Policy for Special Consideration in Candidate Examinations and Assessments

Policy Area: Candidates in College courses
Policy Author: Education Unit
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Related Policies/Regulations ACD Appeals Regulation (July 2010)

Purpose
It is the College's policy to ensure that there are no unnecessary or unreasonable barriers to assessment that prevent candidates in College examinations and assessments, or IMGs seeking an entrance assessment from effectively demonstrating their competence.

Scope
College conducts examinations, assessments and training programs including the examinations prescribed in the TPH. Certain mandatory activities are conducted outside of normal business hours, including evenings and weekends. This policy relates to candidates requesting special consideration for reasonable assessment adjustments for circumstances which substantially affect performance and/or attendance due to:

- Legitimate religious or other relevant observance requirements which preclude or substantially impact on their participation in scheduled examinations and assessments;
- Established learning and/or physical disabilities, visual and/or hearing impairment, or other impairment;
- Adverse circumstances beyond their control occurring on or being known or becoming apparent prior to the day of an exam or assessment;
- Unfair events or conduct of the examination or interview assessment process.

In accordance with this policy, College procedures will be followed regarding possible reasonable adjustments and alternative arrangements.

Key words and abbreviations
Candidate refers to any person who has paid current full fees or partial fees as defined by their enrolment status to the ACD to participate in an approved course/program and/or assessment run by the College in order to achieve FACD and/or another qualification.

Mandatory means that all candidates must participate in the designated activity.
Religious observance refers to religious practices adhered to by the candidate as an on-going and continuous part of their life.

Adverse circumstances refers to an occurrence, unexpected and/or beyond control, on the day, of a magnitude which affects the candidate’s or IMG’s ability to focus on the examination or documentation and interview assessment.

Disability refers to established learning, physical, sensory and intellectual impairment.

Supporting documentation refers to clarifying documentation and information provided by an independent qualified professional in the area for which special consideration is being applied.

TPH refers to the Training Program Handbook

Honorary Secretary (Hon Sec), National Education Committee (NEdC), National Examinations Committee (NExC), National Training Committee (NTC), IMG Assessment Committee, Board of Directors (BoD), Dean of Education (DoE), Chief Censor (CC), Supervisor of Training (SoT), International Medical Graduate (IMG), Trainee Program Handbook (TPH), Summative-In-Training Assessment(s) (SITAs) and Performance Improvement Form (PIF).

The Policy

A. General

Certain mandatory examinations, assessments and training programs, usually for practical reasons beyond the control of the College, are conducted on evenings and weekends.

Candidates requesting special consideration will be required to submit an application with such supporting and/or clarifying information and documentation as the College reasonably requires to consider the application.

Submission of an application does not guarantee the considerations and/or changes requested.

B. Timetable conflicts with religious beliefs and observances

Candidates who consider that an examination timetable conflicts with the prescribed religious or other relevant observance requirements must notify the Hon Sec of the College in writing:

- when they are officially accepted into a College educational program, and
- at least twelve months prior to the date of the exam, or as soon as practicable, so that alternative arrangements may be considered. Applicants should be aware that the fourth year exam dates and locations are set twelve months in advance.

Should the final examination timetable and/or alterations be delayed resulting in candidates not being given twelve months notification:

- the Hon Sec must be notified within seven days of the College issuing the exam timetable.

For the purposes of assessing conflicts, it is noted that in the ordinary course the Fellowship Examination of the College will be scheduled to be held on a Friday and Saturday (weekend commitments being considered unavoidable given the nature of the assessments and the resources utilised).

An IMG documentation and interview assessment candidate who considers that this process conflicts with the prescribed religious or other observance requirements, must notify the Hon Sec of the College in writing within 7 days of receipt of confirmation from the College of a
documentation and interview assessment date, so that alternative arrangements may be considered.

On request, candidates must submit such supporting and/or clarifying information and documentation as the College reasonably requires to consider the application. Where a consent, approval or dispensation may be available to a candidate to allow participation, the candidate will be required to demonstrate reasonable efforts to obtain such consent, approval or dispensation.

Notification does not guarantee a timetabling change, and, on being admitted to the Training Program, trainees accept that the College reserves the right to hold activities outside of normal business hours and on weekends, if suitable and acceptable alternative arrangements cannot be made.

If a request for special consideration is made by reason of prescribed religious or other observance requirements, College will assess what other viable and real alternatives exist, the impact on the viability of the event, the impact on patients and practitioners, disadvantages to other candidates and whether or not the applicant is advantaged or disadvantaged by having different exam conditions. Each application will be reviewed on its merits. Should the request be granted, additional costs and expenses associated with a change in examination conditions will be payable by the requesting candidate.

C. Candidates with known and long-standing disabilities

Candidates with an identified disability as diagnosed by a registered medical professional which prevents or hampers performance to a substantial degree, may apply to have their examinations or IMG interview assessment held under alternative or varied conditions, as approved by the College.

