

Special Consideration for Assessment Policy

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| Area of College | Education, Learning & Assessment |
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| References/Legislation | |
| Associated RACP Documents | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Special consideration summary outcomes table (Appendix A) • Exceptional circumstances categories (Appendix B) • Circumstances which do not constitute grounds for special consideration (Appendix C) • Special Consideration Application Guide and Form • Special Consideration Guidance to Committees • Reconsideration, Review and Appeals By-Law • Privacy Policy • Records Management Policy • Assessment Policy • Standards for RACP Assessment Programs |
| Applicability | Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand |

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|---|-----------|
| 1. INTRODUCTION | 3 |
| 2. PURPOSE | 3 |
| 3. SCOPE | 3 |
| 4. POLICY CONTENT | 3 |
| 4.1. Circumstances that may require special consideration | 3 |
| 4.2. Outcomes of an application for special consideration | 4 |
| 4.3. Application process for special consideration | 5 |
| 4.4. Privacy and Consent | 6 |
| 5. RECONSIDERATION, REVIEW AND APPEALS | 6 |
| 6. REVIEW OF POLICY..... | 7 |
| 7. DEFINITIONS | 7 |
| 8. HISTORY | 8 |
| Appendix A - Outcome Summary Table..... | 9 |
| Appendix B - Categories of exceptional circumstances | 12 |
| Appendix C - Circumstances which do not constitute grounds for special consideration | 13 |

1. INTRODUCTION

Throughout the course of RACP training programs, trainees may experience exceptional circumstances that impact assessment activities. Such circumstances, not ordinarily encountered or anticipated and beyond the control of a trainee, may impact their ability to attend or perform optimally in an examination, or complete or submit a work-based assessment requirement.

The RACP is committed to supporting all trainees by providing reasonable adjustments where necessary to ensure equitable access to assessment activities, in a way that is transparently fair, respectful, responsive, accountable and people-focused. The College's commitment to these principles is outlined in the Assessment Policy and Assessment Standards.

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to enable the mitigation of unreasonable barriers to assessment activities of the RACP caused by exceptional circumstances or adverse experiences.

This policy sets out how and when special consideration applications must be made, how they will be considered, and the range of possible outcomes for different circumstances and assessments.

3. SCOPE

This policy applies to special consideration and/or special arrangements for assessments and examinations in all RACP training programs. It includes reasonable adjustments where possible for candidates with permanent or temporary circumstances that may affect performance, ensuring that all trainees have equitable access to assessments and examinations, aligning with anti-discrimination legislation and the RACP's commitment to supporting all trainees.

4. POLICY CONTENT

4.1. Circumstances that may require special consideration

4.1.1. The following are eligible for special consideration, as they fall within the scope of exceptional circumstances covered by this policy:

- a) permanent or long-term disability and temporary disability due to medical or other relevant conditions,
- b) pregnancy, lactation and infant feeding needs,
- c) compassionate grounds or serious disruptions,
- d) essential commitments such as religious, cultural, societal or legal obligations,
- e) technical or procedural issues encountered during an examination,
- f) discrimination, bias and/or racism encountered during an assessment.

4.1.2. The following are not eligible for special consideration, as they do not fall within the scope of exceptional circumstances covered by this policy:

- a) failure to meet the required standard in an RACP assessment,
- b) late examination applications,

- c) exhausted examination attempts,
- d) exhausted time limits to complete training, and
- e) late training applications.

Please refer to Appendix C for further detail.

4.1.3. The RACP recognises that not every exceptional circumstance trainees may encounter can be adequately summarised and categorised in a policy document. Circumstances not outlined in 4.1.1 and not defined as ineligible in 4.1.2 may be eligible to be considered on a case-by-case basis

