



Please find below the response from the Medical Council of Canada addressing a media inquiry from Jennifer Chevalier, Senior Producer at CBC Ottawa.

## Background

Following the advent of COVID-19 and its widespread and ongoing impacts, the Medical Council of Canada (MCC) sought to be able to move candidates for the Medical Council of Canada Qualifying Examination (MCCQE) Part I, along the route to licensure with implementation of a timely and safe delivery model.

The introduction of the remote proctor exam option using Prometric's ProProctor was done with the best of intentions and in support of candidates. We wanted to offer them an opportunity to complete the MCCQE Part I in either a test centre or in a remote proctored session before starting residency on July 1, following the cancellation of the April administration of MCCQE Part I. Without this novel modality, due to pandemic restrictions for access to testing centers, candidates would not have been able to take this examination until after starting residency. This would have been disruptive to their ongoing training activities.

There is no set timeframe for Canadian trained MD students to complete the MCCQE Part I; they are eligible as soon as they are within 12 months of receiving their MD with no time limit after. Students choose when and where they attempt the exam.

## How many students have registered for exam dates so far and how many of them have contacted you to report irregularities or technical disruption?

Candidates scheduled in the June 1 to Sept 20 session: 7339 (2751 remote proctoring and 4588 in approximately 150 test centres internationally). So far, 1417 exams have been delivered (1168 remotely proctored and 250 in test centres). To date, approximately 300 candidates have raised concerns ranging from difficulty starting their exam on their home laptop, to inability to complete due to system failures.

Students say they've experienced a wide variety of technical issues and lack of communication with the remote proctoring of the MCC QE Part 1 exam. What explanation can you provide for these problems? What steps have you taken to resolve these technical and communication issues?

We are committed to improving the remote proctor candidate experience which, in too many instances to date, has been unacceptable. To do so, we are meeting twice daily with Prometric senior executives to develop solutions to all reported issues, in particular those related to test accommodations, hardware compatibility, proctor responsiveness and connectivity before and during the exam. We are monitoring and evaluating the progress on a daily basis. From a communications perspective, Prometric has introduced a confirmation email that scheduled candidates receive two to three days before their exam. This email includes a video that walks candidates through the expected experience and provides information on troubleshooting (technical support chat function, proctor assistance and a dedicated contact number) during the exam.

The MCC has sent communications to candidates reminding them of their ability to reschedule their exam at no cost up to 48 hours before their appointment and encouraging them to reschedule to a test centre if that is a more suitable choice as we work with Prometric to resolve the issues. We also continue to work with Prometric to add availability in test centres as public health guidelines are loosened.

Some students say they have concerns these issues will invalidate their exam and they may have to take it again. Can you assure students the exams will count toward their accreditation, despite these issues?

When we refer to the “validity of any such examination”, two key considerations or sources of evidence are:

- (1) the extent to which any items included in a test form reflect the blueprint or the core areas intended to be measured by any examination form, as determined by the profession and;
- (2) the defensibility of the process by which a pass/fail designation is rendered for each candidate, irrespective of the test form that they may have completed.

In regard to recent MCCQE Part I test administrations under remote proctoring, it's important to reiterate that despite some technical bumps, we are strictly adhering to the best practice based processes, out of fairness to candidates (past, present and future) and especially to continue to ensure that we adhere to our mandate to assure patients that their doctors, wherever they are in Canada and whatever their specialty, meet the same high-level and consistent standards. While some candidates are completing, at their request, an examination under a different modality (remote proctoring), the driver (interface) under which they are completing the exam is identical to what test centre candidates are seeing as well as what was in use last year (pre COVID-19).

Finally, the processes used to support fair and equitable decisions for all candidates is also identical to the one that we've applied for many years.

Why was it necessary to continue with the MCC QE Part 1 after these problems were discovered? Given the global pandemic, could these exams have been postponed or extended, or could more in person testing locations have been provided?

The vision of the MCC is: *Striving to achieve the highest level of medical care in Canada through excellence in assessment of physicians.* A key part of our mission to sustain this vision is to develop, validate and implements tools and strategies to assess physicians' competence. The Medical Council of Canada Qualifying Examination Parts I and II are the direct embodiment of this vision and MCC's legislated national mandate and contributes significantly to the licensing of all physicians by medical regulatory authorities in all 10 provinces and three territories.

The primary aim of a medical licensing exam program is to assess whether a candidate has demonstrated the core competencies required by the profession at different points in their training, irrespective of specialty.

The MCC recognizes that the current pandemic and the postponement of our exams due to COVID-19 in the Spring presented an opportunity to innovate, and that is what we have tried to do. We continue to work with Prometric to add availability in test centres as public health guidelines are loosened.