

Fellowship Examination

Supervisor Letter of Support - Template

The Australian Board in General Surgery requires that a trainee seeking approval to present for the Fellowship Examination must provide a letter of support from their current clinical supervisor. Trainees are required to provide a letter of support before every attempt. This document has been prepared to assist you in evaluating a trainee's readiness to present for the Examination.

Who should the letter of support be written by?

If a trainee is in a SET post the letter must be from the approved Hospital Surgical Supervisor. If the trainee is not working directly with you, it is vital you discuss the trainee's preparedness with their unit supervisor to enable you to make an informed decision as to whether you support their application to present for the Fellowship Examination.

If a trainee is exam pending and therefore not in a SET post, the letter of support is to be provided by the current clinical supervisor.

What to expect from a Trainee?

Trainees presenting for the Fellowship Examination are expected to have developed an exam preparation or study plan that covers all of the General Surgery syllabus. The plan should include activities that allow trainees to become familiar with the exam format. To assist with this the Board has developed an Exam Preparation form that provides guidelines. This is available on the GSA Website.

What is your role? What should you be discussing with the TRAINEE?

The Australian Board in General Surgery seeks your opinion of the trainee's readiness to present to increase the prospect of a positive outcome in the Examination. As the person with the most direct interaction with the trainee, your opinion is valued and is sought in the best interest of the trainee.

Below is a list of areas you should be discussing with the trainee in order to obtain further information as to the trainee's readiness to present:

- Discuss if the trainee's study has included:
 - Personal study
 - Study group session
 - Formal tutorial / teaching session
 - Practice written papers marked by consultants
 - Practice clinical vivas with consultants
 - Practice vivas with consultants covering the areas of Surgical anatomy, Pathophysiology, critical care & clinical reasoning, and Operative surgery
 - Anatomy
- Has the duration of study been appropriate?
- Have all components of the exam been prepared for?
- Has feedback from consultants of study preparation and practice been positive?
- Has the trainee been practicing under timed/exam conditions?
- Do you consider that the trainee is ready to present to the Fellowship Examination?

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How should the letter be constructed?

It would be appreciated if you could provide the letter on your letterhead confirming that you have discussed the trainee's readiness to present for the Fellowship Examination and detail the points above. The letter should be provided to the trainee who in turn is to submit this to the Board.

On the following page, you will find a sample template letter that can be used and modified as appropriate.

What happens after I provide the letter?

Your letter will then be taken into consideration by the General Surgery Trainee Representative and the Australian Board in General Surgery Chair when finalising the approval of the trainee's application to present for the Fellowship examination.

For your information should a trainee's application to present for the Fellowship Examination not be approved by the Australian Board in General Surgery, the trainee's application fee will be refunded in full.

What if I don't feel the TRAINEE is ready?

It is required as per the Training Regulations that a trainee must provide a letter of support from their current clinical supervisor as otherwise their application cannot proceed.

If you do not feel that the trainee is ready to present for the Fellowship Examination, you are strongly advised to discuss your concerns with the trainee and advise them that you cannot provide a letter of support. Should you wish, you may also put this in writing to the Board Chair for consideration. Please note however that any communication received will also be required to be shared with the trainee.

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Below is a sample template letter that can be utilised to assist you in constructing your letter of support. The template can be modified to suit your specific needs but provides a general overview of the areas the Board is requesting your opinion on. Please ensure the letter is on your letterhead.

Dear Chair, Australian Board in General Surgery

[Trainee Name] is currently employed in the [unit name] at [hospital] and is applying to present for the Fellowship Examination in [Month Year]. I have discussed the following areas with the [Trainee Name] and provide the following overview of our discussion:

Insert comments referencing the following areas:

- *The amount of Personal study undertaken*
- *Involvement in Study group sessions*
- *Involvement in Formal tutorial / teaching session*
- *Has the Trainee undertaken Practice written papers marked by consultants*
- *Has the Trainee practiced clinical vivas with consultants*
- *Has the Trainee practiced vivas with consultants covering the areas of Surgical anatomy, Pathophysiology, critical care & clinical reasoning, and Operative surgery*
- *Has the duration of study been appropriate?*
- *Have all components of the exam been prepared for?*
- *Has feedback from consultants of study preparation and practice been positive?*
- *Has the Trainee been practicing under timed/exam conditions?*

Following the discussions held, I support [Trainee Name] in presenting for the Fellowship Examination in [Month Year] as it is my opinion that they have prepared appropriately and is ready to present.

Yours sincerely

[Supervisor name and signature]