RACP
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October 2026 Divisional Written Examinations (DWE) Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

All candidates sitting the October 2026 Divisional Written Examination (DWE) are required to familiarise themselves with information on the College website.

The DWE is comprised of two papers - one to assess your understanding of medical sciences and one to assess your clinical knowledge, both consisting of a combination of new and previously validated questions. Your answers to these questions will count towards your total exam score.

For all important dates related to the DWE, please refer to the October 2026 DWE webpage.

Eligibility and registration requirements

Q: What are the eligibility criteria for attempting the DWE?

A: To be eligible to register for the DWE, you must have completed 24 months full-time equivalent (FTE) of certified Basic Training (PREP program) or completed the Consolidation phase of training (new curriculum) before:

- the beginning of the clinical year for the February exam; or
- 31 August for the October exam

If you require training before 31 August to be certified to confirm your eligibility for the October exam, the Basic Training team will contact you following your registration for the October DWE to advise you of the requirements that must be completed by 31 August.

If you already have 24 months of certified training, you will not be required to complete these specific eligibility requirements by 31 August.

Q: How many attempts are permitted to pass the DWE?

A: The Progression through Training Policy (PDF) specifies limits on the total training time allowed and the number of exam attempts permitted.

From 1 January 2024, the original three-attempt limit for the DWE was increased to four attempts for all trainees in the Basic Training Program.

Please refer to the correspondence sent on 24 August 2023 regarding the number of attempts you have remaining.

Please note that the total number of allowable attempts for the Divisional Clinical Examination (DCE) has not increased.

For more details, please see the relevant Basic Training Handbook and the Progression through Training Policy information (PDF).

The 'Prepare' tab of the DWE October 2026 page on the College website has up-to-date information, including instructions on preparing for the examination.

Q: What if I have outstanding fees?

A: You cannot register for the DWE if you have outstanding training fees. All fees must be paid in full before you register. Please see the College Fees Terms and Conditions. To arrange or discuss payment, please email examinations@racp.edu.au.

Q: What happens if I withdraw from the exam?

A: If you withdraw from an exam, this is not counted as an exam attempt.

You may be eligible for a refund. Refund amounts depend on when you withdraw. Please refer to the College Fees Terms and Conditions.

Submit an application form under the Special Consideration for Assessment Policy to request a refund on either medical or non-medical compassionate grounds.

You can also reapply to sit the exam at the next sitting (i.e. February 2027) if you meet the eligibility criteria. Application fees will not be rolled over from one examination sitting to another.

Email examinations@racp.edu.au to withdraw from the October 2026 DWE.

Preparation, resources and support

Q: What resources are available to support trainees in their preparation for the DWE?

A: The 'Resources' tab of the DWE October 2026 page on the College website provides a comprehensive range of resources to assist trainees in preparing for the DWE. Offerings include:

- Knowledge Guides: Topics and concepts needed to understand to pass the DWE and progress through training.
- Learning resource guides: These guides, developed and peer-reviewed by RACP Fellows and experts, highlight key readings, courses, resources, and tools for each topic.
- College Learning Series: This series is a cornerstone resource for preparing for the Divisional Examinations.
- Divisional Examination Readiness Course: This course provides information, study tools, and resources to support trainees in preparing for the Divisional Examinations.
- Medflix: RACP's extensive collection of powerful and engaging education videos.
- Pomegranate health podcast: Covers ethical decision-making, communication, and equitable care, with insights from experts to support excellence in practice.
- Preparation Tips: Practical advice and strategies to enhance exam readiness.

- Practice Questions and Sample Papers: Trainees can access practice examination questions, answers, and sample papers to familiarise themselves with the exam format and content.

Candidate Information Session

These sessions provide support for exam preparation. Topics include:

- Exam question development
- Performance standard criteria and standard setting processes
- The marking and results release process
- What to expect on examination day

The slide deck will be made available on the October 2026 DWE page once all sessions are completed.

These resources are made available to help trainees develop confidence and optimise their study strategies.

Q: Do all applications for special consideration require a doctor's note, or does this depend on the type of request?

A: Not all applications require a doctor's note. However, if your request is based on medical grounds, supporting documentation from a doctor or relevant health professional is required.

Q: How long does it usually take for special consideration applications to be processed?

A: Special Consideration applications are usually processed within 20 business days of receiving a complete application. Applicants will be notified of the outcome no later than two business days before their exam.

Exam Day

Q: Where can I find the timetable for exam day?

A: The exam day timetable can be found under the 'Exam day' tab on the DWE October 2026 page of the College website.

