



Royal Australasian College
of Dental Surgeons
Let knowledge conquer disease

SPECIAL CONSIDERATION IN EXAMINATION AND ASSESSMENT POLICY

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Purpose

This policy outlines the criteria and mechanisms by which RACDS candidates undertaking formal assessment may advise the College of, and the College may consider, special circumstances or disability which may adversely impact on their clinical training assessment, examination or other evaluation processes.

Background

RACDS understands the pressures candidates experience when undertaking studies and completing College training programs. This policy applies to those assessments which are formally scheduled and not able to be altered. Where the assessment is on a one-to-one basis and scheduled by mutual agreement, a request for a change in time or date may be made to the College.

The College will consider an application for Consideration of Special Circumstances where circumstances or conditions may have significant impact on, or disadvantage a candidates ability to complete an assessment or examination within the standard procedures and timing.

The College is unable to determine in advance all circumstances that might lead to the granting of Consideration of Special Circumstances. Each case will be considered on its merits in accordance with this policy.

Candidates who believe that their circumstances have the potential to impact on their performance, should consider deferment of the assessment or examination. Candidates who wish to defer their next consecutive examination opportunity, are required to submit an application for Consideration of Special Circumstances for determination of remaining opportunities. Candidates who have applied for the examination have the opportunity to withdraw from the examination (within the current stipulated timelines).

The College will not adjust marks for any aspect of the assessment or examination because of ill health or other circumstances.

Definitions

RACDS / the College	The Royal Australasian College of Dental Surgeons
Examinations	The RACDS examination processes include the following activities which is inclusive of, but not limited to, all RACDS programs, qualifications and assessment tools.
Assessments	International Medical Graduate (IMG) assessments and Six-Monthly assessment reports
College staff	Refers to RACDS members or staff (excluding the examiners) who are involved in a specific examination process delivery or approval.

Applicant	Refers to the individual/s applying for Special Consideration in an Examination or Assessment.
Candidate	Refers to the individual being assessed or examined, including OMS Trainees and IMG's.

Policy Statement

1. SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

1.1. Special circumstances may apply to any form of college examination or assessment, and will only be considered under this Policy, where a formal complying application has been made.

1.2. Consideration may be given to candidates where disability, illness, misadventure or other serious cause beyond the control of the individual has had an effect on performance or attendance. It will not apply in circumstances which the applicant has initiated, caused or voluntarily consented to any event or outcome or which it was in the power or control of the applicant to avoid.

1.3. Applications for special circumstances are classified on the following grounds, which may be temporary or permanent:

1.3.1. Medical - including, but not limited to:

- a) Serious illness or injury, including acute mental health;
- b) Physical trauma leading to impairment or disability;
- c) Complications from pregnancy;
- d) Circumstances which may affect emotional stability (including severe stress or anxiety).

1.3.2. Compassionate - including, but not limited to:

- a) Death of an immediate family member, partner or close relative;
- b) Birth, adoption, fostering or surrogacy of a child;
- c) Serious illness, injury or incapacitation of an immediate family member, partner or close relative;
- d) Serious disruptive events (example: vehicular accident on the way to the assessment);
- e) Unexpected financial hardship.

1.3.3. Permanent and/or Chronic Impairment or Disability

- a) Permanent and/or chronic impairment or disability is defined as a permanent or long-standing condition that may limit the participation or

performance of a candidate when they are undertaking an examination or assessment.

- b) It is the candidate's responsibility to determine his/her physical and/or mental fitness to attend the examination or assessment.
- c) It is the candidate's responsibility to advise the College in advance of the assessment (refer to clause 2.4.3 - Grounds of Permanent and/or Chronic Impairment or Disability for details) of the additional assistance to be provided to them during the examination or assessment. The types of assistance should be similar to what might be reasonably expected to be available within the normal workplace of a clinician. These may include: additional time, special equipment, or other modifications of the assessment procedure as appropriate.

1.4. Candidates who believe that their circumstances have the potential to impact on their performance, should consider deferment of the examination or assessment. Candidates who wish to defer their next consecutive examination opportunity, are required to submit an application for Consideration of Special Circumstances for determination of remaining opportunities. Candidates who have applied for an examination have the opportunity to withdraw from the examination within the current stipulated timelines.

