

# The Re-evaluation of the CFPC Route to Certification Without Examination for Internationally Trained Family Physicians

## Executive Summary

### Introduction

The College of Family Physicians of Canada™ (CFPC), founded in 1954 and incorporated in 1968, defined the first curriculum for postgraduate family medicine training in Canada. In 1964 the CFPC established a program of accredited postgraduate training and subsequent certification in family medicine/general practice. The first Certification Examination in Family Medicine was held in 1969, and upon passing candidates were awarded certification in family medicine and granted Certification in the College of Family Physicians of Canada (CCFP).

A CCFP designation is awarded to Canadian family physicians who have successfully completed their CFPC accredited residency training and passed the CFPC's Certification Examination in Family Medicine. It indicates that the holder has the broad scope of skills necessary to care for patients in Canada, including all clinical domains, acute and chronic, preventive to palliative care, in all patient life-stages, in a variety of care settings. The designation is a recognized mark of excellence in family medicine, ensuring peers and patients that the family doctor has met very high standards of training and is committed to lifelong learning. It is a national standard used by provincial medical regulatory authorities (MRAs) to award medical registration to family physicians and allow them full registration to practise medicine in that province or territory.

### Background

In 2010, as a result of a concern about too few Canadian family physicians and the possibility of addressing this through immigration, Health Canada provided funding to the CFPC to conduct a review of countries with training and certification in family medicine. Jurisdictions with family medicine postgraduate training and educational program accreditation comparable to Canadian standards were identified and reviewed to determine if family physicians trained in those jurisdictions may meet the qualifications required to obtain certification to practise in Canada. The project resulted in the formation of the CFPC's certification without examination route to family medicine certification. The CFPC Board of Directors agreed to award CFPC certification to qualified family physicians who obtained and maintained their certification in family medicine from Australia, Ireland, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

## Project Overview

Canadian family medicine training programs, certification requirements, and accreditation standards, and those in other jurisdictions, have changed since the initial comparisons were carried out. In 2019, a decision was made to re-evaluate each of the four previously approved jurisdictions to ensure they remain comparable with current Canadian expectations.

The expected outcomes of this project included:

- Increasing the CFPC’s and Canadian MRAs’ awareness and understanding of training and certification in the four approved jurisdictions, and their comparability to Canada
- Determining if access to the CFPC Certification without Examination route for eligible family physicians from the four previously approved jurisdictions should continue
- Continuing to have a positive impact on the Canadian family physician workforce

## Project Scope and Process

This project focussed on key activities and deliverables to ensure its success. An advisory committee was established at the outset to support the CFPC team by sharing expertise and perspectives, providing input, developing documents in preparation for interviews, and discussing interview data to enable a recommendation as to the continued comparability of each jurisdiction with the Canadian requirements and certification process.

Criteria for the comparative assessment provided a method of measuring similarities and differences between family medicine training, certification, and practice in Canada, and in the jurisdictions interviewed. A rubric provided a framework for the project, and a supporting document outlined components of training and certification, and included indicators to measure the components. Canadian frameworks related to each component were incorporated and the indicators were mapped to the components, to further assist in accurately comparing Canada and the other jurisdictions.

The categories explored in the interviews were: the usual practice of family physicians in that country, how training occurs, how assessment and feedback within training occurs, the role and structure of point-in-time examination, accreditation processes, and maintenance of certification processes.

Virtual interviews were conducted by the CFPC team with key stakeholders in five professional organizations for family physicians/general practitioners, in four jurisdictions, as follows:

Jurisdiction	Professional Organization
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Australia	Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine (ACRRM) Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP)
Ireland	Irish College of General Practitioners (ICGP)
United Kingdom	Royal College of General Practitioners (RCGP)
United States	American Board of Family Medicine (ABFM)

A questionnaire was designed to guide and ensure consistency across interviews, allowing for flexibility to adapt questions to the discussion and obtain in depth and valuable information. The CFPC team took notes and recorded the interviews, transcribed the discussions, and assigned a colour to each component to indicate its comparability to Canadian requirements:

- Green – Acceptably comparable to Canadian requirements
- Yellow – Somewhat comparable, but with questions
- Red – Concerns over degree of comparability

The majority of components in all interviews were assigned green status, except for emergency medicine and intrapartum care. The differences in these areas were enough that the interview team recommended the steering committee discuss more fully.

The documents were reviewed and discussed by the advisory committee members, who then provided their recommendation as to the continued comparability of the jurisdictions with Canada and, therefore, the approval for graduates from these jurisdictions to meet eligibility requirements to apply for the CFPC’s certification without examination process in Canada.

### **Recommendation from the Advisory Committee**

Following a thorough review of the interview data from the five professional organizations in the four jurisdictions, the advisory committee unanimously agreed that while there have been changes in Canada as well as the jurisdictions interviewed, they were satisfied that family physicians trained in these jurisdictions continue to meet the requirements to apply for certification without examination in Canada.

As a result of the possibility for continuing changes in family medicine training programs and certification requirements, the advisory committee recommended that there be a follow-up review and a re-evaluation of family medicine training programs in the four jurisdictions, to ensure continued comparability with Canada, in 10 years.