



Australian
Medical Council Limited

International medical graduates assessment experiences and performance project

Final Report 2025



Acknowledgement of country



The Australian Medical Council acknowledges Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander Peoples and Māori Peoples as the Traditional Custodians of the lands the AMC works upon.

We pay respects to Elders past, present and emerging and acknowledge the ongoing contributions that Indigenous Peoples make to all communities. We acknowledge the government policies and practices that impact on the health and wellbeing of Indigenous Peoples and commit to working together to support healing and positive health outcomes.

The AMC is committed to improving outcomes for Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and Māori Peoples through its assessment and accreditation processes including equitable access to health services for First Nations Peoples.

Contents

Introduction	01
About the AMC	02
International medical graduate pathways — a shared space	03
Why this work matters	04
Mapping Journeys and Story Telling	05
The Personas	06
The Journey Maps	09
Interactive Journey Maps	12
The value and use of the journey map and persona research	12
Research Report	13
Our Findings	14
Enablers	18
Co-Design Methods	19
What You Said	22
Conclusion	23
Moving Forward	23
Further Information	23

Figures

Figure 1: The Personas

Figure 2: Standard Pathway Persona Card

Figure 3: Competent Authority Pathway Persona Card

Figure 4: Specialist Pathway Persona Card

Figure 5: Short-Term Training in Medical Specialist Pathway Persona Card

Figure 6: Section graphic from the IMGs in Australia current state journey map

Figure 7: International medical graduates in Australia current state journey map

Figure 8: International medical graduates in Australia future state journey map

Figure 9: Pages from the International medical graduates interactive journey maps

Figure 10: Project Advisory Group members providing feedback on the personas and journey maps

Figure 11: Project Advisory Group members providing feedback on the personas and journey maps.

About the images

The images for the personas have been developed using AI technologies. The personas draw on a range of evidence-based themes and are representative of the lived experiences of international medical graduates. To comply with research ethics requirements, we have created images for each person to capture the human element rather than using real photos of individuals.

01 Introduction

This final report provides a summary of the AMC's International medical graduate assessment experiences and performance project 2022 - 2025.

The research uses journey mapping and persona development to improve assessment and employment pathways for international medical graduates. It focuses on safe and quality care for rural, remote and underserved metropolitan communities.

Our research aim was to gain a deep understanding of the challenges and solutions that international medical graduates experience in terms of migration, assessment and registration.

Central to our purpose was to give voice to international medical graduates who have generously shared their experiences with us.

We also draw on the insights of a wide group of professionals who support workforce systems to assess, register and employ international medical graduates. These perspectives have shaped our work.

We sought to build partnerships across the health ecosystem to bring about positive change.

Our work aligns with the implementation of broad policy reforms including the [National Medical Workforce Strategy](#) and [The Independent review of overseas health practitioner regulatory settings](#), led by Robyn Kruk, AO.

This project has Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) approval #37561.

02 About the AMC

The Australian Medical Council (AMC) is a national standards body for medical education, training, and assessment.

Its purpose is to ensure that the standards of education, training and assessment of the medical profession promote and protect the health of the Australian community.

The AMC sets the standard for and manages the national assessment of international medical graduates who are seeking general registration as a medical practitioner in Australia. It contributed to the development of all the current Australian assessment pathways for international medical graduates. The AMC also undertakes research and analysis to support the review and improvement of assessment pathways so they remain valid, reliable, fair and efficient.

03 International medical graduate pathways — a shared space

In Australia, international medical graduate assessment and pathways are a shared space with many stakeholders. The Commonwealth Government and departments, Australian Medical Council, Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (Ahpra), Medical Board of Australia, Prevocational Councils, Specialist Medical Colleges, bridging course providers, recruitment agencies and most importantly International medical graduates themselves all have a stake in international medical graduate pathways and a role in identifying opportunities for improvement.

This means that much of the activity to progress improvement and evaluate success needs to be undertaken in partnership.

