

Frequently asked questions

Updated 22 March 2021

Dates and administrative arrangements

Can I choose my exam time?

No. If you have a reason that you need to sit at a particular time you may apply for [special consideration](#). This application and supporting documentation must be received no later than 20 business days prior to the exam.

What if I'm not available on one of the exam days?

You need to be available for each of the exam days. If not, you should withdraw and enrol in the next exam cycle.

I'd like to sit the exam from overseas. How do I get this approved?

There's no need to have your exam venue approved by the RACGP, even if it's outside of Australia. It's your responsibility to make sure the venue is suitable, including:

- Choosing a safe and comfortable location
- Ensuring there are no distractions or interruptions
- Ensuring nobody but you can see or hear the content of the exam
- Making sure your computer and the internet connection are fast and stable enough for videoconferencing
- Checking that the Zoom teleconferencing software is available in your country. Zoom is **not available** in some regions, including Iran, North Korea, Cuba, Syria and the Crimea region of Ukraine. For the latest information on availability, check the [Zoom support article](#).

The RCE is a live exam, and there will be no opportunity to adjust the time you sit to suit another time zone.

Where can I sit the RCE?

You can choose your own exam venue, but it must satisfy the exam venue requirements above. In general, it must be quiet, private and have a good internet connection to ensure you can connect to Zoom and interact with the examiners.

Where should I sit the RCE?

Every candidate will be facing unique circumstances when deciding where to sit their exam. Some candidates will have a quiet, private space in their homes while others may have to use their practice to.

You'll need to decide where best place for you to sit the exam is. If your home or usual place of work is extremely remote or has unreliable internet, you may consider travelling to a larger town or regional centre to take the exam, perhaps from a professional office or a colleague's practice. Most importantly, you should prioritise internet access and the ability to concentrate during the exam.

On exam day

Will anyone else be involved in my exam?

Our administrators will engage with you at the start of and throughout your exam. The RACGP's Quality Assurance (QA) examiners will also be observing all examiners throughout the examination. At any time, there may be a QA examiner observing your session. The QA examiner will not interact with you during your exam session. You must not bring anyone else to the exam or speak to anyone other than the exam staff and examiners during the exam. You can choose to have a technical support person available to assist with reconnection issues should you experience technical difficulties on the day, but they must stay out of the room for the duration of your exam and only enter if needed for technical support. (See *"I'm nervous about technology"*, below).

Will the RACGP be watching my environment during the exam?

Yes. Your examiner and a QA examiner, when present, will be watching you. In addition, our clinical lead and any administrative staff associated with the examination will see you throughout the exam. Your webcam and microphone must be always on and you must not have a virtual background enabled. Any unexpected or unreasonable disruption may be investigated by your examiner. You may be requested to do a sweep of your exam room using your webcam.

Can I use the bathroom during the exam?

Yes. These breaks are to occur in the marking/transition time of the exam (after reading and case time ends). You must advise your examiner that you're taking a bathroom break and ensure you're back for the start of the next case. Your exam time won't be extended should you return back during case time.

Technology

How is the RCE delivered?

The RCE is delivered remotely using [Zoom](#). You'll be sent a link to access the virtual examination hub (Zoom meeting) where examiners will be stationed to deliver the exam cases on the day. Each examiner will deliver one case. You'll be rotated around the virtual exam rooms (Zoom breakout rooms) by an administrator.

The examiner will share the case reading material with you using share screen and give you remote control so you can scroll through it. You must log in and sit the exam on a laptop or desktop computer. Tablets, iPads, Chromebooks, phones and other devices are not suitable for the exam. Zoom apps may be available on these devices, but we can't guarantee that you'll be able to read and interact with the cases properly if you're not using a computer.

I'm nervous about technology and would like to have a technical support person at my exam. How do I get this approved?

There's no need to have your technical support person approved before the exam. It's your responsibility to arrange a suitable person if you feel one will be necessary.

If you want to use a technical support person, they must be aged 18 years or older, and not be a medical practitioner. They must remain outside the room unless technical difficulties occur. The role of the support person is to help you if technical difficulties occur. They must not see the exam content and must not help you with the exam itself in any way.

