



Frequently Asked Questions

COVID-19 and postponing the CFPC's April 2020 Certification Examination in Family Medicine

Do you really have to postpone the exam?

Yes. COVID-19 has been declared a pandemic by the World Health Organization and is a rapidly escalating public health crisis in Canada. Hospitals and universities have imposed bans on travel both internationally and within Canada for staff physicians, and they have halted the gathering of doctors in large groups. For our **simulated office orals (SOOs)** we require more than 500 family physician volunteers to travel across the country to participate in the delivery of the exam.

Even before we announced the postponement, many of our examiners were starting to express concerns about travel requirements; especially worrisome to them is the possibility of unintended exposure to a COVID-19 case, which would then require 14 days of personal quarantine. This would prevent that family physician from providing their expertise and skilled care to their home community when they are most needed.

Why can't I just take the written exam?

Who would have thought 10 days ago that Italy, a country with a good health care system, would be shut down? The rate of contagion and the impact have been variable and difficult to predict around the world. Thus, even though the window to take the **short-answer management problem (SAMP)** portion of the exam is only three days in mid-April; and there are multiple sites where this component of the exam can be taken nationally, so relatively small numbers of people have to travel long distances; and the vast majority of test locations can accommodate only up to 50 people, there is a high possibility that some or all of the exam centres in the communities where the exam is delivered will be affected with closures or local travel bans due to the illness or quarantine of local staff.

The likelihood of future, yet still unknown, community restrictions related to COVID-19 dramatically reducing the number of candidates across the country who can take the exam in the current testing window is both real and significant. If too few candidates participate in the exam it affects its validity. We do not want you to potentially write the examination only to find afterward that it is invalid because of inappropriate testing environments. By postponing the written component now, we can ensure we will be able to deliver the exam in the near future in our usual, well-coordinated, and high-standard fashion to all registered candidates.

Why can't I take the SAMP examination at home through a secure Internet connection?

We don't have the technology or infrastructure to do this.

What's happening with the Medical Council of Canada and the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada examinations?

The CFPC has been working closely with the Medical Council of Canada (MCC) and the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada because we all realize that the reasons to, for the first time ever, postpone national examinations in the medical field are so compelling. Each organization is planning its own makeup schedules for postponed exams—which will be different for each organization because of inherently different testing and operational details.

- The Royal College usually offers its written and oral examinations once a year in a central location for each of its 68 specialties. The Royal College is postponing the oral exams and is working out how to deliver the written examination differently this year.
- The MCC offers its Qualifying Examination Part I multiple times throughout the year and the Qualifying Examination Part II twice a year. Most candidates write Part I and Part II in different years. The MCC has postponed the spring delivery of Part II and is working on rescheduling the April sitting of Part I.
- The CFPC requires candidates to pass both the SAMP and the SOO for them to be certified in family medicine. Normally we offer our certification examination twice a year—the written SAMPs at more than 44 sites twice a year and the SOOs at 17 sites in the spring, but at only five SOO sites in the fall. We have postponed the SOO and SAMP examinations this spring and are working on rescheduling both components of the exam.

What does this mean for my ability to obtain a practice licence and start working?

Each province's college of physicians and surgeons is responsible for licensing/registering physicians. Licensing/registration often have requirements that are determined by provincial legislation, and there is variability from one province to another. These regulatory organizations have indicated that for physicians who are eligible to sit a national specialty examination—such as the Certification Examination in Family Medicine—provisional licences/registrations can often be issued until the exams are taken and passed and certification is awarded. Each individual circumstance must be discussed with your appropriate college of physicians and surgeons.