Q: Why was the decision made to stagger the start times for the exam?

A: This decision upholds the commitment by the College to deliver a fair and secure examination process for all candidates across various time zones in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand.

Q: How do the staggered start times for the examination affect me?

A: Start times will vary depending on where you have registered to sit your examination. The table below outlines the different start times in each relevant location:

Location	Arrival time (local time)	DWE Start & finish times (local time)	Changes for candidates
Western Australia (WA)	7:30am	8:30am – 3:10pm	The Western Australian (WA) AM & PCH DWE will commence at 8:30am (local time), effective Wednesday,1 January 2025.
All Australian States/Territories (except for WA)	8:00am	9:00am – 3:40pm	All other Australian exam sites except for WA will commence the AM & PCH DWE at 9:00am (local time), effective Wednesday, 1 January 2025.
Aotearoa New Zealand	9:00am	10:00am – 4:40pm	All Aotearoa New Zealand exam sites will commence the AM & PCH DWE at 10:00am (local time), effective Wednesday, 1 January 2025.

Q: Where can I find information about my allocated exam venue?

A: You can find the address, transport and parking options for your allocated exam venue under the 'Locations' section on the 'Apply' tab of the DWE October 2026 closer to the exam.

Q: Can I bring a water bottle into the exam room?

A: Yes. You can bring any water bottle into the exam room containing water only. The water bottle(s) must be on the floor under your desk during the exam. No other beverages are permitted in the examination room without pre-approval.

If you require other beverages during the examination for medical reasons, you must submit an application for special consideration by the closing date using the Special Consideration for Assessment application form and guide.

Q: Is lunch provided?

A: Lunch is not provided, and many venues do not have food vendors on site. You may need to leave the venue to purchase lunch or bring your own on the day.

If you bring your own lunch, it can be stored in your bag, but you won't be able to access it or other personal belongings during the exam.

Q: Can I eat during the exam?

A: Food cannot be consumed during the exam. If you need to eat during the exam for medical reasons, you will need special permission from the RACP.

Please submit a Special Consideration application form by the closing date using the Special Consideration for Assessment application form and guide.

Q: Can I bring a pencil case into the exam room?

A: Pencil cases are not permitted; however, pens (blue and black), a ruler, and a highlighter may be carried into the exam room in a small, clear, resealable plastic bag. Pencils, gel, erasable, or felt-tipped pens are not allowed.

Q: Can I use a pencil to mark my answers in the exam?

A: No. Candidates are required to use blue or black ballpoint pens. No pencils, gel, erasable or felt-tipped pens are permitted.

Your answer sheet will be scanned to create a digital copy of your responses. Black or blue ballpoint pens scan the most clearly. Pencil shading does not produce the best markings for scanning purposes, especially if a response is erased and leaves behind a shadow. Avoid gel and felt-tipped pens as they can cause smudging, and may interfere with scanning.

To answer each question, fill in the answer bubble corresponding to the option you think is correct. Use black or blue ballpoint pens only. If you wish to change a response, mark a clear X through the incorrectly filled bubble and then fill in your preferred answer. To reselect a previously crossed-out answer, circle that answer and cross out all incorrect answers. Heavily edited answers will be manually reviewed.

An example of the answer sheet can be found below:

Q: Can I choose where I sit on exam day?

A: Seating lists showing your allocated seat number will be displayed outside the door of the exam room. Discuss any seating enquiries with the Chief Invigilator as early as possible on exam day.

If you require specific seating arrangements during the examination for medical reasons, you must submit an application for special consideration by the closing date using the Special Consideration for Assessment application guide and form.

Q: Where do I leave my mobile phone and/or electronic devices?

A: All mobile phones, digital watches, sports watches, smart watches (including but not limited to Apple Watch, Garmin, Fitbit, and Samsung), pagers, and electronic communication devices must be switched off, placed on the floor under your chair, and visible to the invigilators.

Q: Can I write on the question paper after the reading time?

A: You may write in the exam booklet once reading time has ended. Invigilators have been advised that this is permitted, and you may use the booklet to make notes and calculations. However, please remember that only answers recorded on the official scoresheet will be marked. Notes or answers written in the exam booklet will not be counted.

Q: Calculators are not permitted in the exam. Will I be required to perform calculations in areas such as biostatistics, pharmacology, or genetic probabilities?

A: Some questions may involve simple calculations in these areas, but can be completed manually without a calculator and are appropriate for Basic Training level.

Q: Am I allowed to bring a stopwatch instead of an analogue watch?

A: No. Only analogue watches are permitted in the examination room. Stopwatches are not allowed to avoid potential disruptions if timers go off.

