

RACGP's Remote Clinical Exam: Frequently asked questions

Updated 30 September 2020

Enrolments, fees, dates and administrative arrangements

Can I choose my exam day?

Each exam session is set on the same day for every candidate. There is no option for sitting the exam on a different day. All candidates will sit on all three days of the exam, and some may be invited to the optional day four.

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

If this is the case, you would be advised to withdraw and enrol for a subsequent exam sitting.

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 reviewing all examiners throughout the exam cycle. 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 don't need to bring anyone else to the exam, but you can choose to have a technical support person if you want. (See "I'd like to invite a technical support person", below).

Do I need a simulated patient to demonstrate techniques?

No. You may interact with a simulated patient over videoconference, but demonstration of physical techniques is not required.

Do I need an invigilator?

No, an invigilator is not required. You may choose to have an optional volunteer support person to help you with technical issues. The support person must meet the RACGP's criteria (See "I'd like to invite a technical support person", below).

I'd like to invite a technical support person to the 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 support person if you feel one will be necessary.

If you wish to use a technical support person they must be aged 18 years or older, and not be a medical practitioner. They should stay outside the room unless technical difficulties occur, and must have photographic identification to show our examiners if they enter the room during the exam.

The role of the support person is to help you if technical difficulties occur. They are not an invigilator, they do not have to act as a simulated patient, and they will not play any role in delivering the exam. They must not see the exam content where possible, and must not help you with the exam itself in any way.

How will technical issues be managed?

Candidates should take all possible steps to prevent technical issues. This includes testing their computer and internet connections before the day of the exam; installing and testing the software ahead of time, including in the mock RCE; and where possible considering having back-up ways of connecting to the internet, for example through a mobile hotspot. However, from time to time connection issues may be experienced. You will be able to invite your technical support person into the room to help you if you experience an issue, and the RACGP will do everything we can to ensure you complete your exam on the scheduled day. This may include contacting you by other means including phone to attempt to resolve the problems.

Will the RACGP be watching my environment during the exam?

Your computer must have a webcam and a microphone, and these must be enabled and working well for the entire exam. Unreasonable disruptions in the background may be grounds for the exam to be interrupted by our examiners.

I'd like to sit 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, however, 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 in Australia 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 share their space with their families. Maybe you have a space in your practice where you can sit undisturbed, or maybe you work from shared rooms and cannot access that space on the exam day. Maybe you are currently overseas, and you don't have reliable internet in your country.

You will need to make a decision regarding the best place for you to sit the exam. If your 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 hotel or a colleague's practice. Most importantly, you should prioritise internet access and the ability to concentrate during the exam.

Will impacted GPs in training and other doctors receive special consideration for the delays?

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

If you are 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 do not sit, or do not 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 are subject to other time limits, like AGPT's training time cap, you will need to seek an extension from your training organisation.

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 station 2. Face to face simulated consultation 3. Mostly simulated consultations 4. Face to face delivery in large groups 5. Delivered in a single session 6. Short (8min) and long (19min) cases 7. 3 minutes reading time for each case 8. Mapped to Core Skills in the curriculum 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. One examiner per station 2. In some cases, simulated patient consultation may be used 3. Format includes more case-based discussion with examiners 4. Remote delivery to all candidates 5. Delivered over 3-4 short sessions on non-consecutive days 6. All cases equal in length (10 min) 7. More reading time per case 8. Use of Clinical Competencies to guide assessment

How is the RCE delivered?

The RCE is delivered remotely using [Zoom](#). You will be sent a link to access the virtual examination centre where there will be four examiners to deliver the four exam questions on the day. Each examiner will deliver one question. You will be rotated around the four virtual exam stations by an administrator.

Case reading material will be visible on the screen. 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 for these devices, but we cannot guarantee that you will be able to read and interact with the cases properly if you are not using a computer.

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 will be provided in the exam support module for the RCE.

The 10 clinical competencies are:

1. Communication and consultation skills
2. Clinical information gathering and interpretation
3. Making a diagnosis, decision making and reasoning
4. Clinical management and therapeutic reasoning
5. Preventive and population health
6. Professionalism
7. General practice systems and regulatory requirements
8. Procedural skills
9. Managing uncertainty
10. Identifying and managing the seriously ill patient

What types of cases will I encounter in the RCE?

