1. **PURPOSE AND SCOPE**
   To provide information pertaining to the structure and processes associated with the administration and conduct of the Fellowship Examination of the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons.

2. **KEYWORDS**
   Fellowship Examination, Court of Examiners, Eligibility, Conduct, Marking System, Results, Feedback, Conflict, Appeals, Withdrawals

3. **BODY OF POLICY**

   3.1. **The Court of Examiners**
       The Court of Examiners (also known as the Full Court) is appointed by the Education Board. Its purpose is to conduct the Fellowship Examination which primarily is an assessment of professional judgement, clinical decision making and medical expertise to ensure a candidate is safe and competent to practise independently as a surgeon.

   3.2. **Roles and Responsibilities to Conduct the Fellowship Examination**

       3.2.1. **Executive Officer**
              The Chief Executive Officer of the College is the Executive Officer to the Court. This role may be delegated as appropriate.

       3.2.2. **Local Co-ordinators**
              The Senior Examiner of each specialty appoints the Local Co-ordinator, who is a Fellow of RACS residing in the region where the clinical and viva segments of the examinations will be held. Local Co-ordinators assist by organising examination venues, patients and equipment at hospitals where the clinical and viva segments are held and arrangements for Anatomy where applicable.

       3.2.3. **Marshalls**
              Marshalls are volunteers who may be surgical Trainees, RACS International Medical Graduates or surgical registrars who assist the Local Co-ordinators on the day of the clinical and viva segments.

       3.2.4. **Invigilators**
              Invigilators play a central role to ensure that the security of the written components of the examination is maintained at all times.

   3.3. **Observers**

       Refer to policy: Observers of Fellowship Examinations (EDA-EXA-012)

   3.4. **Privacy and Confidentiality**

       Any person involved with the Fellowship Examination and candidates presenting for the examination shall:

       3.4.1. Treat as strictly confidential any materials, images, content or discussions of any examination component viewed or discussed for the purposes of conducting the Fellowship Examination.
Respect the privacy and autonomy of patients who play a role in the clinical components of the examination.

3.5. Conflict of Interest

3.5.1. The membership of the Court of Examiners will be published on the RACS website.

3.5.2. It is the responsibility of the candidate to notify the RACS Examinations Department within 2 weeks of registration of any perceived conflicts of interest. Accommodations may be made based on the information provided.

3.5.3. Should an Examiner or candidate become aware, at the commencement of an examination segment, of an actual or perceived conflict of interest, the Examiner or candidate must notify the Senior Examiner or delegate.

3.5.4. In the event that a conflict is raised at the commencement of an examination segment, the following provisions will apply:

a. The co-Examiner present, who is not in conflict, will lead the exam for that candidate; and/or

b. An observer may be present for the examination and discussion of the candidate.

3.5.5. An Examiner should not approach any candidate regarding any matters either professional or personal, which could at that time, or at a later time, be deemed or perceived to be a conflict of interest.

3.5.6. For a candidate to be examined by an Examiner who examined the candidate in a previous examination does not of itself constitute a conflict of interest.

3.5.7. Marshalls and invigilators should not approach any candidate regarding any matters either professional or personal, which could at that time, or at a later time, be deemed or perceived to be a conflict of interest.

3.6. Eligibility to Present for the Examination

See policy: EDA-EXA-033 Fellowship Examination Eligibility and Examination Performance Review.

3.7. Application

3.7.1. The examination dates and application closing dates are published on the RACS website.

3.7.2. A candidate must apply to present for the Fellowship Examination through the online registration form, via the RACS website and pay the full examination fee at the time of registration.

3.7.3. An application outside the published timeframes will not be accepted.

3.8. Timeframe and Venue

The Fellowship Examination consists of two components:

3.8.1. The written examinations are generally conducted in April and August each year in the following regions:

Australia: Adelaide, Brisbane, Melbourne, Perth and Sydney
3.8.2. The clinical/viva examinations are generally conducted in May and September each year in venues across Australia and New Zealand. Where possible, venues alternate between the following regions every other year:

Australia: Brisbane and Melbourne
New Zealand: Auckland and Wellington

The September examination is held in Australia only and where possible, alternates between Adelaide and Sydney every other year.

3.9. The Examination

The examination consists of seven separate but equally weighted segments, which vary according to specialty.

3.9.1. There is a duty on all Specialty Courts to ensure the necessary resources are in place to examine all eligible candidates who register for the examination.

3.9.2. Written papers will be of at least 2 hours duration and held approximately 4-5 weeks in advance of the clinical/viva examinations.

3.9.3. A candidate will not be given access to his or her completed answer booklet/s after the completion of the examination as an answer booklet constitutes examination material and is RACS property.

