



ROYAL COLLEGE
OF PHYSICIANS AND SURGEONS OF CANADA
COLLÈGE ROYAL
DES MÉDECINS ET CHIRURGIENS DU CANADA

Policies for Certification in a Competence by Design Model of Residency Training

June 2020

These regulations supersede previously published editions.

The Royal College reserves the right to change these regulations at any time, without prior notification.

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1. General/Background

The Royal College is the national professional association that oversees the assessment of medical specialists in Canada. In its mandate articulated by a Royal Charter in 1929, the Royal College was given a key role in the oversight of the system of specialty medicine in Canada. The Royal College verifies that a physician has met all the requirements necessary for Royal College certification. To become eligible for examination — physicians must meet an array of credentialing requirements set by the Credentials Committee and a designated specialty committee of the Royal College. With significant assistance from volunteer Fellows, the Royal College produces and administers the national certification exams.

Competency by Design (CBD)

The CBD initiative is based on a competency-based model of education and assessment. The Royal College and its partners are bringing the best of this learning to the development of CBD to achieve the ultimate end goal: improving patient care through an explicit focus on the outcomes desired of our trainees and practicing physicians and surgeons.

In the Competence by Design model, learners will progress through their residency education program and stages of training by demonstrating competence on Entrustable Professional Activities (EPA) and related milestones within their current stage of training. Promotion decisions are based on observations made of the learner as successful completion of EPAs and other observations and feedback on the candidate. An electronic portfolio that captures resident information and observations of competence is required to document resident progression. In addition to successful completion of stages of training, and an electronic portfolio, successful completion of specialty specific examinations remains necessary for Royal College certification.

All accredited specialty and sub-specialty training programs in Canada are transitioning to a CBD model of training. This policy is applicable to candidates training in a CBD program.

Guide to this Policy

2. Definitions/Terminology

Assessment Committee

The Assessment Committee is a Royal College committee responsible for the governance of assessment matters relevant to Royal College credentialing and examination requirements.

Clinical Supervisor

The clinical supervisor appointed by the Residency program director oversees the trainee for a specific milestone or milestones during their residency. He or she approves the documented evidence for the milestones that he/she supervised.

Competence

Competence is the array of abilities across multiple domains or aspects of physician performance.

Competence is both conditional on, and constrained by, each physician's practice context, is dynamic and continually changes over time.

Competence by Design (CBD)

Competence by Design (CBD) is the Royal College competence-based medical education (CBME) approach to residency training and specialty practice in Canada, which focuses on outcomes that are based on a framework of competence.

Competence Committee (CC)

A Competence Committee (CC) is a university committee responsible for assessing the progress of trainees in achieving the specialty-specific requirements of a program. These requirements are established for each stage of training.

Each University's residency program committee commissions the creation of a CC with designated members who will regularly review and synthesize the various assessment information in each trainee's portfolio.

Credentials Committee

The Royal College Credentials Committee is a subcommittee of the Assessment Committee. It advises on policy relating to credentialing issues and provides insight on credentials policy by determining the criteria and conditions for eligibility for Royal College certification.

Discipline-Specific Examination Boards

Royal College Exam Boards act on behalf of the Royal College in matters relating to the content, format, evaluation of candidates and marking of the examination. The discipline-specific examination board is supported by Royal College staff in the production and execution of the examination. Planning of logistics and psychometric analysis is the responsibility of the McLaughlin Centre for Evaluation, Office of Specialty Education. The board must ensure that the examination effectively tests the Royal College objectives of training for the discipline.

Entrustable Professional Activity (EPA)

EPAs are “units of professional practice”, that are built of tasks and abilities. Once sufficient competence is achieved, these tasks are “entrusted to the unsupervised execution by a trainee”. EPAs can be completed independently and are to be observed and measured (in both process and outcomes) for use in entrustment decisions (ten Cate, 2013).

- Typically, each EPA integrates multiple milestones
- EPAs are a measure of assessment defined by the Royal College and assessed by the universities.

