

ACPSEM Policy on Position Papers and Guidelines

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1. Purpose

This policy governs the initiation, development, review, approval and publication of Position Papers and Guidelines produced or endorsed by the Australasian College of Physical and Engineering Sciences in Medicine (ACPSEM). This document aims to guide best practice, inform policy and regulation, and strengthen the professional standards of physical scientists and engineers in medicine within ACPSEM.

2. Definitions

- **Position Paper:** A formal document developed by ACPSEM, presenting reasoned arguments and recommendations on emerging or significant scientific, educational, or regulatory issues. Position Papers may support policy advocacy or consensus positions.
- **Guideline:** A systematically developed, evidence-informed document that supports clinical or professional best practice that is recommended for implementation.

The primary differences between Position Papers and Guidelines are based on best practices in professional and academic governance with details provided in Appendix 1.

3. Guiding Principles

1. **Relevance:** All documents should address issues of strategic, scientific, or operational importance to the ACPSEM and its stakeholders.
2. **Scientific Integrity:** Position Papers and Guidelines should be grounded in current evidence and expert consensus.
3. **Transparency and Governance:** All stages of document development should be auditable and conform to transparent processes, with oversight from the ACPSEM Board.
4. **Stakeholder Engagement:** All documents should incorporate appropriate internal and external consultation, including engagement with relevant Specialty Groups in the ACPSEM. The level of stakeholder engagement will be determined by the Speciality Group or the ACPSEM board. The stakeholder engagement process will be acknowledged in the published document.
5. **Publication in PESM:** ACPSEM's primary academic publication outlet is the *Physical and Engineering Sciences in Medicine (PESM)* journal. Where applicable, Position Papers and Guidelines will be submitted to PESM for peer-reviewed publication, subject to meeting the required standards for scholarly publication as specified by the journal and publishers.

4. Document Initiation

4.1 Initiation Pathways

Proposals to develop a Position Paper or Guideline may originate from:

- A Specialty Group Chair
- The Chair of a Board-appointed working group
- The Head of Specialties
- An Advisory Forum
- A proposal responding to relevant documents issued by national or international agencies (e.g. IOMP, ARPANSA, RANZCR, ANZSNM, IAEA) or
- The ACPSEM board

All proposals must be submitted in writing to the ACPSEM Board via the Head of Specialties and should include:

- A justification statement
- An overview of the intended scope
- Identification of the target audience and strategic importance
- A proposed timeline and milestone schedule
- The intention to publish in the PESM journal

5. Development and Review Process

5.1 Oversight and Governance

Approved proposals are overseen by the Head of Specialties, with administrative support from the ACPSEM CEO or an assigned delegate specific for the proposal. A lead writing group is appointed, comprising members with relevant expertise. An Advisory Forum may be engaged for cross-disciplinary or strategic topics of importance to the professions or the ACPSEM.

5.2 Consultation

Development would include any of the following as appropriate to be decided by the ACPSEM board:

- Internal consultation with ACPSEM members,
- External stakeholder engagement, and
- Transparent response-to-feedback documentation.

5.3 Review and Endorsement

A final draft document will undergo:

- Internal peer review by the relevant Specialty Group(s)
- External peer review if the intention is to publish in the journal
- Board-level approval based on the integrity of the development and consultation process

The Board reserves the right to commission additional reviews where necessary.

6. Publication and Dissemination

6.1 Journal Submission

Following Board approval, Position Papers and Guidelines may be submitted to the PESM journal for peer-reviewed publication. Publication in PESM is subject to meeting the journal's required standards for scholarly publication and is at the discretion of the Editor-in-Chief of the journal.

If the intention is to the PESM journal, documents should be formatted using the template for PESM journal publication provided in Appendix 2 **prior** to Board-level approval.

After Board-level approval, the corresponding author will submit the Position Paper or Guideline via the PESM manuscript submission platform for peer-review. After the requirements for publication in PESM have been met, the final version of the Position Paper or Guideline will be Board-level endorsed before journal publication.