- Candidates should notify the College when they are officially accepted into a College educational program if known at the time, and
- In the case of candidates, written requests must be received by the Hon Sec at least twelve months prior to the date of the scheduled exam. If the condition is not realised at that time candidates must notify the Hon Sec immediately after the condition is diagnosed.

In the case of IMGs, written requests must be submitted to the Hon Sec upon notification from the AMC that their application has been forwarded to the College for assessment.

Supporting Documentation:

The Hon Sec may request additional information and/or documentation. Within fourteen days (for candidates)/seven days (for IMGs), applicants must:

- provide the Hon Sec with such supporting documentation as the College reasonably requires to assess, clarify and/or verify the request and the impact of the notified circumstances.
- notify the Hon Sec that all or part of the supporting documentation sought by the College will not or cannot be provided. If such notice is not received within the prescribed time, the applicant may be taken to have elected not to provide the requested documentation.

A failure to supply supporting documentation may affect the outcome of the candidate’s application.
Without limiting the scope of the documentation, the College may request the following conditions be met, before a request will be considered:

- Original official documentation from a doctor or other appropriately qualified expert on appropriate and verifiable stationery, attesting to the disability and the substantial adverse impact of the condition given the applicable assessment circumstances.
- In the case of dyslexia, a psychologist’s report must also be submitted.
- All conditions must be current within the last two years.
- The documentation provided must include clear recommendations for appropriate or desirable adjustments relating to examinations and/or assessments.
- Candidates for whom reasonable adjustments are made will receive no other additional or special consideration during the assessment of their results.
- Candidates must immediately notify the Hon Sec in writing of any error in prior notifications as well as any change in conditions or circumstances previously notified to the College, which could reasonably be expected to impact on an earlier assessment or finding by the College.
- Documentation will be required to be re-submitted within the prescribed time for each set of examination and assessment situations, or if the candidate’s medical circumstances change.

Evaluation of the request and notification to the candidate

Once a request for special consideration has been received, it is evaluated by the NExC and NEdC, or the IMG Assessment Committee, and appropriate action is considered subject to the presented evidence.

In cases where it might be expected that there could be changes in the way the candidate is affected by the difficulty (e.g. exacerbation of current condition, new diagnosed condition), the College will require that there be recent and relevant evidence of assessments and consultations carried out by an independent expert. This is in order to determine the appropriate level of adjustment, if any, required.

In each event, the College will require, for its purpose in assessing any condition and determining any appropriate allowances and adjustments, that the candidate be assessed by an independent expert nominated by the College.

Candidates will be informed of the result of their request in writing by the Hon Sec within twelve months preceding the date of the exam (if the request has been made in accordance with this policy), or within six months or as soon as is practicable upon receipt of the request made outside the timelines of this policy. IMGs will be informed of the result as soon as is practicable. However, IMGs should be aware that a delay in interview assessment may be required in order to facilitate any special arrangements.

Reasonable adjustments

Depending on the significance of the impact of the condition notified to the College, for the purposes of assessing “reasonable adjustments” it is noted that:

While all candidates must complete the questions comprising an examination or assessment in the time allotted, additional time in the form of rest breaks up to a maximum of 25% of the total examination may be granted to a candidate.

- During such rest breaks, the candidate will not be permitted to work on responses to the examination questions
- The length of additional time is based on the medical recommendation.
• The candidate may be permitted to sit an exam at a venue other than the exam centre in order to meet their reasonable requirements. The exam takes place under the control of an allocated invigilator.
• Specified technical equipment or furniture may be supplied
• Special examination or IMG interview assessment conditions may be granted in accordance with psychologist or medical recommendations.
• Additional costs and expenses associated with a change in examination conditions will be payable by the requesting candidate.

Each application, regardless of grounds, is judged on an individual basis. The decision is based on the supporting evidence supplied or the information available, should a candidate fail to supply the prescribed documentation. The length of any additional time allowed is at the discretion of the NExC or the IMG Assessment Committee.

D. Adverse personal circumstances immediately before or on the day of the exam or IMG assessment

Examples of adverse circumstances which may be eligible for special consideration include temporary but significant illness, injury, accidents or recent bereavement of an immediate family member, partner or close relative,

Circumstances which may not constitute adequate grounds include other assessment commitments, employment commitments, a failure to allow adequate travel time to an exam, social activities, stress or anxiety, minor illnesses, minor inconveniences and study difficulties.

Notification to College:

• Verbal notification to College on the exam or interview day or as soon as possible.
• Notification made using the emergency number supplied for the day.
• Original supporting documentation (medical certificates, appropriate professional familiar with the reasons for the severity of the alleged circumstances, and/or statutory declaration) must be sent to the Hon Sec within 48 hours of the day of the exam or interview, or the day of first notification.
• Irrespective of the information supplied, candidates may be requested to provide further information as assessed by the NExC and/or NEdC, or the IMG Assessment Committee, before a decision is made.
• A failure to provide appropriate supporting documentation, attesting to the impact of the adverse circumstances, may affect the outcome of an application for special consideration.
• Candidates will be informed of the result of their request in writing by the Hon Sec as soon as is reasonably practicable

Reasonable adjustments

If an allowance is made, the NExC may in conjunction with the NEdC, or the IMG Assessment Committee, determine any one or more of the following outcomes or any other outcome determined by the NExC or the IMG Assessment Committee to be appropriate on a case-by-case basis:

• deferment of assessment
• modifying the assessment result;
• prescribe the additional costs and expenses payable by the candidate in connection with the allowance.

