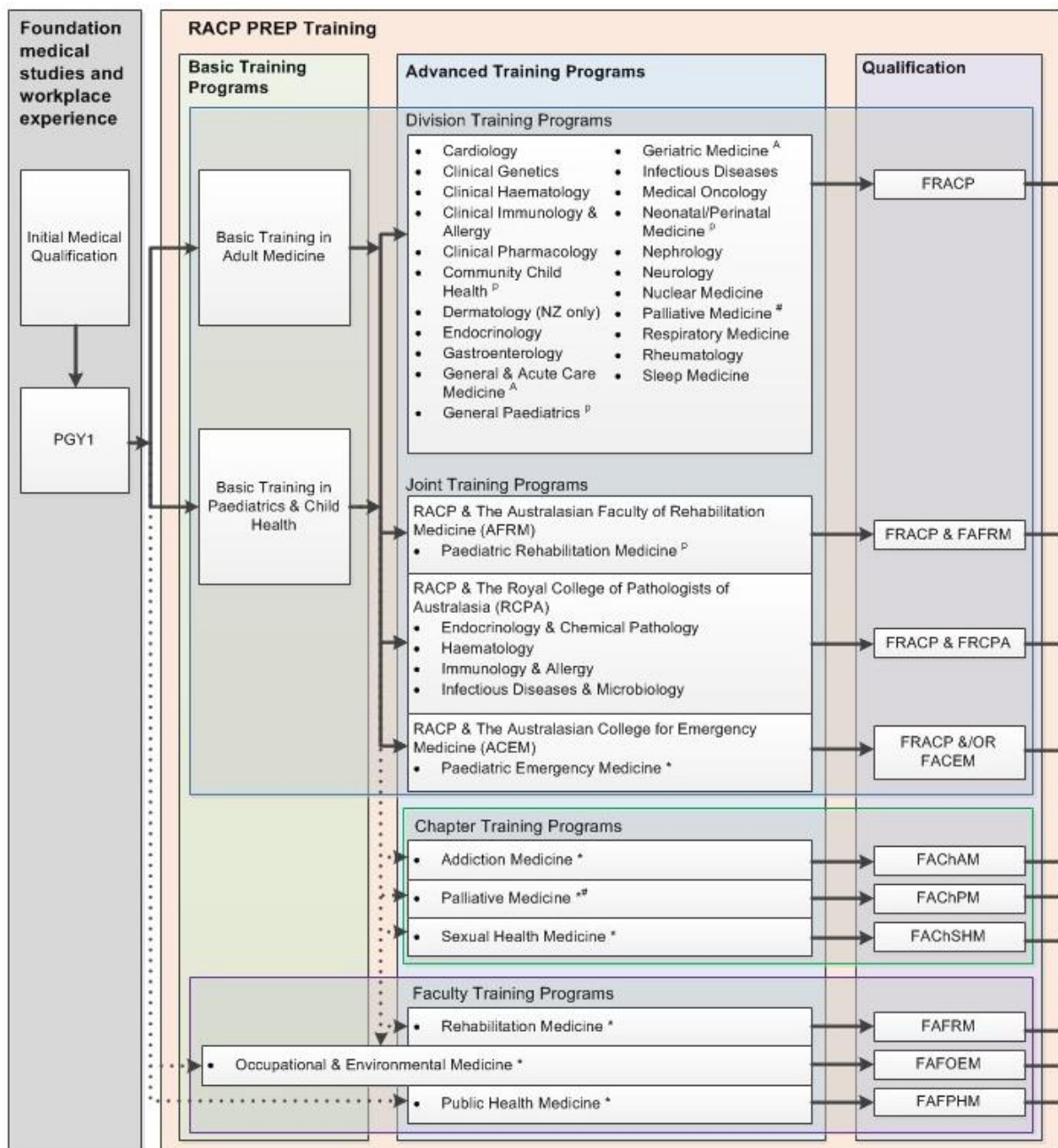
According to the College's *Progression through Training Policy*, a period of training cannot count for more than 1.0 FTE in a single training program (item 3.2). Therefore, experience which has been granted as RPL toward one training program is not eligible to be granted as RPL toward another training program if this would be 'double counting'. That is to say, the same RPL application cannot be submitted to multiple RACP training programs along the continuum of training.