4.2. Outcomes of an application for special consideration

- 4.2.1. The outcome of an application will be that special consideration may be granted, partially granted or denied.
- 4.2.2. Where special consideration is partially granted, the RACP may offer alternative arrangements as deemed appropriate.
- 4.2.3. Where special consideration is granted, the trainee will not be excused from meeting a requirement, a standard for performance or qualification which have been objectively set by the RACP. Marks and grades will not be adjusted, and examination results are final and not subject to appeal.
- 4.2.4. Possible outcomes for successful applications for special consideration are set out in the Outcome Summary Table, Appendix A. If an application for special arrangements is granted, it applies solely to the specific examination instance for which the application was submitted. Special arrangements cannot be transferred to another examination or assessment; a separate application will be required for each instance.
- 4.2.5. The RACP may deny a special consideration request if:
 - a) the application is incomplete,
 - b) the application is not submitted by the prescribed deadline (refer to timelines outlined within Appendix A),
 - c) the application is not supported by reasonable evidence,
 - d) the application has not been submitted in a reasonable timeframe to allow the RACP to make the appropriate arrangements,
 - e) the Applicant does not respond in a reasonable timeframe to requests from the RACP for additional information,
 - f) the application cannot reasonably be accommodated by the RACP, and/or
 - g) the application does not comply with this policy.
- 4.2.6. In relation to RACP examinations:
 - a) **Pre-examination considerations** refer to an incident/issue that occurs prior to the commencement of an examination.
 - I. Outcomes for pre-examination requests for special consideration will specify particular (1) provisions, (2) allocations or (3) refunds for candidates.
 - II. The types of assistance to be provided during an assessment will be limited to what might be reasonably expected to be available within the normal workplace

of an RACP trainee. These may include special equipment or other modifications of the assessment procedure, as appropriate.

- III. Due to the complexity of some examinations, an application for special consideration may not be accommodated.

b) Consideration of technical or procedural issues encountered during an examination

- I. If a technical or procedural issue is encountered during an examination, the candidate must make the examiner aware immediately at the time of issue.
- II. Where possible, the outcome for a technical or procedural issue encountered during an examination is the resolution and/or compensation for this during the assessment.

c) Post-examination considerations refer to an incident/issue that occurs once the examination has commenced and for which resolution and/or compensation during the assessment is not possible. This can include incidents relating to discrimination, bias and/or racism.

- I. Outcomes for post-examination requests for special consideration will specify (1) potential redesignation of examination status or (2) potential refund for the candidate.
- II. A supplementary examination attempt is only an option for Divisional Clinical Examinations where significant technical or procedural issues have occurred and will be determined by the relevant Committee.
- III. Special consideration will not result in additional marks or score changes without completing an alternative assessment. Examinations will not be re-scored or re-assessed, and candidates cannot be granted a pass based solely on special consideration.

4.2.7. In relation to work-based assessment:

- a) Work-based assessment considerations refer to an incident/issue that could lead to the trainee being unable to satisfactorily complete or submit all requirements for a prospectively approved training period.
 - I. Outcomes for work-based assessment requests for special consideration will specify a time extension or other appropriate consideration to enable completion and/or submission of the requirement.

4.3. Application process for special consideration

- 4.3.1. Applications must be made using the application form. Applications for special consideration should be made as early as possible, but by the published deadline under the relevant assessment at the very latest, which will vary depending on the category of exceptional circumstances. (Appendix A and B).
- 4.3.2. The applicant is responsible for providing all required documentation to support the application, as detailed in the published applicant guidelines. The evidence required will depend on the category of exceptional circumstance.
- 4.3.3. Applications will be de-identified and treated confidentially. Details of the circumstances relating to the application will only be reviewed by relevant College staff

and Committee members to enable a decision to be made in relation to the application.

4.3.4. Applications submitted outside the required timeframe or applications initially submitted within the timeframe but not on the prescribed form may, in some circumstances, still be considered. Acceptance will be at the discretion of the relevant College entity or approved delegate, who must be satisfied that the application could not reasonably have been submitted on time or the prescribed form and that the circumstances justify an exception.

4.3.5. The RACP will provide the Applicant with written notification of the outcome of their Special Consideration application within the following timeframes unless otherwise advised by the RACP:

- I. No later than two business days before the scheduled assessment date.
- II. Within 20 business days from the receipt of a complete application.

4.4. Privacy and Consent

4.4.1. The College is committed to protecting the privacy and confidentiality of all information submitted as part of a Special Consideration application.

4.4.2. All personal and sensitive information provided is handled in accordance with the College's [Privacy Policy](#) and applicable privacy legislation, including but not limited to the *Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)* and the *Privacy Act 2020 (NZ)*, as applicable.

