

# JDocs and surgery as a career

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## INTRODUCTION

The Royal Australasian College of Surgeons (RACS) is the leading advocate for surgical standards, professionalism and surgical education in Australia and New Zealand.

The College is a not-for-profit organisation that represents more than 7000 surgeons and 1300 surgical trainees and International Medical Graduates. RACS also supports healthcare and surgical education in the Asia-Pacific region and is a substantial funder of surgical research. There are nine surgical specialties in Australasia being: Cardiothoracic surgery, General surgery, Neurosurgery, Orthopaedic surgery, Otolaryngology Head-and-Neck surgery, Paediatric surgery, Plastic and Reconstructive surgery, Urology and Vascular surgery.

As you start your journey on a medical career, you should consider what your future area of clinical practice might be. The JDocs website is an initiative of the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons that aims to provide career guidance to junior doctors in Australia and New Zealand during the early pre-vocational years for those who would like to pursue an exciting, challenging, rewarding and varied career such as surgery.

Surgeons enjoy the intellectual and practical challenges of the operating theatre and the outpatient clinic. To interact with patients, perform surgery and see their life transformed almost immediately is extremely gratifying. Working with teams of colleagues including other surgeons, anaesthetists, technicians nurses and allied staff to ensure the best outcome for both acute and elective patients also brings a great sense of achievement and satisfaction. There is also significant responsibility to support the patient through their surgical journey.

Using the JDocs Framework and resources as you progress through your first few years in the workplace will expose you to the relevant knowledge and skills that should be achieved during the initial postgraduate years (PGY1–3).

To become a surgeon, you must first complete a medical degree and then work and train in a clinical setting – usually a hospital – for one to two years. The earliest point you can apply to enter the College's Surgical Education and Training (SET) program is during your second postgraduate year (PGY2) after university. Commonly, many doctors apply in PGY3–4.

If your application to enter SET is successful, you will train in one of the following nine surgical specialties. This training occurs primarily in public hospitals and generally takes five to six years. Following successful completion of the SET, you will be eligible to apply to sit the Fellowship examination. Following successful completion of the Fellowship examination, you will

become a Fellow of the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons (FRACS) and will be accredited to practise independently as a consultant surgeon.

The Royal Australasian College of Surgeons launched JDocs, a competency framework supported by a suite of educational resources, in December 2014. JDocs is designed to promote flexible and self-directed learning, together with assessment opportunities to record and log procedural experiences and capture evidence of personal achievements. Supporting resources will be available late in 2015 on an annual subscription basis. Further information about JDocs and subscription is available on the JDocs website, <http://jdocs.surgeons.org> or scan the QR code at the end of the article.

## WHY HAS COLLEGE ENGAGED IN THE PREVOCATIONAL SPACE?

The College recognised the need for engagement with prevocational junior doctors to provide guidance and education that would assist with their development towards a proceduralist career. Key to this was to ensure that the doctor entering any procedural speciality program would be well-prepared and clinically competent relevant to their postgraduate year. As a result, the College established JDocs, which is available to any doctor registered in Australia and New Zealand, from and including internship. Depth of engagement is determined by the individual doctor.

The College also recognises that the New Zealand Medical Council has embarked on a mandatory prevocational e-portfolio for PGY1–2 and has consulted with MCNZ to ensure the JDocs Framework complements this program.

JDocs is not mandatory in Australia or New Zealand; it does not guarantee selection into any procedural specialty training program. Engagement with the Framework and its supporting resources describes the many tasks, skills and behaviours a junior doctor should achieve at defined postgraduate levels, and will help the self-motivated junior doctor recognise the performance standards expected prior to applying to a specialty training program. Junior doctors are also eligible to apply for the General Surgical Sciences Examination, which tests anatomy, physiology and pathology to a high level.

## WHAT DOES THE JDOCS FRAMEWORK COVER?

The JDocs Framework is based on the College's nine core competencies, with each competency considered to be of equal importance, and is described in stages appropriate for each of the first three postgraduate

clinical years, as well as those beyond. In order to link the Framework to everyday clinical practice, key clinical tasks have been developed that are meaningful for the junior doctor. Achievement of the task demonstrates the competencies and standards outlined in the Framework, and shows that the junior doctor is competent at the daily clinical tasks required to commence specialty training.

### ACCESSING JDOCS RESOURCES

The JDocs website, <http://jdocs.surgeons.org>, provides further information about the Framework and how to access subscription based resources. Doctors can download a copy of the Framework and/or access an online version together with a variety of freely available resources. Other resources will be available on a subscription basis. The JDocs website and social media feeds will also deliver updates as to JDocs launch of subscription based resources, as they become available later this year.

### SUMMARY

In summary, the JDocs Framework is about the professional standards and learning outcomes to be achieved during the early postgraduate/prevocational clinical years. It describes and assists early career professional development for junior doctors aspiring to procedural medical careers, including surgery. It strongly promotes work-based assessments for the many prevocational doctors.

Please contact Kathleen Hickey, Director of Education Development & Assessment ([kathleen.hickey@surgeons.org](mailto:kathleen.hickey@surgeons.org)) or Jacky Heath, Manager, Prevocational and Online Education ([jacky.heath@surgeons.org](mailto:jacky.heath@surgeons.org)) with any comments or questions.

Twitter: @RACSurgeons, #RACSJDocs  
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Scan to access JDocs website

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