Exam Candidate

A resident who has received exam eligibility from the Royal College is considered to be a candidate for the examination. They remain a candidate as long as they retain examination eligibility or until they successfully complete all of their examination components.

Examination Format

Each Royal College Examination Board determines the construct of their discipline’s 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 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 Discipline Specific Examination Boards. Each examination will 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.
- **Applied Exam:** An Applied exam may be comprised of an Objective Structured Clinical Examination (OSCE), Structured Oral Examinations (Orals), and or Practical Examinations (Practical).
- **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.
- **Practical Examinations (Practical):** A practical examination requires candidates to undertake practical tasks while observed by an examiner. Practical examinations can take 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.

Examination Committee

The Royal College Examination Committee oversees the discipline- specific examination boards and

advises on all matters relevant to Royal College specialty examinations, including timing, content, and evaluation of exams.

Examination Eligibility Ruling

A ruling is a decision made by the Royal College Credentials Unit on examination eligibility only. Once the resident's program has decided the resident is ready to receive exam eligibility, the program will notify the Royal College Credentials Unit who will confer this eligibility to the resident in the form of a ruling letter. This letter will outline the candidate's examination eligibility. The Royal College retains the authority to withdraw examination eligibility. Please refer to the conditions on rulings outlined in Section V "Royal College Rulings on Examination Eligibility".

Examiner

Examiners are members of the Royal College discipline-specific examination board. Examiners have many roles in the development and delivery of exams. These roles include development of written and applied exam questions and evaluation of the candidate's performance. For the Written examination, the examiner would mark assigned SAQ component of the examination. For the Comprehensive objective examination (COE), the examiner would examine candidates during the "applied" oral and OSCE components as well as marking the SAQ portion of the examination.

Milestone

A milestone is the expected ability of a health care professional at a stage of expertise. CanMEDS milestones illustrate the expected progression of competence from novice to mastery associated with each enabling CanMEDS competency. Each milestone is an observable marker of a person's ability along a developmental continuum. In the context of CBD, milestones are used for planning, teaching and assessment.

- Milestones are observable and can therefore be linked with feedback
- Milestones are the organizational framework for the curriculum; and,
- EPAs are made up of milestones. Milestones are more detailed and are clear descriptions with explicit statements.

Observer

The observer supports learning in residency, contributes to the narrative and reviews evidence. Observations made by the observer are noted in the learner's portfolio. Observers may include preceptors, nursing staff, and senior residents who have already achieved the EPA that is being observed.

Postgraduate Dean

Part of the role of the university Postgraduate Dean is to attest that the trainee has acquired all the competencies.

Program Director

The university Program Director guides learning, meets with learners regularly, and reviews/monitors a learner's progress. The Program Director attests that the trainee has acquired all the competencies required to progress through their learning plan.

Resident

The Royal College classifies postgraduate clinical trainees in accredited Royal College approved programs as residents if they meet all of the following criteria:

- The applicant is registered with the office of postgraduate medical education of a medical school in Canada. The applicant is admitted to and enrolled in an accredited Royal College residency program,

the content of which is defined, supervised and assessed by the residency Program Director and the Residency Program Committee, informed by a Competence Committee, and

- The applicant's postgraduate clinical training is in a discipline recognized by the Royal College.

Royal College Mainport ePortfolio

The Royal College Mainport ePortfolio provides evidence of a physician's development and maintenance of competence from residency until retirement. It tracks the learner's progress as he or she meets milestones and develops competencies, and it identifies assessment strategies to evaluate the performance of Royal College Entrustable Professional Activities (RC EPAs).

Stages of Training – (Competence Continuum)

The CBD Competence Continuum is a series of integrated stages, which begin upon entry into a discipline specific residency training program. Residents will transition through the stages of training upon attestation by the Program Director, and Postgraduate Dean, in consultation with the Competence Committee and Residency Program Committee.

- *Transition to discipline*

This stage emphasizes the orientation and assessment of new trainees arriving from different medical schools and programs.

- *Foundations of discipline*

This stage covers broad based competencies that every trainee must acquire before moving on to more advanced discipline specific competencies.

