

THE COLLEGE OF  
FAMILY PHYSICIANS  
OF CANADA



LE COLLÈGE DES  
MÉDECINS DE FAMILLE  
DU CANADA



# Candidate Guide to the Certification Examination in Family Medicine

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## Welcome

This guide is for anyone planning to sit the Certification Examination in Family Medicine of the College of Family Physicians of Canada (CFPC). It provides information to prepare you for this important assessment.

Only those who have met the eligibility requirements and successfully qualify as candidates are allowed to take the examination. You must pass the examination before being awarded the Certification in the College of Family Physicians of Canada (CCFP).

Residency-eligible candidates will have an opportunity to discuss and practice various components of the examination within their family medicine program. Practice-eligible candidates, and those who qualify as residency eligible from the United States, are invited to contact the nearest university-based department of family medicine or CFPC provincial Chapter for information on examination preparation sessions. Learn more about the [CFPC provincial Chapters](#).

For preparation material offered by the CFPC, please refer to [Preparing for the Certification Examination in Family Medicine](#).

The Certification Examination in Family Medicine is a comprehensive assessment of a physician's knowledge and skills. Candidates will be examined on the application of the patient-centred clinical method, as applied to the breadth and depth of clinical family practice.

**Breadth of practice** encompasses the provision of family medicine care in the office, hospital, or home, as well as a variety of other settings, for patients in every stage of the lifecycle and all genders.

**Depth of practice** encompasses the provision of family medicine care that is not restricted to a single disease, organ, or body system, and includes an organized approach to health maintenance.

If you are residency trained, or work in a broad-based practice, you will be well prepared for what will be on the test. All topics in the examination present regularly in day-to-day practice. If you have a limited scope practice, e.g., you have excluded obstetrics or paediatrics from your provision of family medicine care, be aware that there are examination questions on the full range of family medicine care. You would be advised to review your knowledge of these areas in preparation for the exam.

The security of the examination content is critical to its continued effectiveness. At the time of application to become a qualified candidate, you must agree to the examination terms and conditions, which include a legally binding non-disclosure statement that you agree not to divulge the nature and/or content of any questions, answers, or cases on the Certification Examination in Family Medicine. You will be reminded of your agreement to this obligation at the start of the examination.

We wish you the best of luck and look forward to welcoming you as a new certified member of the College of Family Physicians of Canada.

## Candidate Code of Conduct and Statement of Non-Disclosure

**When submitting an application to the Certification Examination in Family Medicine, candidates are required to agree to the following:**

As a candidate taking a College of Family Physicians of Canada ("CFPC")-administered examination (the "Examination"), I understand that any action taken by me which compromises the proper administration

and conduct of the Examination is considered unprofessional behaviour and is a breach of this Candidate Code of Conduct and Statement of Non-Disclosure (the “Code”). Such actions might include, but are not limited to:

- Any form of cheating, including:
  - Giving or attempting to give information about Examination content to other candidates (such as talking or passing notes) before, during, or after the Examination,
  - Receiving or attempting to receive information about Examination content from other candidates (such as talking or passing notes) or from any other source (such as using an electronic device or written material) before, during or after the Examination,
  - Observing or attempting to observe the answers of, or showing or attempting to show answers to, another candidate before, during, or after the Examination,
  - Copying or attempting to copy, or removing or attempting to remove Examination materials from the Examination site,
  - Divulging or attempting to divulge to anyone the nature or content of any question or answer on the Examination, and,
  - Any impersonation or falsification of documents.
- Any behaviour or activity which causes a material disruption to other candidates or to the conduct of the Examination including, but not limited to, talking during the Examination,
- Engaging in conduct or making any threats or gestures which a reasonable person would find to be harassing, discriminatory, intimidating, aggressive or humiliating and which occurs during the Examination or at the Examination site, and,
- Making verbal or written derogatory remarks, insults and epithets aimed toward the CFPC, its employees, Examination staff, Examination volunteers, or other candidates before, during or after the Examination.

