

COMPETENCE BY DESIGN (CBD) PROGRAM & EXAMS

TIMELINES & FAQs

Updated: May 3, 2022

RESOURCES

1. [*Competence by Design \(CBD\) Technical Guide #5: Exam Readiness](#) (March 2022)
2. RCPSC [website](#)
3. RCPSC: [Policies for Certification in a Competence by Design Model of Residency Training](#) (February 2022)

RESIDENTS

Visit the Royal College website for instructions, schedules, and fees. See exam timelines table.

- [General Steps](#)
- [Exam Eligibility](#)
- [Exam Fees](#)
- [Exam FAQs](#)

PROGRAMS

Deciding exam eligibility

Competence Committees (CCs) will need to determine exam eligibility for each resident at the appropriate time. See exam timeline tables and ensure CC meetings are scheduled accordingly.

- Fall exams: around block 5 (October-November)
- Spring exams: around block 12 (May-June)

CCTs between PGME and the Royal College

Residency Program Committees (RPCs) / Program Directors (PDs) will need to complete Confirmation Completion of Training (CCTs) when sent by PGME.

a. Fall exams:

The Royal College sends an email to Program Directors in mid-January that will include a spreadsheet, the Confirmation of Completion of Training (CCT), listing the names and anticipated end of training date of residents who have applied for the Royal College Fall certification examinations. The program must follow the instructions in the email on how to complete the CCT and PGME will verify before sending to the Royal College. If there are discrepancies, PGME will contact the program directly.

Deadlines:

- Early February – programs to return the individual CCT list to PGME
- February 15 – PGME to return the CCT lists to Royal College Credentials Unit

b. Spring exams:

The Royal College sends an email to Program Directors in late July that will include a spreadsheet, the Confirmation of Completion of Training (CCT), listing the names and anticipated end of training date of residents who have applied for the Royal College Fall certification examinations. The program must follow the instructions in the email on how to complete the CCT and PGME will verify before sending to the Royal College. If there are discrepancies, PGME will contact the program directly.

Deadlines:

- Mid-August – programs to return the individual CCT list to PGME
- August 25 – PGME to return the CCT lists to Royal College Credentials Unit

It is also recommended that CCs and RPCs review exam readiness about 3 months before any exam to see if there are changes in recommendations. This is recommended since the process of exam eligibility started many months in advance of the exam and there could be interval changes in resident progress.

Exam Timelines

For the following tables, the PGY level will depend on if you are a 2-, 3-, 5-, or 6-year program.

For disciplines with two exams in different seasons (fall and spring)

		Block 1	Block 2	Block 3	Block 4	Block 5	Block 6	Block 7	Block 8	Block 9	Block 10	Block 11	Block 12	Block 13
		July	Aug	Aug-Sept	Sept-Oct	Oct-Nov	Nov-Dec	Dec-Jan	Jan-Feb	Feb-Mar	Mar-Apr	Apr-May	May-June	June
PGY	FALL EXAM			Fall Exam Resident: Apply for training and/or practice assessment AUG 31		Fall Exam Competence Committee (CC): Recommend exam eligibility	Fall Exam Residency Program Committee (RPC): Ratify exam eligibility	Fall Exam RCSPSC: Credentials Unit sends CCTs to Program Directors JAN 15	Fall Exam Program Director: Submit CCTs to PGME Early FEB	Fall Exam PGME: CCTs sent to RCSPSC FEB 15	Fall Exam RCSPSC: Issue exam eligibility rulings to candidates	Fall Exam Resident: Register and pay for exam APR 15		
	SPRING EXAM													
PGY	FALL EXAM	Fall Exam Competence Committee: Review if exam readiness unchanged			FALL EXAM									
	SPRING EXAM								Spring Exam Competence Committee: Review if exam readiness unchanged			SPRING EXAM		

CCT = confirmation completion of training

For disciplines with fall exams only

	Block 1	Block 2	Block 3	Block 4	Block 5	Block 6	Block 7	Block 8	Block 9	Block 10	Block 11	Block 12	Block 13
	July	Aug	Aug-Sept	Sept-Oct	Oct-Nov	Nov-Dec	Dec-Jan	Jan-Feb	Feb-Mar	Mar-Apr	Apr-May	May-June	June
PGY			Fall Exam Resident: Apply for training and/or practice assessment Due AUG 31		Fall Exam Competence Committee (CC): Recommend exam eligibility	Fall Exam Residency Program Committee (RPC): Ratify exam eligibility	Fall Exam RCPSC: Credentials Unit sends CCTs to Program Directors JAN 15	Fall Exam Program Director: Submit CCTs to PGME Early FEB	Fall Exam PGME: CCTs sent to RCPSC FEB 15	Fall Exam RCPSC: Issue exam eligibility rulings to candidates	Fall Exam Resident: Register and pay for exam APR 15		
PGY	Fall Exam Competence Committee: Review if exam readiness unchanged			FALL EXAM									

