

COMPETENCE BY DESIGN

TECHNICAL GUIDE 5: EXAM READINESS

Subject	Royal College Lead	Date	Version
When is a resident eligible to sit the Royal College specialty examination? ¹	Credentials Unit	December 2022	1.1

Royal College examinations are offered annually for each specialty and subspecialty. There are a few important actions that must be taken well in advance of the exam date to confirm the resident's eligibility to sit the exam:

- The resident must apply to the Royal College one year in advance of the exam for a training assessment to confirm they have met specialty-specific training requirements.
- Approximately eight months in advance of the exam, the residency program confirms to the Royal College that the resident has met the specialty-specific training requirements and is expected to be able to sit the exam that year.
- The Royal College issues the resident a ruling letter, sent by the online credentials registration system, confirming that the resident meets the training requirements to register for the examination.

WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE:

1. Training assessment²

- The resident applies for a training assessment using the online [credentials registration system](#). If the resident does not have a Royal College ID, they will be required to complete the mandatory [registration form](#) in order to access the credentials registration system. Candidates are required to read the instructions before submitting an application for training assessment.
 - Existing candidates who have a Royal College ID number but have never logged into the system, can click on "Reset your password" or "Forgot your ID" if necessary.
- The deadline to apply for a training assessment occurs the year before the resident wishes to write the exam. For spring exams, the deadline is April 30. For fall exams, the deadline is August 31.

2. Notification of Exam Eligibility

- When the resident enters their Royal College exam year, the competence committee will determine if the resident is progressing through the stages of training, including achievement of milestones, Entrustable Professional Activities (EPAs) and other program assessments, at a pace that will make them ready for the exam.

- The competence committee provides a recommendation on the resident's exam eligibility to the residency program committee (RPC). The RPC makes the decision regarding the resident's exam eligibility.
 - If delegated by the RPC, the competence committee may make the decision regarding the resident's exam eligibility and inform the RPC of the decision.
- An initial ruling of eligibility by the Royal College for the examination is valid for five consecutive years, so the program director should confirm with the resident that they wish to receive their exam eligibility that year.
- The PGME office notifies the Royal College Credentials Unit that the resident is deemed eligible for the exam by submitting the Confirmation Completion of Training (CCT) (a spreadsheet with a list of names of residents at that school who the PGME office deems eligible for exams that year).
 - For spring exams: the Royal College sends CCTs to PGME offices on July 25 the year before the exam. It must be returned to the Royal College Credentials Unit by August 25 the year before the exam.
 - For fall exams: the Royal College sends CCTs to PGME offices on January 15 the year of the exam. It must be returned to the Royal College Credentials Unit by February 15 the year of the exam.

¹ This guidance is applicable to residents registered with a Canadian postgraduate medical education office, in a Royal College accredited specialty or subspecialty program, and for candidates with postgraduate residency training in a program in the United States accredited by the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME). Guidance for international medical graduates (IMGs) is available on the Royal College website.

² See the Royal College website for instructions for the Surgical Foundations exam.

Principles of Exam Eligibility and Readiness

Residents typically write the exam at the end of the Core stage of training. However, the Royal College does not set requirements for the amount of training that must be completed before a resident is eligible for the exam. With the recommendation of the competence committee and approval by their residency program committee, residents may sit the exam at any point in their training. Certification will not be conferred until the resident's training is complete.

Exam eligibility is granted for a five-year period following the training assessment. After the five-year period has elapsed, no further eligibility will be granted. Candidates must complete all required examination components within the five years; a maximum of four attempts is permitted on a single exam component.

Many disciplines have two components to the exam – written and applied – that may occur at different times. Ruling letters state the eligibility granted for the specialty examination as a whole. For some specialties, candidates will be required to successfully complete one exam component before being invited to a subsequent exam component (e.g., written and applied). 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. For specialties with 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.

Programs reserve the ability to withdraw a resident's exam eligibility at any point prior to the examination by notifying the Credentials Unit at the Royal College.