Q: Am I allowed to wear earplugs during the exam?

A: You will need to submit a Special Consideration request if you wish to wear earplugs. Please note that wearing earplugs may result in missing instructions provided by the invigilator.

Q: What should I do if I become ill on the day of the exam? Would this be handled as a post-exam application?

A: If you become unwell on the day of the exam, you should contact the examinations team as soon as possible. You will then need to submit a Special Consideration application after the exam, supported by a medical doctor's note.

Q: Can I leave the exam room early?

A: Yes. You may leave the examination room after the first 30 minutes of writing time. However, no one may leave during the last 10 minutes.

Q: Will scrap paper be provided for rough sketches or calculations in the exam?

A: No. Scrap paper will not be provided. However, you may make rough notes or calculations in your exam booklet. Please note that any notes or workings written in the booklet will not be marked.

Q: How do I report an incident during my exam that I believe impacted my performance?

A: All incidents must be reported to the invigilator, who will complete an Incident Form and submit it to the College. You may also apply for post-exam special consideration using the Special Consideration for Assessment application guide and form.

Details of the incident must be clearly outlined, along with documentation to support your application if appropriate. All post-exam special consideration applications must be emailed to examinations@racp.edu.au no later than 5pm AEDT/5pm NZDT, **Tuesday, 27 October 2026.**

Refer to Appendix A of the Special Consideration for Assessment Policy (PDF) for possible outcomes of a successful application for special consideration.

Q: If post-exam special consideration requests are reviewed while results are being finalised, and possible outcomes include "no attempt" or a refund, does this mean that a passing result would still be recorded as a pass?

A: Yes. If you are successful, your result will stand, and you may proceed to the Divisional Clinical Examination. A "no attempt" or refund outcome would only apply in the case of an unsuccessful result.

Q: Am I allowed to leave the exam venue between sessions, or must I remain in a designated room?

A: You may leave the exam venue between sessions, for example to have or purchase lunch. Lunch break is 50 minutes, and you must ensure to return to the exam room in plenty of time before the afternoon session begins.

Q: What is the role of RACP staff observers?

A: RACP staff observers represent the College and are there to liaise with candidates and provide information should candidates wish to follow up on anything after the assessment.

Marking, results and feedback

Q: Why does it take time before results are released?

A: We understand the anticipation that candidates may experience whilst waiting to receive their results. Your patience is very much appreciated. The timeline for processing and releasing exam results involves multiple stages, particularly because this large-scale paper-based exam is administered over numerous sites. Quality assurance and data integrity checks must be followed and completed at all stages to ensure the accuracy and fairness of candidate outcomes.

Below is a high-level summary of the key steps involved. This applies to both Paediatrics & Child Health (PCH) and Adult Medicine (AM) candidates across Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand:

Steps Post-Exam Day	Description
Exam data collection	Scanning and processing of answer sheets, with double verification by external companies.
Data verification	Checking for anomalies and data comparison.
RACP item analysis	Review of item statistics by internal experts.
Item review by SMEs	Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) review flagged items.
Item analysis meeting	Discussion and finalisation of item decisions.
Cut-score determination	Establishing the final pass threshold.
Results meeting	Discussion of candidate exam results and decisions on incidents and post-exam special consideration applications. All candidate details are de-identified.
Results confirmation	Confirmation of results for release.
Results administrations	Final preparation of results for release
Results release	Results are typically released mid-week to ensure candidates can access College support if needed.

While we aim to work as efficiently as possible, these steps are essential to ensure the fairness, accuracy and integrity of exam results through careful Quality and Assurance processes and discussions.

Q: What is the usual pass mark for the DWE in terms of percentage of questions?

A: As outlined on the website, the pass mark is not fixed. Historically, it has ranged between 55% and 65%.

Q: What feedback is provided to candidates and supervisors following the DWE?

A: Feedback following the DWE is structured to help candidates and supervisors understand their results and identify areas for improvement. Candidates receive a personalised report that breaks down their performance by curriculum-linked topic areas, indicating the number of items in each topic area and the number they answered correctly. Supervisors receive a summary report displaying candidate performance by topic area, alongside training setting, state/territory, and overall exam averages. Directors of Physician/Paediatric Education (DPEs) are provided with training hospital summaries for all candidates at that setting, enabling targeted support. Feedback is typically delivered within four weeks of exam results being released, with ongoing efforts to streamline this process for faster delivery.

Examination, development and quality assurance

Q: How are examination papers constructed?