- *Core of discipline*

This stage covers the core competencies that make up the majority of the discipline

- *Royal College examination*

Residents will appear for the written and/or applied component of the Royal College examination during the core of discipline stage and the transition to practice stage

- *Transition to practice*

In this stage, the senior trainee should demonstrate readiness to make the transition to independent practice

Experiences

A training experience replaces the 'rotation' in the traditional residency education model. Training experiences include both mandatory and recommended training activities, which support a resident's acquisition of competence. These activities can include: clinical care such as inpatient care, ambulatory clinics, performing technical procedures; or extra-clinical activities (e.g., simulation exercises, scholarly projects, journal clubs, etc.).

Written-before-Applied

Written-before-Applied is an exam format requiring candidates to complete the written component of the exam with a passing grade before being invited to take the applied (oral, OSCE, practical) component of the exam. This format will be applied to all candidates in programs that have moved to a competence-by-design training model.

3. Eligibility for Certification

3.1 Introduction

The following represents the basic requirements for eligibility for the Royal College certification. Each step in the process is outlined in more detail in applicable section of these policies and procedures:

- 3.1.1 The candidate must maintain enrollment in an accredited Royal College residency program in a CBD discipline.
- 3.1.2 The candidate must complete all training requirements, including demonstration of competence in the required Entrustable Professional Activities (EPAs) prescribed by the discipline, as evidenced by the attestation of the applicant's Postgraduate Dean and Residency Program Director, in consultation with a Competence Committee.
- 3.1.3 The candidate must be deemed exam eligible by the Royal College, as evidenced by a Royal College ruling letter for exam eligibility.
- 3.1.4 The candidate must complete all Royal College exam components before being invited to become certified and be invited to become a member of the Royal College.

3.2 Demonstration of Satisfactory Moral, Ethical and Professional Standing

- 3.2.1 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.
- 3.2.2 If, at any time prior to certification, the Royal College receives information pertaining to a restriction of a medical license, a criminal conviction or charge and/or other relevant information which puts into issue a candidate's satisfactory moral, ethical and/or professional standing, the matter will be investigated and reviewed by the Director of Assessment, Office of Specialty Education or a delegate.
- 3.2.3 Upon completion of the investigation and review, the Director of Assessment or his or her delegate has the following options for decision:
 - deny eligibility,

- suspend a candidate's eligibility (with or without conditions for re-instatement of eligibility); or,
- revoke a candidate's eligibility.

3.2.4 The candidate may appeal the decision of the Director of Assessment or his or her delegate pursuant to the procedure in Section 5.7 of this Policy.

4. Postgraduate Medical Education in a CBD Discipline

4.1 Residency Education

To be eligible for a Royal College examination under this policy, residents must complete the training requirements within a Royal College accredited residency training program in a CBD discipline.

4.2 Training requirements

By the end of training, the resident must have achieved the all training requirements, including demonstration of competence in the required Royal College Entrustable Professional Activities (EPAs) prescribed by the discipline. Their achievement of these requirements must be attested to by the resident's Postgraduate Dean and Residency Program Director, in consultation with a Competence Committee.

Residency Programs will communicate resident exam readiness, and completion of training to the Royal College in three stages, as a condition of the resident being granted and maintaining eligibility to their discipline-specific examination, and ultimately, certification. Documents must be submitted by the Royal College discipline specific deadline:

- 4.2.1 Notification of Exam Eligibility: The Royal College Credentials Unit requires notification from the resident's program that the resident is ready to receive exam eligibility. This notification is given to the Credentials Unit by submission of a document attesting that the program believes the resident should be ruled eligible for the exam. Ruling letters conferring exam eligibility are sent to the resident after this document has been received.
- 4.2.2 Confirmation of Exam Readiness: The Royal College Credentials Unit must receive a confirmation prior to the exam to ensure the candidate is intending to appear at that year's specialty examination. The program submits this on behalf of the candidate, and it is received in the months leading up to the exam as a final confirmation that the candidate will be challenging the examination.
- 4.2.3 Eligibility for Certification: A notification must be sent from the program to the Royal College Credentials Unit, signed by the post-graduate Dean, near the end of the resident's training, confirming the date of the resident's completion of training. Upon receipt of this confirmation, alongside acknowledgement that the resident has successfully completed their specialty examination, the Royal College will contact the resident about certification and an invitation to become a Fellow of the Royal College.

