

|            |                           |                                     |
|------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <b>1.</b>  | <b>POLICY TITLE</b>       | <b>Special Consideration Policy</b> |
| <b>1.1</b> | <b>Policy number:</b>     | <b>AS-E-011.2</b>                   |
| <b>1.2</b> | <b>Category:</b>          | <b>Organisational</b>               |
| <b>1.3</b> | <b>Approval date:</b>     | <b>March 2012</b>                   |
| <b>1.4</b> | <b>Revision due date:</b> | <b>March 2015</b>                   |
| <b>1.5</b> | <b>Unit responsible</b>   | <b>Education Services</b>           |

## **2. POLICY DECLARATION**

This policy describes the rules for granting special consideration in cases when Candidates encounter difficult circumstances beyond their control that may affect their performance in RACGP summative assessment processes. Candidates who enrol in any assessment process agree to abide by this policy and its procedures. The intent of this policy is to inform Candidates of the considerations regarded by the College as relevant to a special consideration application, and of the manner in which applications will be processed, facts will be checked and decisions will be made.

**This policy is authorised by the CEO.**

## **3. BACKGROUND**

This policy applies to all forms of summative assessment processes conducted by the College, and to all Candidates for College summative assessments.

### *i) Objectives*

The objectives of this policy are to:

- Guide a Candidate through the processes which apply to any application for special consideration made by Candidates experiencing difficult circumstances, which either detrimentally affect performance and/or prevent attendance at specific College assessment activities
- Provide guidelines as to the factors and information the College regards as relevant to its decision making

This policy endeavours to strike a balance between according fairness in deserving cases and at the same time paying due regard to the higher public duty of ensuring that Candidates meet the required standard of general practice. This policy seeks to achieve these objectives by informing those affected by its decisions of the process and the factors and information regarded as relevant to assist the Candidate to present his/her case to aid the decision making process.

The objective of all College policies is to continually improve the capacity of general practice to deliver the highest quality service to the Australian community.

### *ii) Specific Aims*

The specific aims of this policy are to:

- Inform assessment Candidates of the circumstances in which special consideration may be granted
- Set out the procedure the Candidate must adhere to in making any application for special consideration
- Set out the form special consideration may take
- Ensure that allowances and support provided for special consideration are fair and appropriate within the scope of the guidelines prescribed by this policy

# THE ROYAL AUSTRALIAN COLLEGE OF GENERAL PRACTITIONERS

- Provide procedures for determination by the Board of Censors of the considerations and support to be applied following approval of special consideration
- Note the rights of Candidates to bring appeals in relation to College decisions

## 3.1 Definitions

“Candidate” means a person who is enrolled in any College Assessment, or presenting for, or participating in, a College Assessment or segment of a College Assessment.

“College assessments (assessments)” are either the College examinations or the Practice Based Assessment (PBA) conducted by the College and undertaken by the Candidate to evaluate their knowledge, skills or experience in relation to general practice.

“College examinations” are one the College assessments which is comprised of three examination segments, being the Applied Knowledge Test (AKT) - an extended multiple choice exam; Key Feature Problems (KFP) - a mixture of extended multiple choice and short answer questions; and Objective Structured Clinical Examination (OSCE) - a combination of 14 short and long clinical cases.

“Practice Based Assessment” (PBA) is one the College assessments which is comprised of three segments, being the Oral Examination comprised of 20 two part questions (VIVA); Examiner Clinical Visit (ECV); and Recorded Consultations (RC).

## 3.2 Related Policies, Documents, Legislation & Strategic Priorities

[Academic Misconduct Policy](#)

[Appeals Policy](#)

[Assessment Methods](#)

[Assessment Performance Reporting](#)

[Board of Censors’ Decisions Reviews Policy](#)

[Eligibility for Assessment](#)

[Allocation of Candidates to Remote Supervision and Established Examination Centres](#)

[Withdrawal from Enrolment in College Assessments](#)

[PBA Handbook](#)

[PBA Handbook Appendices](#)

## 3.3 Assessment standards

College assessments are summative assessment processes designed to assess whether the skills, knowledge and experience of the Candidate are adequate to enable them to practise as independent general practitioners measured against the curriculum as prescribed by the Censor in Chief of the College. The standards for general practice determined by the College, as reflected in the assessment material presented to Candidates during an assessment, are designed to ensure that the required standard of competence in general practice is met by Candidates who successfully pass its assessments. For this reason the assessments must be academically valid and cover the field of general practice expected by the community.

