

Policy on Academic Certification

1. Objective & Scope

The Royal College Academic Certification program is intended recognize extraordinary academic medical leaders who are a full-time academic faculty member at the rank of full or associate professor at a Canadian University (or affiliate, see section 3). The program is particularly aimed at clinician scientists & researchers, clinician administrators/leaders and innovators in medical education¹.

Because the program is the only pathway to Royal College certification that does not necessitate writing a Royal College examination in order to gain certification, it is intended for extraordinary internationally trained specialists only. As such, annual reports generated by the Royal College are expected to confirm the status of the Academic Certification appointment(s).

This route to Royal College certification is not intended for those who have a reasonable alternate route to certification. It is also not intended for those who have previously failed the Royal College examination.

2. Definitions & Acronyms

This section defines key terms used in the policy.

Royal College	Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada
CSE	Committee on Specialty Education (standing committee to Council) responsible for the specialty education continuum.
Routes to Certification	Include Examination, Practice Eligibility Route, etc.
Certificant	A physician with Royal College certification
ECC	Executive Committee of Council
CEO	Chief Executive Officer of the Royal College
OSE	Office of Specialty Education

3. Policy

3.1 Academic Certification is intended for physicians:

- 3.1.1 with a demonstrated track record as extraordinary academic medical leaders who intend to pursue a career in education innovation, administrative leadership and/or research², and whose time is protected from providing clinical care to pursue such activities;

¹ Clinical teaching duties alone would not constitute sufficient academic activity.

² The Dean's nomination package must be specific regarding the type of research that the nominee does, for example; clinical, basic science, translational, health care delivery, etc.

- 3.1.2 who have trained internationally in specialty or subspecialty programs that have not been accredited by the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada (RCPSC); and,
- 3.1.3 who have and will continue to contribute significantly to their field of medicine through scholarship, education innovation and research³.
- 3.2 The nominee must be nominated for Academic Certification by the Dean of the relevant faculty of medicine, with appropriate supporting documentation (see checklist and Dean's attestation form).
- 3.3 At the time of nomination, the nominee must meet all the following criteria, and this must be documented in the nomination package:
- Currently holds or recruited to fill the rank of associate professor or higher;
 - Have held a full-time academic faculty position or equivalent in any jurisdiction (i.e., engaged primarily in academic duties) for at least five years;
 - Be a specialist and/or subspecialist in a discipline recognized by the Royal College;
 - Be enrolled in Royal College Continuing Professional Development program⁴;
 - Be subject to ongoing evaluation of performance and practice by a supervisor/superior, and;
- Have no other reasonable route to Royal College certification given their training, scope of practice, or other relevant factors.

The nomination from the Dean must confirm that the nominee has a guarantee of a university appointment and outline faculty support for academic duties. It should be noted that physicians who are not employed by the university, but by an affiliated organization, can be considered for Academic Certification. Criteria and eligibility will be the same as for those employed by a university directly. Examples of affiliated organizations are hospital research institutes or cancer organization research institutes. Final decision on eligibility of nominees employed by affiliated organizations is at the discretion of the Committee on Specialty Education.

Additionally, it should be noted that if a nominee has been recruited as an assistant professor and subsequently promoted to associate professor, Academic Certification is not automatic (i.e., promotion does not equate to certification).

- 3.4 In addition to the criteria listed in section 3.3., the Dean's nomination package must clearly demonstrate the extraordinary nature of the nominee's knowledge, experience and academic contribution. Accepted evidence includes:
- Evidence of recent and ongoing peer reviewed publications
 - Other research and/or other scholarly activities⁵
 - Evidence of relevant and peer reviewed research grants
 - National or international adjudicated awards
 - Professional and/or clinical innovations that have an influence on the practice and/or specialty and have been published or recognized in some way
 - Evidence of course development or innovations

³ The research and administrative duties do not need to be in the sub-specialty or speciality for which the physician trained.

⁴ For those being recruited to Canada: Academic Certification will be finalized once CPD enrollment is completed.

⁵ The type and quality of publications will be judged by the CSE and publications in higher-impact journals are expected.

- Leadership roles
- Advocacy efforts/work

Documentation must also demonstrate that the nominee is supported to make a significant commitment – i.e. at least 40% of their time – to impactful academic work (administration, innovative clinical leadership, research, and education design over and above clinical teaching) and in doing so, makes a significant contribution to the academic work completed for their specialty/subspecialty.

Finally, the Dean's nomination package (ideally within the attestation form) must clearly articulate that a search for eligible Royal College certificants was undertaken for the nominee's position, and was unsuccessful.

3.5 The Committee on Specialty Education considers this pathway to certification to be extraordinary, and will approve or disallow certification through this alternate, extraordinary pathway on a case-by-case basis. Once its decision has been made, the Dean and the nominee will be notified of its decision in writing.