3. Ruling letter

- When the training assessment is successful and the CCT is received, the Royal College issues a ruling letter to the resident granting examination eligibility. The credentials registration system issues the ruling letters. Rulings are processed and sent in batches as soon as CCTs are returned to the Credentials Unit.
- The letter specifies the years in which the resident can attempt the examination.
- The ruling letter is required to register for the examination.

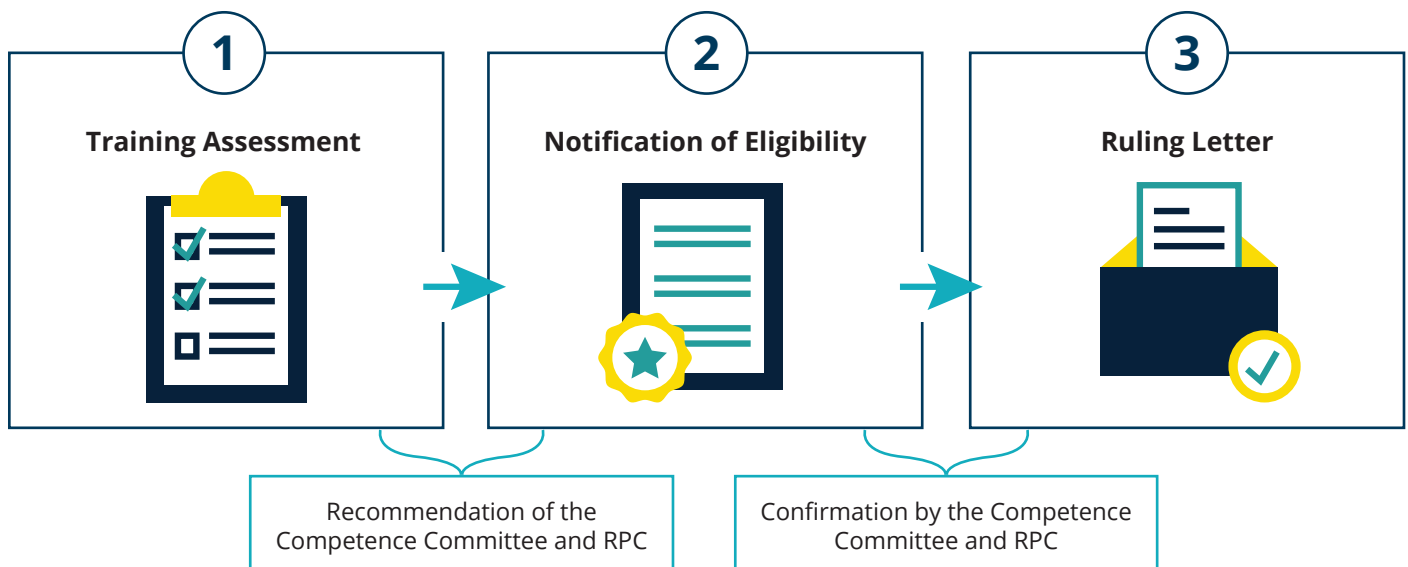
WHERE THERE IS FLEXIBILITY

With the transition to Competence by Design, the exam is no longer a final activity that must be completed at the end of a resident's training. While residents are typically expected to sit their exams at the end of the Core stage of training, CBD provides the flexibility for residents to progress through their training such that they may be prepared to sit the exam earlier (or later) than the expected time.

The program may withdraw the resident's eligibility at any point prior to the examination by notifying the Credentials Unit at the Royal College.

Residents may withdraw themselves from the examination by notifying the Royal College Examinations Unit. See section 6.4 of the CBD Certification Policy for details regarding refunds and eligibility timeline. Check the [Royal College website](#) for the most up-to-date information regarding implications of withdrawals.

WHEN IS A RESIDENT ELIGIBLE TO SIT THE ROYAL COLLEGE SPECIALTY EXAM?



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