04 Why this work matters

International medical graduates make a significant contribution to many OECD countries including Australia. They make up more than 30 percent of the Australian medical workforce, represent more than 50 percent of the General Practice workforce, and are the mainstay of rural and remote health communities and underserved metropolitan communities.

Australia, along with other OECD countries, experience barriers to international medical graduate assessment with individual and system level impacts. Pathways for international medical graduates are complex, at times bureaucratic, time consuming, uncertain, expensive, and stressful.

The workforce issue requires urgent attention, and the international medical graduate journey needs to be simplified.



31%

of doctors practising in Australia did their medical training overseas.



56%

of doctors working in general practice did their medical training overseas.

05 Mapping Journeys and Story Telling

Journey mapping is a method used to map the key milestones, the pain-points and the enablers of a particular process. It has been used in marketing and customer product development, however, it has not been widely used in medical education.

Journey maps are often combined with persona development. **Personas** are useful because they draw on evidence from interviews, surveys and focus groups to create compelling stories which explore the lived experience of a specific user group.

These methods inform human-centric design and user-centred strategic planning because they allow us to see the challenges and proposed solutions from the perspective of those most closely impacted. They democratise change and privilege the voice and perspectives of the users of a process and system. They are based on the premise that users know best the challenges they experience and can provide insight into the solutions that will work for them on the ground.

The 15 personas challenge notions of the homogeneity of international medical graduates. They show the diversity of international medical graduate experiences in terms of age ranges, pathways, countries of origin, education and work experiences, family and life circumstances, pain-points and enablers.

Our journey maps are structured as current and future state maps.

The **current state journey map** focuses on exploring the challenges and emotions of international medical graduates as they navigate pathways to immigration, assessment, registration and working as doctors.

The **future state journey map** revisits all the milestones shown in the current state and focuses on exploring individual and system level solutions to challenges.

Our journey maps and personas are evidence-based. They draw on a survey with more than 4000 respondents; interviews; and 10 focus groups with health services and international medical graduates.

The Personas

Figure 1

The 15 personas challenge notions of the homogeneity of international medical graduates.

[Learn More](#)