2. APPLICATION FOR CONSIDERATION OF SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

- 2.1. In circumstances where the candidate presents for examination or assessment, it is a requirement that the candidate notify the designated RACDS staff member of their problem as soon as possible before or during the course of the examination or assessment.
- 2.2. Applications will not be accepted from a candidate who fails to notify the designated RACDS staff member of their condition before or during the course of the examination or assessment.
- 2.3. Applications will not be accepted where an application has not been made as soon as practicable after the occurrence of the event or circumstances in respect of which the application is made. Applications cannot be made retrospectively after an examination or assessment was voluntarily undertaken with knowledge by the Applicant of the event or circumstances in respect of which the application is made.
- 2.4. Where an application has not been made in accordance the terms and conditions of this policy, those special circumstances will not constitute grounds for reconsideration, review or appeal under the Reconsideration, Review and Appeal of Decisions Policy of the College.

2.4.1. Medical Grounds

Applications for special circumstances on medical grounds must be

accompanied by a medical certificate from the treating practitioner which details the following:

- a) The date(s) on which the candidate sought medical treatment or advice, which should be prior to or on the date of the scheduled assessment;
- b) The severity of the medical condition;
- c) A description of the medical condition;
- d) The time frame of the medical condition;
- e) The treating medical practitioner's professional opinion about the effect the medical problem has had on the candidates ability to perform in the assessment;
- f) In the case of a serious medical condition, (other than headache, stomach ache, etc.) the opinion of an appropriate specialist practitioner is required.
- g) The treating medical practitioner supplying the evidence should have a professional doctor-patient relationship with the applicant and should not be a family member, friend, relative, supervisor, employer or colleague.

2.4.2. Compassionate Grounds

Applications for special circumstances on compassionate grounds must be accompanied by relevant supporting documentation. This documentation may include, but is not limited to:

- a) A bereavement notice, death certificate and/or statutory declaration stating relationship to deceased;
- b) A notice from the treating practitioner where illness of a close relative is involved;
- c) A copy of police incident report;
- d) A statutory declaration stating the relevant circumstances.

2.4.3. Grounds of Permanent and/or Chronic Impairment or Disability

The College will endeavour to provide the optimal examination environment for candidates with a disability. Individuals applying for the use of specialised equipment, aids or special assessment conditions as a result of a disability should contact the College in writing at the time of registration for the assessment or at least 90 days prior to the scheduled date in order to permit appropriate arrangements, should this be considered necessary.

Applications for special circumstances on permanent and/or chronic impairment or disability grounds must be accompanied by relevant supporting documentation. This documentation must include:

- a) A description of the medical problem or disability;
- b) The period of the medical problem or disability;

- c) The treating medical practitioner's professional opinion about the effect of the medical problem or disability on the candidate's ability to perform in the assessment;
- d) The treating medical practitioner supplying the evidence should have a professional doctor-patient relationship with the applicant and should not be a family member, friend, relative, supervisor, employer or colleague;
- e) Clear instructions for the provision of specified requirements and the types of assistance sought necessary to address the reasonable requirements of the applicant to undertake the assessment;
- f) The candidate may be asked to undertake an assessment by an independent assessor chosen by the College. The independent assessor will be asked to provide a report with the opinion on the need for the type of reasonable assistance requested by the candidate. The cost for the provision of such a report shall be borne by the candidate.

2.5. Applicants (in relation to any of the above categories) may be requested to supply further information or documentation, as required by the College.

