# Policy on Formal Review of Examinations

### Objective & Scope

### This document outlines the policy and procedures for the formal review of examinations of the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada (the “Royal College”). It is intended for candidates, Chairs, and members of Discipline Specific Examination Boards (including invigilators appointed by the Royal College), Examination and Assessment Committee members, and Royal College staff.

Formal reviews of examinations are part of the evaluation and quality improvement system used by the Royal College to grant specialist certification. They provide a means to investigate the circumstances of the written, oral, or other type of examination administered to one or several candidates, and to ascertain whether the **process** was carried out under conditions appropriate to the conduct of an examination as determined by the Discipline Specific Examination Boards and approved by the Examination Committee of the Royal College. Formal reviews of examinations involve candidates, Royal College examiners, the Examination Committee, the Assessment Committee, and the Office of Standards and Assessment to identify any **significant irregularities in the conduct of the examination process** and any procedural unfairness materially affecting one or several candidates.

### Definitions & Acronyms

This section defines key terms used in the policy.

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| Royal College | The Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada |
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| Formal Review | A review conducted under this policy based on alleged significant procedural irregularities in the examination and assessment process. |
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| Procedural Irregularity | An irregularity in the conduct of the examination process. |
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| Formal Review Panel | A panel consisting of three Royal College Fellows who are members of the Royal College Assessment and/or Examination Committees constituted under this policy. |
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| Paper Review | A review by a Formal Review Panel of the written submissions and all materials, documents and evidence submitted by the parties. |
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| Oral Hearing | A hearing before the Formal Review Panel. The candidate and the Royal College may appear in person or be represented by counsel, or both, and the hearing may be conducted in person or by electronic means (telephone conference, video conference, etc.). |

### Policy

3.1Formal reviews of examinations are conducted only based on alleged significant procedural irregularities in the assessment process, not because of alleged errors in content. The exclusion of errors in content applies to allegations of errors in either the questions and structure of the examination, or the evaluation and content of the responses provided by the candidate.

3.2 The review process is not a re-grading or re-scoring exercise. This scope of review is designed to act as a safeguard for the validity of the examination and assessment process.

3.3 The distinction between content reviews and process reviews is of the utmost importance. Requests for reviews based on alleged errors in content will not be processed. A request for a formal review will only be considered in the event of a procedural irregularity serious enough to affect materially the candidate's performance.

Examples of potential issues that do NOT constitute process irregularities include:

* Disagreements or concerns regarding the content and/or structure of the examination.
* Disagreements or concerns regarding the grading of the examination.
* Concerns regarding the extent of post-examination feedback provided to candidates.
* Requests for disclosure of Royal College documentation and/or records.
* Mere fact of repeat examiners.
* Requests for the Royal College to consider information not normally considered as part of the evaluation process, such as FITERs (Final In-Training Evaluation Reports) and reference letters.

3.4 Principles:

* Examiners in each specialty are authorities on content. Their judgment relative to the correctness of a candidate’s answers is not open to challenge, otherwise the review would become a content-oriented discussion between experts.
* An examiner’s decision with respect to the correctness or completeness of a response and their assessment of a candidate’s knowledge and/or skills is final. While a candidate may disagree with their decision, such disagreement does not constitute grounds for review.
* On occasion, deviations from the stated format or conduct of the examination may be unavoidable and irregularities may occur that do not result in any unfairness or significantly affect the performance of the candidate.

3.5 Formal reviews will be initiated and conducted in accordance with the procedures set out in Appendix A.

### Contact(s)

For information or clarification, please contact:

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### Appendices

Appendix A: Formal Review Procedures

### Policy record

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| Approved by: | Assessment Committee & Committee on Specialty Education |
| Original approval date: | November 2017 |
| Approval path: | Assessment Committee & Committee on Specialty Education |
| Effective date: | November 2017 |
| Revised approval date: | November 24, 2022 |
| Date of next review: | November 2025 |
| Royal College Office: | TMCE, Assessment |
| Version status: | Approved |
| Keywords: | Formal review, procedural irregularity, formal review panel, paper review, oral hearing, repeat examination |
| Information security classification | Public |