

Guidelines for diagnostic radiography, radiation therapy and nuclear medicine technology students, interns and professional development year trainees

Introduction

These guidelines have been produced by the Radiation Safety Program to assist centres accredited to train medical imaging technology, radiation therapy and nuclear medicine technology students, interns and professional development year (PDY) trainees in understanding the requirements of the *Radiation Act 2005 (The Act)* and the *Radiation Regulations 2007 (The Regulations)* regarding licensing and supervision.

Legislative Requirements

Section 13 of *The Act* requires that all persons operating or using ionising radiation apparatus or radioactive substances must hold an appropriate licence issued by the Radiation Safety Program.

Section 16(1)(b) of the Act provides the Secretary to exempt a class of persons from the requirement to hold a Use Licence. The following classes of persons have been exempted from the licensing requirements of Section 13 of the Act:

- a student medical radiation practitioner who is employed as a trainee practitioner in nuclear medicine, diagnostic radiology or radiation oncology;
(This classification and exemption applies to persons who are completing an internship with an accredited institution or a professional development year supplementing their undergraduate studies.)
- an undergraduate student in a university or TAFE Institute who is undertaking coursework or research that involves the use of radiation sources

(this exemption applies to students completing their undergraduate degree course in a medical radiation practice)

- a postgraduate student in a university or TAFE Institute who is undertaking research or higher studies that involves the use of radiation sources.
(this exemption applies to postgraduate students undertaking research or higher studies such as a Ph.D in a medical radiation practice.)

Supervision

The Radiation Advisory Committee has considered the question of what constitutes appropriate supervision. The Committee recognises that the level of supervision required will vary with the stage of training of the person and the assessment of their competence by the supervisor. The Committee had concerns about matters such as repeat radiography by students, use of interns and PDYs in on-call situations, and the suggestion that, some undergraduate students employed as assistants during vacations have been instructed to operate X-ray equipment.

Centres accredited to use registrars and postgraduate students should therefore note that the Department regards the following as mandatory in relation to interns and PDYs, and students.

1. A person holding a licence or registration in the same professional category as the student must appropriately supervise interns and PDYs.
2. For the diagnostic radiography and radiation therapy professions, in accordance with the Australian Institute of Radiography (AIR) - Professional Accreditation and Education Committee PAEC guidelines, 3 registered persons in that professional category are required to supervise each student or registrar.
3. For the nuclear medicine profession, in accordance with the Australian and New Zealand Society of Nuclear Medicine Inc. (ANZSNM) Mentoring and the Professional Development Year: Accreditation Board Guidelines, one registered technologist per postgraduate technologist is required in the workplace at all times to provide guidance. Nuclear medicine technologists must be accredited with the ANZSNM to supervise interns and PDYs.
4. Interns and PDYs students are not permitted to work in on-call situations without appropriate on-site supervision..
5. Undergraduate students are not permitted to operate ionising apparatus, handle or administer radioactive substances outside the terms of the exemption granted in relation to their course of training. This means that they must be under the appropriate supervision of a person holding the relevant operator licence or registration.
6. Interns and PDYs, and postgraduate students are not permitted to supervise undergraduate students
7. For diagnostic radiography, repeat radiography should only be undertaken by students under the direct supervision of a radiographer and all repeat radiographs must be personally approved by the supervising radiographer. This would assist in ensuring that many attempts are not necessary to obtain an adequate image.

Conditions of supervision of intern, PDY's and students will form part of the management licence conditions and are enforceable through the Radiation Act.

Hospitals, radiology, radiation therapy and nuclear medicine centres should note that use of X-ray equipment or use of radioactive substances without the appropriate licence or a contravention of *the Act*, which leaves not only the individual user, but also the management licensee person (usually the hospital or centre) liable to prosecution.

Further Information

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