There are four case types in the RCE:

1. Case-based discussion

You will be given a patient summary and some background history, with or without results and/or photos. Questions will be delivered verbally. The total number of questions and approximate time allocated will be listed on the reading material. This will give you an idea of the level of detail required.

2. Remote consultation with a simulated standardised patient

Using professional actors as patients with the examiner observing the interaction. You will be given patient information summary and instructions on what to do in the consultation.

3. Case-based discussion with description of physical examination or procedure

You will be given a patient summary, background information and asked to describe some aspects of relevant physical examination and discuss potential findings, and/or describe how you would carry out a procedure relevant to the case.

4. Critical appraisal and case-based discussion with reference to a research paper

You may be given one or more academic research papers around a week prior to the start of exams and will be asked to discuss specific aspects of the paper in this case type. There may be a patient case provided at the station with discussion on how to apply the research findings in the patient's specific context.

How long do I have for each case?

The examination time for each case is 10 minutes. We have allocated 10 minutes between cases to allow for movements between the virtual examination rooms and for identification to be completed at each station. This will allow you at least five minutes to read the case material.

How many exam cases are there?

There will be 12 cases delivered over three sessions of four cases each, on three separate days. Each session will last up to 90 minutes, but we recommend you keep two hours available. If competency has not been demonstrated, eligible candidates will be offered an additional set of four cases several days after the completion of the 12 cases. The additional set of cases is optional, but a pass mark cannot be awarded to a borderline candidate who does not sit the additional cases.

How do I prepare for the RCE?

The best way to prepare for the RCE is to continue working on 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.

For dedicated exam preparation, we recommend the following:

- Familiarise yourself with the RACGP Curriculum, focussing on what is required for the GP at the point of Fellowship.
- Practise a structured approach to managing patient presentations which are often non-specific and full of uncertainties.
- Practise being systematic in defining patient problems, and working through the differentials to a provisional or definitive diagnosis
- Continue practising in a patient centred and culturally safe way, and have an evidence-based approach to quality care.
- Ensure you familiarise yourself with the material in the RCE exam support module on [gplearning](#)
- The Mock RCE will be offered to give you the live exam experience, and to offer you feedback.

How will the RACGP determine whether I have passed the exam?

Consultation with leading international educational experts, review of the current literature and consideration of current pandemic conditions informed the development of the RCE model. As with all RACGP exams there is no predefined “pass mark” or “pass rate”. The RACGP has instead implemented a model of sequential testing that is better suited to an exam that is required to be delivered remotely to the large number of candidates enrolled, across a wide geographic footprint.

Candidates must achieve a pass in sufficient cases to provide the RACGP with a high degree of confidence that they have achieved the competency level for a GP at the point of Fellowship.

The complete exam comprises a total of 16 cases.

Based on binomial probability calculations, we can be confident that candidates who achieve a total of 11 passes in the first 12 cases are at the standard required for Fellowship and therefore are a clear pass at this stage of the exam. These candidates do not require further assessment.

Similarly, statistically, we can be confident that candidates who fail five or more cases of the initial 12 are not yet at the standard for Fellowship. These candidates will not be eligible to sit the last four cases.

Any candidate for whom competency cannot yet be determined after 12 cases, will be offered the additional four cases to enable them to demonstrate their competency.

Who is involved in designing the Remote Clinical Exam?

After years working as an RACGP examiner and censor, our recently appointed General Manager of Education Services Dr Genevieve Yates is overseeing the project to deliver a modernised assessment.

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), have been engaged to lead the 2020 Clinical Assessment Project.

They are being supported by Acting Censor-in-Chief, Dr Tess Van Duuren and National Clinical Lead of Assessment, Dr Gary Butler.

The RACGP is committed to ensuring that the voice of GPs in training is heard when it comes to decisions that affect them. The new Faculty for GPs in Training through Inaugural chair, Dr Krystyna de Lange plus key stakeholders are being consulted on developments relating to both the transitional Remote Clinical Exam (RCE) format and new (Clinical Competency Exam) formats.