4.4.3. Access to application materials is limited to authorised College staff and committee members involved in the administration, assessment, or review of Special Consideration requests and related processes. To protect applicant confidentiality, committee members receive redacted applications, with only the information necessary for decision-making provided.

4.4.4. Application documentation is stored securely. Once the Special Consideration process and any related Reconsideration or Appeal processes are complete, documentation is retained as required by legal, regulatory, or administrative obligations, which is usually for a period of up to seven years. It is then securely destroyed or de-identified in accordance with the College's Records Management Policy.

4.4.5. By submitting a Special Consideration application, applicants:

- I. Consent to the College collecting, accessing, using, and storing their personal and sensitive information for the purpose of assessing the request.
- II. Understand and accept that authorised personnel will view the information solely in relation to assessment and examination processes.
- III. Acknowledge that submission does not guarantee a particular outcome or change to assessment results.
- IV. Acknowledge that the College's Reconsideration, Review and Appeals Process is the pathway for challenging decisions made under this policy, where eligible.

5. RECONSIDERATION, REVIEW AND APPEALS

If an application for Special Consideration is unsuccessful, trainees can seek a review through the College's Reconsideration, Review and Appeals process. A Reconsideration,

Special Consideration for Assessment - Policy

Review, or Appeal can only be initiated after a Special Consideration for Assessment (the process covered by this policy) has been submitted and a decision reached.

The Reconsideration, Review and Appeals By-Law applies exclusively to decisions made by College Bodies and explicitly excludes examination results, as these represent outcomes of assessments against established criteria rather than discretionary decisions. Refer to the Reconsideration, Review, and Appeals By-Law for more information.

6. REVIEW OF POLICY

This policy will be reviewed every three years or as required by legislative changes or requirements. It may also be changed as a result of other amendments.

Staff and members of the College may provide feedback about this document by emailing RACPPolicy@racp.edu.au.

7. DEFINITIONS

| Term | Means |
|---|---|
| Board | the Board of Directors of the College. |
| Categories of exceptional circumstances | <p>under which a trainee can make an application for special consideration are defined in Appendix B and listed below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• permanent or long-term disability and temporary disability due to medical conditions or health-related needs,• pregnancy, lactation and infant feeding needs,• compassionate grounds or serious disruptions,• essential commitments such as religious, cultural, societal or legal obligations, or• technical issues encountered during an examination• discrimination, bias and/or racism encountered during an assessment. <p>Circumstances that do not ordinarily constitute ground for special consideration are set out in Appendix C.</p> |
| College | The Royal Australasian College of Physicians, ACN 000 039 047, an incorporated body limited by guarantee. |
| Examination | refers to any summative written, clinical or practical assessment administered by an RACP Division, Faculty or Chapter. |
| Fellow, Trainee, and Member | have the same meaning as in the College Constitution |
| Special consideration | is the process of considering the particular circumstances affecting a trainee with a view to enabling the granting, where justified, of special provisions or arrangements relating to an examination or work-based assessment, to alleviate the impact of the exceptional circumstance(s) without excusing the trainee from meeting a requirement, a standard for performance or qualification which have been objectively set by the RACP. |
| Work-based assessment | refers to any formative or summative assessment activity undertaken in the workplace as part of an RACP training program's requirements. |

Special Consideration for Assessment - Policy

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| Reasonable adjustments | are modifications or provisions made to remove or reduce barriers for candidates with exceptional circumstances or adverse experiences, ensuring they can participate in assessments on an equitable basis with others without compromising the integrity of the assessment. |
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8. HISTORY

| Revision | Effective Date | Summary of Changes |
|----------|----------------|---|
| 1.0 | 01.01.2010 | New Policy |
| 2.0 | 01.01.2018 | Limited revision (for work-based assessment) |
| 2.0 | 03.03.2018 | Limited revision (for examinations) |
| 2.1 | 02.12.2022 | Administrative update and transfer to new policy template |
| 3.0 | 01.03.2025 | Limited revision (for examinations) |
| 3.1 | 01.01.2026 | Limited revision (for examinations) |

Appendix A - Outcome Summary Table

Possible outcomes of a successful application for special consideration – Examinations