Additionally, in the case of Fellowship Examinations:

• No moderation of marks is possible
• Supplementary examinations are not available
• All attempts at the examination even if partial are considered an examination attempt. Credit for ALL passed exam components may be considered by the NExC.
• Some sort of fee reduction may be offered for subsequent exam attempts
• Trainees must still complete all examinations and pass within the required time frame in order to apply for FACD.

E. Special Consideration where a candidate believes they have been unfairly affected by events or conduct of the examination or interview assessment process

Candidates/IMGs must:
• notify the CC or IMG Assessment Committee on the day
• make an application in writing to the Hon Sec within 48 hours of the exam or interview assessment
• in the case of a face-to-face exam (eg viva) the candidate must notify the CEx before the final meeting of all the examiners occurs on the day.

The NExC in conjunction with the NEdC will consider the application and may recommend that the candidate’s results be reviewed or a supplementary examination be given or the eligibility provisions be modified.

The NEdC will report any such case to the DoE.

F. Identification by the NExC or the IMG Assessment Committee that a candidate may have been unfairly affected by events or conduct of the exam process

Where the NExC or the IMG Assessment Committee believes that a candidate has been adversely affected by the events or conduct of an examination, the NExC or IMG Assessment Committee may, after consultation with the DoE (or proxy of the NEdC) and Hon Sec (or proxy of the BoD), make an adjustment to the examination or interview assessment process.

G. Other Exceptional Circumstances

Candidates who wish to apply for special consideration for an assessment / examination for any other set of circumstances not covered by this policy, eg. early birth of a child, may apply to the College for such consideration.

Notification to College:
• Verbal notification to College on the exam or interview day or as soon as possible.
• Original supporting documentation (medical certificates, appropriate professional familiar with the reasons for the severity of the alleged circumstances, and/or statutory declaration) must be sent to the Hon Sec within 48 hours of the day of the exam or interview, or the day of first notification.
• Irrespective of the information supplied, candidates may be requested to provide further information as assessed by the NExC and/or NEdC, or the IMG Assessment Committee, before a decision is made.
• A failure to provide appropriate supporting documentation, attesting to the impact of the adverse circumstances, may affect the outcome of an application for special consideration.
• Candidates will be informed of the result of their request in writing by the Hon Sec as soon as is reasonably practicable.
H. Expectation of attendance

Notwithstanding that a request for special consideration may have been made, candidates who are physically capable of sitting an examination will be expected to sit the examination and appropriate preparation must be undertaken by candidates.

IMG applicants have the right to defer their interview assessment in the case of illness or misadventure.

I. Late Applications

The College is not obliged to consider or respond to any requests made outside the time limits prescribed in this policy.

J. Appealing decisions

- If a candidate does not agree or accept the decision notified, they must advise the Hon Sec in writing, within fourteen days of the notification, outlining the reasons for disagreement and if applicable, the change in conditions sought. The Hon Sec will refer the original application together with all relevant documentation to the BoD, who will review the process and the reasons for the decision.

- On undertaking a review, the BoD may seek additional information (although it is not obliged to do so).

- If the BoD deems that, notwithstanding the exceptional circumstances, the College’s policies and procedures have not been properly followed or applied appropriately, the BoD may overturn or modify the previous recommendation and notify the candidate of a new or amended course of action.

- If a candidate is not satisfied with the outcome of a review by the BoD, decisions relating to requests for special consideration may be appealed in accordance with the College Appeals Policy.
SPECIAL CONSIDERATION IN CANDIDATE EXAMINATIONS AND ASSESSMENTS
FLOW CHART (Version 3)

**CANDIDATES**

- Notify Hon Sec in writing upon acceptance into Training Program

**Known long-standing disability**

- Formal request to Hon Sec in writing 12 months before examination
- Supply to Hon Sec within 14 days

**Religious Observance**

- Notify Hon Sec in writing
  - 7 days of notification of interview
  - Within 7 days of notification of interview

**Request for more documentation**

Request evaluated by the NExC, the NEdC and/or the IMG Assessment Committee

Hon Sec advises in writing the outcome 12 months prior to examination or as soon as practicable. Any costs involved will be met by the applicant.

**Adverse circumstances on the day**

- Verbal notification to College asap; supporting documentation within 48 hours to Hon Sec;

**Adverse effects during examination/ interview assessment**

- In addition for Viva, notify CEx before the end of the day
- Letter from Hon Sec with result as soon as practicable

NEdC + NExC and/or IMG Assessment Committee will consider and report to DoE

Candidates/IMGs may appeal the final decision in writing to the Hon Sec within 14 days. The College Appeals process will then be followed.