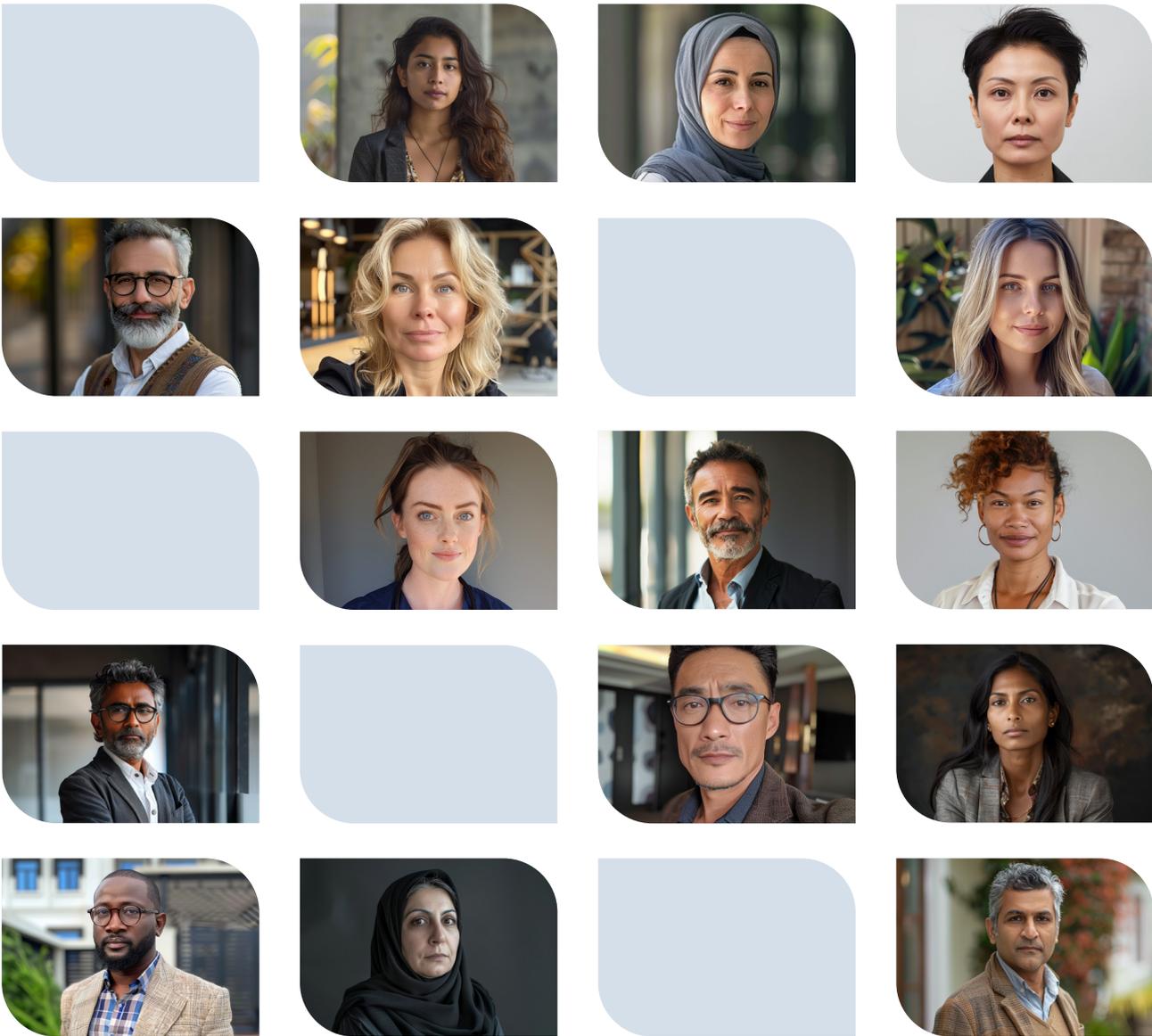


Figure 2
Standard Pathway Persona Card

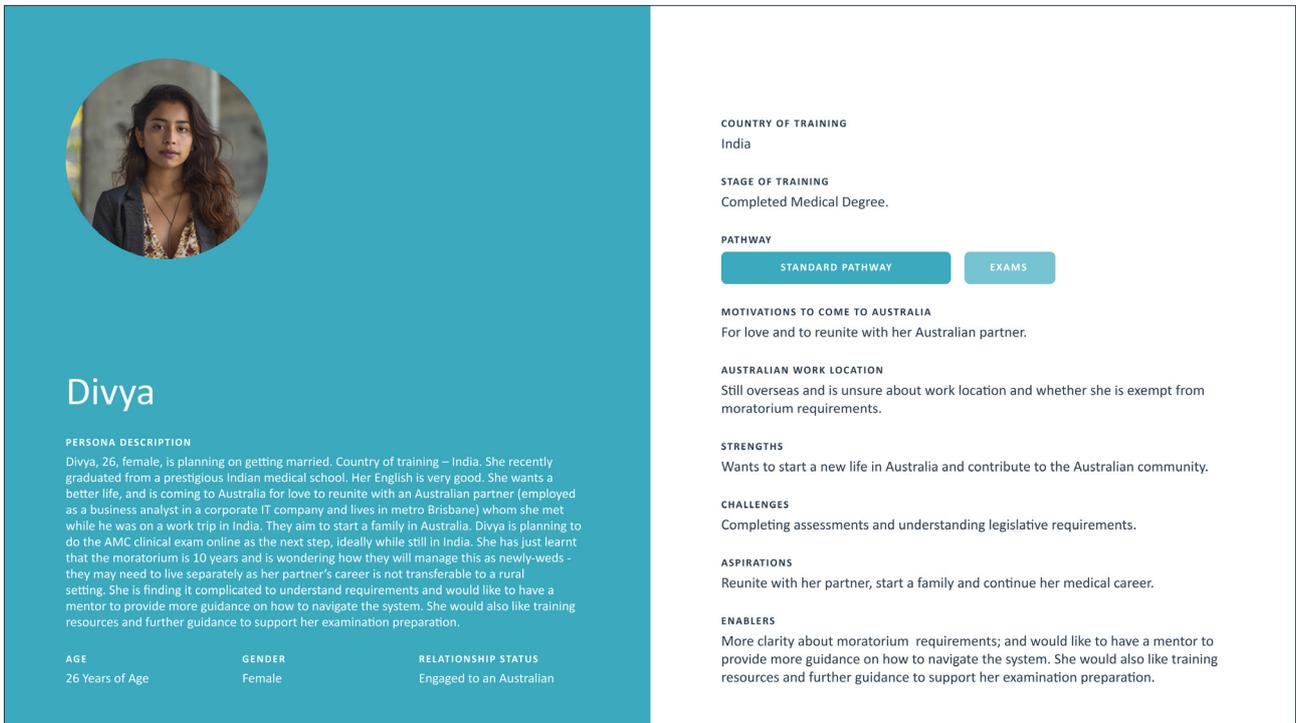


Figure 3
Competent Authority Pathway Persona Card



Figure 4
Specialist Pathway Persona Card