4.3 Policy on Training Requirements

In evaluating completion of training requirements, the Post-Graduate Dean, the Program Director, and the

Competence Committee, as applicable, may apply the following policies:

4.3.1 Accelerated Achievement of EPAs:

It is understood by the Royal College that residents may have training or clinical experiences prior to entering a CBD residency program. The Competence Committee should use evidence from those previous clinical experiences to recommend achievement of an EPA to the Program Director and competence committee. In such circumstances, the previous clinical experiences must be documented by the competence committee as justification as to why they represent a valid substitute for clinical observations and workplace based assessments.

4.3.2 Version of EPAs:

The discipline-specific training requirements under which residents are assessed will evolve over time. In order to ensure that residents are assessed on current standards, the Royal College requires that the most current training requirements (EPAs) are applied to the resident when the resident is promoted to their next stage of training. Their current stage of training, as well as any completed stage of training, will not be affected.

4.3.3 Modifications to Residency Training:

It is understood by the Royal College that residents may require leaves of absence from training. The circumstances that would qualify residents for leaves of absence are determined by the university. Following leave, trainees must be reassessed on their performance on their most recent stages of training, which allows the Program Director and Postgraduate Dean to determine if any adjustments to the training program are required.

4.3.4 Transferability of EPAs between Universities:

Required EPAs are the same for the specific discipline regardless of the university. If a resident transfers to another university for training it is the responsibility of the Program Director and Postgraduate Dean of the former institution to identify to the Program Director and Postgraduate Dean of the accepting institution which EPAs and milestones have been achieved by the resident to date. It is the responsibility of the accepting Program Director and Postgraduate Dean to approve the achievement of any EPAs and milestones.

4.3.5 Transferring from CBD to Non-CBD program:

In the event that a trainee transfers from a specialty using a Competence-by-Design model of training to a specialty that does not utilize a CBD model, the program director will work alongside the trainee to assess his or her knowledge and create a plan for transitioning the trainee into a traditional time-based residency program. The program director will be required to submit a letter to the Royal College Credentials Unit recommending credit for previous training. This letter must be supported by the post-graduate dean. This information will be necessary for the trainee to register for the examination. The letter may be submitted via email to credentials@royalcollege.ca

5. Royal College Rulings on Examination Eligibility

5.1 Policy

When the resident's program has determined that the trainee is progressing through their training as expected and is prepared to sit the Royal College exam, the Credentials Unit of the Royal College should be notified by the program, in accordance with Section 4.2 of this policy. The Royal College will then issue a "ruling letter" on examination eligibility.

5.2 Purpose

This Royal College policy provides a standardized process for oversight and decision-making regarding access to the Royal College discipline-specific examinations through the provision of a "ruling letter" which confers examination eligibility. Receiving a Royal College "ruling letter" does not mean certification has been granted, rather, it is a step in the process of becoming certified.

5.3 Examination Eligibility Ruling

- 5.3.1 Upon receipt of a "Notification of Exam Eligibility" document from the resident's program, the Royal College Credentials Unit will issue a "ruling letter" to the candidate.
- 5.3.2 To maintain eligibility for the examination, the Royal College must receive a "Confirmation of Exam Readiness" from the candidate's residency program by the discipline specific deadline, confirming the candidate's 'exam readiness'.

5.4 Conditions Pertaining to Rulings

- 5.4.1 An initial ruling of eligibility for any Royal College examination component is valid for 3 years, subject to the time limitation set out in 5.5.1.
- 5.4.2 A candidate must be granted eligibility for each exam component separately (e.g., written, oral or applied). A candidate will be required to successfully complete one exam component before being granted eligibility to a subsequent exam component. Ruling letters conferring exam eligibility will state the exam component for which eligibility has been granted.