2.6. Circumstances NOT Constituting Adequate Grounds for Consideration of Special Circumstances:

- a) Stress or anxiety which would ordinarily be associated with preparation for or performance in examinations or other forms of assessment, including where the application refers to the result of travel arrangements made by the individual submitting the application.
- b) Knowing attempting an assessment with inadequate preparation, in the absence of factors that may be considered exceptional by their nature.
- c) Stress or anxiety resulting from relationship difficulties other than that associated with the complete breakdown of a marriage, de facto relationship or equivalent.
- d) Minor illnesses or medical conditions.
- e) Pre-existing illness or medical condition affecting the individual, immediate family member, partner or close relative which is not regarded as acute and substantive.
- f) Excessive work commitments, including specific rostering arrangements.
- g) Excessive work commitments outside the applicable training program.
- h) Work-related anxiety and stress such as may be met in the course of normal medical practice including adverse outcomes, medico-legal issues.
- i) The inability of the individual to organise their time effectively in order to meet administrative requirements/deadlines, including the completion of the training time and assessment requirements of a college training program within the specified timeframe.
- j) Ignorance of relevant published regulations and/or policies.
- k) Computer-related or other similar technological failure.
- l) Loss or theft of books or notes or similar materials;
- m) Decisions to undertake optional commitments of a personal nature;

- n) Personal or lifestyle choices where appropriate allowance or consideration has already been made;
- o) Circumstances where alternative arrangements were available (e.g. withdrawals, deferral or other special arrangements, etc) and an application was not made for such arrangements.

2.7. Notwithstanding a conclusion that the circumstances involved are 'special' and the grounds may exist for the individual to be afforded special consideration, there is no obligation for the CEO/approved delegate to afford relief where it is considered that adequate relief has been previously granted or is not otherwise warranted in the entirety of the circumstances. An applicant must demonstrate that the special circumstances have significantly affected them to the extent that special allowances are warranted. Applications will be rejected where the College is not satisfied that the effect of the special circumstances were significant enough to substantially prejudice the Applicant, or where other measures or other circumstances or allowances have ameliorated or addressed the prejudice or disadvantage caused by the special circumstances.

2.8. Where some form of allowance is granted on the basis of the existence of special circumstances, it must be understood that this will not excuse the individual from meeting a requirement or standard performance or qualifications which have been objectively set.

3. RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCE

3.1. Applications for religious observance requirements, where that observance prohibits participation in an assessment or examination at a particular time or on a particular day must be made concurrently with the application for assessment.

3.2. The candidate must provide all relevant information at the time of application;

3.3. The College will endeavour to accommodate candidates with legitimate religious requirements, taking into account what might reasonably be expected to occur in the workplace;

3.4. The College may also seek advice from an authority in the particular religion prior to making a determination;

3.5. On request, candidates must submit such supporting and/or clarifying information and documentation as the College may reasonably require in considering the application.

4. APPLICATION PROCESS

4.1. Applications for special circumstances must be submitted on the relevant application form from the [College website](#).

4.2. The application form must be accompanied by a letter from the applicant detailing the circumstances including the impact on their performance or ability to present for or complete the assessment.

4.3. Applications must follow the timelines as detailed below:

- a) In circumstances where the candidate presents for examination or assessment, it is a requirement that the candidate notify the designated College staff member of their relevant condition or issue before or during the course of the examination or assessment;
- b) Applications will not be accepted from a candidate who fails to notify the designated College staff member of their relevant condition or issue before or during the course of the examination or assessment;
- c) Any application for Consideration of Special Circumstances for a College examination or assessment made after the publication of results in that examination or assessment series will not be accepted. Such special circumstances (for which an application has not been made before publication of result) will not constitute grounds for reconsideration, review or appeal under the Reconsideration, Review and Appeals Policy;
- d) Medical grounds – must be sought as promptly as the circumstances permit and in all cases no later than 5 days after the date of the assessment (and must be before notification of the outcome of the assessment);
- e) Compassionate grounds – must be sought as promptly as the circumstances permit and in all cases no later than 5 days after the date of the assessment (and must be before notification of the outcome of the assessment);
- f) Permanent and/or chronic impairment or disability grounds - 90 days prior to the assessment or examination date;
- g) Religious observance - must be made concurrently with the application for assessment (so that alternative arrangements may be considered).

4.4. Candidates submitting an application for special circumstances must submit relevant supporting documentation at the time of application.

4.5. Supporting documentation will only be accepted from appropriate professionals e.g., medical practitioners, lawyers, psychologists, police etc. Medical certification can only be provided by the treating practitioner and as outlined in section 1.3.1 Medical.