For example, using the below diagram of RACP training pathways, the same experience would not be eligible to be granted toward prevocational training and Basic Training. Nor would the same experience be appropriate for Basic Training and Advanced Training.

However, one experience may be eligible to be granted toward both Advanced Training in Rheumatology and General and Acute Care Medicine in dual training programs\*, or toward both Rehabilitation Medicine and Geriatric Medicine in conjoint training programs\*\*. In this case, separate applications would need to be submitted to each relevant supervising committee.

\*dual training is when a trainee completes more than one Divisional advanced training program at the same time in separate specialties, with each program leading to the award of FRACP.

\*\*conjoint training is when a trainee undertakes two separate training programs independently, with each program leading to award of a different College Fellowship.



**4. Is training undertaken before completion of the Divisional Clinical Examination eligible for RPL toward Advanced Training?**

No, according to the *Progression through Training Policy*, Basic Trainees who have completed the equivalent of 36 months of certified full-time Basic Training and who are yet to pass both the Written and Clinical Examinations are not eligible to apply for entry into an Advanced Training program (Division, Faculty or Chapter). You remain a Basic Trainee until you have successfully completed all the requirements of the Basic Training program, including time requirements and all formative and summative assessments. As such, all training undertaken prior to successful completion of the clinical exam is not equivalent to advanced training and does not meet the RPL principle of comparability.

**5. How many applications for RPL can I submit?**

There is no limit to the number of application you may submit, as long as you observe the application due dates.

You may submit applications to multiple training programs (e.g. Basic Training and Advanced Training), although 'double counting' will not be permitted.

You may submit multiple applications to the same training program if, for example, you wish to apply for exemption from training time and from a project requirement.

**6. Why can't I apply for RPL for clinical experience I acquired during an interruption of training?**

Trainees are required to apply for prospective approval of training, and to plan their learning in advance. Planning learning in advance encourages learners to self-reflect and ensures training is undertaken within the supportive educational framework provided by College education programs including appropriate curricula, teaching and learning opportunities, planning and recording learning and progress, formative workplace based assessment and opportunities for feedback and support.

If you are currently on a period of interruption and have an opportunity to commence clinical training or research, you should contact the College immediately to enquire about how to gain prospective approval.

It may be necessary to interrupt training to undertake non-clinical experience. In some circumstances, this experience may be eligible to apply for RPL toward a different/later training program. It must meet the RPL principles, and the assessor must be satisfied the trainee could not reasonably have applied prospectively.

**7. Is prevocational training eligible for RPL?**

*Last year I completed the NSW Health Education and Training Institute (HETI) training program. I am now entering Basic Training and want the second year of the HETI program to be counted.*

Previous practice was that trainees who completed their second year of the HETI program could claim RPL to be recognised as part of their Basic Training program, as of 1 January 2015 you cannot apply for RPL for that year and are encouraged to prospectively apply for BPT1.

**8. I am an IMG who has just met the requirements for general registration / registration in a general scope of practice.**

*Can I request RPL for time spent working locally while waiting for my registration?*

Time spent working in Australia while waiting to sit the AMC Part II Examination is not eligible to request RPL be granted.

You are not able to request RPL for time working within New Zealand prior to gaining registration in a general scope of practice.

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**9. What about changing Advanced Training programs?**

*I have completed two years of Advanced Training in Cardiology, and this year I would like to start training in General Medicine as well. Can I apply to have RPL for any of my Cardiology training?*

Yes, any advanced trainee who wishes to change advanced training programs, or enter dual training, may apply to their Advanced Training Committee within the first 3 months of the new training program to have prior experience recognised through RPL. This process was formerly referred to as retrospective acceptance, retrospective certification or cross-accreditation.

**10. As a post-Fellowship trainee, what RPL can I request?**

*I completed the General Medicine training program some years ago and would now like to do more training in Geriatric Medicine. Will any of my previous training count towards my post-Fellowship training? What about my work in Geriatric Medicine as a consultant?*

Post-Fellowship training programs have the same assessment and time requirements as pre-Fellowship training programs. As such, you may wish to apply for RPL to be exempted from non-core training requirements of your post-Fellowship program – some Advanced Training committees will accept pre-Fellowship training as meeting their non-core requirements, provided the experience meets currency requirements.