For disciplines with spring exams only

	Block 1	Block 2	Block 3	Block 4	Block 5	Block 6	Block 7	Block 8	Block 9	Block 10	Block 11	Block 12	Block 13
	July	Aug	Aug-Sept	Sept-Oct	Oct-Nov	Nov-Dec	Dec-Jan	Jan-Feb	Feb-Mar	Mar-Apr	Apr-May	May-June	June
PGY											Spring Exam Resident: Apply for training and/or practice assessment APRIL 30	Spring Exam Competence Committee (CC): Review exam eligibility	Spring Exam Residency Program Committee (RPC): Ratify exam eligibility
PGY	Spring Exam RCPSC: Credentials Unit sends CCTs to Program Directors JULY 25	Spring Exam Program Director: Submit CCTs to PGME Mid AUGUST	Spring Exam PGME: CCTs sent to RCPSC AUG 25	Spring Exam RCPSC: Issue exam eligibility rulings to candidates	Spring Exam Resident: Register and pay for exam NOV 4			Spring Exam Competence Committee: Review if exam readiness unchanged			SPRING EXAM		

FAQs

The following are answers from the Royal College to your questions:

What is the written-before-applied exam concept?

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 is a “decoupling” of the exams. If a candidate is successful on the written component, but unsuccessful on the applied component, they will not be required to repeat the written component in subsequent years.

Take note if your discipline utilizes a written-before-applied concept or if they utilize comprehensive objective examinations. For comprehensive objective examinations, candidates will be required to successfully complete both exam components in one year. Those that are unsuccessful will be required to re-take both components at the subsequent attempt.

Disciplines are determining when they will switch to the written-before-applied concept, so ask your Specialty Committee if the change has not yet occurred.

Since Competence Committees need to recommend exam eligibility, when a program has two exams (written and applied), does the CC need to make separate recommendations for each exam?

When we ask for exam ready attestation it's for both components. So, when a program attests to a candidate being exam ready, it is for both components.

If a candidate attempts their written exam (and at this point in time they would not get their results) and the program wants to change that “exam ready” status, they would inform the Royal College Credentials Unit and we would indicate to the candidate that they are pulled from the applied exam and to contact their program.

The programs would not be required to complete a second attestation prior to the applied/oral exam if there is no change in “exam ready” status.

Review the following steps to make a decision:

- The resident needs to make an administrative application long in advance of the exam (about a year).
- The program needs to make an attestation that the resident is on track to be ready for the exam long in advance of the exam (about 6-8 months).
- The Royal College expects that the program will review the resident in the 2-3 months prior to the exam for readiness and that the program will notify the Royal College if the resident is no longer on track to be ready for the exam. It is recommended that the program has a CC meeting and RPC meeting for ratification about 3 months prior to the exam.
- If things change with the resident's progress, the program can alert the Royal College even up to the night before the exam (not advised) that the resident is no longer ready for the exam.

What happens if a resident passes the written component of the exam but fails the applied exam?

From the [Policies for Certification in a Competence by Design Model of Residency Training](#) (February 2022):

5.2.1 A ruling of eligibility for any Royal College examination is valid for 5 years, subject to the time limitation set out in 5.3.1.

5.2.2 Candidates writing decoupled exams will be required to successfully complete one exam component before being invited to a subsequent exam component (e.g., written, or applied).

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 5.3.1.

...

5.3.1 Candidates must complete all required examination components for their specialty within five years of being granted eligibility. A maximum of four attempts are permitted on a single exam component.

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 5.3.1.

5.3.2 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 or applied) without successful completion.
- the candidate has not completed all examination components within five years of their initial grant of eligibility.

5.3.3 Candidates who have exhausted their eligibility under section 5.3.2 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 5.5.

If a resident fails an exam, can they progress to the last stage, Transition to Practice?

Yes

Can residents be 'Not Progressing as Expected' and be deemed exam eligible?

No, residents must be 'Progressing as Expected' at a minimum.

At the time of application, attestation, and registration a resident should be Progressing as Expected. If the status changes and the Program Director/CC feel that the resident should not attempt the certification examination, the Royal College Credentials Unit should be notified as soon as possible.

Can residents receive a refund if they do not sit an exam?

The Royal College provides this information on their website:

<https://www.royalcollege.ca/rcsite/credentials-exams/exams-fees-e>

There is also consideration for COVID-19-related exam withdrawals:

<https://www.royalcollege.ca/rcsite/credentials-exams/exams-register-e>