Surgeons – Practise in Australia

Able Medico · Information for overseas-trained surgeons · November 2026

Overview

The Royal Australasian College of Surgeons (RACS) assesses overseas-trained surgeons in nine surgical specialties. Many surgical specialties are on the acute-shortage list, so a section 19AB exemption can allow you to bill Medicare in any location.

General surgery and otolaryngology (ENT) are among the next specialties the Medical Board of Australia has prioritised for its Expedited Specialist pathway. Until they are added, all overseas-trained surgeons are assessed by RACS.

Surgery in Australia

RACS assesses the nine surgical specialties recognised in Australia:

- Cardiothoracic surgery
- General surgery
- Neurosurgery
- Orthopaedic surgery
- Otolaryngology – head and neck surgery
- Paediatric surgery
- Plastic and reconstructive surgery
- Urology
- Vascular surgery

What Australian surgeons do

- Assess patients and plan operative and non-operative care
- Perform elective and emergency surgery, increasingly with minimally invasive and robotic techniques
- Take part in on-call rosters, trauma care and multidisciplinary meetings
- Supervise and teach surgical trainees

Where they work

Public and private hospitals, private rooms and day-surgery centres. Most surgeons combine a public appointment with private practice. Regional hospitals have the greatest need, particularly for general surgeons.

About RACS assessment

RACS is accredited by the Australian Medical Council to assess overseas-trained surgeons on behalf of the Medical Board of Australia. RACS assesses comparability and recommends requirements. It does not grant registration, find you a position, arrange visas or set salaries — that is where Able Medico helps.

Your pathways

There are two routes for surgeons. Our Due Diligence report tells you which fits your training and experience.

Pathway	Who it is for	Possible outcomes	What follows	Leads to
RACS specialist assessment	Surgeons who have completed specialist surgical training and are recognised as specialists in their country of training	Substantially / partially / not comparable, after a document assessment and interview	Substantially comparable: up to 12 months FTE supervised practice. Partially comparable: up to 24 months FTE supervised practice with further training and workplace-based assessments, and possibly the Fellowship Examination	Specialist registration and FRACS
Area of Need	Surgeons selected by an employer for a position the state or territory has declared an Area of Need	Suitable / not suitable for the position	Practise in that position under supervision; RACS can assess this alongside specialist assessment	Registration tied to that position, while you complete specialist recognition

Points to know

- RACS reviews your application, assesses your documents, and then invites you to a Zoom interview, usually about 4 weeks ahead.
- You have 28 days to accept the RACS recommendation.
- Not comparable applicants may consider applying to the Surgical Education and Training (SET) program.

Medical licencing process

1. **Due Diligence.** Our opinion on your most likely RACS outcome, your registration pathway and visa options.
2. **Primary source verification.** Verify your medical and specialist qualifications through the Australian Medical Council.
3. **RACS assessment.** Application review, document assessment, then interview.
4. **Find your position.** We introduce you to hospitals and surgical groups. RACS must be satisfied the position and supervision meet your requirements.
5. **Ahpra registration.** Limited (or provisional) registration while you complete supervised practice.
6. **Visa.** Skills in Demand visa (subclass 482) or a permanent residence visa.
7. **Medicare.** Provider number and section 19AB exemption for your location.
8. **Commence practice.** Supervised practice, workplace-based assessments and any further training, plus the Fellowship Examination if required.
9. **Fellowship and specialist registration.** Complete your requirements, then FRACS and specialist registration.

Workforce, demand and remuneration

Demand. Cardiothoracic surgery, neurosurgery, orthopaedic surgery, otolaryngology, paediatric surgery, plastic and reconstructive surgery, urology and vascular surgery are on the acute-shortage list for section 19AB (as published May 2026). General surgery is not on the list, so where you can bill Medicare depends

on District of Workforce Shortage (DWS) status for the location, but it is a priority specialty for the Expedited Specialist pathway.

Remuneration. Earnings depend on your specialty, the mix of public and private work, location and your supervision level before specialist registration. We discuss remuneration for specific opportunities with you directly.

How Able Medico helps

Medical licencing and migration is our forte. We prepare your RACS application and interview, help you secure a suitable position, and manage Ahpra, visa and Medicare steps. Through our employer contacts we can introduce you to public and private hospitals.

Next steps

- **Start with Due Diligence:** ablemedico.com.au/able-medico-for-doctors
- **Contact us:** ablemedico.com.au/contact-us

Sources

- Specialist Assessment Process — RACS
- Australian application process: Specialist and/or Area of Need assessment — RACS
- Expedited Specialist pathway — Medical Board of Australia
- Specialist pathway – specialist recognition — Medical Board of Australia