



Monash University MBBS – Extended Rural Cohort stream Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

General Information

The following information applies to the Monash MBBS Extended Rural Cohort (ERC) stream only. Please note there are differences between the selection criteria and application processes of the ERC stream offered by Monash University and the University of Melbourne. Applicants interested in the ERC stream offered by the University of Melbourne should contact the University of Melbourne (www.medicine.unimelb.edu.au or 03 8344 5890) for information.

1. What is the Extended Rural Cohort (ERC) stream?

The ERC stream is a collaborative initiative between Monash University and the University of Melbourne. It has been developed to provide an extended rural training option for students interested in practicing medicine in a rural or regional location.

In recent years, the Australian Government has been addressing rural medical workforce shortages through a number of initiatives, including the introduction of the Rural Undergraduate Support and Coordination (RUSC) and Rural Clinical School (RCS) programs as an integral component of medical schools based at metropolitan universities. Through these programs, all Commonwealth-supported students spend a minimum of 4 weeks in a rural or regional setting and 25% of these students spend a further two semesters (or more) in rural clinical placements during the three clinical years of their course.

In the Monash ERC stream, students will undertake the first two years of the course, which cover basic medical and behavioural sciences, at the Monash Clayton campus. They will then spend five of their six clinical semesters in rural clinical placements. One clinical semester will be spent in a metropolitan hospital setting.

The extended rural placement that is available to students enrolled in the ERC stream will enable students to establish the social and professional links that will facilitate their return to rural communities for further training and to practice medicine.

2. Where will the Monash ERC course be offered?

The course is offered at the Clayton campus of Monash University. The first two years of the course will be primarily taught at the Clayton campus in south-east metropolitan Melbourne. The three clinical years (years 3, 4 and 5) will be mainly based at the Bendigo and Mildura Regional Clinical Schools, with students being taught at various hospital and community-based locations in northern rural and regional Victoria.

3. Will any of the ERC course be taught at metropolitan hospitals?

Yes, students will spend one clinical semester in a metropolitan hospital setting.

4. Where can I find out more about clinical placements in northern Victoria?

Further information about the Bendigo Regional Clinical School and the Mildura Regional Clinical School can be found at <http://www.med.monash.edu.au/srh/>.

5. How long is the Monash ERC course?

Five years. Students may also elect to complete a one-year Bachelor of Medical Science research degree during their program, for a total of six years of study.

6. How does this course compare to the current medical course offered at Monash University?

Students enrolled in the ERC stream of the Monash MBBS course will study the same five-year undergraduate-entry MBBS course offered at the Clayton campus, which is an integrated, theme-based curriculum. The curriculum that is taught in the rural clinical placements will address the same educational objectives as that being taught in metropolitan placements, although the actual clinical location may provide a unique contextual flavour to the material. The ERC stream of the Monash MBBS course will provide students with the same outstanding medical education as the current MBBS course. Monash University has been delivering clinical education at rural sites for over 15 years and students undertaking rural clinical placements receive an equivalent – if not better – clinical education than their metropolitan counterparts.

Information for Prospective Students

7. How many students will be in the ERC stream?

The student intake into the Monash ERC stream each year will be 30 Commonwealth Supported Places (CSPs – see question 20 for further information).

8. Am I eligible to apply for the Monash ERC stream?

The ERC stream is only available to:

- Current Year 12 students, or
- Applicants who have completed VCE (or equivalent) no more than two years previously and have not undertaken any tertiary studies since then.

International students are not eligible to apply for admission to the ERC stream.

9. What is the admission procedure for the ERC stream?

Students who wish to be considered for admission to the Monash ERC stream must apply through the Victorian Tertiary Admissions Centre (VTAC) and must nominate the VTAC code for this stream (28151) in their list of preferences.

All applicants who have included any Monash MBBS code in their list of VTAC preferences will be contacted by the Faculty of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences in October with information about the ERC stream, the Dean's Rural List and the Dean's Indigenous List. Applicants who are eligible for the Dean's Rural List or the Dean's Indigenous List are encouraged to apply to be considered for a place in the course via these pathways.

Applicants will be invited for interview based in their performance in the aptitude test (see questions 10 and 11, below).

10. What are the prerequisites for the ERC stream of the Monash MBBS course?

- Students studying Year 12 are required to obtain a study score of at least 30 in English and Chemistry.
- All applicants are required to sit an aptitude test. UMAT (Undergraduate Medicine and Health Sciences Admission Test) is the aptitude test required for admission to the Monash MBBS course.

11. How will students be selected for the ERC stream?

Selection into the ERC stream of the Monash MBBS will be based upon a combination of:

- UMAT
- Performance in a semi-structured interview
- ENTER

12. How are the interviews structured?

The selection interview, of approximately 45 minutes, is conducted by a three-member panel of trained interviewers. The interview questions have been designed to determine which applicants have relevant personal qualities such as leadership ability and motivation to succeed in the medical course. There are two groups of questions:

- Accomplishment questions: applicants are asked to tell the panel about past accomplishments that might demonstrate particular personal qualities.