6.2 Alternative Dissemination

Where PESM journal publication is deemed unnecessary or inappropriate:

- The full text may be hosted on the ACPSEM website
- Direct dissemination to stakeholders (e.g. regulatory agencies) may be pursued

All endorsed and approved documents will be listed as ACPSEM publications on the ACPSEM website.

7. Endorsement of External Documents

ACPSEM may formally endorse Position Papers, Guidelines, and equivalent issued by reputable external organisations following:

- Review by the relevant Specialty Groups
- Contextual analysis for Australasian practice
- A recommendation from the Head of Specialties

The Board may:

1. Endorse the document
2. Request further consultation
3. Decline endorsement with justification

Endorsed external documents will be listed on the ACPSEM website but are not published in PESM.

8. Review and Revision of Documents

8.1 Review Timeline

Position Papers and Guidelines should be reviewed:

- At least every five years
- Earlier if prompted by changes in evidence, policy, or professional standards

Authors or designated Specialty Groups are responsible for initiating the review. If unavailable, the Head of Specialties will appoint qualified reviewers.

9. Open Access Financial Support

ACPSEM may provide financial support (up to 100%) for open access fees associated with PESM publication of Position Papers and Guidelines that:

- Are approved in accordance with this policy
- Meet criteria for scientific quality and strategic value
- Enhance ACPSEM's visibility, credibility, or professional leadership

Applications for funding must be made to the CEO and Head of Specialties prior to journal submission.

10. Records and Archiving

The ACPSEM office will maintain a central archive of:

- All current and historical Position Papers and Guidelines
- Document development records and approvals
- Consultation responses and peer reviews

A public repository of endorsed and published documents will be maintained on the ACPSEM website.

11. Governance and Administration

Item	Details
Policy Domain	Governance & Publications
Responsible Officer	Chief Executive Officer
Approval Authority	ACPSEM Board
Effective Date	[Insert Date]
Review Date	[Insert Date]
Version	3.0

12. Document History

Version Date		Author	Summary
3.0	19 October 2025	CEO	Initial release

Appendix 1 - Primary differences between Position Papers and Guidelines

1. Purpose and Intent

Aspect	Position Paper	Guideline
Primary Purpose	To advocate for a particular position, policy, or viewpoint	To provide evidence-informed best practice recommendations
Function	Influences opinion, fosters discussion, and may drive policy change	Guides professional behaviour in clinical or technical practice

2. Evidence Base and Rigor

Aspect	Position Paper	Guideline
Evidence Requirement	May include expert consensus, literature synthesis, or policy precedent	Requires systematic evidence review, structured appraisal
Development Rigor	Moderate; focused on persuasive argumentation	High; development process follows rigorous, transparent methodology

3. Normativity and Binding Nature

Aspect	Position Paper	Guideline
Mandate	Non-binding but may become influential	Non-mandatory, but seen as authoritative practice standards
Normative Weight	High in policy or advocacy contexts	High in clinical, operational, or technical contexts

4. Target Audience

Aspect	Position Paper	Guideline
Audience	Policymakers, regulators, members, public and ACPSEM members	Practitioners, managers, clinical teams, accrediting bodies and ACPSEM members

Application Scope	Strategic, regulatory, or definitional issues	Day-to-day professional practice, service delivery, quality control
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5. Examples of Use

Position Paper	Guideline
Definition of a "Qualified Medical Physicist"	Radiation therapy equipment commissioning procedures
ACPSEM's position on Artificial Intelligence in Medical Imaging	QA protocol for diagnostic imaging equipment
Workforce strategy in clinical engineering	Recommended staffing levels for radiation oncology physics services

6. Publication and Dissemination

Aspect	Position Paper	Guideline
Publication Format	Published in professional journals, as white papers, on web sites	Published in peer-reviewed journals (e.g., PESM), may include supplements
Update Cycle	As needed (e.g., policy shift, emerging issues)	Regularly scheduled (typically every 3 years) or in response to new evidence

8. Summary of Distinctions

Feature	Position Paper	Guideline
Advocates a position	✓	✗
Provides best practice	✗	✓
Requires systematic review	Optional	Required
Normative authority	Strategic or policy-oriented	Clinical/professional practice-oriented
Peer-reviewed format	Optional	Expected