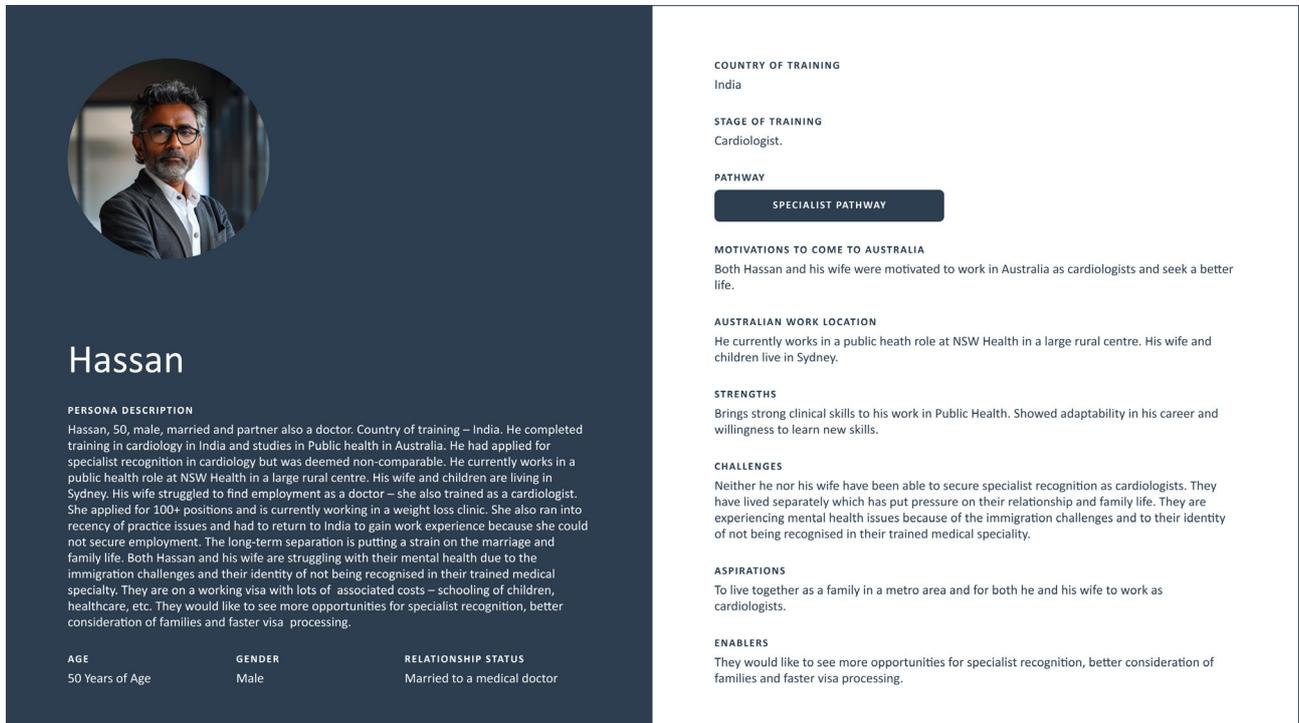


Figure 5
Short-Term Training in Medical Specialist Pathway Persona Card



The Journey Maps

Figure 6

Section graphic from the International medical graduates in Australia current state journey map.