Note: If a candidate is successful on the written component of the examination, but unsuccessful on the applied component, they will not be required to repeat the written component in subsequent years, subject to the time limitation set out in section 5.5.1.

5.5 Renewal of Examination Eligibility

- 5.5.1 Candidates must complete all required examination components for their specialty within five years of being granted eligibility.
- 5.5.2 A candidate whose eligibility for any component of the exam has expired after three years through failure on the examination or through failure to appear at the examination may apply for one additional year of eligibility for the examination component, resulting in a maximum of four (4) years of eligibility for each exam component, subject to the time limitation set out in 5.5.1.
- Note: If a candidate should use all four years of eligibility to pass their written examination component, their maximum eligibility for the applied component will be limited to the remainder of the five years of examination eligibility set out in 5.5.1.
- 5.5.3 A renewal of eligibility is valid only for the examination component session in the year following the granting of the renewal.
- 5.5.4 If a candidate chooses not to renew their eligibility for an examination component in the fourth year, then the candidate loses that year of eligibility. The only exception is a circumstance where the Royal College has granted a deferral of eligibility (see Section 5.6).
- 5.5.5 Application for the renewal of eligibility must be made by the deadline in the year before the candidate wishes to be examined.
- 5.5.6 A candidate will be granted no further eligibility on the occurrence of either of the following:
- the candidate has exhausted four years of eligibility on a single exam component (written, oral or applied) without successful completion;
 - the candidate has not completed all examination components within five years of their initial grant of eligibility.
- 5.5.7 Candidates who have exhausted their eligibility under section 5.5.6 may only re-apply for examination eligibility upon completion of additional accredited residency training and submitting a request for a reconsideration of a ruling on exam eligibility pursuant to the reconsideration of a ruling process set out in section 5.7.

5.6 Deferral of examination eligibility

In the event that the candidate cannot attend or unexpectedly misses an examination due to a serious accident, illness or other impediment, the Royal College will consider a deferral of examination eligibility for one attempt.

NOTE: Deferrals will only be granted in exceptional situations. Deferrals will generally not be granted for missed flights and other travel delays, minor illness, lack of preparedness or scheduling conflicts.

- 5.6.1 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.
- 5.6.2 Candidates who miss an examination unexpectedly must submit a request for deferral within five business days of the missed examination date.
- 5.6.3 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 identifying and confirming the accident or illness, together with verification that the accident or illness is or 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.

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

5.7 Reconsideration of a Ruling on Examination Eligibility

- 5.7.1 A reconsideration of a ruling on examination eligibility may be initiated at the request of an applicant or by the Director of Assessment of the Office of Specialty Education of the Royal College, or his or her delegate, if substantive new information about an applicant'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.
- 5.7.2 Requests for reconsideration of a ruling will be considered by the Director of Assessment or his or her delegate.
- 5.7.3 In the event that a reconsideration of a ruling is initiated by the Director of Assessment or his or her delegate, the Director of Assessment or his or her delegate shall disclose to the applicant the nature of the information received and allow the applicant an opportunity to provide relevant information and make submissions as to his or her examination eligibility.
- 5.7.4 The Director of Assessment or his or her delegate shall issue a written decision either confirming or amending the original ruling with respect to examination eligibility and provide a copy of the decision to the applicant.
- 5.7.5 The applicant may appeal the decision of the Director of Assessment or his or her delegate following the procedure set out in Section 5.8 of this Policy.

5.8 Appeal of a Decision on a Royal College Ruling Policy

- 5.8.1 An applicant who wishes to appeal a decision made under Sections 3.2 or 5.7 of this policy must notify the Director of Assessment of the Office of Specialty Education of the Royal College within 30 working days of the date of the decision with a written statement of the reasons for the request. The appeal request must be submitted with a non-refundable administrative fee (see Royal College website for current fees).
- 5.8.2 The appeal of the decision 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 or his or her delegate.
- 5.8.3 If a conflict of interest exists or any other impediment such that a panel of three (3) members selected from the Royal College Credentials Committee is unfeasible in the circumstances, the Director of Assessment of the Office of Specialty Education of the Royal College or his or her delegate shall appoint appeal panel members from outside of the Royal College Credentials Committee.