How will technical issues be managed?

You need to take all possible steps to prevent technical issues. This includes testing your computer and internet connection and speed before the day of the exam; installing and testing Zoom ahead of time and having an alternate way of connecting to the internet, for example through a mobile hotspot. You should ensure that you know how to connect to your hotspot or alternative internet including accessing and entering any passwords before the exam day.

From time-to-time unexpected connection issues may be experienced. You'll be able to invite your technical support person into the room to help you if you experience an issue, and we'll do everything we can to ensure you complete your exam on the scheduled day. This may include contacting you by phone to attempt to resolve the problems.

If you experience a technical issue, please tell your examiner immediately. If you are unable to communicate with your examiner Zoom has an 'Ask for help' feature you need to use to alert the hub administrator. They'll come into the virtual exam room to assist.

What other technical areas should I be confident with?

Each examiner will share the case materials with you on screen. You'll be able to scroll through the reading material using Zoom's remote control function. You should practise this with a friend and make sure you know how to open the document to fit to your entire screen, enlarge the font and manage scrolling. It's also advisable to use a large screen.

Will there be further technical information given to candidates?

The [RCE web page](#) has several resources including the Zoom FAQs and Technical Guide and some useful links for testing internet connection and Zoom support. We recommend you practise using Zoom before the exam – familiarise yourself with the platform, test your camera and microphone, practise using the screen sharing and remote control function.

About the Remote Clinical Exam

How is the RCE different to the OSCE?

The OSCE	The RCE
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Mostly two examiners per station2. Face-to-face simulated consultation3. Mostly simulated consultations4. Face-to-face delivery in large groups5. Delivered in a single session6. Short and long cases7. Three minutes reading time for each case8. Use of core skills and clinical competencies	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. One examiner per station2. Use of remote simulated consultation3. More case-based discussion with examiners4. Remote delivery to all candidates5. Delivered over 2-3 short sessions on non-consecutive days6. All cases equal in length (10 minutes)7. Five minutes reading time per case8. Use of clinical competencies mapped to core skills

Who was involved in designing the Remote Clinical Exam?

After years working as an RACGP examiner and censor, General Manager of Education Services, Dr Genevieve Yates, oversaw the project to deliver a modernised assessment that also serves to safeguard all involved during the COVID-19 pandemic.

A full-time project manager and a part time clinical lead, both with considerable expertise and experience in assessment development and delivery (including remote clinical assessment delivery), were engaged to lead the 2020 Clinical Assessment Project.

They're supported by Censor-in-Chief, Dr Tess Van Duuren and National Clinical Lead of Assessment, Dr Gary Butler

We're committed to ensuring the voice of GPs in training is heard when it comes to decisions that affect them. The Faculty for GPs in Training, plus key stakeholders are consulted on developments regarding the transitional Remote Clinical Exam (RCE) format and new Clinical Competency Exam (CCE) formats.

What's assessed in the RCE?

This is a clinical competence exam, with a focus on your clinical skills. The RCE clinical competencies are mapped to the Core Skills and the competency outcomes within those core skills, which are in the curriculum that underpins your training. The competencies are grouped into the 10 Clinical Competencies. Further details are provided in the RCE candidate module on [gplearning](#) and in the [Candidate guidelines for the Remote Clinical Examination](#).

How many exam cases are there and how long will I be in the exam?

The RCE consists of 16 cases in total. You'll complete 12 cases over two sessions on two separate days. Each session will be approx. 2.5 hours including the pre-exam briefing, but we recommend you keep extra time available in case of any unexpected connection issues.

If competency has not been demonstrated, you'll be invited to complete an additional four cases on day three. This session will be almost two hours including the pre-exam briefing.

Will I know in advance what the case distribution will be for my exam?

No, this information isn't provided. You should prepare for all types of cases.

What types of procedures might I be examined on and can we have examples?

Cases will be typical of those you may experience in general practice. Therefore, any general practice type procedures may be examined.

Where can I find the clinical competency rubric?

This is attached to the RCE candidate module on [gplearning](#).