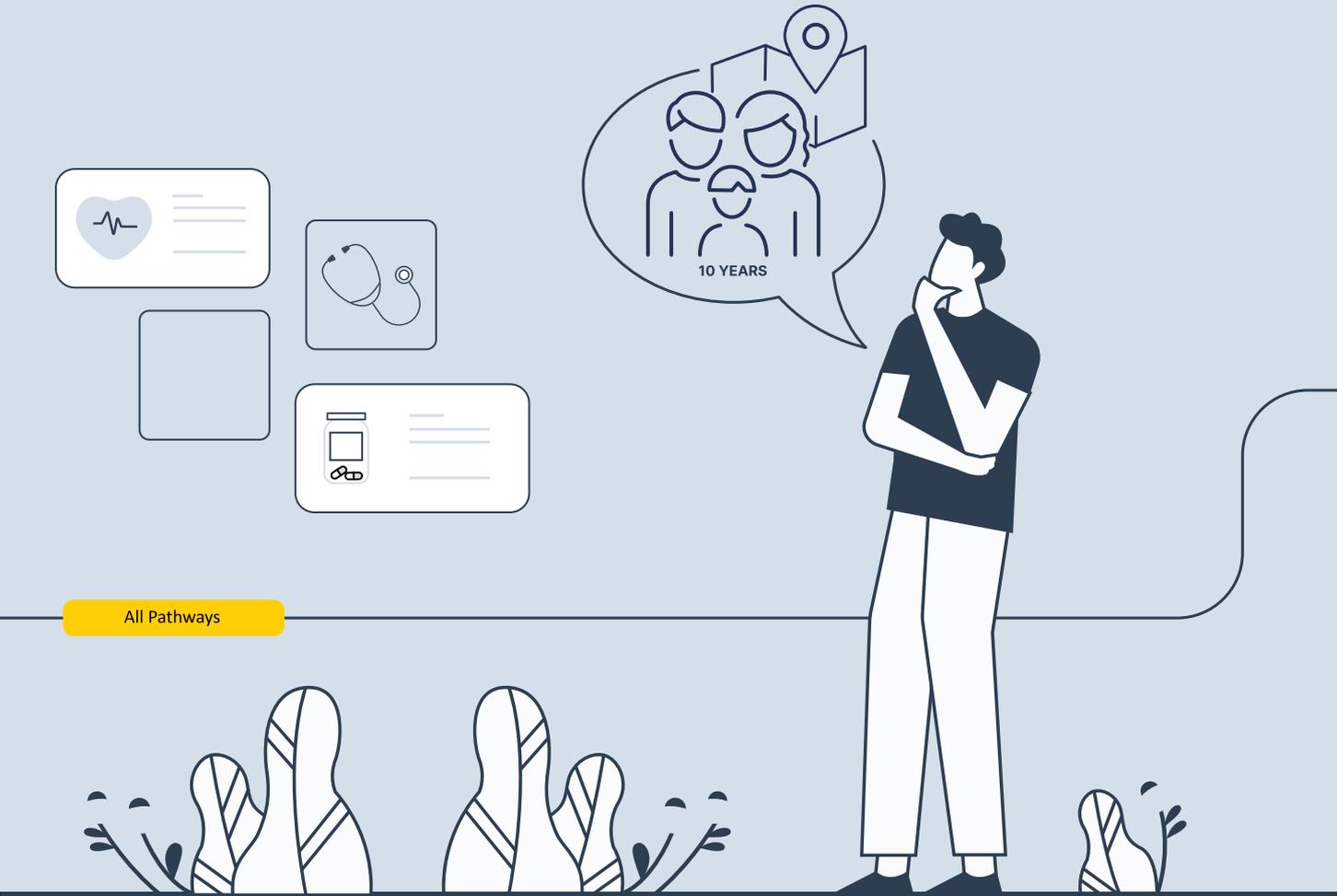
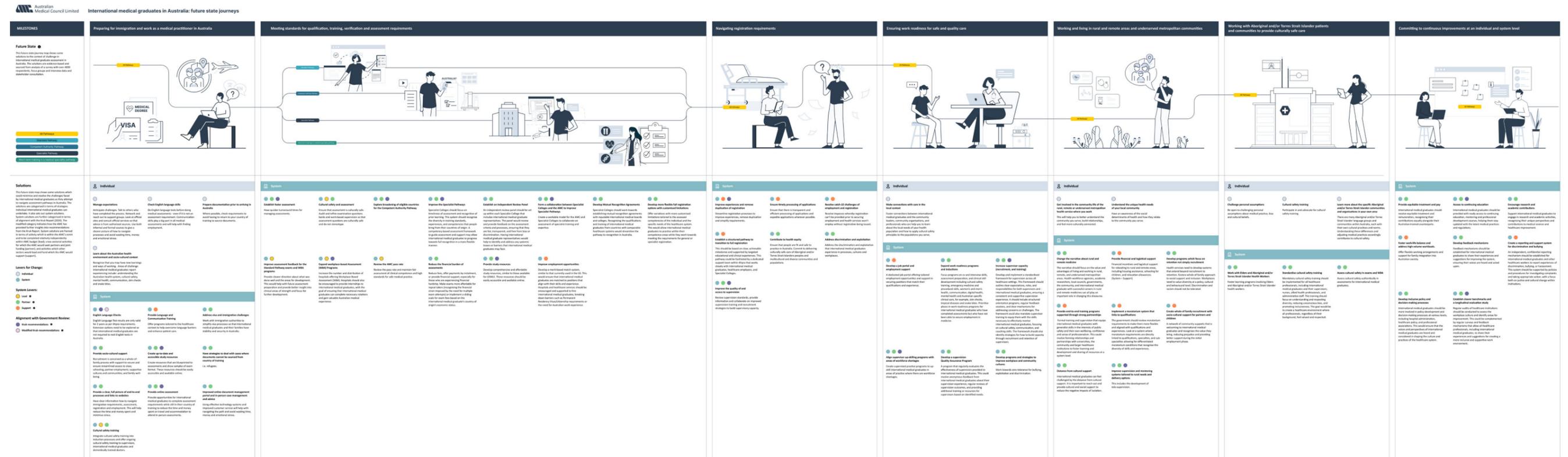


Figure 8

International medical graduates in Australia future state journey map.

Explore the Journey Maps



Interactive Journey Maps

As part of the consultation process for our project, we gained feedback that the journey maps provided valuable ways in which to learn of the lived experience of international medical graduates as they navigated assessment and registration pathways in Australia. Some stakeholders provided feedback that they wanted more interactive ways of navigating the content. We listened to this feedback and with the help of our design partners at What Works Global, we created interactive journey maps.