A: The construction of DWE papers involves a comprehensive, multi-step process to ensure that the questions will effectively assess the required knowledge and skills. The Adult Medicine (AM) and Paediatrics & Child Health (PCH) DWE are constructed in line with the examination 'blueprints', which outline the expected distribution of questions across specialties. These blueprints are available on the 'Prepare' tab.

Item Writing Panels (IWPs) meet three times a year for Adult Medicine and twice for Paediatrics & Child Health to write and review prospective exam questions. Each panel includes over 20 specialists who help write and approve new exam questions. The Chairs of the IWPs and Written Exam Committee work with the RACP Assessment Development team to construct the final exams, including a proportion of previously validated items that have demonstrated strong psychometric performance. These items serve as 'anchors' in the exam analysis phase to support the equating and stability of examination difficulty over time. Multiple specialists review new and past questions to finalise them for exam readiness.

The draft exam undergoes multiple reviews, including by the IWP Chairs, who check the selection and suggests edits or replacements - and by open book reviewers, who are drawn

either from the Written Exam Committee or from the Expression of Interest pool. The IWP Chair also provides additional feedback. All comments and feedback received are reviewed by the IWP Chair and Technical Editor, who resolve queries and make final adjustments to the questions. Key stakeholders, including the RACP Assessment Manager, Senior Executive Officer, and Written Exam Committee Chairs, conduct a second review. Once all content is approved, the exams undergo a final quality assurance process, including checks for image quality on proofs. Exams are then prepared for printing. This meticulous process ensures that the examinations are reliable, fair, and aligned with the College's rigorous standards of assessment.

Q: Is there a variance in the number of questions included in the examination for each specialty, rather than what is outlined in the blueprint?

A: The examination is developed in line with the quotas set out in the Divisional Written Examination (DWE) blueprint, available under the 'Prepare' tab on the DWE webpage. The blueprint outlines the approximate number of questions per specialty, based on the Knowledge Guides.

While some specialties may appear more heavily represented, this often reflects the inclusion of sub-specialty topics. These are an integral part of the blueprint and Knowledge Guides and help maintain balanced and comprehensive coverage across the curriculum.

Q: How is the standard set for the DWE?

A: The standard-setting processes for the DWE ensure that candidate performance is assessed fairly and consistently across all candidates. For both exams, the standard is set using criterion-referenced methods, using pre-determined criteria for exam performance related to exam content. There is no quota for the number of candidates who can pass, and performance is not scaled to a 'bell curve' or other norm-referencing means.

For the DWE, the standard is primarily determined using the *Modified Angoff method*. A full paper calibration using this method occurs every five years, with the most recent calibration conducted in 2024 for the 2025 examinations. Psychometric analysis, based on the Rasch model (an item response theory model), stabilises the cut score for subsequent exams. This approach uses the previously described 'anchor' items to maintain consistency and fairness across each exam administration.

These approaches are designed to ensure reliability and fairness in assessing the knowledge and performance of candidates, maintaining rigorous standards of quality and consistency.

Q: What quality assurance measures are in place for each DWE?

A: DWEs are supported by a robust quality assurance framework to ensure fairness, accuracy, and consistency across each assessment. This framework is underpinned by detailed business rules tailored to each examination purpose, format, and potential risks. These rules cover every stage of the examination process, including planning with relevant committees, blueprinting, item creation and review, examiner recruitment and calibration, examination conduct, item analysis for written exams, scoring reviews for practical exams, and standard setting. Additional measures include thorough checks for data accuracy, results meetings and ratification (addressing borderline candidates or events that might affect results), communication of results to candidates and stakeholders, and the collection and utilisation of feedback to refine future assessments.

These quality assurance measures uphold the credibility and reliability of each DWE, ensuring that all candidates are assessed to consistent and rigorous standards.

Q: How does the College manage risks and contingencies for the DWE?

A: The College has a robust risk management and contingency planning framework for each DWE that has been refined and enhanced through lessons learned during the COVID-19 pandemic. This framework ensures examinations are delivered effectively whilst maintaining quality and minimising disruptions.

Comprehensive Risk Management Plans are in place to address situations that could impact exam delivery. These include Situation Management Plans, which guide responses to external events, supported by a Crisis Communications Plan to ensure clear and effective communication to all stakeholders in the event of an emergency. In addition, Contingency Plans provide strategies for deferring examinations or implementing alternative delivery methods. These plans are published on the College website and reviewed before each examination cycle to address emerging risks and ensure preparedness.

These measures demonstrate the College's commitment to proactively managing risks, maintaining examination quality, and providing support to all stakeholders during the examination process.