The reason for granting special consideration is to accommodate a disadvantage suffered by the Candidate which is beyond his/her control, and which is objectively likely to have an adverse impact on his/her capacity either to attend or to perform at an assessment. Special consideration is granted in exceptional circumstances which appreciably exceed the pressures experienced by other Candidates in an assessment setting.

The granting of special consideration can never include the alteration of an assessment numeric score or the fail status, because:

- a) It is not the purpose of special consideration to assume or to agree that the Candidate would have done better if the Candidate’s circumstances had been different;
- b) While the College recognises that illness can affect the performance in an examination, it is the decision of the Candidate to whether to present for an assessment in their circumstances. A Candidate who presents for an assessment needs to be aware that the set general practice

standard must be reached and the assessment must be passed despite the circumstances, as ultimately patient safety is paramount.

Where a Candidate feels their performance in an examination may be impacted by grounds as set out in this policy, they may apply to be withdrawn from an assessment, in which case special consideration may be provided in the form of waiver of the withdrawal fees, if applicable. Please see [Withdrawal from Enrolment in College Assessments](#). For assistance available under this policy, see Section 4.4.

## 3.4 Fair assessments

The College in its determinations regarding special consideration will ensure that its decisions do not unfairly disadvantage either the applicant or other Candidates for the same assessment. In order to do this both the determination that special consideration should be granted and the level of consideration or support provided need to be carefully considered, balancing the legitimate concerns of the Candidate seeking special consideration and fairness to other Candidates who are presenting for the same assessment.

## 4. BODY OF POLICY

### 4.1 Special consideration

A Candidate may apply for special consideration in the event that special circumstances beyond the control of the Candidate, such as illness, disability, misadventure or other serious cause, may have an effect on performance or attendance.

The Censor in Chief will not consider a request for special consideration or assistance that does not comply with this policy. Applications for special consideration must be made in writing (email accepted) accompanied by further detailed documentary evidence within the time frame specified by this policy - refer Section 4.5.

#### *i) English as a second language is not grounds for special consideration*

The fact that English may not be a Candidate's primary language is not grounds for special consideration.

Candidates need to be aware that all States and Territories in Australia require a minimum standard of command of the English language in order to practice medicine. Since College assessments set the required standard for general practice in Australia, a written and spoken command of English, to the standard to be able to communicate effectively in the assessment situation, is required.

#### *ii) No re-marking of failed assessments*

In no circumstances will special consideration extend to re-marking a failed assessment.

Successful requests for recognition of special circumstances may take the form of setting aside the results of an assessment, but they will not change the results (numeric score or fail status) of the assessment.

## 4.2 Grounds

The grounds for special consideration may be:

- a) Short-term; or
- b) Long-term.

### 4.2.1 Short-term grounds

Short term grounds for special consideration may be summarised as emergencies coinciding with the assessment such as the onset of a disabling bout of influenza or gastroenteritis,

injury, serious illness or death of a close family member, or an accident. Special consideration must be sought by the Candidate as promptly as the circumstances permit and in all cases no later than 10 working days after the conclusion of the assessment. In the event that the short-term grounds are medical in nature, please see Section 4.3.4 below for requirements regarding submission of medical certificates.

## 4.2.2 Long-term grounds

Long term grounds refer to circumstances subsisting well in advance of the assessment that may call for some accommodation of the Candidate's special needs with regard to assessment conditions. In these instances, the application procedures and time limits must be strictly observed.