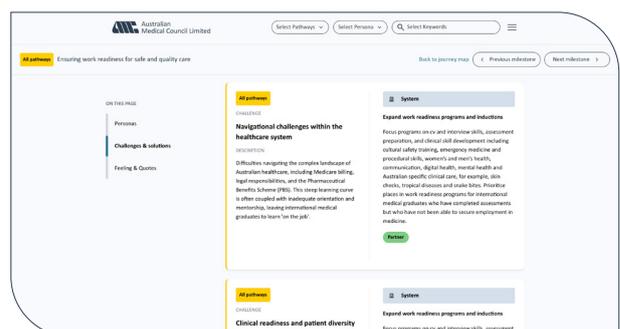
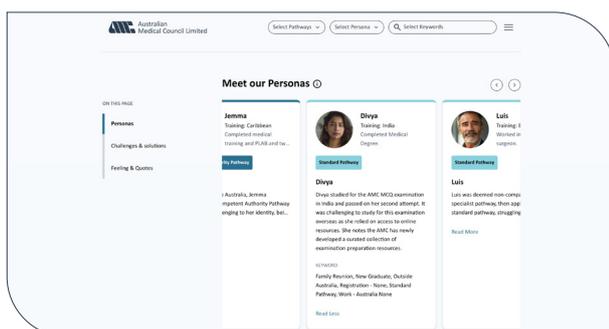
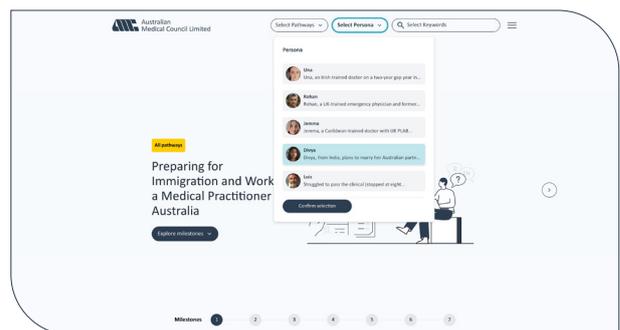
New features of these interactive journey maps include:

- The ability to search via persona, pathway and key words
- Side-by-side mapping of the challenges and solutions with tagging as to whether the solutions are lead, partner or support actions for stakeholders to undertake and alignment with Kruk recommendations
- Visually appealing animations
- Feelings and quotes for each milestone
- Mapping of each milestone to the personas.

Figure 9

Pages from the International medical graduates interactive journey maps.

[Explore the Interactive Journey Maps](#)



06 The value and use of the journey map and persona research



Provide evidence-based insights into the individual and system solutions needed to resolve some of the long-standing challenges that international medical graduates face.



Bring a human and strength-based perspective and highlight the contributions of international medical graduates despite the challenges.



Point to partnerships that can be formed to implement strategies that have shared responsibilities across the sector.



International medical graduates can see that they are not alone, and that there are system enablers for change.



Help to prioritise challenges and solutions.



Help stakeholders to align processes.



Provide a holistic end-to-end analysis of challenges and possible solutions.

07 Research Report

We have also prepared reports which summarise our research findings:

- a **survey report** which provides a detailed summary of the survey findings.
- 24 high impact changes that form the basis of our **Clearing The Way report**.

Read our reports here.



08 Our Findings

International medical graduates shared a number of challenges, which they experienced in navigating their path through the Australian immigration, assessment, registration and employment systems. They also had great insight into the enablers which could improve their experience and system outcomes.

Challenges

Key Challenges international medical graduate's face:



CHALLENGE 01

Preparation involves cultural adjustments, a significant financial burden and the learning of new skills.



CHALLENGE 02

Document management can be complex (impossible) for certain groups e.g. refugees.



CHALLENGE 03

Recency of **practice** can impact registration and the opportunity to work as a medical practitioner.



CHALLENGE 04

It can be difficult to access **supervision** which impacts progression and employment.

**CHALLENGE 05**

Many international medical graduates report **discrimination and exploitation**. This impacts their wellbeing, mental health, sense of belonging, identity and financial position.