4.6. Where the use of specialised equipment, aids or special assessment conditions are required, applications should be made in accordance with section 2.4.3 Grounds of Permanent and/or Chronic Impairment or Disability of this policy.

5. REVIEW OF SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES APPLICATIONS

- 5.1. Where an application is made under this policy, the notification of the outcome of the examination or assessment will be delayed pending the resolution of the application for Consideration of Special Circumstances under this policy.
- 5.2. Applications will be reviewed by the Director of Education for completion of documentary evidence and compliance with requirements of this policy.
- 5.3. The Director of Education will advise the candidate if any further documentation or evidence is required, which the candidate must provide as promptly as the circumstances permit and no later than 5 days after the request for further documentation or evidence has been issued.
- 5.4. If the Director of Education in consultation with the Registrar or Assistant Registrar determines in their absolute discretion that there are insufficient grounds for an application under this policy, or that the application lacks documentary evidence or fails to comply with requirements of this policy, the College will not be obliged to consider the application, or the further information provided (as the case may be). Examples of issues that will not be considered as sufficient grounds are listed in clause 2.6 - Circumstances NOT Constituting Adequate Grounds for Consideration of Special Circumstances
- 5.5. If the Director of Education determines in their absolute discretion that the application has sufficient grounds for an application under this policy, and complies with requirements of this policy, the relevant Registrar or Assistant Registrar will consider the application. The Registrar or Assistant Registrar may consider to consult with the relevant Board of Studies or Committee.
- 5.6. Although every effort is made to handle requests sensitively, in making an application for Consideration of Special Circumstances the candidate waives their rights to Privacy in relation to any of the information included in the application so that the case can be given full and careful consideration by the College.
- 5.7. All applicants will be notified in writing of the outcome within 30 days of receipt of the application.
- 5.8. Where applicable and required, the appropriate examination or assessment personnel will be notified of the outcome of your application.
- 5.9. Consideration of Special Circumstances granted to a candidate is not on-going and is only applicable to a single examination or assessment. A new application and supporting documentation must be made for each subsequent consideration unless otherwise stated.

5.10. The outcome of an application for special consideration in an examination will be a recommendation of the Registrar or Assistant Registrar or approved delegate of any of the following:

- a) The individual may be allowed to withdraw from the examination without penalty.
- b) The individual may be allowed a further attempt at the examination without affecting the number of attempts available to them under relevant College regulations.
- c) Other consideration be given as deemed appropriate.
- d) The application may be declined/no action may be taken.

5.11. Where the decision relating to an application for special consideration results in an individual being granted an additional or supplementary attempt at an examination, the decision will include a recommendation relating to the charging of fees or otherwise to the individual for presenting at that attempt.

5.12. Where an additional attempt at an examination is granted, and where this does not require an automatic associated extension of time in which to complete training and/or assessment requirements, the time limits available to complete part or all of the training requirements for which successful completion of the examination is a component, may, upon a separate application at an appropriate time, be extended to enable the allowable attempt at the examination in question, to be made.

5.13. The remarking of an examination is not an outcome available under the special consideration provisions.

5.14. In making a decision, factors such as the following will be taken into account:

- a) The extent to which the circumstances cited in the application are considered to be exceptional in that they could reasonably be seen as preventing the individual from meeting the requirement(s) in question, or as having adversely impacted on their performance in the assessment.
- b) What might reasonably be expected to occur in the workplace and incorporate the impact on the viability of the event, other doctors and Fellows, the provision of health services and additional costs.
- c) The degree to which the special circumstances claimed in the application are supported by the documentation provided.
- d) The relief, if any, previously granted by a college entity in relation to the special circumstances that are the subject of the application.
- e) Previous College decisions in relation to other applications citing similar grounds.

6. RECONSIDERATION, REVIEW AND APPEAL OF DECISIONS

- 6.1. Decisions relating to applications for Consideration of Special Circumstances may be appealed in accordance with the College's Reconsideration, Review and Appeals Policy, accessible on the College's website: www.racds.org.