



Examination Policy for Candidates in a CBD Program

April 2017

**These regulations supersede previously published editions.
The Royal College reserves the right to change these regulations
at any time.**

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OBJECTIVE

Examination Policy for Candidates in a CBD Program outlines the policies for the administration of the Royal College examination for CBD Disciplines.

DEFINITIONS

Examination Format

Each specialty determines the construct of their examination and uses these components to examine candidates based on an examination blueprint. Specialty specific examination format documents outline the exam components that will be administered for an examination cycle. These components may change from time to time and candidates should refer themselves to the specialty specific examination format found on the Royal College website.

Exam Components

The Royal College develops and administers various exam components as determined by the Specialty Committee, Examination Committee and Specialty Specific Examination Boards. Each examination cycle could be comprised of one or more components. These components include:

- **Multiple Choice Questions (MCQ):** MCQs consist of an opening question or stem that asks the learner to choose the most correct answer from a list that also includes two to five plausible yet incorrect distractors.
- **Short Answer Questions (SAQ):** The SAQ format consists of a brief, highly directed question designed to elicit a reliable, constructed response from the learner. Answers usually consist of a few short words or phrases. The model answer key is designed to comprehensively anticipate all correct answers.
- **Objective Structured Clinical Examination (OSCE):** The OSCE samples the performance of learners as they rotate through a series of stations representing various clinical scenarios. At each station, learners may encounter a standardized patient (SP), a structured oral examination, visual information (e.g., diagnostic images, electrocardiograms), a high- or low-fidelity simulation (e.g., part-task trainer), or a written task. Learners are usually asked to perform a specific skill, to simulate part of a patient encounter, or to answer questions based on the presented material.
- **Structured Oral Examinations (Orals):** Oral examinations provide an opportunity for an assessor or panel of assessors to pose a series of questions to a learner in order to assess and react to the learner's responses. Oral examinations allow a high level of dynamic interaction between an assessor and the learner.
- **Practical Examinations (Practical):** A Practical examination is one where candidates are required to undertake practical tasks which are assessed. Practical examinations can take many different forms depending on the subject material. They can be individual performance of a task (e.g. use of a microscope for diagnosis), or examination in which a number of tasks or questions would be completed. In some instances there are time limits for each question.

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CONTACT

For further information or clarification, please contact:
The Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada (Royal College)
Office of Specialty Credentials Unit
Office of Specialty Education, Examination Unit
Ottawa, ON
1-800-730-8177

Frequency of examinations

- a) The Royal College will offer discipline specific examinations on a yearly basis (calendar year) or as directed by the Assessment Committee.
- b) Where specialties have more than one examination component, the component will be offered once during an examination year. (e.g. if a discipline has a written exam component and an applied exam component, each component will be offered only once during an exam year)

Language of examinations

- a) The Royal College examinations are offered in English and French only.
- b) Candidates must indicate at the time of registration for the examinations what their language of preference is for each component.
- c) Candidates whose first language is not English or French should ensure that they have reasonable fluency, written and oral, in either English or French.

Examination format

- a) In disciplines where there is a written and an applied (oral, OSCE, practical) component, residents must be successful at the written component in order to be deemed eligible for the applied component. The written component must occur before the end of the core of discipline phase of training and the applied component may occur during the core of discipline or transition to practice phases of training.

Note: residents who are unsuccessful at the written examinations may continue into the Transition to Practice stage

- b) Candidates will have two consecutive years of eligibility to the written examination, and upon success, will be granted two consecutive years of eligibility to the oral examination. Candidates whose eligibility expires through failure at the examination, or failure to appear at the examination, may apply for a renewal of eligibility.
- c) Information about the examination format for each discipline is available on the Royal College website: www.royalcollege.ca.
 - Candidates are notified as soon as possible of changes in the examination format or examination timing

Date of examinations

Examination dates will be published prior to the examinations; current dates are available on the Royal College website.

Locations of examination centres

- a) Written examinations will be held in various locations. Written examination centre locations are available on the Royal College website (please refer to the "Date of examinations" section to view writing centres for the respective spring and fall examinations).
- b) Applied examinations (practical, OSCE, Oral) will be held at designated Royal College facilities located in Ottawa, Ontario.
- c) Applied examinations may be held from time to time at alternative locations as directed by the Assessment Committee.