If you feel you have further experience within the past 5 years directly relevant to the specialty in which you will complete post-Fellowship training, you may also apply for recognition toward core training requirements.

**11. What is an ‘appropriate training site’?**

The assessor will determine if the training site is appropriate for the training experience – in many cases the site must have a certain level or type of College accreditation, while other experiences (such as non-core training) may be undertaken at an unaccredited site in some circumstances. Refer to the guidelines included in the relevant training program handbook or contact your College Officer if you have concerns regarding this requirement.

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**12. I forgot to submit my application for prospective approval of training before the deadline.**

*Can I apply for RPL for my training so far this year instead?*

If you have commenced training in a new program this year and missed the deadline for prospective approval, you may apply for RPL. In order to be granted RPL, the assessor must be satisfied that you could not reasonably have applied prospectively. RPL is only available to trainees within the first 3 months of their training program.

**13. I undertook some training under a College Advanced Training Committee last year that hasn't yet been certified.**

*I've now changed training programs, so can I request RPL for last year's training?*

You can submit your application (before the due date), but the application will not be assessed until a certification decision relating to the training period in question has been made.

**14. I've applied to enter my training program, but I haven't started my first training rotation / run. Should I apply for RPL now?**

Yes, you should apply for RPL now, even if you haven't commenced your training term. In some Chapter or Faculty training programs there may be a separate application date to register or enter the program (also known as an 'intake' date) before commencement of training. The 3 months to submit your application begins from when you have first contact with the College and formally register your intent to train. In some cases you may have to submit your application for RPL before you begin training.

**15. How will the learning portfolio link to the RACP curricula?**

The learning statements of your portfolio will be directly linked to the themes of the College curriculum for your training program. You will be asked to reflect upon your experience and map what you have learned to the knowledge, skills and competence as outlined in the themes.

**16. Must I have completed formative assessments during the experience?**

No, you need not have completed formative assessments, although providing evidence of equivalent educational activities would strengthen your application.

If you have not completed equivalent formative assessments during the experience outlined in your application, the Assessor may require that you complete additional assessments prior to completion of your training program.

**17. How should letters of support (reference letters) be presented?**

Letters of support must:

- be written on hospital letterhead
- include detail on the type of position
- state that your work / training was satisfactory

- include dates and subspecialty of the position
- include details of any relevant accreditation held by the hospital

**18. Can certificates of qualifications obtained in another country be used for RPL?**

Yes, for training completed overseas it is appropriate to use the certificates gained as supporting evidence of your competence. Training completed under other institutions may use different descriptions of training activities, or competency outcomes. It is important that you compare your experience with the RACP curricula and handbooks and give adequate explanation of where comparable experience can be demonstrated.

Overseas documents, university transcripts, certificates of completion etc. authenticated copies (certified by a Justice of the Peace in Australia or New Zealand). Any documents not in English should be translated and authenticated as true and accurate by a Justice of the Peace in Australia and New Zealand.

Information on how to locate a Justice of the Peace can be found here:

<http://australia.gov.au/topics/law-and-justice/justices-of-the-peace> (Australia) or here: [www.jpfed.org.nz/](http://www.jpfed.org.nz/) (New Zealand).

**19. Can conference registration and session speaker attendance documentation be evidence to support my (AFOEM) Ramazzini oral presentation for RPL?**

Yes, if you presented at an Annual Scientific Meeting or at an International conference. You will be required to show

- supporting evidence of certificates gained
- your registration
- your name on the program for the session you presented.

**20. Who will assess my application?**

Your application will be assessed by a Fellow or group of Fellows representative or delegate of the committee that oversees your training program.

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**21. How and when will I be notified of the outcome of my application?**

The Committee associated with your training program will be in touch with the outcome of your application.

**22. What are some examples of training requirements I might be granted exemption for through RPL?**

There are a range of training requirements that you can request exemption for through the RPL process. Some examples are discussed below.

*Training time requirements:*

You may request recognition of time spent in training elsewhere prior to entry to the program. The maximum time which may be granted to an applicant is 12 months.

RPL will not be granted if it will exceed two-thirds of the total amount of training time for the training program. This is to ensure that the College maintains oversight of the quality of its training programs, and that overseas applicants have sufficient exposure to become familiar with the local healthcare system.

