



*La version française suit.*

Dear colleagues,

Please find below some information to better understand the Medical Council of Canada (MCC)'s approach to the upcoming Medical Council of Canada Qualifying Examination (MCCQE) Part II scheduled for October 24 and 25, 2020.

Since our announcement in March regarding postponement of the May 2020 MCCQE Part II and throughout the evolving pandemic, we have worked actively with our exam site staff, as well as regularly consulted with public health authorities, in each specific location, as well as Dr. Theresa Tam, Chief Public Health Officer of Canada, to explore scenarios to deliver our exams safely and in a timely way. As noted by Dr. Tam's office – 'COVID-19 activity is variable across Canada'.

#### **Site cancellations**

At the time of this message, we are ready and planning to safely administer our exams at as many of the planned sites as we are able to. To date, Touchstone and Novotel in Toronto, Montreal (two sites), Quebec City, Ottawa and Kingston sites have advised the MCC they are unable to hold our exam.

We understand the impact of cancellation decisions on candidates scheduled in these centres, especially those previously impacted by the postponed May 2020 exam dates, and we will keep them updated as decisions on future exam sessions are made.

For candidates that have been displaced from the October session due to cancellations, the MCC will transfer their intact application to the first available session. This automatically provides candidates with a place on that date. This is the same process that was used to transfer those from the postponed May 2020 exam to the October and February sessions. Candidates will, however, be asked to reselect their centre choices as these are not always the same as the previous exam session.

Once the May 2020 candidates had been moved to October or February, the MCC allowed candidates who would have applied for the October MCCQE Part II exam to use the remainder of the open places for February. Under normal circumstances, these candidates would have been required to follow the regular process where new candidates add their name to the pre-application list from

which we make a random selection, considering the necessary reference groups.

For the May 2021 session, we will prioritize Family Medicine candidates who are in their second year and due to complete residency on June 30, 2021. These candidates must add their name to the May 2021 pre-application list to be allocated a spot in that session.

On a site-related note, we have received requests to restrict the access to the different exam sites to 'local' candidates only. Centre assignments are based on candidate choice. It would not be reasonable or practical to offer sites exclusively to residents of that area or to graduates of a certain university as we know that many of the candidates move for their residency and select the exam sites based on convenience of location for the exam dates. Further, there are candidates who are not affiliated with a Canadian university who require access to MCC examinations.

### **Contingency plan**

The next scheduled exam date for the MCCQE Part II is February 7, 2020. The MCC Examinations team is working to add an additional date in February as well as additional dates in March to address the backlog created by the cancellations as a result of the pandemic.

For all exam sessions, we do have a consideration process to assist candidates who advise us of a need to write immediately. For the exam of February 7, we have already approved over 20 such requests.

If we add additional dates, depending on the number of candidates displaced in October, we may be able to invite candidates on the pre-application list for the February session, who were not previously selected.

### **Virtual exams**

The Medical Council of Canada is considering an online delivery option for our Objective Structured Clinical Examinations (OSCEs), including the MCCQE Part II and the National Assessment Collaboration (NAC) Examination. However, given the high stakes nature of these non-computer-based exams and our commitment to delivering psychometrically defensible exams, the MCC determined that we could not rapidly switch to deliver them in an online format in 2020 and still maintain the quality of these assessments. We are, however, actively looking at delivery options that can be implemented in a timely manner.

### **Ensuring a safe exam environment during the pandemic**

We have worked diligently to make the changes necessary to reduce the possible risks during the delivery of the MCCQE Part II with physical distancing and other personal protective measures in place at each examination centre, as per the guidelines set by local public health authorities. The environment will mimic that in an outpatient setting for seeing a patient. We are following the 2 metres of physical distancing when possible and all will be wearing masks. We will be staggering exam starts (therefore finishes) to keep gathering to a minimum. On exam day, candidates and site staff must complete and sign

the COVID-19 screening questionnaire to ensure their safety and the safety of others.

In addition to these protocols, we have ensured that:

- During the exam there are no large gatherings or sequestration of candidates
- All orientation is being done online
- Candidates are not eating or drinking during the exam, so limited risk
- Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) is mandatory
- Masks are removed momentarily for ID purposes (just as airlines currently do)
- In the exam room, all participants are wearing PPE
- There is no physical exam or touch required of any type
- Candidates were encouraged to select exam centres as close as possible to their residence to reduce travel

As of October 15, 2020, excluding the cancelled sites, the MCC anticipates having over 1,000 of the 2,139 candidates who originally registered to challenge the MCCQE Part II exam during the October session.

At this time, we are not considering a full cancellation of the exam, but we are hoping to accommodate as many candidates as we are able to in as many locations as possible; however we continue to monitor public health guidelines and will adjust as required. Candidates can choose whether to participate or defer based on their own circumstances. The MCC has introduced a flexible refund policy in support of this.

Sincerely,



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Executive Director and CEO

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