## 4.3 **Circumstances**

Special consideration may be granted in the following circumstances that may impede assessment performance.

### 4.3.1 Logistical and locational constraints

Geographically isolated Candidates can arrange to sit for the online segment of a College Assessment in a location other than one of the major centres on the approved list published by the College. If an alternative venue is required because of geographical isolation, a written application for supervision must be submitted at the time of enrolment. The approval of an alternative venue will be granted, if at all, subject to appropriate conditions, and applicable College policies.

### 4.3.2 Religious grounds

If religious beliefs preclude a Candidate from presenting for the AKT or the KFP segment(s) of an assessment on the designated date, the Candidate is eligible to apply for supervision of those segment(s) on an alternative date, normally on the day prior to the designated assessment date. Adherence to religious practices which require fasting may well affect a Candidate's performance later in the day and special consideration should be applied for to accommodate this eventuality also. The approval of any alternative arrangements in these instances will be subject to applicable College policies and appropriate conditions, usually including the requirement to sign a confidentiality agreement and pay a fee (determined annually) towards the costs of holding the assessment, such as invigilator fees and catering.

### 4.3.4 Medical problem or disability

Candidates are urged to ensure at the time of enrolment for a College assessment that they are sufficiently fit and healthy that they will present well and do as well as possible in the assessment.

A Candidate who has a short-term, long-term or emergency medical problem that is likely to impair his or her assessment performance or prevent the Candidate from presenting for an assessment may lodge a request for special consideration. These requests for special consideration or assistance on the basis of a medical problem must describe the medical problem in detail and specify the level of support sought. The Candidate must make the request prior to commencing any segment of the assessment if the Candidate is aware of the medical problem at the time. If the Candidate becomes aware of the medical problem after the assessment has commenced, the Candidate must apply, in writing (email accepted) accompanied by further detailed documentary evidence within the time frame specified by this policy. Applicants are referred to Section 4.5.

In the case of a short-term, long-term or emergency medical problem or disability, the request for special consideration or assistance must also have attached a detailed medical certificate showing:

- a) The date(s) on which the Candidate sought medical treatment or advice;

- b) A description of the medical problem or disability;
- c) The period of the medical problem or disability; and
- d) The medical practitioner's professional opinion about the effect of the medical problem or disability on the Candidate's assessment performance.

In making such an application Candidates agree that they are waiving to the College their rights to privacy in relation to the medical condition that may affect their assessment performance. The waiver of privacy is solely for the purpose of the College's considering the application and reaching a determination as to whether it is an appropriate case for special consideration and the form which such special consideration may take.

The medical practitioner supplying the evidence should not be a relative and should have a proper, professional doctor-patient relationship with the applicant.

#### 4.3.5 Other serious problem, including compassionate grounds

In the case of any other serious problem, any appropriate supporting documentary evidence must be provided. This may include:

- a) Documentary evidence of serious illness of a family member or dependent (in which case the requirements and provisions in Section 4.3.4 relating to medical certificates and privacy will apply);
- b) Death notice or death certificate of a close relative or dependent; or
- c) Other relevant documentary evidence.

Some circumstances may justify special consideration in the form of granting a leave of absence to enable the Candidate to defer their assessment to a later date but within the three year period.

#### 4.3.6 Emergency preventing attendance

If an emergency has prevented the Candidate from attending an assessment, special consideration may take the form of permitting the Candidate to re-present at a later date for no additional fee.

### 4.4 **Kinds of special consideration and support**

Special consideration will **not include** a revision of the result of an assessment (change of score or fail status). Please see [Assessment Performance Reporting](#).