EXAMINATION ELIGIBILITY

General Information

4.1 Obtaining a Royal College examination eligibility ruling letter

- a) Successful completion of a resident's EPAs, milestones, competencies and other training requirements must be documented and attested to by the program director, Competence Committee and the postgraduate dean.
- b) Eligibility for the Royal College examinations requires successful progress through the following stages of training as defined in the national standards of training:
 - Transition to discipline
 - Foundations of discipline
 - Core of discipline
- c) Examination eligibility will be conferred by the Royal College Credentials Unit. Candidates cannot access the examination without a valid eligibility ruling letter.
- d) When the assessment of Canadian residency training for eligibility to access the Royal College examination has been completed, the Royal College will issue a ruling letter on examination eligibility and/or conditions to be met to attain eligibility.
 - A successful 'Anticipation of Completion of Core' (ACC) document is a criterion of eligibility to the Royal College examinations. The ACC must be completed by a residency program director on behalf of the Residency Program Committee (RPC), and informed by the Competence Committee. It must be signed by the program director and postgraduate dean. Submission of this document is required during *Core* and 6 months prior to planned written examinations and/or applied examination.
 - Applicants who do not have a signed ACC from an approved Royal College supervision structure will be ineligible for the Royal College examinations. A requirement for further residency training for a successful ACC document imposes no obligation on any residency program to provide such training.

4.2 Demonstration of satisfactory moral, ethical and professional standing

- a) Candidates must demonstrate satisfactory moral, ethical and professional standing in clinical and/or research activities. This requires that the candidate appropriately relates to patients, students, colleagues, and other health care professionals with respect to gender, ethnicity and cultural, religious and personal values.
- b) If, at any time prior to certification, the Royal College receives information pertaining to a revocation of a medical license, a criminal conviction or charge and/or other relevant information which puts into issue a candidate/candidate's satisfactory moral, ethical and/or professional standing, the Chair of the Credentials Committee shall appoint a subcommittee made up of no less than three members of the Credentials Committee (the Subcommittee) to investigate and review the matter. Upon completion of its investigation and review, the Subcommittee may refuse to grant eligibility, suspend a candidate's eligibility or revoke a candidate's eligibility. Prior to refusing to grant eligibility or to suspending or revoking a

candidate's eligibility, the Subcommittee shall disclose to the candidate the nature of the information received and allow the candidate an opportunity to provide information and make submissions as to his/her satisfactory moral, ethical and/or professional standing. The decision of the Subcommittee is subject to review only in accordance with the reconsideration and appeal processes.

4.3 Reconsideration of a ruling

- a) A review of a ruling may be considered if substantive new information about a resident's credentials or training is received or if there was an error in the administration of policy in an applicant's assessment of training. New information may be received from the applicant or any other knowledgeable source and should be sent to the Office of Specialty Education of the Royal College to the attention of the Director of Assessment.
- b) The request for a reconsideration of a ruling will be considered by the appropriate Royal College credentialing body. The original ruling may be amended or reconfirmed.
- c) A candidate whose initial period of eligibility for a certification examination has expired and who has not passed the examination after the completion of one Royal College-approved study plan and one Royal College-approved period of training in the specialty will **not** be granted any further extension of eligibility for the discipline examination, barring exceptional circumstances. For greater clarity, the completion of any further study plans and/or training in and of itself will generally **not** be considered 'exceptional circumstances' for the purposes of this section.
- d) The applicant must notify the Director of Assessment of the Office of Specialty Education of the Royal College in writing within 60 working days of the date of the ruling, with a clear written statement outlining the ways in which policies were improperly applied.

4.4 Formal review of a decision on a Royal College ruling

- a) Applicants may request a formal review of a decision on a ruling if there was an error in the administration of policy in an applicant's assessment of training. The applicant must notify the Director of Assessment of the Office of Specialty Education of the Royal College in writing within 60 working days of the date of the ruling, with a clear written statement outlining the ways in which policies were improperly applied.
 - A formal review of a Royal College ruling will be conducted by a panel of three (3) members of the Royal College Credentials Committee designated by the Director of Assessment of the Office of Specialty Education of the Royal College.
 - The criteria for membership on the appeal panel would include knowledge of credentialing. If a conflict of interest exists or any other impediment, the Director of Assessment of the Office of Specialty Education of the Royal College will appoint a review panel of members from outside of the Royal College Credentials Committee.
 - Formal reviews of a Royal College ruling are not intended for a review of a ruling on the grounds of substantive new information about credentials or training. Refer to Section 4.3 "Reconsideration of a ruling" for the review process. On the other hand, if there was a misapplication of policy in an assessment of training, an applicant may challenge the decision on a Royal College ruling. In determining whether the decision on a Royal

College ruling conformed to Royal College policies and procedures, the review panel will consider all the information that was available to the Royal College in reaching its decision, including the applicant's statement of misapplication of policy.