Updates from candidate questions – September 2020

Do I need to address COVID protocols in my case?

Not unless this forms part of the case. You can assume that any patient pre-visit screening has been performed.

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

Yes, you can.

Can we have the research papers with us at the exam

No, you cannot bring any notes into the exam with you.

Can I take notes into the exam?

No notes can be taken into the exam.

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

No, this information is not provided to candidates. You should prepare for all types of cases.

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

You should expect that cases will be typical of those that may be experienced in General Practice, therefore, any general practice type procedures may be examined.

Can we use a timer or a watch?

Yes, candidates will be required to time keep for the simulated patient case.

Will we be given some case examples?

The Mock exam included cases representative of each of the case types that will be presented at this exam.

Where can I find the clinical competency rubric?

This is attached to the RCE online exam support module on [gplearning](#).

Are we going to be marked down if we don't respond to visual cues?

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

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

You will have five minutes of reading time prior to each case. You can make notes during this time and throughout the exam. 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.

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.

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 will be allowed to finish your sentence. Any comments made after the 10-minute end of case time will be disregarded by the examiner. If there is any technical issue that warrants additional time then you will be allowed to continue as guided by your examiner.

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

Yes, it will be available to you throughout the exam.

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

The online module contains detail of what to expect in a case-based discussion. You should view each case that you see in your day to day practice as an opportunity to practise case-based discussion.

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 regarding that case until the 10 minutes have expired.

Will we be required to interpret patient results via zoom?

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

Where can I access the recording of the technology webinar for candidates?

If you registered for the webinar you would have received a link to view the recording. You can however view the recording [here](#). Please use the password: 6epAtNP%

Can I have a sample of case pre-reading materials so I can practice on Zoom with a friend or family member?

You can access the pre-reading materials for the mock exam [here](#)

Where can I view the candidate technical guide and other technology frequently asked questions?

You can view that document [here](#)

About the optional fourth day

What happens after completion of the three days of examinations?

You will be notified as to whether you are being offered the optional additional cases or not. Those who have clearly passed and those who have clearly failed after the 12 cases will not be offered the additional cases.

What if I am offered the extra four cases?

The additional four cases are optional. If, following the 12 cases, you have not clearly demonstrated your competence, you will have the choice to sit an additional four cases to demonstrate that you are at the standard of a Fellow. If you choose not to sit the additional four cases your result will be recorded as a fail.

What if I don't sit the extra four cases?

As your competence was not clearly demonstrated in the first 12 cases, your result will be recorded as a fail.

If you choose not to attempt the optional additional set of cases, you can enrol to sit the full RCE again in 2021.

Will the additional cases cost anything?

Yes, the fee is \$1095 for the fourth day. The fee does not need to be paid in advance but will need to be paid before results are released in December.

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

No. Just like in other exams, the RACGP will complete a detailed statistical analysis and rigorous quality assurance procedure with the results of the whole exam, including day four. We can't release any results from the first three days until this has been completed.

We know some candidates will find it stressful wondering whether they have passed or failed, but this is no different to any other Fellowship exam. The total time from starting the exam to receiving your results will be similar to OSCEs in the past.

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

No. Day four is not a supplementary exam, it is part of the same exam. We cannot give you results of part of the exam before you have finished the entire assessment.

Why does day four cost more?

A huge amount of work goes in to developing every case in a Fellowship level exam, such as the RCE. 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 both 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 did not 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 are not mandatory, and if you would prefer to attempt the RCE again in a future semester instead, you may do so.

Are there financial hardship arrangements in place for day four?

Yes. You can choose to pay the fee for the fourth day immediately, at the time of enrolment. However, if this isn't practical for you, the due date can be extended by approximately six weeks, into December 2020. Exact due dates will be shared closer to the exam date.

If you can't make payment before the release of results (17 December 2020), don't worry. Your results will not be lost or forfeited and can be released once the payment has been completed. You won't be able to enrol in any more exams until payment has been made.