3.6 Once granted, Academic Certification is subject to the following:

- 3.6.1 Academic certification remains in effect only for as long as the certificant maintains a full-time academic appointment and the same specialty/subspecialty practice, at the same medical school and/or its affiliated institutions, and remains a Fellow in good standing with the Royal College.
- 3.6.2 If an academic certificant moves to another Canadian medical school, academic certification may be transferred at the request of the accepting Dean of medicine of that school provided that all the criteria for academic certification continue to be met. The Royal College must be notified and may request information as required in order to assess continued compliance with the Academic Certification criteria.
- 3.6.3 Academic Certification will lapse if it is not accepted by the nominee through applying to be a Fellow (member) of the Royal College and signing the Royal College Fellowship declaration within two (2) years of having been granted by the Committee on Specialty Education, unless the sponsoring Dean requests an extension of a specified time for an approved reason.
- 3.6.4 The sponsoring Dean (or their successor) will be expected to confirm that the Academic Certificant continues to meet the criteria for Academic Certification on an annual basis through an audit generated by the Office of Specialty Education.
- 3.6.5 Academic Certification confers eligibility for the applicable Royal College examination in the specialty/subspecialty in which Academic Certification is granted. An examination ruling letter will be issued upon request by the OSE. Success in this examination(s) leads to full Royal College certification. The attestation of Academic Certification remains in effect for certificants who are unsuccessful at the Royal College certification examination, provided the other conditions are still being met.

3.7 Appeal of an Academic Certification Decision:

The decision of the Committee on Specialty Education may only be appealed in accordance with this section. The policy listed below has been written in reference to the decision-making body to which the request for an appeal is directed: The Executive Committee of Council (ECC). Should the panel of ECC members uphold the original decision of the Committee on Specialty Education (CSE) the implication is that the decision regarding the nomination for Academic Certification is final. Applicants have one single opportunity to request an appeal if the original decision is upheld, it cannot be further appealed to the next committee within the governance hierarchy (i.e. Council).

- 3.7.1 While a nominee, Dean or supervisor may disagree with the decision of the Committee on Specialty Education relative to the nomination package meeting the requirements, such a disagreements does not, of itself, constitute grounds for an appeal.
- 3.7.2 Requests for an appeal must be based on the same information available at the time of the original nomination; changes or improvements in the nominee's eligibility status will not be considered in the appeal, and in such a case, would require re-nomination. An appeal of a decision of the Committee of Specialty Education must be received by the Office of Specialty Education within 60 days from the date on the decision letter.
- 3.7.3 Requests for an appeal will only be considered based on one or more of the following grounds:
- A lack of due process during the original review and decision; or
 - A factual error in the interpretation of the information provided to the CSE for the purposes of the nomination; or,
 - An error in the administration or application of this Policy on Academic Certification.
- 3.7.4 Appeals must be requested and will be assessed based on the same information available at the time of the original nomination; changes or improvements in the nominee's eligibility status will not be considered in the appeal (please refer to the section 3.8 of this Policy on Academic Certification).

3.8 Re-Nomination following an Academic Certification Decision:

If a Dean's nomination of a nominee for Academic Certification is unsuccessful, the nominee may only be re-nominated for Academic Certification where substantive changes in academic appointment, duties and achievements or a significant enhancement of faculty and departmental support of the nominee can be demonstrated. At the request of the Dean, the Executive Director of the Office of Specialty Education (or delegate) will review this new information and may disallow any re-nomination that does not identify substantive change. In all other respects, re-nominations shall be considered and be subject to this policy and attached procedures.

4. Roles and Responsibilities

4.1 Dean of the Faculty of Medicine (or Health Sciences)

It is the responsibility of the sponsoring Dean to complete the nomination and submit all necessary documents to the Office of Specialty Education as detailed in the attached procedures section. In addition, the Dean must provide confirmation that an appropriate search for eligible Royal College certificants was undertaken and that the applicant's role will include significant commitment to academic work (administration, clinical leadership, research, education design.)

4.2 The Office of Specialty Education

The Office of Specialty Education (OSE) receives all nomination forms for Academic Certification and reviews them to determine completeness in order to meet the CSE's meeting criteria of the nomination package, and coordinates with the Dean (and/or the Dean's office) in the case of any missing or incomplete documentation. The OSE also coordinates and communicates with the Committee on Specialty Education as well as the appeal body, the Executive Committee of Council, in the event that an a formal appeal is launched. The OSE also regularly monitors and evaluates the impact of this policy, particularly the effects of the policy restrictions.

4.3 Committee on Specialty Education

From delegated authority from the Royal College Council, the Committee on Specialty Education (CSE) is responsible for defining the policies and criteria for Academic Certification. Voting members of this committee are also responsible for evaluating nominations and making decisions regarding whether those nominations meet the criteria for Academic Certification.

