

PAAs and AAs: Assessing overseas qualifications for AAs

Introduction

1. This document sets out our policy for assessing overseas qualifications to determine if an individual holds a relevant qualification, in order to be eligible to apply for registration as an Anaesthesia Associate (AA) in the UK.

What is an acceptable overseas qualification?

2. An acceptable overseas qualification (AOQ) is an international qualification which has been accepted by us to be a relevant qualification.
3. A relevant qualification is defined in the General Medical Council (Registration) (Anaesthesia Associates and Physician Associates) Rules ('the registration rules') as, 'an approved qualification or a qualification which is accepted by the Regulator for the purposes of registration as an associate'. Individuals are only eligible to apply for registration where they hold a relevant qualification¹.
4. We assess whether to accept an international qualification for the purposes of registration as an associate under Article 4 (2)(c) of the Anaesthesia Associates and Physician Associates Order. Because only those holding a relevant qualification can apply for registration, the assessment of an international qualification has to be done before an application for registration can be made.
5. In line with good practice the policy will be regularly reviewed to ensure that it remains up to date, fair, proportionate, and effective.

Why do we accept overseas qualifications for registration?

6. We will assess an individual's overseas qualification on request². If it satisfies our criteria then that individual is considered to hold a 'relevant qualification', and is eligible to apply for

¹ Under rule 4(1) of the registration rules

² Under rule 4(2), when the individual holding the qualification submits a qualification assessment form, and has paid the required fee.

registration. Acceptance as a relevant qualification means that it also fulfils the education and training standards for registration.

7. A decision that an overseas qualification is acceptable does not necessarily mean the individual will be granted registration. To be granted registration, applicants must satisfy us that they meet all nine of the registration standards, and the information and procedural requirements, as outlined in the registration evidence framework.

How will we assess overseas qualifications?

8. To determine whether an individual's overseas qualification is acceptable as a relevant qualification, it will be assessed against the approved AA AOQ criteria in place at the time of assessment. The criteria are subject to change. This means a qualification may satisfy the current criteria, but may not continue to satisfy the criteria if amended in the future.
9. Our decision on whether the qualification satisfies the criteria, and is accepted as a relevant qualification, will be made on the basis of robust, objective and independently verifiable evidence. As part of the assessment we may, where we consider it relevant to our decision, make enquiries (for example of the awarding institution, a regulator/ relevant government body), or request information from the person holding the qualification³.
10. Where the person holding the qualification does not provide information we request, we may make a decision in the absence of that information⁴.
11. The AA AOQ criteria has been developed to broadly reflect the core components of a UK AA qualification. This provides assurance that those with a relevant qualification meet the standards of education and training accepted to practise as an associate in the UK.
12. We use the terms 'must' and 'should' in the criteria.
 - Where 'must' is used, the qualification has to fulfil the requirement.
 - 'Should' indicates that we can use our discretion. This is primarily used in relation to the amount of time we consider sufficient to satisfy us that the criterion is met. The criteria provide a clear indication of what is likely to satisfy us that the qualification may be acceptable.
13. Where we do not consider that an AA qualification satisfies all the criteria, it cannot be accepted as a relevant qualification.

³ Rule 4(3)

⁴ Rule 4(4)

AA AOQ Criteria

Criteria	Rationale	'Must' or 'Should'
<p>1. Your qualification must permit you to practise as an Anaesthesia Associate, or other comparable title, in the country where the qualification was awarded.</p>	<p>To ensure we maintain integrity of the profession – accepting qualifications where the education and training has been designed to prepare individuals to practise as an anaesthesia associate, or role with a comparable title.</p>	<p>Must</p>
<p>2. Your qualification must have been awarded in a country where the profession is regulated by law and must have been accepted for registration as an AA (or other comparable title) in that country,</p> <p style="text-align: center;">OR</p> <p>your qualification must have been accepted to hold registration as an AA in another country where the profession is regulated by law.</p>	<p>The qualification must fulfil one of the parts of this criterion.</p> <p>Part one gives assurance that an individual is subject to professional regulation in the country they qualified in, and that their qualification has been accepted for registration in that country.</p> <p>Part two allows flexibility for individuals where their qualification is comparable to a UK qualification, but the profession is not regulated by law in the country where it was awarded. Assurance is provided if the qualification has been accepted for registration in another country where the profession is regulated and the individual has used their qualification to hold registration there.</p> <p>This criterion is disapplied for AA qualifications from the Republic of Ireland, to account for the unique political factors and long-standing agreements that exist between the United Kingdom and Ireland, including the Common Travel Agreement and the Belfast Agreement (the Good Friday Agreement). This criterion is also</p>	<p>Must</p>

	disapplied for applicants with qualifications obtained from EFTA countries and Switzerland due to the specific legislative requirements that apply.	
3. Your qualification must have been awarded from an institution which is accredited by a recognised organisation ⁵ in the country where it was awarded.	To provide assurance about the qualification and education/training framework delivered by the institution.	Must
4. Your qualification, and education and training must: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● be based in scientific, evidence-based medicine ● include knowledge of biomedical science ● be of a level at least equivalent to a postgraduate diploma from a UK university. 	To reflect content of UK AA courses and the requirement that individuals have knowledge of biomedical science.	Must
5. Your programme of study that led to your qualification should have taken a minimum of two academic years to complete.	To reflect length of UK AA courses, and to ensure that the qualification is of a duration that would allow the individual to have gained sufficient experience to practise in the profession.	Should
6. Your programme of study should have contained approximately 3000 hours of time in education and training.	To reflect requirement of UK AA courses. This includes the clinical experience, because Anaesthetics is a craft specialty and much of the education and training for UK AAs is acquired through experiential learning and reflective practice with trainers.	Should
7. If you have studied at more than one institution and the study contributed	To provide assurance that an individual has not moved institutions to avoid	Must