Note: All outcomes will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. Not all outcomes apply to every examination. Refer to the Special Consideration Application Guide for documentation requirements and further details.

| | Exceptional Circumstance | Application deadline | Documentation required | Decision made by | Possible outcomes for successful applications |
|---|--|---|------------------------------|--|--|
| Timing of consideration Pre-exam | Permanent or long-term disability and temporary disability due to medical or other relevant conditions | At the time of examination application | As per the Application Guide | Assessment Services, the relevant Committee or delegate of | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specific allocation within the designated examination period • Adjustments during the examination, which may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Advice to examiners ○ Food or medication permitted ○ Use of physical aids or equipment ○ Modifications to the assessment procedure ○ Additional time |
| | Pregnancy, lactation and infant feeding needs | At the time of examination application if possible. The RACP recognises that these needs may not always be known well in advance. Applicants are encouraged to submit their application as early as possible to allow maximum flexibility in making arrangements. | As per the Application Guide | Assessment Services, relevant Committee or delegate of | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specific allocation within the designated examination period • If lactating: access to a private space (if available), refrigerated storage, and additional breaks • If pregnant: additional rest breaks, modifications to technique, and permission for food or medication as required |

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| | Essential commitments, including religious, cultural, social or legal commitments | At the time of examination application | As per the Application Guide | Assessment Services, relevant Committee or a delegate of | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Specific allocation within the designated examination period |
| | Compassionate grounds or other significant disruptive events occurring before the start of the examination | Up to commencement of examination | As per the Application Guide | Assessment Services, relevant Committee or a delegate of | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Withdrawal from the examination without financial penalty, in accordance with the College Fees Terms and Conditions. |
| During exam | Technical or procedural issues | Candidate must notify examiner or invigilator immediately at the time of the issue | As per the Application Guide | Results Committee or a delegate of | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where feasible, the issue will be addressed or compensated for during the assessment. |
| Post-exam | Technical or procedural issues that could not be compensated for or resolved during the examination The candidate should, where possible, make the examiner aware of the issue at the time of the issue and record/document the incident. | Application must be submitted within 5 calendar days of the exam and before results are released | As per the Application Guide | Results Committee or a delegate of | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Written examination: Designation as an attempt, no attempt, or withdrawal with refund where appropriate, or entitlement to re-sit at the next available opportunity and a refund in accordance with the College Fees Terms and Conditions. Clinical or Practical Examination: Designation as an attempt, no attempt, or withdrawal with refund where appropriate, or a supplementary examination (Divisional Clinical Examinations only), determined on a case-by-case basis where warranted. |
| | Temporary disability occurred during the examination, and the candidate opted to complete examination | Not applicable | Not applicable | Not applicable | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Designation as an attempt, with no refund applicable in these circumstances. |

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| | Temporary disability occurred during the examination, and the candidate was unable to or opted not to complete examination | Application must be submitted within 5 calendar days of the exam and before results are released | As per the Application Guide | Results Committee or a delegate of | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Designation as an attempt, no attempt, or withdrawal with refund where appropriate, or a supplementary examination (Divisional Clinical Examinations only), determined on a case-by-case basis where warranted. |
| | Racism, discrimination, and/or bias experienced during the examination | Application must be submitted within 5 calendar days of the exam and before results are released | As per the Application Guide | Results Committee or a delegate of | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Designation as an attempt (applicable in circumstances where assessment was passed so result can be upheld), no attempt, or withdrawal with refund where appropriate, or a supplementary examination (Divisional Clinical Examinations only), determined on a case-by-case basis where warranted. |

An **attempt** designation counts against the number of attempts a candidate has at the examinations. Grade awarded to the candidate stands.

A **no-attempt** designation does not count against the number of attempts that a candidate has at the examination. Grade awarded to the candidate stands.

A **withdrawal** designation does not count against the number of attempts that a candidate has at the examination. No grade is awarded.