3.9.4. A candidate must sit all seven components of the examination on each occasion he/she presents.

3.9.5. Two Examiners will be present with the candidate during the clinical/viva components of the examination, and every effort is made to ensure each candidate is assessed by as many Examiners as possible across the entire examination.

3.9.6. The responsibility for marking each segment lies with the pair of Examiners involved. Each Examiner will mark independently and then agree on a consensus mark after discussion with their examining partner at the conclusion of the segment. A completed examination or component thereof will not be remarked or reviewed.

3.9.7. When necessary, candidates will be segregated into separate rooms to avoid contact between those candidates who have completed an examination segment and those who have not.

3.9.8. By applying to present for the Fellowship Examination, the candidate is agreeing to the terms and conditions of the examination. Refer Fellowship Examination Guidelines for Candidates.

3.9.9. Disruptive behaviour by a candidate in any segment of the examination will be investigated as misconduct. If a candidate is reported to be causing a disturbance during the examination, he/she will be removed from the examination room.

   a. The candidate involved will not be given extra time at the end of the examination for any reason including time taken to address the incident.
b. An examiner or other person supervising an examination segment will complete an incident report for consideration by the Court of Examiners.

3.10. Pre-examination Court Meetings

3.10.1. Specialty Workshops

a. Each Specialty Court of Examiners meets annually to
   - Set questions and marking guidelines and to discuss business related to the examination.
   - Review and confirm applications for Appointments to the Court of Examiners.

b. The Chair, Court of Examiners must approve all significant alterations to the examination format and candidates must be given six months’ notice of any approved changes to the examination format.

3.10.2. Specialty Court Meetings

Each Specialty Court meets prior to the commencement of the clinical/viva component of the examination to discuss business matters related to the examination and to prepare for the examination.

3.10.3. Executive of the Court Meeting

A meeting of the Executive of the Court is usually held the day prior to the commencement of the clinical/viva component of the examination.

3.11. Post-Examination Court Meetings

3.11.1. Specialty Court Meetings

a. Each Specialty Court meets at the completion of the examination to review the overall performance of candidates and make recommendations to the Full Court.

b. In the event of a vote to be taken at the Specialty Court meeting, each examiner is expected to vote unless a conflict of interest has been established.

3.11.2. Full Court Meeting

a. The Full Court considers the candidate result recommendations made by the Specialty Courts and ratifies the results of all candidates at the examination.

b. All Examiners conducting the examination are required to attend. An Examiner must have a valid reason for non-attendance and their apology must be minuted.

3.11.3. Business Meeting of the Court

Attended by the Full Court for the purposes of conducting examination business, including but not limited to:

a. Setting of Examination Dates

b. Policy changes

c. Recommendations for Education Board
d. Scholarships

e. Other Business

3.12. Prohibited Equipment or Materials

3.12.1. Equipment or materials which are not permitted to be taken into an examination room (prohibited equipment or materials) includes but are not limited to:

a. all watches, mobile phones, calculators, portable computers, tablets or other electronic audio-recording devices (e.g. audio-recording wrist bands, pens, spectacles, mp3 players, iPods, iPads, etc.).

b. notes, books, textbooks or other materials.

3.12.2. A candidate who takes prohibited equipment or materials into an examination room will be informed that he or she must leave the examination room immediately and will not be permitted to take further part in the examination.

3.12.3. The candidate’s result for the examination will not be approved and any examination fees paid will be forfeited as per terms stipulated in clause 3.19.

3.12.4. An Examiner or other person supervising an examination segment will complete an examination incident report for consideration by the Full Court.

3.13. Cheating

3.13.1. Cheating is defined as, but is not limited to:

a. gaining or attempting to gain access to any materials such as specimens or images, or patients involved in the examination, prior to an examination;

b. copying, or allowing another candidate to copy, answers during the course of an examination;

c. disseminating or making available questions or answers to another candidate or prospective candidate relating to the current examination;

d. procuring knowledge of the questions, and their answers, from anyone before the examination.

3.13.2. An invigilator, Examiner or other person supervising an examination segment will, upon identifying suspected cheating during the examination, complete an examination incident report for consideration by the Full Court.

3.13.3. The candidate involved will not be given extra time at the end of the examination for any reason including time taken for discussions with the person who has identified the incident.