4.4 Executive Committee of Council

The Executive Committee of Council (ECC) is responsible for rendering decisions on appeals of rejected nominations for Academic Certification. Please refer to appeal policy and procedure below for more information on this process. Decisions regarding Academic Certification made by the ECC are considered final.

5. References

5.1 List of Royal College approved Specialties and Subspecialties.

5.2 <https://www.royalcollege.ca/rcsite/credentials-exams/certification-exams-e#step-1>

6. Contact(s)

For information or clarification, please contact:

Office of Specialty Education

The Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada

Ottawa, ON

1-800-267-2320

7. Appendices

7.1 Procedures for submission of an Academic Certification Nomination package

7.2 Checklist for Deans

7.3 Attestation form from the Dean

7.4 Procedure for Appeals of Academic Certification Decisions

8. Policy record

Policy number	
Most recent resolution:	
Previous resolution(s):	Approved by Royal College Council: June 22, 2018, Resolution No. 2018/19-4; ECC: 2018-05-23; C: 2018-06-21/22
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Effective date:	
Date of next review:	July 2024
Royal College Office:	OSE
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Information security classification	External

Appendices

7.0 Procedure for submission of a nomination for Academic Certification Nomination Package

- 7.1 All nominations for Academic Certification must come directly from the Dean of the faculty of medicine to which the nominee is being recruited or retained. Nominations must be submitted before one of the two yearly deadlines of February 28th and September 30th in order to be considered at the spring and fall CSE meetings respectively.
- 7.2 The nomination must clearly demonstrate, through evidence of recent and ongoing publications, course development and leadership roles that the nominee makes a significant commitment – i.e. more than 40% of their time – to meaningful academic work (administration, innovative clinical leadership, research, and education design over and above clinical teaching and in doing so, makes a significant contribution to the academic work within their institution.) The level of impact in these areas is expected to be significant and will be assessed by the Committee on Specialty Education.¹)
- 7.3 The complete nomination package **must** include:
- 7.3.1 A letter of nomination from the Dean on the provided template, of the relevant faculty of medicine that includes:
- ✓ a description of how the nominee is an exceptional internationally trained specialist who has demonstrated themselves to be academic leaders in their discipline;
 - ✓ a description of the nominee's position(s) and role within the faculty and teaching hospitals and affiliate institutions including a detailed description of planned academic activities, as attested to by letter(s) of employment/contract;
 - ✓ confirmation that the nominee fulfills the faculty's criteria for the rank to which the nominee is being appointed;
 - ✓ assurance that the physician's academic time is protected, constitutes at least 40% of their work hours, and contributes to the academic work of their specialty/sub-specialty² ;
 - ✓ a description regarding why the nominee is not reasonably eligible for another route to certification; and,
 - ✓ a confirmation and description about an appropriate search for eligible Royal College certificant that was undertaken.
- 7.3.2 An up to date curriculum vitae of the nominee which provides a detailed description of specialty/subspecialty training, past and current clinical activities in the specialty concerned, and a full listing of publications, awards, grants, etc.
- 7.3.3 Certified copies of degrees, diplomas and certificates.
- 7.3.4 A supporting letter from the department head of the recruiting faculty, and, if applicable, chief administrator of the partner organization.
- 7.3.5 For nominees being recruited from outside of Canada, attestation(s) of academic appointment

¹ Please review section 3 of the Policy on Academic Certification for more details.

from the nominee's originating (foreign) institution(s) describing the type of appointment and proposed appointment at the Canadian University.

- 7.3.6 The non-refundable nomination fee.
- 7.3.6 The university must provide evidence that there is ongoing evaluation of the nominee's performance and practice, carried out with the certificant's superior. Examples of appropriate evaluation tools are multisource feedback forms and standardized annual performance appraisals and continues to meet the criteria for Academic Certification.
- 7.3.7 Written acknowledgment from the nominee that they support the application for Academic Certification.
- 7.3.8 A completed checklist.

- 7.4 The Office of Specialty Education reviews nomination packages to confirm all eligibility criteria have been met and ensure the nomination is complete.
- 7.5 Completed nominations are presented to the Committee on Specialty Education, the decision-making authority for Academic Certification.
- 7.6 Once a decision is rendered by the Committee on Specialty Education, the Office of Specialty Education communicates the decision in writing to the sponsoring Dean and the nominee will be copied.
- 7.7 If the decision was to accept the nomination, the Office of Specialty Education will also communicate via a letter to the applicable Medical Regulatory Authority.
- 7.8 Academic certification comes into effect on the date Fellowship is granted by the Royal College, or on the date upon which the nominee takes up the faculty position, whichever is later.
- 7.9 Attestation of Academic Certification will indicate the Royal College specialty and, as appropriate, the subspecialty for which academic certification has been granted (e.g., Neurosurgery; Internal Medicine/Cardiology, Pediatrics/Cardiology).