- Situational questions: applicants are asked to explain what they might do if they find themselves in particular situations.

In the interview, the panel will try to assess several personal qualities in each applicant, including:

- Quality of motivation - Applicants should be able to demonstrate a realistic knowledge and understanding of what is involved in both the medical course and a career in medicine. Applicants for the Extended Rural Cohort stream will particularly be asked about their motivation for a career as a medical practitioner in a rural/regional setting.
- Appropriateness of interpersonal style - Applicants should be able to discuss leadership, particularly the ability to inspire other people, and teamwork, particularly the ability to work within a collaborative unit. We expect our students to have the ability to listen and be non-judgmental and to have the flexibility to adapt to new situations. All of these attributes should be developed to an extent appropriate to the applicant's age and maturity.
- Communication skills - Doctors must be able to communicate effectively with others. We expect our applicants to demonstrate appropriate ability in communication skills during the interview. As part of the assessment of communication skill, applicants may be asked to "de-technicalise" a scientific concept, i.e. to explain the concept in non-technical terms. Applicants may also be asked to discuss a topical issue in health and to participate in an "active listening exercise" in which they may be expected to answer specific questions concerning a short story read to them by one of the panel members.

Applicants should note that the structure and content of the interview is constantly under review.

13. Is it possible to prepare for the interviews?

Yes, to the extent that applicants should have thought through and be able to articulate why they would like to study medicine and why they are particularly motivated to practice medicine in a rural setting. Extensive *interview training* is not necessary or desirable.

14. Where will interviews be held?

Interviews will be conducted at the Monash University Faculty of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences, Wellington Road, Clayton and may also be conducted at various regional centres in northern Victoria.

15. Can an international student apply to enter the ERC stream?

There are no places for international students in the ERC stream. All places are Commonwealth-supported places (CSPs). If you expect to change citizenship status to become an Australian permanent resident within the next few months, you may apply for admission to the ERC stream.

16. Will preference be given to applicants from northern Victoria?

Yes, preference will be given to students from northern Victoria, as well as others eligible to be considered via the Dean's Rural List (www.med.monash.edu.au/medical/northernvic/deans-rural.html). Students eligible to be considered for a place via the Dean's Indigenous List (www.med.monash.edu.au/medical/northernvic/deans-indigenous.html) are also encouraged to apply.

17. What accommodation options will be available in northern Victoria?

Development of student accommodation is part of the funding package for infrastructure provided by the Federal and State Governments in support of this initiative. By the time the first intake of students is ready to move up to northern Victoria to commence their extended clinical placements (in 2009) a number of accommodation options will be available.

18. What if I am accepted into the ERC stream and I want to transfer into the standard MBBS stream at some later stage in the course?

Transfer between the ERC stream and the standard MBBS stream will not be permitted under any circumstances. Monash University has made an undertaking to the Federal Government that it will enrol 30 students in the ERC stream each year and these students will experience an extended rural placement (five out of six clinical semesters) in northern Victoria. If students were to be allowed to move between the ERC stream and the standard MBBS pathway during their course, this would destroy the integrity of the educational model and breach the university's undertaking to the Government. Therefore, applicants should be aware that if they accept a place in the ERC stream of the Monash MBBS, they are making a commitment to undertake five clinical semesters

in northern Victoria. If they wish to break that commitment, they will forfeit their place in the Monash MBBS program.

19. Will any of the places in the Monash ERC stream be bonded places?

Yes, some of the places will be Bonded Medical Places (BMP). The Federal Government has advised all medical schools across Australia that approximately 25% of Commonwealth-supported places must be set aside as BMP. Therefore, seven of the 30 places in the ERC stream will be BMP. Applicants who accept an offer of a BMP will be required to sign a contract that gives permission for the government to require them, at the end of their training, to practice in a designated *area of need*. An *area of need* is a district of workforce shortage as defined by the Australian Government (not necessarily in a rural location). For further information about BMP, see <http://www.health.gov.au/bmpscheme>.

In addition to the BMP, a number of Medical Rural Bonded Scholarships (MRBS) will be available to applicants offered a CSP in the Monash ERC stream. In 2008, these scholarships were valued at \$23,222 per annum to new medical students for the length of the course, in return for a legally binding commitment to practice in rural areas for a fixed period at the completion of training. Up to three MRBS will be available to students in the Monash ERC stream. For further information about the MRBS scheme, see <http://www.health.gov.au/mrbscholarships>.

Further Information

20. Is there a website where I can get more information on Monash University's Extended Rural Cohort stream?

The website is www.med.monash.edu.au/medical/northernvic/.

21. Is there a course guide or a pamphlet with more information?

Information about the undergraduate-entry MBBS course can be found in the Handbook (<http://www.monash.edu.au/pubs/handbooks/undergrad/med-21.html>). This site provides very detailed information about the course structure, but applicants interested in the Extended Rural Cohort stream should note that the references to limited periods of rural education are relevant to students in the standard MBBS stream, not to students in the new ERC stream.

This information is correct as of Monday, 31 March 2008.