Possible outcomes of a successful application for special consideration – Work-based assessments

| Exceptional circumstance | When to apply | Documentation required | Decisions made by | Possible outcomes for successful applications† |
|--|---|---|--|--|
| All exceptional circumstances categories | As soon as the issue arises and where practicable before work-based assessment is due | As relevant to the request, per the Application Guide | Relevant training program Committee or delegate of | Time- extension or other appropriate special arrangement |

Appendix B - Categories of exceptional circumstances

All categories below are subject to Appendix C – Circumstances that do not constitute grounds for Special Consideration. Applicants must review both appendices before submitting a request.

- Permanent or long-term disability due to medical conditions: a condition that is permanent or has existed for a substantial duration and which may require reasonable adjustments to support the trainee's participation or performance in assessments.
- Pregnancy, lactation and infant feeding needs: pregnancy or lactation-related factors that may impact attendance, comfort, or timing of assessments.
- Temporary disability due to medical conditions: an acute medical condition or serious injury that causes a short-term but significant impact on a trainee's ability to prepare for, attend, or perform in an assessment. For the Divisional Clinical Examinations only, pre-examination applications may be considered where the candidate presents with a major or acute medical condition that may affect their capacity to undertake the assessment or pose a health or safety risk to others. Applications must be supported by documentation from a registered health practitioner. Given the multi-week structure of the DCE, outcomes may include rescheduling within the same cycle or a supplementary examination, determined on a case-by-case basis by the relevant Committee.
- Compassionate grounds or severe disruptions: serious personal circumstances (e.g. bereavement, crisis, or trauma) that may substantially impair the trainee's ability to prepare for, attend, or complete an assessment.
- Essential commitments: religious, cultural, legal or compulsory societal obligations that conflict with the scheduled timing of the assessment and cannot be rescheduled by the trainee.
- Technical issues during examination: a disruption beyond the trainee's control that significantly interferes with performance, and where adjustment on the day was not feasible.
- Discrimination, bias and/or racism encountered during an assessment: conduct, decisions, or systemic practices within an assessment or examination process that results in a candidate being treated less favourably, unfairly, or inequitably on the basis of their characteristics, like their race, religion, gender or sexual orientation. This includes:
 - Discrimination: adverse actions or being treated less favourably because of characteristics.
 - Bias: Conscious or unconscious attitudes and behaviours influencing assessment experiences and decisions.
 - Racism: being treated less favourably, unfairly, or not given the same opportunities, as others in a similar situation, because of race, country of birth, ethnic origin or physical characteristics.

(Source: Australia - *Racial Discrimination Act 1975*, *Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986*, and related anti-discrimination laws; Aotearoa New Zealand - *Human Rights Act 1993*, *New Zealand Bill of Rights Act 1990*, and Te Tiriti o Waitangi principles)

Appendix C - Circumstances which do not constitute grounds for special consideration

The College would not normally regard the following examples as exceptional circumstances that warrant special consideration. This list is not exhaustive.

- Routine or expected levels of stress associated with preparing for or performing in examinations, including stress from expected workloads or rostering arrangements leading up to examinations.
- Difficulty managing time effectively, resulting in missed administrative requirements or deadlines.
- Lack of awareness of relevant published regulations, policies, or deadlines.
- Decisions to engage in personal or social activities, such as community sports, social clubs, recreational travel, or planned personal events (e.g., weddings).
- Minor, short-term, or stable medical conditions affecting the candidate or immediate family members, partner, or close relatives that do not substantially impair assessment performance. For the Divisional Clinical Examinations only, pre-examination applications may be considered where the candidate presents with a medical condition that may pose a health or safety risk to others. Refer to Appendix B for further details.
- Stress related to travel arrangements.
- Financial hardship on its own does not constitute an exceptional circumstance for special consideration. Support in this scenario can be explored through discussion with the [RACP office](#).
- Missed deadlines or submission dates for any assessment-related requirements. Loss or theft of books, notes, or other materials that could affect study preparation.
- Attempting an examination without adequate preparation, unless linked to an accepted exceptional circumstance as defined by this policy.
- Misreading examination instructions or case details, which leads to missing information.
- Brief, non-disruptive events during the examination, such as sneezing, coughing, or standard hospital announcements (e.g., MET calls).
- Incidental noise from staff, examiners, or nurses knocking or entering the examination room.
- Technical issues that occur before the examination starts, provided they do not affect the actual conduct of the examination.