- The review panel may amend or reconfirm the Royal College ruling.
- There is no provision for further review to the Royal College of the decision of the formal review panel, which is considered final.

4.5 Withdrawal of examination eligibility

- a) The Royal College retains the authority to withdraw acceptance of an applicant's credentials or withdraw permission to access the examinations on the recommendation of an examination board, the Royal College Credentials Committee, or the applicant's program director.
- b) The Royal College may require that the applicant satisfies specific requirements as a condition of accessing the examination
- c) If a candidate performs poorly on a Royal College examination as determined by the Royal College in its sole and absolute discretion, the Royal College may require the candidate to undergo a Royal College-approved study plan and/or additional training before regaining eligibility to repeat the examination
- d) Withdrawal of a satisfactory ACC will result in withdrawal of examination eligibility.

4.6 Renewal of examination eligibility

- a) A candidate whose eligibility to the examinations has expired after two (2) years through failure on the examinations or through failure to appear at the examinations may, in order to regain examination eligibility, be required to satisfactorily complete a Royal College approved study plan and/or additional residency training as determined by the Royal College in its sole and absolute discretion.
- b) Application for the renewal of eligibility must be made by the deadline in the year before the candidate hopes to be examined.
- c) The Credentials Committee retains the authority to deny a candidate the option of doing a study plan and grant him or her eligibility conditional upon successful completion of Royal College approved training in the discipline.
- d) If a candidate reaches a point where they have not passed the examination after completion of one Royal College-approved study plan and one Royal College-approved period of training in the specialty, no further eligibility for the specialty examination will be granted. Extension of eligibility will only be granted in exceptional circumstances. The Credentials Committee may, in its sole and absolute discretion, deny any further eligibility for the certification examinations regardless of a candidate's completion of any further study plans and/or training. The Credentials Committee's decision in this regard shall be final.
- e) A renewal of eligibility is valid for the next examination session following the granting of the renewal.

4.7 Deferral of examination eligibility

- a) In the event that the candidate misses an examination due to a serious accident, illness or other impediment the Royal College will consider a deferral of examination eligibility for one year. In practice, this will provide the candidate with one additional year of eligibility.

Note: *Deferrals will only be granted in exceptional situations.*

- b) Candidates who know in advance of the examination that they will miss the examination should contact the Royal College to request a deferral as early as possible.
- c) Candidates who miss an examination unexpectedly must submit a request for deferral within five business days of the missed examination date.

All requests for deferral must include the following documentation:

- A written request for deferral and a detailed description of the circumstances leading to the request, signed by the candidate;
- In the case of serious accident or illness, an original letter, on office letterhead, from the candidate's qualified treating professional confirming the accident or illness, along with verification that the accident or illness was serious enough to warrant missing the examination; and,
- In the case of any other impediment, appropriate documentation, from a source with direct involvement or knowledge of the circumstances in question.

Note: *The Royal College may request additional information and/or confirmation, as it considers necessary on a case by case basis.*

- The final decision regarding a request for deferral lies with the Director of Assessment, Office of Specialty Education or a delegate.

Registration

Candidates must register for the examinations by the published deadlines. <http://www.royalcollege.ca/rcsite/credentials-exams/writing-exams/registration/exam-registration-instructions-information-e>. Candidates faxing, mailing or emailing their registration need to ensure that they have a confirmation of delivery of their registration to ensure that the Royal College has received their registration.

Payment of examination fees

Examination fees must be paid in full and are due by the posted deadlines, which can be found on the Royal College website.

- a) Examination fees for the components of the examinations will be published prior to the examination registration deadline. Candidates need to refer to the published fees prior to submitting their registration to the exams.
- b) Non-payment of fees by the appropriate deadline may result in the candidate's registration to the examination being declined.
- c) Examination fees are reviewed annually by the Royal College and are subject to change. To obtain an examination fee schedule please refer to the Royal College website.

Withdrawals from examinations

- a) Notification of withdrawal must be received by the Examination Candidate Unit up to 20 business days prior to the first component of the examination. Upon receipt of notification, 50% of the examination fees will be refunded. Notification of withdrawal less than 20 days prior to the examination will result in no refund of the fees.
- b) All candidates who withdraw from the examination, or do not appear at the examination, will be considered to have used an attempt.

Deadlines

All applications must be received before the end of the business day on the date of the relevant deadline. Please refer to the Royal College website to see the current deadlines for the spring and fall examinations.

Access to exams

Access to the examinations will be granted to candidates that have registered and have received a confirmation of their examination registration. Candidates that do not have proof of registration will not be given access to the examination cycle for that given year.