I understand the CFPC’s Board of Examination and Certification will take appropriate measures to deal with violations of this Code including, but not limited to, possible: forfeiture of Examination fees, refusal of entrance to the Examination, early termination of the Examination, expulsion of the offender, invalidation of test results, and the designation of Denied Standing with a possible prohibition of participation in future Examinations. Notification of the specifics of a breach of the Code may also be given to medical regulatory authorities and/or any other entity responsible for medical education, training, and credential verification.

In recognition of the duty of the CFPC and of myself to the public to ensure that only physicians who fully and fairly pass the certification examinations be granted certification by the CFPC, I hereby attest that I will not perform any action that might compromise the proper conduct of the Examination and I will abide by the Code, as printed above.

I am a candidate for an Examination administered by the CFPC, and I have read and am in agreement with the above statements.

## **Examination Description**

**Defining competence for the purposes of certification by the CFPC: The evaluation objectives in family medicine**

The [evaluation objectives](#), including topics and key features, guide both the CFPC’s Board of Examinations and Certification and the Family Medicine Certification Examination Committee in the choice and development of the test items for the examination. They have been designed to clearly describe the domain of competence to be tested within each topic area. In most of the cases, you will be examined based on the evaluation objectives.

## Examination components

The Certification Examination in Family Medicine is comprised of two components: a written examination and an oral examination. The two components are taken on different days.

The written component is composed of cases in a short-answer management problem (SAMP) format. It is delivered by computer either in a brick-and-mortar test centre or using your own computer, in your own space, using a remote proctoring examination platform.

The oral component, delivered virtually, is made up of five simulated office orals (SOOs), which are interactions between yourself as the family physician and a standardized patient (a role-playing family physician who will also mark the interaction at the end of each encounter) in a simulated family medicine office setting.

The content of the examination is distributed between the written and oral components. To be successful on the examination, you must pass both components.

## Examination schedule

Certification Examination in Family Medicine	
Written Examination	Virtual Oral Examination
SAMPs	SOOs
<p>4.5+ hours of examination time, composed of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Logging into and undergoing an identity check</li> <li>• Fifteen minutes at the start for a required examination delivery-platform tutorial</li> <li>• Four hours of testing time</li> <li>• Fifteen-minute optional break - to take if needed when you wish</li> </ul> <p>Plan for a total of five hours for your exam administration.</p>	<p>2.5+ hours examination time, composed of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Logging in and undergoing an identity check</li> <li>• Five SOO stations, each with               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Reading time for case familiarity</li> <li>○ Fifteen-minute one-on-one encounter with the examiner role-playing the patient</li> <li>○ Twelve minutes of marking time by the examiner</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

## The written examination

The written examination is comprised of short-answer management problems (SAMPs) designed to test a candidate's recall of factual knowledge and problem-solving abilities in the areas of issue identification, management of health problems, and critical appraisal.

This component is delivered via computer. You have the option of taking the written component at one of the testing centres in Canada operated by Prometric (CFPC's third-party vendor for delivering the SAMPs) or using your own computer in a space of your own choosing via Prometric's remote proctoring software called ProProctor.

Registered candidates will be contacted by the CFPC via e-mail with instructions on when and how to select their testing appointment.

For additional information on the written component of the examination, please refer to [Preparing for the Certification Examination in Family Medicine](#).

### **The oral examination**

The oral examination, delivered virtually, consists of five 15-minute simulated office oral (SOO) interviews administered consecutively.

The SOOs are designed to simulate an outpatient office-based setting in which family physicians usually provide care. Certified family physicians act as examiners and role-play a patient with specific issues and life situations. The family physician examiner, while playing the role of the patient, notes how you interact with, care for, and medically manage the patient they are playing. This family physician examiner then marks your performance according to pre-defined criteria.

This examination assesses your ability to use the patient centred clinical method. Identifying and managing the issues the role-play is built around is important; however, it is not sufficient to pass a SOO. The scoring system has been devised to also focus on assessing your use of a patient-centred clinical method in patient encounters, including an ability to demonstrate understanding of the patient's unique experience of their illness, to develop an understanding of the patient's context, and to establish plans for ongoing care defined by finding common ground with patients.