**CHALLENGE 06**

Many international medical graduates are subject to a **ten-year moratorium** to work in designated areas. This can impact family life e.g. children's schooling and partner employment — up to 50 percent of survey respondents stated that they had chosen to live separately for significant periods due to moratorium requirements.



CHALLENGE 07

Many international medical graduates are unfamiliar with the history and specific needs of **Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander** patients and communities.



CHALLENGE 08

International medical graduates report challenges in **continuous improvement** at an individual and system level.

Enablers

The Enablers are structured in five themes as set out below:



Theme 1
Socio-Cultural Support and Induction



Theme 2
Communication and Coordination



Theme 3
Design of international medical graduates
assessments and pathways



Theme 4
Education, Training and Support



Theme 5
Further Research

09 Co-Design Methods

This work has been led by a Project Advisory Group that includes a wide range of stakeholders of international medical graduate assessment including: international medical graduates; health consumer and community members; the Council of Presidents of Medical Colleges; Post Graduate Medical Education Councils; executive staff of health services including general practice across a mix of locations (including metropolitan, outer metropolitan, rural and regional settings); the Medical Board of Australia (MBA); the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (Ahpra); the Australian Medical Association (AMA); AMC committees and staff; Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander stakeholders; government agencies, examiners and supervisors, Workplace-Based Assessment providers; and bridging course providers.

We have conducted extensive consultation with 110 stakeholder organisations of international medical graduate assessment and registration, and more than 100 international medical graduates. This process yielded valuable information to further refine the personas and journey maps.



Figure 10
Project Advisory Group members providing feedback on the personas and journey maps.



Figure 11
Project Advisory Group members providing
feedback on the personas and journey maps.

What you said:

"The personas appear to be comprehensive and capture most things that IMG's face from a health service perspective."

"The clearly articulate real-life challenges for IMGs, for example homesick and integrating into the Australian healthcare system. Often IMGs move to Australia and don't have family with them."

"Good quality work and there is good diversity within the personas. They show the different life stories and context prior to arriving in Australia, for example someone that is coming for a gap year versus a refugee and the challenges they face."

"The personas provide good examples to support the need for an organisation to invest in more resources to support IMGs entering the workforce so that they feel valued and supported."

"I think this is an excellent piece of work. While there are no surprises, it clearly documents the complexity and the unique pathway that each individual IMG will experience. It highlights that one size does not fit all and will hopefully assist with future change that will enable greater flexibility and simpler processes for IMGs in the future."

"Really well done and gives a human touch to a complex issue. There are some many complexities around the IMG journey and this work shows how many things that need to be considered."

"The personas highlight that each person has their own unique situation and challenges. The health system needs more flexibility to support each individual circumstance."

"Such a challenging but exciting space to be involved in but there is some much room for improvement and change."

"They look great and it is good to see both the current and future state. The future state provides practical solutions where changes can be made by all sector stakeholders."

"It is a great way to educate staff members within the health system that are involved in the recruitment, employment and supervision of IMGs. It highlights the diversity and unique experiences that impact individuals and their families. It also highlights to IMGs the challenges they and their families will face so that they can make informed decisions regarding relocation to Australia to commence or continue their medical careers."

10 Conclusion

Moving Forward

- The health system is fragmented with multiple agencies involved in the professional journeys of international medical graduates.
- The international medical graduates have strong lived experience which can guide future improvements
- One size does not fit all – international medical graduates experiences and journeys are various so enablers need to be customised to meet individual and system needs.
- The personas and journey maps set out directions to shape international medical graduate and policy leaders' efforts to commit to action and system change.

The AMC has committed to a comprehensive plan of change focused on further improving our assessments and the learning support we provide to international medical graduates to help them prepare and progress through the AMC standard pathway.

Our next steps in this project are to measure the success of the project and form further partnerships with organisations and individuals across the system to bring about change.

Further Information

For further information about this project see the [AMC website](#).

To get in touch with the project team email policy_research@amc.org.au

