Advanced Skills Training Posts Rural Generalist and General Practitioner Program (AST Program)

Operational Procedures

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AST Program Overview

The Advanced Skills Training Posts Rural Generalist and General Practitioner Program (AST Program) is targeted at rural generalist registrars, general practitioner registrars and Fellows of ACRRM or RACGP. The purpose of the program is to provide access to innovative new Advanced Skills Training (AST) posts and to utilise funding to support and attract doctors to these positions. This initiative will support posts that meet community need across all jurisdictions. The AST Program is a collaborative program requiring engagement and participation between:

- GP Colleges (ACRRM and RACGP)
- Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care (DoHAC)
- State and Northern Territory health departments (the jurisdictions)
- Rural Generalist Pathway Coordination Units (RGPCUs)
- Local Health Networks
- Public health settings
- RG registrars, GP registrars and Fellows

The program aims to increase Rural Generalist (RG) and General Practitioner (GP) training capacity through increasing the number of highly skilled Rural Generalists and General Practitioners in rural areas who can supervise and support doctors in attaining a specialist skill. The program intends to create a robust rural training network to ensure rural communities have access to RGs and GPs with the right skills, in the right place with doctors that intend to utilise their advanced skills to deliver services in rural communities.

The posts under the AST Program will include all AST disciplines supported under the GP Colleges' curricula, including procedural areas and non-procedural areas such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health, mental health, palliative care, and paediatrics. Funding will be up to $150,000 for each 12-month AST post (pro-rata where not completed). The AST Program provides a contribution toward the total cost of participant employment and training and therefore will rely on the health setting to contribute to the cost.

Two full time AST posts will be awarded annually in each State, and the Northern Territory will be awarded three posts annually. Where posts are not filled in 2024, the unfilled posts will be able to be filled in 2025 or 2026 in addition to the annual jurisdiction allocation for those training years. The program will also aim to distribute the allocation of participants to posts equally between the GP Colleges in each jurisdiction, wherever possible.

Roles and Responsibilities

Department of Health and Aged Care

- AST Program funding provider
- Approval and confirmation of all posts under the AST Program (via the allocation plan)
- Determining Program level priorities for AST type and eligibility requirements for posts under the AST Program (in consultation with GP Colleges and jurisdictions)
- Ensuring proper use of Commonwealth funds
- Maintaining and updating the AST Program Guidelines
- Managing the evaluation of the AST Program including managing the evaluator contract

AST Program Team (Program Administrator)

- General administration of the AST Program
- Contract and administer funding payment to host employers
- Marketing and promotion of the AST Program
- Support AST Program stakeholders
- Secretariat support for the AST Program Selection Committee
- Review identified posts for alignment with the AST Program priorities and eligibility requirements
- Consulting with the jurisdictions on the final decision making in the selection of post in their jurisdiction under the Program
- Develop and submit an allocation plan to the Department specifying the AST Program posts for the following training year
- Liaison with the jurisdictions
- Liaison with DoHAC
- AST Program reporting to DoHAC
- Monitor and support AST Program participants

- Monitor AST posts
- Monitor and support AST post supervisors

GP Colleges

- Review and endorsement of priority list of posts provided by each jurisdiction
- Identification and nomination of alternate or additional AST posts for consideration and agreement by the jurisdictions
- Identification and approval of participants to fill AST Program posts in consultation and agreed with the jurisdictions
- Assist to monitor and support AST Program participants
- Accredit and assist in monitoring AST posts
- Assist to monitor and support AST post supervisors
- Marketing and promotion of the AST Program posts

Rural Generalist Coordination Units/ Jurisdictions

- Identification and nomination of AST priority posts and AST disciplines for AST Program funding
- Identification of participants to fill AST Program posts
- Submission of a priority list of pf preferred training posts and/or identified gaps or need for specific ASTs to the Colleges for review and endorsement
- Inclusion of AST Program posts in the state/ territory RG Coordination Unit recruitment process
- Work with the Administrator on the final decision making in the selection of AST posts under the Program for their jurisdiction
- Monitor and support AST Program participants registered with the state/ territory Rural Generalist program

- Marketing and promotion of the AST Program posts

Host Employers

- Employment of funded AST Program participants

- Contribute to the cost associated with the employment and training of participants in the AST Program

- Identification of AST posts for AST Program funding

- Identification of potential participants to fill AST Program posts

- Ensure availability of an appropriate accredited supervisor

- Ensure protected teaching time as per the training and curriculum requirements

- Ensure adequate clinical exposure to meet logbook and curriculum requirements

The AST Program Post Identification, Nomination and Selection Process

To be funded by the AST Program:

1. A potential AST post will be identified by a stakeholder(s) and further investigated with the

   - ACRRM; or

   - RACGP; or

   - RGCUs/jurisdictions

to ensure the post meets AST Program post eligibility criteria.

AST posts may be in hospital, general practice community and non-general practice community training settings. All AST disciplines supported by the GP Colleges are eligible for funding under the AST Program.

All AST posts must be supported by the relevant jurisdiction to be considered for funding under the AST Program.

2. An AST post must be nominated by:

   - RGCUs/jurisdictions; or

   - ACRRM; or

   - RACGP.