⁵ For example a regulatory body, Ministry of Health or Education, or other appropriate government body.
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<p>to the award of your AA qualification, it must be clear that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● the institution is part of a recognised twinning programme or a recognised campus of another institution, or ● it was not possible to complete your qualification at one institution for justifiable reasons, and ● the course credits that contributed to the award of your qualification must not have included credits transferred from another institution where you failed or were excluded (or where you left to avoid exclusion). 	<p>being excluded due to concerns about their conduct or performance and to make sure they completed a full course of study.</p>	
<p>8. Your programme of study must have involved in-person clinical experience which was overseen and approved by the institution you attended.</p> <p>As a minimum this should have comprised of 60% of the total course hours.</p>	<p>To reflect requirement of UK AA courses. Anaesthetics is a craft specialty and much of the education and training for UK AAs is acquired through experiential learning and reflective practice with trainers.</p> <p>Clinical experience must be in-person so we can be assured of the individual's ability to interact with patients, and must be approved/overseen by the awarding institution, to ensure it was appropriately supervised and delivered the intended learning outcomes.</p> <p>The % total course hours clinical experience comprised is a 'should', because this reflects the current average % of clinical experience for UK AA courses.</p>	<p>Must and Should</p>

<p>9. The in-person clinical experience completed as part of your programme of study must have included experience in each of the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Perioperative care ● General anaesthesia ● Regional anaesthesia ● Resuscitation and transfer ● Procedural Sedation ● Pain ● Anaesthetic implications of specific populations 	<p>To reflect content of UK AA curriculum, and ensure that AAs seeking registration in the UK have the capabilities required to provide good clinical care as an AA in the UK.</p> <p>Knowledge of these areas is also required as these are covered in the Anaesthesia Associate Registration Assessment (AARA). Individuals without experience in these areas are unlikely to be successful in the required registration assessment.</p>	<p>Must</p>
<p>10. The course that led to your qualification must have included training in the practical procedures listed below, and you must have been assessed as competent to at least the level indicated:</p> <p>Capable of performing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Insertion of supraglottic airway Intubation using standard laryngoscope ● Intubation using video laryngoscope ● Spinal anaesthesia ● Simple peripheral nerve block ● Peripheral venous cannulation ● Urinary catheterisation ● Ultrasound guided peripheral venous cannulation <p>Trained in simulated environment:</p>	<p>To reflect content of UK AA curriculum, and ensure that AAs seeking registration in the UK have the core knowledge and skills needed for UK AA practice.</p> <p>Knowledge of these areas is also required as these are covered in the AARA. Individuals without experience in these areas are unlikely to be successful in the required registration assessment.</p>	<p>Must</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Emergency front of neck airway access ● Needle thoracocentesis ● Nasogastric tube insertion <p>Understands how to perform procedure and can assist senior anaesthetist:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Arterial line ● Chest drain insertion 		
<p>11. The course leading to your qualification must have always included your supervision and delegation from a fully-qualified doctor anaesthetist, at level 1a or 1b of the UK curriculum entrustment scale(or equivalent) for all clinical theatre sessions and any interventions performed whilst in clinical training.</p>	<p>The UK AA role allows AAs to undertake certain activities, under appropriate supervision, not available to other health-professions (aside from doctors). Assurance that applicants are qualified to work with this level of supervision is crucial to ensuring patient safety.</p>	<p>Must</p>

What decisions can we make?

14. Our assessment is of the education and training the individual undertook, which led to the award of their AA qualification. As such, our assessment is limited to the individual’s specific qualification and is not a decision on the qualification conferred by an overseas institution in all cases.

15. An assessment of an overseas qualification may result in one of the following outcomes:

- a The individual’s qualification is accepted to be a relevant qualification.
- b The individual’s qualification is not accepted as a relevant qualification.

Qualification is accepted

16. Where we decide an individual’s qualification is acceptable, they will then be eligible to apply for registration as an AA.

17. On applying for registration, the individual's qualification will be accepted as evidence that the applicant meets the standards of education and training. In limited circumstances we may change our decision about whether we will accept a qualification, as explained below.

Qualification is not acceptable

18. If the qualification is not accepted, the individual is not eligible to apply for registration with us.

19. Applicants cannot appeal against our decision that an overseas qualification is not acceptable. It is at our discretion to determine which overseas qualifications are acceptable for the purposes of applying for registration as an AA in the UK.

In what circumstances might we change our decision?

20. Where a decision has been made not to accept an individual's qualification, it will remain unacceptable, unless:

- the individual is able to provide new and/or additional evidence about their qualification as part of a new request for assessment, which addresses the reasons given for our previous determination that the qualification was not acceptable (for example, showing that it now satisfies our criteria), **or**
- we make amendments to our criteria, and these changes mean that the qualification may now satisfy the criteria.

21. If an individual believes that their qualification may now satisfy the criteria, they can request a new assessment of their qualification by submitting a new qualification assessment form and paying the required fee.

22. If, in the period between us accepting an individual's qualification and them applying for registration, we have received information which calls into question the information used to determine whether the qualification satisfies the criteria and is acceptable, then the individual's qualification may no longer be considered a relevant qualification. In this case we may need to undertake a further qualification assessment to determine whether the individual remains eligible to apply for registration.

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