

# Policy on Areas of Focused Competence Assessment and Credentialing –In- Training Route

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*Note: This policy is active and currently under review. A new policy is expected in 2024.*

## 1. Objective & Scope

Physicians seeking the Area of Focused Competence (AFC) credential, allowing them to use the designation Diplomate of the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada (DRCPSC), can obtain the credential by completing one of two routes:

- a) As a Trainee from an accredited Royal College AFC training program (in-training route), or
- b) As a physician pursuing the Practice Eligibility Route (PER-AFC) (practice route).

This policy applies to the in-training route only and outlines the requirements and process of determining an AFC Trainee's eligibility for the credential by recognizing the completion of an accredited training program and the competencies achieved.<sup>1</sup>

## 2. Definitions & Acronyms

### 2.1 Areas of Focused Competence (AFC)

AFC is a category of discipline recognition of the Royal College, created to address unmet need within Canada's system of specialty medicine. AFCs represent supplemental competencies that enhance, rather than replace, a physician's existing scope of practice. Normally, AFCs are either a) broad areas that have multiple routes of entry and which could enhance the practice of a wide-range of practicing physicians, or b) highly specific and narrow scopes of practice that do not meet the criteria of a Royal College subspecialty. AFCs do not in and of themselves prepare a physician for independent practice, but rather build upon one's certification, while recognizing an area of supplemental or advanced training/ practice.

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<sup>1</sup> Assessment and credentialing for physicians in the practice route (PER-AFC) are outlined in the *Policy on Area of Focused Competence Assessment and Credentialing – Practice Eligibility Route, May 1, 2020.*

## 2.2 Diplomate of the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada (DRCPSC)

A distinct Royal College credential granted to those physicians who successfully achieve the discipline-specific training requirements (i.e., as expressed in the Competency Training Requirements (CTR) and portfolio), and who meet the ongoing requirements for the credential.

## 2.3 Competency Training Requirements (CTR)

The Competency Training Requirements (CTR) document specifies the discipline's definition, eligibility requirements, scope, key competencies and required and/ or recommended training experiences.

## 2.4 Competency Portfolio (portfolio)

The competency portfolio is a tool of summative assessment based on the discipline's CTR. AFC portfolios are competency-based and not organized around time-based rotations. Successful completion of a portfolio requires demonstrably achieving all competencies outlined in the discipline's CTR, as confirmed by the AFC Trainee's Faculty of Medicine.

## 2.5 AFC Standards of Accreditation (AFC-SA)

The AFC Standards of Accreditation (AFC-SA) document describes the requirements that a given accredited AFC training program must meet in order to achieve and maintain Royal College accreditation status.

## 2.6 AFC Trainee

AFC Trainee is the name given to a physician registered as training in a Royal College accredited AFC program and following the full AFC curriculum. Successful completion of the curriculum and portfolio lead to eligibility for the AFC credential. This nomenclature distinguishes them from residents who are training in accredited specialty and subspecialty programs leading to eligibility for Royal College certification.

## 2.7 AFC Director

AFC Director is the name given to the physician responsible for the administration and educational quality of a Royal College accredited AFC training program. This nomenclature acknowledges their responsibilities are broadly comparable with those of a Program Director of an accredited specialty or subspecialty program leading to eligibility for Royal College certification.

## 2.8 Confirmation of Competencies Acquired (CCA)

This document, initiated by the AFC Director and the Postgraduate (PG) Dean, attests to the Royal College that all required competencies as outlined in the discipline-specific training standards have been satisfactorily achieved by the AFC Trainee making them eligible for the credential.

## 2.9 National Standards

All recognized disciplines of the Royal College develop a suite of discipline-specific documents that set the standards for the discipline nationally. For AFCs, the suite consists of the Competency Training Requirements, the Competency Portfolio and the AFC-Standards of Accreditation.

## 3. Policy

A Faculty of Medicine has the responsibility and authority to attest that an AFC Trainee from an accredited AFC training program is eligible for the Royal College credential.

The AFC Director, acting on behalf of the competency committee (or equivalent), attests that the AFC Trainee has satisfactorily achieved the competencies identified in the discipline's national standards and is thereby eligible for the credential. The postgraduate dean, acting on behalf of the Faculty of Medicine, attests that the AFC Trainee successfully completed the accredited AFC training program, thereby confirming the AFC Director's determination of the AFC Trainee's eligibility for the credential. These attestations are made via the "Confirmation of Competences Acquired" (CCA) document.

Once a Trainee is deemed eligible, the Faculty of Medicine is responsible for informing the Royal College through the submission of the CCA. Upon receipt, the AFC Trainee will be notified of their successful completion of the accredited AFC training program and eligibility for the credential.

### *Application of this policy to former Trainees*

The new model of assessment introduced following the program evaluation in 2018 sought to simplify and streamline the assessment process. In the interest of fairness and equity to Trainees who completed training in an accredited program prior to this change, effective July 1, 2021, this policy may be applied to former trainees who meet the following eligibility criteria:

- The program was accredited at the time the trainee completed their training. As per Royal College AFC accreditation policy, Trainees registered in a program at the time of accreditation, regardless of their start date, are eligible to apply for assessment.
- Trainees have successfully completed training, demonstrating achievement of the required competencies identified in the version of the portfolio that was applicable during the Trainee's training.
- The program has access to the Trainee's evidence of achievement as part of its assessment records and can attest to the former Trainee's eligibility for the AFC credential.

The Royal College will permit the application of this policy to former Trainees until July 1, 2023.

## 4. Roles and Responsibilities

### 4.1 Faculty of Medicine

Following receipt of a Trainee's application for assessment, the Faculty of Medicine, via the AFC Director, must confirm with the Royal College their AFC Trainee's registration in the program and the Trainee's intention to be deemed eligible for the credential. The Faculty of Medicine also attests to an AFC Trainee's eligibility for the credential through the submission of the CCA.

#### 4.2 AFC Trainee

Upon confirmation of their registration in an accredited AFC training program by the Royal College, the AFC Trainee is responsible for the payment of the assessment fee, as set by the Royal College.

#### 4.3 Specialty Standards Review Committee (SSRC)

The review and approval of AFC discipline-specific documents, including the CTR, portfolio and AFC-SA, will be delegated to the Specialty Standards Review Committee. Only substantive changes to the templates, policies or procedures are brought to the Office of Specialty Education (OSE) or its relevant standing committee.

#### 4.2 AFC Committees

AFC Committees are responsible for maintaining the discipline's standards by reviewing and updating the CTR, portfolio and AFC-SA. They are also responsible for reviewing the accreditation status of AFC training programs and for recommending independent portfolio assessors for PER-AFC assessment process. Depending on the structure of the recognized discipline, the AFC Committee may be a subcommittee of a Specialty Committee, or a stand-alone committee.

#### 4.3 Royal College

The Royal College is responsible for the AFC category of discipline recognition and the granting of the AFC credential. This responsibility includes the development and maintenance of national standards, assessment and credentialing of AFC applicants, accreditation of training programs and credential recognition.

## 5. Contacts

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## 6. Appendices

Appendix A: Procedures for confirming AFC Trainee eligibility for the AFC credential (*forthcoming*)

## 7. Policy record

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