- 5.8.4 Appeals shall be conducted by way of a written hearing. In extraordinary circumstances, the Director of Assessment or his or her delegate may, in his or her sole discretion, direct that the appeal be conducted by way of an oral hearing, in whole or in part, instead of a written hearing. The decision of the Director of Assessment or his or her delegate in this regard is final and not subject to review or appeal.
- 5.8.5 Prior to the date of the oral hearing or the date for deliberations in the case of a written hearing, the Director of Assessment or his or her delegate shall provide to each member of the appeal panel all materials, documents and evidence submitted by the parties as well as any other relevant information to the matters at issue.
- 5.8.6 Within 30 days of its deliberations, the Chair of the Panel shall issue in writing the panel's decision and any other relevant information or recommendation to the Office of the Director of Assessment.
- 5.8.7 The appeal panel may confirm or amend, in whole or in part, the decision of the Director of Assessment or his or her delegate made under Section 3.2 or 5.7 of this policy, as the case may be.
- 5.8.8 There is no provision for further appeal to the Royal College of the decision of the appeal panel, which is considered final.

6. The Royal College Examination

6.1 Exam Policies

This examination policy for candidates in a CBD Program outlines the policies and procedures for the administration of the Royal College examination for CBD disciplines.

6.2 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 must obtain confirmation of receipt of their registration from the Royal College to ensure that the Royal College has received their registration.

6.3 Payment of Examination fees

Examination fees must be paid in full and are due by the posted deadline

- 6.3.1 Examination fees for each component of the examinations will be published prior to the

examination registration deadline. Candidates need to refer to the published fees prior to submitting their exam registration.

6.3.2 Non-payment of fees by the deadline may result in the candidate's registration to the examination being declined.

6.3.3 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.

6.4 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.

6.5 Confidentiality

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

6.6 Withdrawals from Examinations

6.6.1 Notification of withdrawal must be received by the Examination Unit at least 20 business days prior to the first component of the examination. Upon receipt, 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.

6.6.2 All candidates who withdraw from the examination, or do not appear at the examination, will have been considered to have used one year of eligibility, unless granted a deferral pursuant to section 6.5.

6.7 Frequency of Examinations

6.7.1 The Royal College will offer discipline specific examinations on a yearly basis as directed by the Assessment Committee.

6.7.2 Where specialties have more than one examination component, each component will be offered once during an examination year. For example, if a discipline has a written exam component and an applied exam component, each component will be offered only once during an exam year.

6.8 Language of Examinations

6.8.1 The Royal College examinations are offered in both English and French.

6.8.2 Candidates must declare at the time of examination registration whether they wish to be examined in English or French for each component of the exam. The candidate must consistently respond to questions on the exam component using the declared language.

6.8.3 Candidates whose first language is not English or French should ensure that they have reasonable fluency, written and oral, in either English or French.

6.9 Date of Examinations

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

6.10 Examination Sites

Examinations, including the Surgical Foundations examination, may be held in various centres across Canada. Candidates will be notified of the site(s) where the examination(s) will occur when candidates receive the Royal College exam registration form.

6.11 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 are also required to provide government issued photo identification at the time of the examination.

6.12 Candidate Conduct

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

- 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.
- Candidates must not procure, use, or attempt to use or distribute any improper or unauthorized materials.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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, examination materials and notes.
- 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.
- Candidates are responsible for arriving at the right time and place for the examination and must have with them government issued photo identification to gain access to the examination.
- 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 being distributed and instructions are being given by an invigilator. They must enter the room quietly, and time will not be extended for the examination.
- 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.
- 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.
- All work must be done in accordance with the examination instructions and must be handed in to the invigilator.
- At the close of the examination, candidates must stop writing and submit their work at once.