For additional information on the oral component of the examination, please refer to [Preparing for the Certification Examination in Family Medicine](#).

## **General Examination-Related Information**

### **Personal belongings**

**No personal items are permitted in the space where you will be taking your examination, whether you are taking the examination at a test centre or in a space of your own choosing, on your own computer.**

Should you take the written SAMP examination at a Prometric testing site, you will be directed to place all your personal belongings such as keys, papers, wallets, cellphones, watches, coats, etc., in a designated area during the examination. While every effort will be made to store them safely, the CFPC is not responsible for your belongings. Bring as few of these personal items as possible. For both the SAMPs and SOOs, you are **not permitted** to wear watches or electronic bracelets of any kind (i.e., digital, analogue, or smartwatches) on exam day. There is a clock on all computer examination interfaces; time remaining on your exam is clearly indicated on your computer screen during both the SAMP and the SOO components.

You will need the following for both the SAMP and SOO components, regardless of where you are taking the examination.

- Valid government-issued photo identification. You will not be able to take the examination if you do not pass the identity check.

Acceptable identification is a valid driver's licence, passport, or provincial identification card. A health card is not acceptable unless it is issued by the province of Quebec—this is used for non-drivers with no other form of identification because Quebec does not offer a provincial identification card.

## SAMP booking

- Approximately four to six weeks prior to the date of the written examination, you will receive an e-mail from the CFPC with information on when and how to book an in-person or remote-proctored appointment with Prometric for the written examination.
- If you choose to take the written examination at a Prometric testing site, you are responsible for making and paying for any travel and/or accommodation arrangements.
- If travel is needed, we strongly encourage you to plan for unforeseen arrival delays when booking your travel. If you miss your examination start time, you will not be able to take the examination.

## Health, food, and accommodations

- If an exam candidate feels their performance will be adversely affected due to health or personal reasons, they should not sit the examination. They should inform the CFPC or the exam centre coordinator immediately.
- As some candidates and exam proctors may have fragrance sensitivities, candidates taking the SAMPs at a Prometric testing site are asked to please refrain from wearing perfume, aftershave, or other scented products.
- Whether taking the examination at a test centre or virtually, food should not be consumed during the examination. However, candidates with special dietary requirements may make arrangements with the CFPC prior to the examination by submitting a request at the time of application. If approved by the CFPC, the food must be packaged in a clear plastic bag.
- Candidates who require any type of modification to the testing environment (i.e., time and/or private space to express breast milk, additional break time, access to medications or devices, etc.) must make prior arrangements by requesting test accommodations at the time of application. Learn more about submitting a [test accommodation](#).

## Emergencies

In the event of an emergency on examination day, please call the CFPC Exam Team at 1-800-387- 6197 and choose:

- Option 1 for English or option 2 for French; then
- Option 4 for Examinations; then
- Option 1 for exam candidate inquiries

## Late arrivals

### SAMPs

Plan to arrive or log in 30 minutes before your scheduled appointment to allow time for check-in and verification procedures. For example, if your scheduled appointment time is 8:00 a.m., you should arrive at the testing site or log-in at 7:30 a.m. You will be checked in on a first-come, first-served basis. Your actual examination start time may vary slightly depending on the time it takes to check you in.

Candidates who arrive or log in more than 30 minutes after their scheduled test start time will not be allowed to start their exam. Attendance will be recorded as no show. Fees will not be refunded to candidates who are denied entry due to late arrival. Lost time due to late arrival does not constitute grounds for appeal.

### **SOOs**

Please log in at your instructed start time, which will be emailed to you a few days before your examination. It is important to log in at the time indicated to ensure you are available for the required identification check. If you arrive late, you may not be permitted to begin the exam as all participants will be onboarded at the same time.

Candidates who log in after the start of their first scheduled SOO station may be accommodated at the discretion of the CFPC, only if the schedule allows. If the CFPC is unable to accommodate the candidate, the attendance will be recorded as a no show and will not count as an exam attempt.

