

## **The application of new standards in Competence by Design**

### **1. BACKGROUND**

The Royal College has a number of key functions that contribute to the system and self-regulation of specialty medicine education across Canada. This policy relates to Royal College training standards for recognized disciplines. These standards are developed by Specialty Committees and applied nationally by universities to inform resident training and assessment in a given program, and are then used to confer trainee eligibility for Royal College certification.

In the Competence by Design (CBD) model of training, specialty-specific standards of training take the form of Competencies, Training Experiences, Standards of Accreditation and the Portfolio of Entrustable Professional Activities (EPAs). Residency training is divided into four stages (transition to discipline, foundations of discipline, core of discipline, and transition to practice) and the achievement of competencies is sequenced to promote progression through a CBD program. Promotions to a next stage of training are accomplished upon the successful achievement of the competencies, as demonstrated through EPA achievement, within a given stage, and as adjudicated by the local program's Competence Committee. In turn, progress through the stages of training informs the Royal College's assessment of a resident's eligibility for national certifying examinations (credentialing). Certification requires successful achievement in the examination as well as successful completion of the Portfolio of EPAs.

### **2. APPLYING NEW VERSIONS OF SPECIALTY-SPECIFIC STANDARDS**

The specialty-specific standards under which trainees are assessed will evolve over time, given a variety of factors, including developments in the discipline, changes in practice profile, changes to related disciplines, new technologies, revisions for clarity, etc. For this purpose, a policy that clearly defines expectations for the application of revised iterations of a discipline's standards and certification requirements for residents training in CBD programs is required.

#### **a. Policy Principles**

There are several principles guiding the application of specialty-specific standards:

##### *National application of standards*

The Royal College sets national training standards to assure consistency of competencies of graduates and therefore to protect patient safety. As such and in line with current practices, the protocol for the application of new standards of training will be applied nationally to all CBD programs within a discipline, and all trainees – regardless of their training program – will transition to new standards in the same fashion.

##### *Contemporary standards for assessment*

The application of new standards will reflect the developmental and iterative nature of CBD as an educational approach. Changes to specialty-specific standards will be applied in a timely manner, ensuring that residents achievements are held to contemporary standards. Further, the protocol used will be responsive to an evolving clinical environment and will

have the ability to nimbly address possible major overhauls of standards, should they be required.

*Minimize disruption for seamless progression of training*

In cases where there is a change to discipline standards, a resident's current stage will not be impacted. Instead, changes will only be applied to forthcoming stages which have not yet been started, establishing a balance between maintaining clear expectations for training, while ensuring access to contemporary educational design and standards of training. In cases where standards have been updated, it is expected that credit for past entrustment (EPAs that are complete or near complete) will be maintained and taken into account when reviewing a resident's portfolio. The ability to maintain credit, however, will be highly dependent on the functionality of the electronic portfolio in use by the resident's program.

*Flexibility and discretion for decision-making at the local program level*

Local program Competence Committees will have the discretion to make decisions to address issues faced by residents currently in a revised stage of training. For example, in the case of a difficult or ill-positioned entrustable professional activity (EPA) that has been removed or modified within a resident's current stage of training, a Competence Committee/program may choose to not assess the resident or modify their approach on that particular EPA, provided that they record their justification for doing so. On the reverse, should a new EPA be added to a resident's current or previous stage of training, it is expected that a Competence Committee/program would not require a resident to achieve this EPA, limiting disruption to the resident's current stage of training.

**b. Parameters**

All changes to a discipline's standards of training are determined by a Royal College Specialty Committee specific to the discipline. The updates to standards referred to in this policy include both moderate and fundamental changes, as well emerging special cases requiring significant redress of a discipline's standards.

- **Moderate changes** include the addition/removal of a milestone, replacement of a milestone within an EPA, changes to context, and change to an assessment template.
- **Fundamental changes** include moving an EPA to a different stage of training or adding/deleting an EPA to/from a stage.

Minor and editorial changes (limited to rewording and spelling/grammar corrections) to specialty-specific standards will not be versioned. Instead, these changes will be communicated by the Royal College and will be adopted as soon as is feasible by the Faculty/program.

**c. Procedure – 'next stage' approach to application of new standards**

A 'next stage' approach will be utilized when applying new standards to a CBD program and will adhere to the principles and parameters outlined above. The next stage approach applies a prospective introduction to new standards of training. In this, when the standards of a discipline are updated, the most recent version of standards as provided by the Royal College (Competencies, Training Requirements) is applied upon the resident moving to the subsequent stage of training (i.e., updates to a discipline's standards are only applied once a resident reaches a new or 'next' stage of training). The current stage of training, as well

as any completed stage of training (as identified by the Competence Committee), is not impacted. Upon receiving attestation that the resident has completed training according to the appropriate training standards from the postgraduate office, the Royal College will deem that that stage has been achieved and will apply it for certification purposes.

## **ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

### Royal College Specialty Committees

Specialty Committees will renew and make changes to specialty-specific standards under CBD as informed by evidence from discipline programs.

### Specialty Standards Review Committee (SSRC)

Moderate and fundamental updates to specialty-specific documents (Competencies, Training Experiences, and Standards of Accreditation, excluding the Portfolio of Entrustable Professional Activities [EPAs]) must be ratified by the Specialty Standards Review Committee (SSRC), which reports to the Committee on Specialties (COS) and Committee on Specialty Education (CSE). The SSRC does not review minor changes to these documents.

### Royal College

The *Specialties Unit* will work in collaboration with the Specialty Committees to support the renewal of specialty-specific standards for CBD programs. They will facilitate the communication of new standards internally within the Royal College Office of Specialty Education. The postgraduate offices are notified about changes to specialty-specific standards via memorandum on a quarterly basis.

The *Information Management Technology Services* team at the Royal College will work to ensure that the Royal College ePortfolio platform remains up to date.

The *Credentials Unit* deems completion of training for certification upon receiving attestation from the postgraduate offices that a resident has completed training according to the training standards applied during their time in training.

### Postgraduate Medical Education (PGME) Offices

The PGME offices will ensure the proper application of renewed specialty-specific standards to resident assessment. The Postgraduate Dean will submit an attestation that a resident has completed training according to the appropriate training standards to Royal College, on behalf of the Program Director, and that any version changes during a trainee's time were adopted according to the policy stipulated above.

### Competence Committees

The local program's Competence Committee will assess resident competencies, progression, and entrustment based on the most recent and applicable standards. Competence Committees have the discretion to make decisions for residents currently in a stage that has been revised (e.g., a difficult or ill-positioned EPA).

## **3. REFERENCES**

Policies for Certification in a Competence by Design Model of Residency Training (Section 5)