3.14. Report of prohibited equipment or materials or cheating

3.14.1. Upon receipt of an examination incident report for the taking of prohibited equipment or materials into an examination room or cheating, the Chair of the Court of Examiners will:
3.14.2. If a report on the taking of prohibited equipment or materials into an examination room or cheating is received by the Full Court, or if a Specialty Training Board or the Deputy Chair, BSET receives the report directly:

a. prior to the examination taking place; the candidate's application for presenting to an examination will be withheld until such time an investigation has concluded; if an allegation is upheld in addition to any penalty imposed by the relevant authority or Training Board, the candidate's application will not be valid and the entire examination fee paid will be forfeited as per terms stipulated in clause 3.19 of this Policy.

b. during the examinations and prior to the examination results being made available to candidates; the examination result will be withheld by the Full Court until such time as an investigation has concluded; if the allegation is upheld, in addition to any penalty imposed by the relevant authority or Specialty Training Board, the examination result will not be approved and the candidate will be regarded as having an unsatisfactory performance.

c. after the examination results have been made available to candidates; if the allegation is upheld, in addition to any penalty imposed by the relevant authority or Specialty Training Board, the examination result will be withdrawn and the candidate will be regarded as having an unsatisfactory performance.

3.15. Special Circumstances Relating to Examinations
Refer to policies EDA-EXA-034 Special Consideration and EDA-EXA-035 Reasonable Adjustments for Disability.

3.16. Marking System
3.16.1. The marking system used for the examination is the expanded close marking system, with marks ranging in grades from 1 to 4.

a. A mark of 4 is awarded for exceptional performance.

b. A mark of 3 represents a satisfactory standard achieved.

c. A mark of 2 represents a fail, where the candidate has failed to reach the standard.

d. A mark of 1 represents a fail, where the candidate falls well short of the standard.
3.16.2. The Marking Policy is as follows:

a. Each of the separate seven examination segments is equally weighted and the marking point scores within each segment, scaled accordingly. This means a satisfactory performance in all 7 segments would achieve an overall score of 21.

b. Candidates obtaining a total mark of:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Result</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>≥21</td>
<td>Will be recommended for approval to the Full Court</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>≤18</td>
<td>Will not be recommended for approval to the Full Court</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 - 20</td>
<td>Are in the Discussion Band and will be discussed by the Specialty Court and recommended to the Full Court as a pass or fail</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

c. For candidates in the Discussion Band (scoring 19-20) the Specialty Court will discuss the performance of the candidate, detailing those areas where the required competence was not achieved, and recommend to the Full Court either a pass or fail result.

d. Notwithstanding the above, any Member of the Full Court may request that any candidate's performance be described and the candidate's result be confirmed by a majority vote.

3.17. Results and Presentation to the Full Court of Examiners

3.17.1. Results are approved as a ‘pass’ or ‘fail’ by the Full Court.

3.17.2. Immediately following the Full Court meeting, the results of the examination are available for candidates, through the RACS online portal and can be also collected in person.

3.17.3. Candidates who have passed the examination are presented to the Full Court.

3.17.4. Formal written confirmation of results is forwarded to the candidates within 14 days.

3.17.5. Results will be emailed to Specialty Training Boards immediately after the Full Court Meeting.

3.18. Feedback Reports for Unsuccessful Examination Attempts

Refer to policy: EDA-EXA-033 Fellowship Examination Eligibility and Examination Performance Review

3.19. Withdrawals and Refunds

3.19.1. A candidate who wishes to withdraw from the examination must do so via the RACS website and online withdrawal form.

3.19.2. A candidate will be refunded 100% of the examination fee if the relevant Specialty Training Board does not approve his/her application to present.

3.19.3. A percentage of the examination fee will be refunded in accordance with the following timeline:
a. A candidate will be refunded 95% of the examination fee if notification of withdrawal from the examination is received prior to the application closing date.

b. A candidate will be refunded 50% of the examination fee if notification of withdrawal from the examination is received after the application closing date and more than 15 business days prior to the commencement of the written component of the examination.

3.19.4. A candidate will not receive any refund if:

a. notification of withdrawal from the examination occurs less than 15 business days prior to the commencement of the written component of the examination.

b. notification of withdrawal from the examination occurs after completing the written component.

c. they do not attend any component of the examination.

d. they are prevented from participating in the examination as a result of taking prohibited equipment or materials into an examination room or cheating or misconduct.

4. ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTS

Policies
EDA-EXA-011 Court of Examiners Terms of Reference
EDA-EXA-012 Observers of Fellowship Examinations
EDA-EXA-016 Appointments to the Court of Examiners
EDA-EXA-019 Position Description: Senior Examiners and Deputies
EDA-EXA-021 Position Description: Deputy Chair of the Court of Examiners
EDA-EXA-022 Position Description: Chair of the Court of Examiners
EDA-EXA-033 Fellowship Examination Eligibility and Examination Performance Review
EDA-EXA-034 Special Consideration
EDA-EXA-035 Reasonable Adjustments for Disability
ETA-SET-026 SET Misconduct
ETA-IMG-015 IMG Misconduct

Other
Application for Special Consideration
Application for Reasonable Adjustments for Disability
Fellowship Examination Information for Candidates
Examination Incident Report

Approver Education Board
Authoriser Council