Fees will not be refunded to candidates who are denied entry due to late arrival.

### **Process errors**

If, during the examination, an exam candidate feels that a process irregularity has occurred, it should be immediately brought to the attention of the examination coordinator or proctor. This allows the coordinator or proctor to either institute some immediate course of action to correct the process error or to provide a written report to the Board of Examinations and Certification at the earliest possible opportunity. Immediate attention to a process irregularity will usually result in a complete and satisfactory resolution. It does not preclude a further request for review on the part of the candidate(s) concerned. On the contrary, it may even be construed as additional evidence of the importance of the process irregularity in the case.

### **Cancellation policy**

A refund for a portion of the examination fee will depend on the date of receipt of a written, signed withdrawal/refund request.

- Candidates who withdraw from the examination more than 60 days prior to the date of the examination will be subject to a penalty of \$500.
- Candidates who withdraw within 30 to 60 days prior to the date of the examination will be subject to a penalty of one-half (50 per cent) of the examination fee.
- There is no refund for candidates who withdraw within 30 days of the examination.

Candidates must withdraw and re-apply should they wish to take the examination later. Fees paid for a previous attempt are not transferable to a later session. Please send your cancellation request to

[ccfpexam@cfpc.ca](mailto:ccfpexam@cfpc.ca)



## The Marking of the Examinations

Approximately six weeks after the examination, the results will have been analyzed and delivered to the CFPC's Board of Examinations and Certification. Numbers are used to identify candidates to the Board of Examinations and Certification to ensure that marking is anonymous. The Board reviews all results and recommends who should receive Certification. Results are usually mailed to candidates within eight weeks of completion of the examination. Results are also posted in the secure members' section of the CFPC website. Candidates will be notified by email as soon as the results are available online.

**For reasons of confidentiality, the CFPC will not provide exam results by email, phone, or fax.**

The examination is intended to be a comprehensive review of a candidate's knowledge and skills in family medicine. To be consistent with patterns of practice across Canada, the CFPC's Board of Examinations and Certification standardizes the correct answers to the SAMP questions and the expected performance on the oral examination. Clear criteria are defined for examiners and markers against which candidate performances will be compared in order to assess their abilities. Candidates will also be expected to demonstrate a level of performance consistent with their peers to be awarded Certification.

The Certification Examination in Family Medicine is a terminal assessment instrument that examines a broad spectrum of content. Candidates will be informed of whether they passed or failed the examination as a whole. The result profile will also indicate whether they had a passing score on each of the written and oral components of the examination.

The content to be assessed for each examination is distributed between both the written and oral components. Therefore, candidates are reminded that to be successful on the overall examination, they must demonstrate a passing performance on both components.

## Notifying family medicine residency program directors

It is the policy of the CFPC to allow family medicine program directors access to a summary of the results for each of their residents sitting the examination. This information is valuable to help assess the accuracy of their own in-training evaluation process, as well as to indicate whether there may be specific strengths or weaknesses in their training program. If, for any reason, a candidate

does not wish to have their exam results released to the program director, they must send a written request to [ccfpexam@cfpc.ca](mailto:ccfpexam@cfpc.ca) **within one week of completion of the examination**. If notice has not been received from the candidate by this time, exam results will be forwarded to the program director as part of the CFPC's usual policy and process.

## Awarding certification

Certification in Family Medicine is awarded to

- Residency-eligible candidates who are successful on the examination and who meet all the requirements of their training program such that they are deemed to have completed training by their program director and post-graduate dean of medical education.
- Practice eligible candidates who successfully qualify for the examination and pass the examination.

## **Notifying medical regulatory authorities**

The CFPC forwards a list of physicians who were granted the CCFP designation to all medical regulatory authorities in Canada daily.

## **Maintenance of certification**

The successful completion of the Certification Examination in Family Medicine is one of the essential prerequisites for an individual to be granted Certification in Family Medicine by the CFPC. In order to maintain Certification, the physician is required to maintain membership in the CFPC and to meet the College's continuing medical education requirements for certified members.