Special consideration or assistance may include:

- a) The admission of additional materials to the assessment room that may physically assist the Candidate, beyond that usually admissible as set out in the *Assessment conduct of Candidates* policy;
- b) A Candidate may request assistance during an assessment if a medical condition or disability exists which may impair the performance of the Candidate. Assistance may include anything that enables the Candidate to participate in the assessment or to feel more comfortable during the assessment, such as physical aids that assist the Candidate who needs special help to feel physically comfortable, but which does not impart an advantage in the assessment. Assistance may include:
  - Assistance to reach seating at the site of the assessment
  - Special seating

- Special lighting
  - Other assistance;
- c) The arranging of an alternate venue and time to complete the assessment in the case of the written segments;
- d) An opportunity to present at a subsequent scheduled assessment at a reduced fee or no additional fee;
- e) Such other consideration as is considered appropriate at the discretion of the Censor in Chief.

Candidates who need special assistance are required to notify the RACGP Faculty Office or invigilator as soon as practicable, and preferably at least 10 working days prior to the date of the assessment.

## 4.5 Applications for special consideration

### 4.5.1 Timelines for Applications for Special Consideration

All applications for special consideration must be made in writing. If the short-term circumstances occur on the day of the assessment, then the College must be notified as soon as it is practicable that special consideration will be sought, followed by a written application for special consideration (together with supporting documentation) to be received by the College no later than 10 working days after the assessment.

In long term circumstances where the Candidate is seeking special consideration, the application must be in writing, accompanied by supporting documentation, and received no later than 20 working days prior to the date of the assessment. All applications must be made to the Censor in Chief at the address indicated in Section 4.5.1(ii) below.

#### *i) Short-term circumstances in the assessment room*

If, in the assessment room, the Candidate is experiencing short-term discomfort or distraction affecting his or her performance, the Candidate may ask to be moved. The request should be made to the assessment supervisor promptly. The assessment supervisor will note the complaint and the outcome. If the assessment supervisor is of the view that the conditions complained of are no different from those experienced by other Candidates, the assessment supervisor may refuse to move or otherwise accommodate the Candidate, and a note will be made of the refusal to accommodate the Candidate. A candidate may request a reconsideration of such a decision within the terms of these guidelines and the College's [Board of Censors' Decisions Reviews Policy](#).

#### *ii) Long-term circumstances*

In cases when circumstances are long-term (see Section 4.2.2), Candidates should make written application for special consideration, not less than 20 working days prior to the assessment, either by

- a) Email to: [fellowshipservices@racgp.org.au](mailto:fellowshipservices@racgp.org.au) (preferred method), or
- b) By post to: Fellowship Services Branch  
Royal Australian College of General Practitioners  
1 Palmerston Crescent  
South Melbourne  
Victoria 3205  
Australia

Applications must include originals or certified copies of all documentary evidence.

## iii) *Emergency circumstances*

In cases of emergency circumstances (see Section 4.2.1), Candidates should make written application for special consideration, not less than 10 working days following the assessment, to the Censor in Chief addressed as in Section 4.5.1(ii) above.

### 4.5.2 Written notice of decisions

The Censor in Chief will give a written notice of the decision concerning the request for special consideration or assistance promptly after receiving the request from the Candidate. The notice will specify:

- a) If special consideration is granted, the nature of the special consideration or assistance granted and the reason for granting it;
- b) If special consideration or assistance is not granted, the reason for refusing to grant it;
- c) Advice that the Candidate may apply for reconsideration of decisions on the kind of assistance offered or to not provide assistance.

### 4.5.2 Right of appeal

If the Candidate wishes to appeal to the Censor in Chief based on a refusal to accommodate the Candidate, or if the Candidate is not satisfied with the level of support offered, then the application stating the grounds must be made by the Candidate promptly and in accordance with the procedure prescribed in the [Board of Censors' Decisions Reviews Policy](#).

## 5. PROCEDURES

### 5.1 Access to published policy

Members, staff, and the general public will have access to this policy.

### 5.2 Promulgation of published policy

Relevant Members and staff will be sent communications explaining the function and role of this policy. Staff will be further trained in how to use and apply this policy.

All Candidates will be provided access to a copy of this policy at least one month prior to the date of an assessment.

All Candidates will be reminded of the content of this policy immediately prior to the assessment, before entering the assessment room.

### 5.3 Review of this policy

This policy will have a review cycle of three years