Will I be marked down if I don't respond to visual cues?

Your communication is being examined and there may be relevant visual cues when you're consulting with the simulated patients. As this is in an online format, use of visual cues will be very limited. You're not expected to maintain direct eye contact with examiners during the case-based discussions.

Will the candidate case information remain on the screen for me to read during the case?

Yes, it will be available to you throughout the case, and you will have control of the document throughout the case so you can scroll through and refer to sections as needed.

Will we be given case type examples to guide our study, in particular the case-based discussion cases?

The online module in [gplearning](#) contains detail of what to expect in a case-based discussion case. You should view each case that you see in your day-to-day practice as an opportunity to practise. There are also four practise cases provided as downloadable resources in the online module, and a recorded case information webinar available on the [RCE webpage](#).

Will we have to interpret patient results via zoom?

Yes, you may be given patient pathology or imaging results or other relevant information to review.

Will impacted GPs in training and other doctors receive special consideration for the cycle delays due to COVID-19?

Yes. We recognise that the change from OSCE to the new clinical exams will be disruptive for GPs in training. We're therefore extending the exam candidacy for all candidates eligible to sit the RCE or CCE in 2020 and 2021.

If you're eligible to sit either the RCE or the CCE, your maximum exam candidacy will be extended from six semesters over three years (plus approved suspensions and leave) to seven semesters over 3.5 years (plus approved suspensions and leave). Candidates who don't sit, or don't pass their clinical exam in one semester will therefore not be disadvantaged.

You should know that this extension only applies to the RACGP's [Fellowship Exam Attempts Policy](#). If you're subject to other time limits, like AGPT's training time cap, you'll need to seek an extension from your training organisation.

How do I prepare for the RCE?

The best way to prepare is to continue honing your clinical skills during your daily patient encounters, and discussing cases with your peers and mentors, with the intent of continuous improvement of your practice and patient outcomes.

Visit the RCE webpage for resources and information to assist in exam preparation.

Timing

How long do I have for each case?

You'll have five minutes reading time, and 10 minutes examination time for each case. We've allocated five minutes between cases to allow for examiner marking, movement between the virtual exam rooms and for an ID check to be completed at each station.

Will we be cut off at the 10 minute mark or will we be allowed to continue being examined?

Your exam time will stop at the 10 minute mark and you'll be allowed to finish your sentence. Any comments made after this will be disregarded by the examiner. If there's a technical issue that warrants additional time, then you'll be allowed to continue as guided by your examiner.

If we finish a case early can we go back and address other items, we may have missed?

Yes, you can continue to add information about that case until the 10 minutes have ended.

Can I use a timer or a watch?

Yes, you'll be required to manage timing for the simulated patient case to ensure all tasks are completed within the 10 minutes case time. Candidates are able to use a phone to keep time in this case. All other case timing is managed by the examiner throughout the exam.

Research papers and taking notes

Can I discuss the research papers with anyone before the exam?

Yes, you're welcome to discuss with colleagues and fellow candidates prior to the exam.

Can I have the research paper with me at the exam?

Yes, you may have an unannotated copy with you. The examiner may ask to see the paper and if they do, you'll need to show your paper with no notes or edits on it.

Can I make any notes on my research papers during the exam?

No, you must not write on the research papers during the exam. This includes highlighting or any form of annotation. Examiners may ask you to show them your research papers.

Can I take notes into the exam?

No. But you may bring blank paper – one piece per case. You may write on the blank paper once the exam has commenced.

Can I use another device to write on instead of paper and pen?

No, you may only write on blank paper and are not permitted to access any device other than a timer during the exam. You must not annotate the digital version of the case shared with you by the examiner.

Will I have time to read questions and write down any notes?

You'll have five minutes reading time prior to each case. You can make notes during this time. In the case-based discussions, exam questions will be delivered verbally by the examiner once the case time begins. You can write down the questions if you wish. In the simulated patient case, the tasks are in the written candidate reading material provided during reading time. Notes must be destroyed at the end of the case and the examiner will instruct you to do this before you move into the next room.

About the optional third day

What happens after day two?