The policy states that in exceptional circumstances, and at the discretion of the assessor, up to 24 months of training time may be granted as RPL. Some examples of these exceptional circumstances include, but are not limited to:

- An applicant who has completed all or part of a comparable structured training program through an accredited medical College overseas (e.g. training accredited by the Royal College of Physicians in London)
- An applicant who has completed all or part of a comparable structured training program through an accredited medical College in Australia or New Zealand (e.g. training accredited by the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists)
- A Post-Fellowship trainee who has completed relevant training previously within the RACP, and/or has relevant experience at a consultant level

For all above examples, a decision about the relevance and comparability of the experience to the training program in question will be fundamental and entirely at the discretion of the assessor.

*Project or module requirements:*

Activities undertaken outside of the College may be recognised as comparable to project, module or formal study requirements.

*AFRM External Training Module 3:*

*I am in my third year of the Rehabilitation Medicine PREP Advanced Training Program. Can I apply for exemption from the AFRM External Training Module 3, based on the two published scientific papers that I wrote just before I joined the Training Program?*

Yes, this requirement is eligible to request RPL be granted, under Category 3: Relevant post-graduate coursework and research.

All trainees joining the training program after 1 January 2015 must consider their prior experience against the training program requirements upon entry to the program, and submit any request for RPL within 3 months of entry to the program.

If you joined the Rehabilitation Medicine PREP Advanced Training Program prior to 1 January 2015, you are advised to contact your College Officer to discuss the timing of your RPL application for exemption from this module.

*The AFOEM Ramazzini:*

You can apply for RPL if you have completed an oral presentation, which will be subject to the Assessment sub-committee's review of your application and supporting documentation. For further information on the Ramazzini presentation procedures please refer to the website [www.racp.edu.au/page/afpem-ramazzini](http://www.racp.edu.au/page/afpem-ramazzini).

You must first apply to join the AFOEM Training program by the annual intake date (refer to the website [www.racp.edu.au/page/afpem-apply-for-training](http://www.racp.edu.au/page/afpem-apply-for-training) ) then submit your application for RPL prior to the RPL due date. It is in your best interest to submit the form as soon as possible, prior to commencement of your training. Your application should be made under the category 'Relevant post-graduate coursework and research'.

*College Summative Examination Assessments:*

The following College Summative Examination Assessment requirements are mandatory and under no circumstances will a trainee be granted exemption through RPL:

- Divisional Written and Clinical Exams,
- AFPHM Oral Exam,
- AFOEM Written and Practical Exams
- AFRM Fellowship Written and Clinical Exams
- AChSHM Exit Assessment

Exceptions may apply to AFRM Module 1 Written and Module 2 Clinical Assessments, and to the AFOEM Stage A Written Examination.

*AFRM Module 1 and 2 Assessments:*

A trainee who has completed the RACP Divisional Summative Examination Assessments may apply for RPL under Category 1. RACP training programs. Your application should be submitted as soon as possible, but must be received within the prescribed application period as outlined in policy item 2.7.

*Stage A of the AFOEM training program:*

You must first apply to join the AFOEM Training program by the annual intake date (refer to the website [www.racp.edu.au/page/afoem-apply-for-training](http://www.racp.edu.au/page/afoem-apply-for-training)) then submit your application for RPL prior to the RPL due date.

To progress to Stage B, you will be required to provide adequate evidence of comparable abilities or achievements. The application will be considered and assessed using the criteria below:

- must have completed an Advanced Life Support course and provided a certificate of completion to the Faculty office,

AND

- must have completed a Divisional Basic Training Program and passed the RACP written and clinical examinations;

OR

- must have completed Modules 1 and 2 of the training course of the Australasian Faculty of Rehabilitation Medicine;

OR

- must hold Fellowship of the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners;

OR

- must hold Fellowship of the Royal New Zealand College of General Practitioners.

#### *Stage C of AFOEM training:*

AFOEM training program applicants or trainees cannot progress directly to Stage C through recognition of prior learning. Please refer to [www.racp.edu.au/page/afoem-apply-for-training](http://www.racp.edu.au/page/afoem-apply-for-training) for eligibility requirements for entry at Stage A and Stage B.

