



## NEW ZEALAND MEDICAL ASSOCIATION

### ACE – Frequently Asked Questions

The Doctors in Training Council are a group of junior doctors within the NZMA who have provided speakers at ACE information evenings for the last 5 years. We have compiled a list of FAQs that come up year after year. We hope that these answer some of the questions you have about applying for your first job as a doctor.

#### **How did ACE start?**

ACE was set up in 2003 after the NZMSA and NZMA lobbied successfully for its introduction. Prior to ACE the recruitment process dragged on for months and was a stressful process for applicants because each DHB ran its processes independently so there were 21 processes to keep track of!

#### **Am I guaranteed a job by ACE?**

No. Getting a job is competitive and ACE does not change this. ACE simply speeds the process of job offers being made in a coordinated way.

The computer program streamlines the transactions of job offer and job acceptance but DOES NOT affect the freedom of employers to set preferred employee characteristics.

#### **Do I have to work where I am matched?**

ACE relies on applicants only applying to DHBs where they will work if offered a job there. There is a general expectation that you will take up this job, but it is not confirmed until you sign your contract with your DHB.

However, as all first year house officer jobs are offered through the ACE scheme if you turn down the job offered through ACE there may not be another job on offer in New Zealand. Therefore you should rank DHBs carefully.

#### **Who is my employer?**

ACE is not an employer. If you accept a job it is with a DHB and any employment issues you have need to be discussed with that DHB. ACE is simply a matching process between employers (DHBs) and employees (you).

#### **Who controls ACE?**

ACE is "owned" by DHBNZ, an organisation which the 21 DHBs jointly control. The running of ACE is currently contracted out to ARRMOS which is based in the Auckland region. The ACE centre and coordinator are independent from all the individual DHBs and reports to DHBNZ. No one DHB has influence over ACE.

#### **How many DHBs should I apply to?**

This is a personal choice. You can apply to all 21 if you wish, but you should only apply to DHBs you are willing to work at. In the past 4 years greater than 96% of successful applicants have got one of their first 4 choices.

**How should I rank the DHBs?**

Rank them in order of your preference to work at that DHB. Think carefully about where you want to most work and for what reasons and make the list in that order.

If you are successful through ACE you will only be offered one job and the job you are offered depends first on your preference list and second on how much the DHBs you have ranked like your application.

**Can the DHBs see my list of preferred DHBs?**

No. This is strictly controlled. The DHBs will never know what your preferences are even after the match is completed. Sometimes employers ask about preferences, but ACE will not give them this information.

**How does the computer match work?**

ACE uses a computer program to speed the process of matching applicants with employers. It mimics the process of multiple job offers being made and rejected, but removes the time required for postal services to deliver the letters.

It does not change the competitive nature of applying for a job or limit a DHBs ability to set criteria for preferred employees.

Essentially the computer has two sets of lists which are matched. One set of lists are the ~350 lists of preferred DHBs from applicants, the other is the 21 lists from DHBs of preferred applicants. The computer "matches" the lists so that applicants receive a job offer from their most preferred DHB that would offer them a job if a position was available.

**How likely am I to get my first choice?**

Each year the ACE centre publishes this data on the [www.newdoctors.co.nz](http://www.newdoctors.co.nz) website. The range has been from 72% to 86% getting their first choice of DHB.

**Can I apply with a partner or friend?**

Yes you can. But, if you submit a paired application, the DHBs rank you receive will be based on the least preferred of the pair.

If you are planning to make a paired application we recommend you make this clear in your cover letters and make contact with the DHBs RMO offices so that when they make up their ranking lists this is considered.

**How do I apply to ACE?**

Electronic applications are made online through the [www.newdoctors.co.nz](http://www.newdoctors.co.nz) website.

**What are the deadlines for applications?**

These change yearly, but are generally from May to June each year, make sure you check all the dates and make sure you are contactable when job offers are made. If you are going to be overseas on your elective and may not be contactable, make sure you have provided alternative contact details for someone who can respond on your behalf.

### **What happens if I don't get matched?**

Some years a small number of applicants are not matched in the first round of the match. When this happens ACE may run a second matching round. Usually this involves the remaining candidates being provided with a list of remaining positions and a second round of ranking and matching. If an applicant is not matched in the second round we would recommend contacting individual DHB RMO units to let them know you are available if someone else pulls out of a job or a new job becomes available.

### **Do I need a covering letter?**

Whenever you apply for a competitive job you need to make the best case for you being the best candidate. If there are special reasons you want a job in a region (family, paired application, special interest or connection) then a cover letter is a great idea.

### **Do I need a CV?**

Yes, the ACE online application allows you to display your relevant achievements. Guidance on how to write an effective CV is available on the [www.newdoctors.co.nz](http://www.newdoctors.co.nz) website. Clear, concise, well written CVs will stand out of the pile.

### **Should I make myself known to my preferred DHBs?**

Yes. You rely on the DHB you want to work in, including you in their list of preferred candidates. Anything you can do to improve this chance is in your interests.

### **A DHB has asked me to come to an interview – can they do that?**

Yes. As outlined above, ACE is simply a matching process and it's still competitive. Any DHB, and particularly those that receive large numbers of applications, may decide to use an additional selection tool – such as an interview. Attendance is completely optional but bear in mind, if it's a DHB you want to work in then your best chance of success is to attend.

### **Who should I get as references?**

References are very important. You should get references from consultants who know who you are and on whom you believe you have made a good impression. If it has been a while since you have been on that consultants' attachment it may be a good idea to make a phone call or write a letter to them reminding them of who you are. Remember they must have observed you in a NZ-equivalent setting and GP references are fine. Don't worry about getting a spread of references from different specialities. What they say is more important so just choose the best ones.

Good luck with your applications and have great fun being doctors next year!

The Doctors' in Training Council of the NZMA

w: [www.nzma.org.nz/about/DITC.html](http://www.nzma.org.nz/about/DITC.html)

e: [ditc@nzma.org.nz](mailto:ditc@nzma.org.nz)

p: 0800 656 161