An AST Post cannot be nominated without the support of the relevant jurisdiction.

3. Nominations for AST posts must be provided to the AST Program team. Email nominations to the AST Program team at **astprogram@acrrm.org.au** on the AST Program nomination form.

4. On receipt of nominations for AST posts, the AST Program team will provide the AST post nominations in priority order for each jurisdiction, to the AST Program Selection Committee.

5. The AST Program Selection Committee will review the applications and provide the endorsed priority list with an allocation plan to the DoHAC for funding approval.

6. DoHAC will review the recommendations and approve the posts that will receive funding.

Individual registrars or Fellows are not eligible to apply directly to the program for funding under this program.

Individuals are to liaise with their relevant College and/or specific health care facility or RGCU to identify their interest in relevant posts.

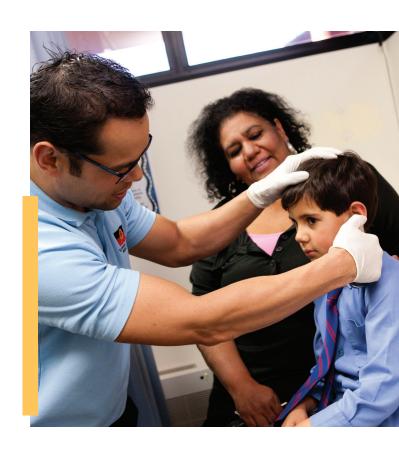# AST Program Post Nomination Application Requirements

AST Program post nominations will require the following information to be completed and submitted on the AST Post nomination form:

- AST discipline

- Overview of the AST post structure e.g. location, number of sites involved, range of health settings

- Accreditation status with relevant college(s) of the AST post

- Start and completion date for the AST training post position

- Demonstration of community need for the advanced skill

- Purpose of the post (e.g. GP to build clinical capacity, meet workforce shortage)

- Confirmation that the post is new, modified or a post that has not been funded in the past three years

- Demonstration of future sustainability for the AST post

- Host employer(s) and status of the host employer acceptance of the post

- Identification of a candidate and associated college that has been identified to commence in the post (where applicable)

- Detailed breakdown of the utilisation of funding in AST Program funding template

- Confirmation of the support of the relevant jurisdiction for the post to be nominated

Posts that include a combination of hospital and community-based training settings will require the identification of:

- The host employer(s) (employment responsibilities)

- Breakdown of funding allocation to be provided to each Host employer to meet employment and training responsibilities

The AST Program post nomination and funding breakdown form can be accessed **here**

AST Program Post Eligibility Criteria

- Training posts will be in MM2-7 locations. Consideration may be given to support training posts in MM1 locations where training is not available in a rural location and support for this post will fill a service delivery gap in an identified community.

- The AST posts can be in hospital, general practice community and non-general practice community training settings.

- AST posts must have training accreditation before a participant commences employment and training. All posts should meet the ACRRM and/ or RACGP accreditation requirements for the relevant discipline.

- AST posts must be new training posts (as defined in the AST Program Guidelines) and not replace or duplicate existing training posts. Implementation of these posts is not to lead to the withdrawal of funding from existing posts.

  - A training post will not be considered eligible for funding if it has received funding through another organisation for more than 12-months within the last 3 years.

  - In this context, positions funded by the DoHAC, applicant organisation or a state and territory government will not be considered new and will be ineligible for funding under this program.

- Existing accredited AST posts that have been modified to enhance training exposure and support training in areas of community need, may be supported as new AST posts and will need to be considered on a case by case basis with the Department to provide final approval.

- AST posts should support new activity and be directed toward highest priority advanced skills disciplines.

AST Program Post Prioritisation Criteria

AST posts, funded under the AST Program, will be prioritised based on the following criteria:

- alignment with community need

- in Aboriginal Controlled Community Health Service/Aboriginal Medical Service settings

- providing Mental Health services

- alignment to community workforce need (including vulnerable populations)

- demonstrate innovation to maximise placements in communities in need

- are structured to offer high quality training experiences including a diverse range of clinical experience (e.g. aged care, palliative care etc.)

- can be accredited with ACRRM and/or RACGP by the commencement of the funding period

- has an appropriately skilled and qualified candidate identified to commence in the AST post; and

- demonstrate the need for the development of training and supervision capacity in the community.

Administration and Funding Payments

The AST Program team will provide a final list of approved AST posts to for each RGCU, ACRRM, RACGP and host employer advising:

- approved AST
- host employer(s)
- start and completion dates for the approved AST funded post
- funding allocation; and
- the participant approved to commence in the post and the participant's college details.

On advice of acceptance of the AST Program funded post by the host employer, the AST Program team will provide the host employer with an AST program Training and Funding Agreement.

The AST Program will issue funding to the host employer in-line with the completed Training and Funding Agreement. (Payments will not be made until the participant commences in the funded post).

Training Monitoring

Formal monitoring of the participant's progression, in an AST Program funded post, will be the responsibility of the relevant training college, with oversight from the program Administrator.

