



# Australasian College for Emergency Medicine

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## Role of interns in the emergency department

Guidelines

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## Document Review

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Timeframe for review: every three years, or earlier if required.  
Document authorisation: Council of Advocacy, Practice and Partnership  
Document implementation: Standards Committee  
Document maintenance: Department of Strategic and Strategic Partnerships

## Revision History

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Version	Date	Pages revised / Brief Explanation of Revision
1	Mar 1999	First version
2	July 2004	Revised document
3	July 2013	Revised document
4	Sept 2019	Content reviewed and new template adopted

## 1. Purpose

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This document outlines the role of interns in emergency departments, and their status within the primary service-provision workforce.

This guideline is applicable to all emergency departments in Australia and New Zealand.

## 2. Background

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The variety of skills exercised, together with the large and varied patient load, make the emergency department a unique and valuable clinical training environment. Many of the skills learnt in emergency medicine are essential for subsequent independent medical practice. While the majority of the internship is spent under supervision in the inpatient ward environment, the emergency medicine rotation presents particular risk exposure for the intern since within the emergency department there is a greater requirement for critical decision-making, including disposition and other therapeutic interventions.

All junior doctors require a period of training in emergency medicine. The practice of emergency medicine requires the knowledge, experience and skill to rapidly assess and treat undifferentiated patients in a time-critical manner. This includes the requirement to make critical decisions rapidly and reliably.

All intern clinical practice in the emergency department requires direct supervision. In general new graduates have not had sufficient practical exposure and experience to function safely and effectively in an emergency department unless directly supervised.

## 3. Procedure and actions

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- In the interests of safe, high quality and efficient patient care and a satisfactory working environment in the emergency department, it is essential that the important role of training junior staff does not compromise the clinical service provision role of the emergency department. Where there is a conflict between these two goals, patient care will take precedence.
- Where interns are included among the emergency department medical workforce, the roster profile will be structured so as to allow direct supervision, case by case, by a medical officer of at least registrar grade, at all hours of the day. There will be capacity for case-by-case supervision of technical skills, interpretation of tests (including x-rays) and decision-making (in relation to both therapy and disposition). During clinical handover an intern should always hand cases to a more senior doctor and consequently should not receive cases at clinical handover.
- Intern staff shall be considered supernumerary to workforce and will not be calculated within the base EFT for staffing of emergency departments.



**Australasian College for Emergency Medicine**

34 Jeffcott St  
West Melbourne VIC 3003  
Australia  
+61 3 9320 0444  
admin@acem.org.au

**acem.org.au**