You'll be notified whether you're being invited to day three or not via email. Those who've clearly passed or clearly failed after the 12 cases delivered on the first two days, won't be offered a place in day three as additional assessment is not required.

Why have I been invited to day three?

If, following the first 12 cases, you haven't clearly demonstrated your competence, you'll be invited to sit a further four cases to demonstrate that you're at the standard of a Fellow.

How do I enrol in day three?

Enrol by clicking the enrolment link and following the instructions that will be emailed to you in your invitation.

What if I'm invited to sit day three, but choose not to?

The additional four cases on day three are optional but as your competence wasn't clearly demonstrated in the first 12 cases, your result will be recorded as a fail.

Will the additional day cost anything?

Yes, the fee is \$1095. The fee doesn't need to be paid in advance but must be paid before results are released.

Will I find out if I've passed or failed after day two?

No. We know some candidates will find it stressful wondering whether they've passed or failed, but just like in other exams, we must complete a detailed statistical analysis and rigorous quality assurance procedure with the results of the whole exam, including day three. We can't release any results until this has been completed.

Will I find out how many cases I passed in the first two days if I'm invited to day three?

No. We can't give you results of part of the exam before you've finished the entire assessment.

Why is there an additional cost for day three?

A huge amount of work goes in to developing every case in a Fellowship level exam. Every case passes through multiple quality assurance, road testing, evaluation, review and editing points before being approved for use in the exam. This process spans many months and involves external and internal professional and clinical (GP) resourcing. There are also significant operational costs that include software licensing, training, development of exam collateral, staffing, examiner and quality assurance costs. To meet all these costs, we need to charge a fee.

In past years, candidates who didn't demonstrate their competence in the clinical exam had to enrol again in a later semester. This meant paying the entire exam fee again, as well as the stress of sitting an exam, and potentially facing a delay in Fellowship of six months. We believe the option to sit additional cases as part of the same exam cycle is beneficial for candidates. However, the additional cases aren't mandatory. You can enrol in another clinical exam in the future if you prefer.

Are there financial hardship arrangements in place for day three?

Yes. You can choose to pay the fee for the third day immediately, at the time of enrolment. If this isn't practical for you, you may pay the fee before results are released.

If you can't make payment before the release of results, don't worry. Your results won't be lost or forfeited and can be released once the payment has been made. You won't be able to enrol in any more exams until payment has been made.

Results

Why does it take so long to receive my results?

Upholding the standard for Fellowship is our priority and part of our commitment to every member and the wider community. It's also a requirement of the AMC that we ensure every exam is statistically reliable, valid, fair, and consistent.

It's important that we can confidently rely on exam results. For this reason, we take time to analyse every exam in detail before publishing results.

Statistical analysis of results includes an in-depth review of the performance of all questions, the performance of all candidates and candidate groups, and the consistency of examiner marking.

A detailed procedural analysis is also undertaken. This includes a review of exam processes, investigation of all incidents and analysis of Quality Assurance (QA) and examiner feedback.

Once the data has been analysed, a comprehensive report is sent to the Council of Censors who oversee examinations. They'll ratify results once they're satisfied that the exam meets the standard for accreditation and Fellowship.

Following ratification, results are uploaded to the RACGP's online system and then tested for accuracy before being made live for candidates.

We understand that waiting is frustrating but given the importance of these exams to both candidates and the college, high standards must be maintained so that the award of Fellowship of the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners remains a globally recognised achievement and qualification of excellence. The quality checking ensures that only those who are truly ready for safe, independent general practice, are awarded a pass in the Remote Clinical Examination.

Enrolments close for RCE 2021.1 before results are released for 2020.2. Can I enrol in RCE 2021.1 if I fail RCE 2020.2?

Candidates who sit and are unsuccessful in the 2020.2 RCE (March) will be allowed to enrol in the 2021.1 RCE (July) through a late enrolment process as long as normal exam eligibility requirements are met. For the 2021.1 RCE, eligibility requirements include a valid pass in both AKT and KFP. Detailed instructions on how to enrol via this late enrolment process will be provided to all candidates who were unsuccessful in the 2020.2 RCE at the time of results release.