- Food is permitted at the discretion of the Chief Invigilator. Food should be brought in prior to the exam. Candidates will not be permitted to go to vending machines/the cafeteria during an examination.
- Bathroom privileges: only one candidate at a time will be allowed to go to the bathroom, and the candidate may be escorted there and back by an invigilator (at the invigilator's discretion).
- No candidate will be permitted to leave during the final fifteen minutes of the examination.
- Candidates are required to report examination process irregularities to the responsible local authority (i.e., the Chair of the Discipline Specific Examination Board (or a delegate), an invigilator, or the local coordinator)

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.

6.13 Conflicts

The Royal College tries to ensure that potential examiner and candidate 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; and
- all other relationship encounters that could present a bias at an examination.

In the event that a candidate identifies a conflict, they are obligated to bring the conflict to the attention of the examination invigilator who will then bring it to the attention of the Chair of the Discipline-Specific Examination Board who will identify a substitute member of the same Discipline-Specific Examination Board to take over the examiner duties.

The Royal College cannot guarantee that a candidate will have new examiners when re-writing or taking multiple examinations. Candidates may not request substitute examiners unless there is a legitimate conflict.

If you anticipate a conflict of interest with an examiner, please report it to the Royal College Credentials Unit at candidates@royalcollege.ca before the exam.

6.14 Candidates requiring an Examination Accommodation

- 6.14.1 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.
- 6.14.2 Requests for examination accommodation must be submitted to the Royal College at the time of application for the examination. Candidates may submit their request to examaccommodation@royalcollege.ca. Requests must include the following documentation:
- A signed letter from the candidate with a description of the need for accommodation and its severity, along with a description of the required accommodation;
 - If the candidate has previously been provided accommodations by their university or other medical education programs, the candidate should provide documentation of the accommodations

provided;

- Supporting documentation from a qualified treating professional confirming the need for accommodation, its severity, the candidates' functional limitations, and specific recommendations for the accommodation. All supporting documentation must be provided on office letterhead, from the candidate's fully licensed practising physician, clinical psychologist, or other appropriate licensed healthcare provider (the practitioner cannot be a relative or spouse of the candidate);
- If the supporting documentation specified above is more than two years old, the candidate must provide up-dated documentation from a qualified treating professional confirming that the original documentation and functional limitations outlined therein are still valid.

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

- 6.14.3 In the event that the need for an examination accommodation arises after the application for examination is submitted, the candidate must inform the Program Manager, Formal Reviews and Accommodations at examaccommodation@royalcollege.ca and submit the documentation described in section 7.15.2 as soon as possible. In some circumstances, it may not be possible to arrange examination accommodations requested too close to the examination date.
- 6.14.4 The final decision regarding an accommodation request lies with the Director of Assessment, Office of Specialty Education or a delegate.
- 6.14.5 Prior to taking the Royal College examination, the candidate and the Royal College must confirm special arrangements and accommodations in writing.
- 6.14.6 Candidates requesting exam scheduling accommodations in relation to religious observances may do so using the exam accommodations process.

6.15 Results/posting of marks

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 within 10 days of the completion of the exam.

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

6.16 Expiration of Exam Results

Candidates who successfully complete all exam components in their specialty will receive a letter from the Credentials Unit acknowledging the candidate's successful result. Additionally, this letter will contain an invitation to become certified by the Royal College pending any further requirements (e.g., completing training). This results letter will be valid for five years. If the outstanding requirements outlined in the letter have not been met and certification has not been achieved within five years, the candidate would be required to re-take all examination components in their specialty and complete all outstanding requirements to re-qualify for certification.

7. Privacy Policy

All documents and information obtained by the Royal College during the course of an assessment of training will be kept confidential, except as required or permitted by law. Candidates are requested to provide copies and NOT original documents. All personal information is managed in accordance with the Royal College Privacy Policy. Please refer to the Privacy Policy on the Royal College website: www.royalcollege.ca for an explanation of how personal information is managed.