In accordance with the relevant college training and curriculum requirements the host employer (hospital, general practice community or non-general practice community training settings) is responsible to ensure the education, training, and supervision provided to the participant will support the participant to meet the requirements of the relevant AST discipline.

This includes but is not limited to:

- allocation and availability of an appropriate accredited supervisor
- provision of an accredited AST post
- ensuring protected teaching time as per the training and curriculum requirements
- ensuring adequate clinical exposure to meet logbook and curriculum requirements.

The host employer and registrars or Fellowed RGs/GPs should immediately report any adverse events/critical incidents involving the delivery of the AST post training to the relevant GP College and the AST Program Administrator.

Post Withdrawal Process

Withdrawal is defined as:

1. when an AST Program post is withdrawn; or

2. a participant withdraws from an AST program post pre or post commencement.

A post may be withdrawn from the AST Program where the post:

- has a participant that has not commenced the AST training placement

- has a participant that has withdrawn from the AST training placement in the first 6-month period

- has a participant that has taken extended unexpected leave that affects the completion of the AST training requirements

- is withdrawn by the host employer prior to commencement of the placement; or

- has accreditation withdrawn by the College(s) prior to commencement of the placement.

The host employer must advise the AST Program team in writing immediately of any withdrawal from an AST Program funded post. The AST Program team will advise the AST Program Selection Committee and DoHAC of the circumstances of withdrawal.

The AST Program team will work with stakeholders to identify a satisfactory resolution to issues that may lead to withdrawal. Where there is a variation to the funding of these posts the AST Program Selection Committee will be required to endorse and submit the recommendations to DoHAC for final approval.

Participant Eligibility and Selection Process

Participant Eligibility Process

Participants that meet the following criteria are eligible to access AST program funded training posts:

- Australian General Practice Training Program (AGPT) registrar applying to undertake an AST post approved by the relevant college

- ACRRM Independent Pathway (IP) registrar applying to undertake an AST post approved by ACRRM

- ACRRM Rural Generalist Training Scheme (RGTS) registrar applying to undertake an AST post approved by ACRRM

- RACGP Fellowship Support Program (FSP) registrars applying to undertake an AST post approved by RACGP

- Remote Vocational Training Scheme (RVTS) registrar applying to undertake an AST post approved by the relevant college

- Fellows of ACRRM and/or RACGP applying to undertake an AST post approved by the relevant college

- Other applicants may be considered if they are eligible to undertake the identified AST training post and are supported by the relevant GP College and jurisdiction

Participant Priority Groups

When selecting participants for AST Program funded posts, priority is to be given to participants that meet the above criteria and align with all or some of the priority placement criteria:

- Registrars of ACRRM or RACGP who are enrolled and have at least 12 months experience in an RG training program

- First Nations registrars or Fellows of ACRRM or RACGP

- GP registrars or Fellows with proven rural training experience and intent:
  - have completed at least 12-months placement in a rural clinical school
  - have completed placement as a junior doctor in a MM2-7 location
  - have completed at least 12-months work in an MM2-7 location directly prior to application
  - demonstrate a plan to utilise their AST skill in a future rural practice
  - demonstrate that they are returning to a rural region with family connections.

- ACRRM or RACGP registrars and Fellows seeking AST aligned to community workforce need (including vulnerable populations)

- Equal distribution of participants between ACRRM and RACGP, wherever possible.

As funding is allocated to the AST posts, individual registrars or Fellows are not eligible to apply directly for funding. Individuals are to liaise with their college and/or specific health care facility or RGCU/jurisdiction if they wish to participate in the AST Program.

Where possible, recruitment to AST Program funded AST training posts will be included in the recruitment processes of each state or territory's Rural Generalist program. The timing and requirements of these processes will differ across jurisdictions and have various phases which may include a case management phase that follows the principles of "Right doctor for the right place".

An equal distribution of posts to registrars/fellows of each of the GP Colleges will be undertaken wherever possible. Where an equal distribution is not possible, the distribution must be endorsed by both colleges before submission to DoHAC for approval.

Participant Application Process

AST Program funded posts can be advertised in various ways. Applications for placement into an AST program post should be undertaken in line with the advertised position:

- Application through the relevant state or territory RGCU recruitment process
- Direct application to the employer of the advertised AST

Colleges, RGCUs, AST Program Team, employers or other stakeholders may assist and support potential participants to undertake the appropriate application process for the relevant AST post.

Training Monitoring

Formal monitoring of the participant's progression in their AST post will be the responsibility of the Program Administrator in conjunction with the relevant college.

In accordance with the relevant college training and curriculum requirements the host employer (hospital, general practice community or non-general practice community training settings) is responsible to ensure the education, training, and supervision provided to the candidate will support the candidate to meet the requirements of the relevant AST discipline.

This includes but is not limited to:

- allocation and availability of an appropriate accredited supervisor
- provision of an accredited AST post
- ensuring protected teaching time as per the training and curriculum requirements; and
- ensuring adequate clinical exposure to meet logbook and curriculum requirements.

The registrar or Fellow should immediately report any adverse events/critical incidents involving the delivery of the AST post training to the relevant college.

Where issues with progression are identified, the relevant college is responsible for introducing and managing remediation processes in consultation with the host employer.