

Special Consideration for an Examination Assessment

1 Purpose and context

- 1.1 RACS recognises there will be serious misadventure, accident or extenuating circumstances beyond a candidate's control which is of such severity or gravity that they may impact adversely on examination performance. The policy has been instituted to support candidates who would under normal circumstances reach their usual demonstrated performance level but are significantly affected by serious misadventure, accident or extenuating circumstances beyond their control.
- 1.2 To pass, candidates must demonstrate that they have achieved a minimum standard; merely applying for special consideration based on a serious misadventure, accident or extenuating circumstances will not demonstrate that the minimum standard has been achieved.
- 1.3 Granting special consideration will not take the form of allocating additional marks or changing grades without undertaking an alternative assessment.
- 1.4 Special consideration should not be utilised repetitively in order to manage long-term illness, disabilities or ongoing severe disruptive circumstances. In such circumstances, candidates should refer to the "Reasonable adjustments for an examination assessment" policy.
- 1.5 This policy should be read in conjunction with the following regulations, policies and documents:
 - a) Conduct of the Generic Surgical Sciences Examination (GSSE)
 - b) Conduct of the Clinical Examination (CE)
 - c) Conduct of the Specialty Specific Surgical Sciences Examinations (SSE)
 - d) Fellowship Examination (FEX)
 - e) Reasonable Adjustments for an Examination Assessment
 - f) Marking methodology / standard setting guide

2 Definitions

- 2.1 Special consideration refers to those situations where a candidate wishes to formally advise RACS they have suffered unforeseen severe and/or grave illness, misadventure, accident or have extenuating circumstances and as a result, they have:
 - a) been prevented from meeting an examination requirement or deadline; or
 - b) performed below their usual standard during an examination assessment
- 2.2 **Candidate** means a person who is enrolled in an RACS Examination, i.e. post-graduate doctors, surgical trainees and specialist international medical graduates (SIMG).

3 Principles

- 3.1 RACS is committed to ensuring all candidates have the right to equity and fairness when undertaking examination assessment.
- 3.2 RACS seeks to apply the principle of granting special consideration for short-term illness, serious misadventure or extenuating circumstances which are beyond a candidate's control and which may have impacted on examination performance whenever possible.
- 3.3 RACS will ensure the integrity and examination standards are maintained while providing an alternative way for assessing a candidate who is granted special consideration.
- 3.4 RACS will protect the confidentiality of information provided when reviewing requests for special consideration.

4 Timeline

- 4.1 An application must be submitted as soon as the candidate is aware that they have extenuating circumstances; either
- for candidates sitting Fellowship clinical/viva segments, applications must be received by one hour after the final component of the examination;
 - for all other examinations, i.e. the Fellowship written examination, CE, GSSE and Specialty SSE examinations, applications must be received by the Examinations Department no later than 5.00pm AEDT/AEST on the day after each examination component.
 - Candidates must assess whether or not they are fit to present for the exam.
 - Senior Examiners have the authority to submit special considerations on behalf of candidates.
 - Senior Examiners will have access to all special consideration submissions.
- 4.2 An application will not be considered after the examination result is published.

5 Submitting an application

- 5.1 It is the candidate's responsibility to notify RACS of unforeseen severe and/or grave illness, misadventure or extenuating circumstances beyond their control and to obtain documentation which demonstrates the severity and/or gravity and timing of the circumstance. The documentation should also demonstrate how this has disrupted the examination.
- 5.2 Candidates affected by unforeseen severe and/or grave illness, misadventure or extenuating circumstances beyond their control who choose to undertake an examination cannot apply for special consideration regarding their performance unless the circumstances:
- were either not present before an examination; or
 - escalated considerably within an examination.
- 5.3 Factors contributing to or constituting extenuating circumstances, misadventure or accident must directly relate to the timing of assessment requirements. These may include:
- medical conditions or events;
 - psychological trauma, impairment or incapacity arising from an event;
 - physical trauma leading to impairment or incapacity resulting from an accident.
- 5.4 Factors which would not be normally considered as contribution to or constituting extenuating circumstances:
- routine demands of employment and employment related travel;
 - difficulties adjusting to self-directed learning and the demands of surgical work;
 - stress or anxiety normally associated with examinations;
 - routine financial support needs;
 - lack of knowledge of requirements of the training work;
 - difficulties with the English language or technology e.g. computer use/typing;
 - difficulties with visa arrangements that could have been reasonably anticipated;
 - scheduled anticipated change of address, moving home, house moves, etc.
- 5.5 Other circumstances which can be grounds for a special consideration application other than serious misadventure or accident may include:
- emergency service commitments, where a candidate is required to attend an emergency situation and the requirement to attend is specified in supporting documentation;
 - legal commitments, where a candidate has been refused excusal from jury duty or is subpoenaed to attend a court, tribunal or hearing, and the requirement to attend is specified in supporting documentation;
 - compulsory involvement in a ceremony or significant cultural activity of a unique nature (excluding those specified in clause 5.6), where the requirement to attend is specified in supporting documentation from a relevant official or leader of the event/activity.
- 5.6 The following circumstances would not be regarded as grounds for a special consideration application.

- a) demands of sport, clubs, social, volunteer associations, or extra-curricular activity;
- b) recreational travel (domestic or international);
- c) personal events, such as weddings.

5.7 A candidate who seeks to gain an unfair advantage in assessment by submitting an application for special consideration that is not genuine is subject to appropriate disciplinary action whether or not the application for special consideration is subsequently withdrawn.

6 Determination and outcome of special consideration

6.1 On the basis of the information provided by the candidate, the following may be taken into account in determining whether special consideration is granted:

- a) the severity of the event;
- b) history of previous applications for special consideration.

6.2 For special consideration to be applied, candidates must have achieved the minimum requirements for the examination.

6.3 Where it is determined that special consideration is granted for the examination and the candidate has met the minimum requirements, one of the following outcomes will apply:

- a) The application is not approved and the fail result stands;
- b) The application is approved, and the result is elevated to a pass;
- c) The application is approved and the result and attempt is omitted.

6.4 Omission is only applicable for examinations with a maximum number of attempts. Should an omission be granted, any time limits associated with the requirement to pass the examination remain and are not extended.

6.5 Omission does not entitle the candidate to a refund of the examination fee.

7 Delegations to approve special consideration

7.1 Assessment that 'serious misadventure, accident or extenuating circumstances' has been proved and documentary evidence provided: Examinations Management.

7.2 Determine the outcomes of all requests for Special Consideration: Chair of the appropriate examination committee responsible for ratifying the examination results.

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