Confidentiality

Candidates will be required to sign a confidentiality statement as part of the registration process and examination process.

Candidate conduct

Examination candidates need to conduct themselves in a professional and ethical manner. The following will apply during all examinations.

- a) All examination information is confidential. Any transmission of examination information, either written or verbal is expressly prohibited without prior consent of the Royal College. No one is permitted to make written notes or to record, in any way, the contents of an examination.
- b) Candidates must not procure, use, or attempt to use or distribute any improper or unauthorized materials.
- c) No examination candidate may bring into the examination room any books, notes, electronic communication devices with memory capability; e.g., smart phones, cell phones, pagers or other materials containing information pertaining to the examination.
- d) Talk or any other form of communication between candidates during examinations is not allowed. All communication devices must be deposited with the invigilators prior to the start of the examination.
- e) Candidates are not permitted to leave the examination room until one half hour after the examination has begun, and in no case before attendance has been taken. A candidate who leaves before the examination is over must hand in all completed and attempted work.
- f) If books, notes, etc., cannot be left outside the examination room, they must be put in a place designated by the Invigilator before the candidate takes a seat.

- g) Students writing examinations are responsible for arriving at the right time and place and must have with them the appropriate identification to gain access to the examination.
- h) The doors of the examination room will normally be opened at least 10 minutes before the starting hour. Candidates that are late for the start of the examination will need to sign a waiver. Candidates should be aware that a portion of time will be lost while the examination is assigned and instructions are being given by an invigilator. They must enter the room quietly, and time will not be extended for the examination.
- i) Candidates must remain seated. A candidate needing to speak to the invigilator (e.g., to ask for additional supplies) should indicate this by raising their hand.
- j) Questions concerning possible errors, ambiguities, or omissions in the examination paper must be directed to the invigilator, who will investigate them through the proper channels. The invigilator is not permitted to answer questions other than those concerning the examination paper.
- k) All work must be done in accordance with the examination instructions and must be handed in to the invigilator.
- l) At the close of the examination, candidates must stop writing and submit their work at once.
- m) Food is permitted at the discretion of the chief invigilator. Food should be brought in prior to the exam. Students will not be permitted to go to vending machines/the cafeteria during an examination.
- n) Bathroom privileges: only one student at a time will be allowed to go to the bathroom, and the student may be escorted there and back by an invigilator (at the invigilator's discretion).
- o) No student will be permitted to leave during the final fifteen minutes of the examination.

Candidates are reminded that cheating on any examination is considered a serious offence which could lead to expulsion from the examination and affect future eligibility. Candidates are not permitted to have in their possession, or to use, any unauthorized materials during an examination.

Conflicts of interest

The Royal College tries to ensure that potential examiner and examinee conflicts are minimized. A conflict that could exist may include: a past candidate/faculty teaching relationship; a past work based candidate/examiner relationship; past candidate/examiner encounters in other exams; all other relationship encounters that could present a bias at an examination.

In certain circumstances, if conflicts cannot be managed appropriately or minimized, candidates may be examined by members of the examination committees under the approval of the Examination Committee leadership and the Royal College leadership.

Candidates requiring an examination accommodation

- a) The Royal College will attempt to accommodate candidates with specific requirements for the examination provided that the validity of the examination is maintained and the accommodation does not cause undue hardship or unreasonable expense for the Royal College.

b) Requests for examination accommodation must be submitted to the Royal College at the time of application for the examination. Requests must include the following documentation:

- A description of the candidate's required accommodation;
- A description of the candidate's functional limitations;
- A description of any previously provided accommodations by their university or other medical education programs;
- Supporting documentation from a qualified treating professional appropriate for evaluating the limitation, including specific recommendations for testing accommodations.

Note: *The Royal College may request additional information, as it considers necessary, on a case by case basis.*

- c) In the event that the need for an examination accommodation arises after the application for examination is submitted, the candidate must inform the Manager of Credentials, The McLaughlin Centre for Evaluation, and submit the documentation described above as soon as possible. It may not be possible to arrange examination accommodations requested too close to the examination date.
- d) The final decision regarding an accommodation request lies with the Director of Assessment, Office of Specialty Education or a delegate.
- e) Prior to taking the Royal College examination, the candidate and the Royal College must confirm special arrangements in writing.

Results

Candidate results will be posted to a secure server on the date specified on the Royal College website link for accessing results. Results are typically posted 10 days after the completion of the exam or sooner. Please refer to the information link to review your results posting date. Exam results will be posted after 12 PM on the specified date for your specialty.

Examination results go through a rigorous data verification process to ensure that posted results have been audited and verified as complete and accurate.

Appeal of Results

Currently under development.