#### *AFPHM compulsory entry requirements:*

You are required to meet the following entry requirements prior to acceptance to the PHM training program:

1. Have general medical registration with the Medical Board of Australia or the Medical Council of New Zealand (MCNZ) and a practicing certificate.
2. Have a minimum of three years post graduate medical experience
3. Have completed, or be enrolled in, a MPH (or equivalent Master's degree) that includes the Faculty's core discipline areas.
4. Be employed in an approved public health medicine position.

(Please see the [Public Health Application](#) page for full details of entry requirements)

Neither the three years of postgraduate medical experience nor the MPH degree may be claimed as RPL toward your AFPHM training requirements, as this would constitute 'double counting' (refer FAQ 3).

**23. Can I have the whole 24 months of my post-FRACP Divisional training program granted as RPL?**

While you can apply for up to 24 months of training time to be granted through RPL, you should be aware that post-FRACP Divisional training is 36 months in duration. This policy supersedes the *Post-Fellowship Training Requirements (Divisions) Policy* which provided for an 'automatic' RPL for the 12 months of non-core training that most Divisional training programs required. The requirements for pre- and post- Fellowship Divisional training is now the same – refer to the relevant training requirements handbook for details. ([handbooks.racp.edu.au](http://handbooks.racp.edu.au))

**24. I've received the outcome of my application. Do I need to do anything else?**

Depending on the outcome of your application, you may need to take further action.

*If the outcome is deferred*, the assessor wants further information. A) You will receive a letter which may specify that you need to submit more documentation. In this case, you will need to source the requested documents and submit them within 4 weeks of the date of the letter (unless otherwise specified). B) An outcome may also be deferred so that the assessor can see an end of year supervisor report for your current training rotation. You should tell your supervisor, so that they know the end of year report might influence the outcome of your RPL application.

Whatever outcome you receive, you should tell your supervisor. If you have been granted 12 months of RPL, for example, your supervisor should then assess you at the end of the year at the level of a *second year* trainee. If your application has been declined, deferred or partially approved, your supervisor should be made aware of the feedback the assessor has given you, as this may include areas that you should focus on in your next learning plan.

College staff will update your training details for you as required, and these changes would be reflected in your online portal information.

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**25. Are exceptional circumstances considered?**

Yes, exceptional circumstances will be considered on an individual basis if you are unable to meet a requirement, such as the due date for applications, of the policy. You must apply in writing as soon as the circumstances permit to your education or training committee.

**26. I am not happy with the outcome of my application. What can I do?**

You may apply for reconsideration under the provisions of the College's *Reconsideration, Review and Appeals Process By-Law* (available on the Education Policy [website](#)).

**27. Who do I contact for more information?**

You are encouraged to contact the College Officer for your training program as soon as you begin to think about submitting an application for RPL.

Program		Email	Phone
Basic Training	Australia	<a href="mailto:prep_bt@racp.edu.au">prep_bt@racp.edu.au</a>	+61 02 9256 5454
	New Zealand	<a href="mailto:basictraining@racp.org.nz">basictraining@racp.org.nz</a>	+64 04 472 6713
Advanced Training Australia (including Chapters)			
General enquiries		<a href="mailto:AdvancedTraining@racp.edu.au">AdvancedTraining@racp.edu.au</a>	+61 02 9256 5445
Specialty-specific enquiries		Please access on the website: <a href="http://www.racp.edu.au/page/educational-and-professional-development/advanced-training#contact">www.racp.edu.au/page/educational-and-professional-development/advanced-training#contact</a>	
Advanced Training New Zealand			
General enquiries		<a href="mailto:AdvancedTraining@racp.org.nz">AdvancedTraining@racp.org.nz</a>	+64 04 472 6713
Specialty-specific enquiries		Please access on the website: <a href="http://www.racp.edu.au/page/educational-and-professional-development/advanced-training#contact">www.racp.edu.au/page/educational-and-professional-development/advanced-training#contact</a>	
Faculties			
Occupational & Environmental Medicine		<a href="mailto:OccEnvMed@racp.edu.au">OccEnvMed@racp.edu.au</a>	+61 02 8076 6388
Public Health Medicine		<a href="mailto:afphm@racp.edu.au">afphm@racp.edu.au</a>	+61 02 9256 9622
Rehabilitation Medicine		<a href="mailto:Rehab@racp.edu.au">Rehab@racp.edu.au</a>	+61 02 8076 6304

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