Appendix 2 - Template for Physical and Engineering Sciences in Medicine (PESM) journal publication

Title Page

- **Full Title:**
e.g., "ACPSEM Position Paper on Minimum Practice Standards in Diagnostic Medical Physics"
or
"ACPSEM Guideline for Quality Assurance in Radiation Oncology Physics"
 - **Running Title** (≤50 characters)
 - **Authors and Affiliations:**
List all authors' full names, institutional affiliations, Emails, and ORCID iDs where available.
Corresponding Author:
Name of corresponding author.
 - **Statement of ACPSEM Endorsement:**
"This paper was endorsed by the Australasian College of Physical and Engineering Sciences in Medicine (ACPSEM) on [Board Approval Date]."
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Abstract (Structured, ≤250-300 words)

- **Background:** Brief context or rationale
 - **Objective:** Purpose of the Position Paper or Guideline
 - **Methods:** For Guidelines—methodology for development
 - **Key Recommendations / Findings:** Summary of key content
 - **Conclusions:** Implications and significance
-

Keywords

(4–6 keywords; include ACPSEM, medical physics, clinical engineering, etc.)

1. Introduction

- Purpose of the document
- Scope and intended audience
- Justification and strategic relevance to the field and ACPSEM
- Related ACPSEM, national or international documents, if applicable

2. Methodology (*Required for Guidelines; optional for Position Papers*)

- Composition of working group (disciplines, expertise)
 - Literature review strategy (databases, search terms, inclusion/exclusion)
 - Evidence appraisal tools (e.g., GRADE, NHMRC, PRIMSA review)
 - Consensus or Delphi process (if used)
 - Stakeholder consultation and public comment period
 - Peer review (internal and external, if applicable)
-

3. Body of the Document

- Organized thematically or by key recommendations
 - For **Position Papers**:
 - Background
 - Policy rationale
 - Argumentation supporting the ACPSEM position
 - For **Guidelines**:
 - Recommendations, each followed by rationale
 - Level of evidence (if used)
 - Practice scenarios or use cases
 - Illustrative figures or tables (with legends and source citations)
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4. Implementation Considerations (*Guidelines only*)

- Resource and workforce implications
 - Regulatory or accreditation relevance
 - Monitoring and quality improvement strategies
 - Limitations and barriers to adoption
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5. Review and Endorsement Statement

This section must include:

- ACPSEM Board approval date
- Review cycle (5 years or sooner as required)
- Proposed review responsibility (e.g., Specialty Group)
- Citation of previously endorsed versions (if applicable)

Example:

“This document was approved by the ACPSEM Board on 15 March 2025. It will be reviewed no later than March 2028 by the ACPSEM Radiation Oncology Specialty Group.”

6. Conflict of Interest Declarations

- Each author must declare any financial or professional conflicts of interest.
 - If none, state:
“The authors declare no conflicts of interest relevant to this publication.”
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7. Funding Statement

- Include ACPSEM support:
“This publication was supported by the Australasian College of Physical and Engineering Sciences in Medicine (ACPSEM), including financial support for open access publication.”
 - Include any other funding received for work undertaken.
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8. Acknowledgments

- Contributions by non-authors
 - Stakeholder groups consulted
 - Reviewers or external advisors (with permission or noted as anonymous)
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9. References

- Must use the PESH’s reference style as prescribed by the journal
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10. Tables and Figures

- Numbered sequentially (Table 1, Figure 1, etc.)
 - Include clear captions and source notes
 - Supply high-resolution images if submitted separately
 - Ensure all tables and figures are referenced in-text
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11. Supplementary Materials (*If applicable*)

- Additional datasets
 - Detailed methods
 - Stakeholder feedback summaries
 - Flowcharts of development methodology
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12. Appendix (Optional)

- Definitions
 - Abbreviations
 - Full recommendation tables
 - Template forms or checklists
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Submission to PESM

- Manuscript must be submitted via the journal's manuscript submission platform by the corresponding author
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