



**ROYAL COLLEGE**  
OF PHYSICIANS AND SURGEONS OF CANADA  
**COLLÈGE ROYAL**  
DES MÉDECINS ET CHIRURGIENS DU CANADA

# Royal College Qualifications and Designations

Definitions and Guidelines for Use

Office of Professional Practice & Membership  
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# Qualifications and Designations

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## Royal College of Physicians & Surgeons of Canada

The Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada is the national professional body overseeing the medical education of specialists in Canada. The Royal College’s Maintenance of Certification (MOC) Program, which is mandatory for all Fellows of the Royal College, supports specialist physicians in lifelong learning and professional development and is one way to support their continued competence in a constantly evolving medical environment.

The Royal College issues designations and related documents which confirm achievement of and adherence to the high standards set by the Royal College. This document defines the various qualifications and designations bestowed by the Royal College, and provides guidance for acceptable use of those designations.

## Royal College Official Designations

The Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada issues three official designations:

**FRCPC** Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians of Canada (Division of Medicine)

**FRCSC** Fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons of Canada (Division of Surgery)

*The above two designations may only be used by current, active Fellows and Retired Fellows (members) of the Royal College.*

**DRCPSC** Diplomate of the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada

*The above designation may only be used by current, active Diplomates of the Royal College. Diplomates who are also Fellows may use the DRCPSC following their Fellowship designation.*

## Special Notes

Royal College designations are the same in English and in French.

There are no designations for specialist or subspecialist Certificants who are not Fellows of the Royal College.

## Use of the Designations

The following provides recommended ways to describe your Royal College qualifications. If you have questions about correct use of designations and descriptors of practice, contact the Royal College Services Centre or your provincial regulator (as some provincial variations exist).

### *If you are a Fellow with a specialty certification:*

- Dr. J. Example, FRCPC, Pediatrics
- Dr. J. Example, FRCPC, Anatomical Pathology
- Dr. J. Example, FRCSC, Neurosurgery

### *If you are a Fellow with a subspecialty certification:*

For those certified in a Royal College subspecialty, both the primary specialty and subspecialty may be listed, or only the subspecialty, based on the preference of the certified individual. The Fellowship designation will reflect the individual's *primary* certification.

- Dr. J. Example, FRCPC, Internal Medicine & Gastroenterology
- Dr. J. Example, FRCPC, Gastroenterology
- Dr. J. Example, FRCSC, Obstetrics and Gynecology & Maternal Fetal Medicine

### *If you are a Fellow and a Founder:*

If you have been approved as a Founder, you may include the subspecialty in which you are a Founder as part of your credentials. The Founder reference must be placed at the end of the description of credentials and practice. Contact your provincial regulator if you have questions as some provincial variations exist.

- Dr. J. Example, FRCPC, Pediatrics, practicing in Maternal Fetal Medicine, Founder in Maternal Fetal Medicine.

### *If you are a Fellow and a Diplomate:*

The Diplomate designation and the name of your AFC discipline may be added after your Fellowship designation. The discipline name may be abbreviated if desired.

- Dr. J. Example, FRCPC, Pediatrics, DRCPSC, Transfusion Medicine
- Dr. J. Example, FRCPC, Pediatrics, DRCPSC, TM, Adult IC<sup>1</sup>

### *If you are a Diplomate without Royal College specialty or subspecialty certification:*

- Dr. J. Example, DRCPSC, Transfusion Medicine
- Dr. J. Example, DRCPSC, TM, Adult IC

### *If you are a Subspecialist Affiliate (see definition on p. 8):*

In most circumstances, Subspecialist Affiliates may describe their qualifications as “Subspecialist Affiliate in [discipline]”, however due to variations in the regulations across provincial jurisdictions related to use of title/credentials and advertising we highly recommend confirming acceptable signature format with your provincial regulator.

- *Dr. J. Example, Subspecialist Affiliate in Infectious Diseases*

## Descriptions of Practice

If, in addition to naming your Royal College specialty you wish to describe your field of practice, the medical term(s) used must not include names of other Royal College disciplines in which you are not certified.

## Multiple Fellowships

If you are certified in a *primary* specialty in both the Division of Medicine and the Division of Surgery you may use both Fellowship designations (FRCPC and FRCSC).

However, if you are certified in one primary specialty and one or more subspecialties you should only use the designation affiliated with your primary specialty.

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<sup>1</sup> TM, Adult IC are the abbreviations for Transfusion Medicine, Adult Interventional Cardiology.

Examples:

- an individual certified in General Surgery and Emergency Medicine (both primary specialties) would use FRCSC and FRCPC
- an individual certified in General Surgery and Critical Care Medicine (a primary specialty and subspecialty) would use FRCSC

## Improper use of the Designations

Royal College Fellowship or Diplomate designations should not be shortened or modified in any way. Periods should not be inserted between the letters of the designations. Additionally, the C at the end of the designation should not be placed in parentheses.

Examples of improper modifications to the Royal College Fellowship designation include:

- FRCPC / FRCSC [when used in reference to a Canadian designation]
- FRCPCQ/FRCSCQ
- FRCPC(C)/FRCSC(C)
- F.R.C.P.C / F.R.C.S.C
- frcpc/frcsc

## Information on Recognized Royal College Disciplines

Brief descriptions of each discipline (including specialties, subspecialties, special programs, and AFC-Diplomas) can be found on the [Royal College website](#).

Detailed information on all disciplines recognized by the Royal College including national standards, examination dates, and accredited programs can also be found on the [Royal College website](#).

## For More Information

Royal College Services Centre  
1-800-461-9598  
613-730-2410  
[membership@royalcollege.ca](mailto:membership@royalcollege.ca)

# Definitions of Qualifications Bestowed by the Royal College

## Certification by Examination

**Specialty and subspecialty certification:** The Royal College offers a number of routes to certification, including traditional (for Canadian-trained specialists and for American-trained specialists completing ACGME-accredited programs), Approved-jurisdiction (for certain jurisdictions outside of the US and Canada), Practice Eligibility (for International Medical Graduates and subspecialists), and Practice Ready Assessment. Regardless of the route, Royal College certification attests to the fact that the certificant has met the highest Royal College standards of assessment for the certificant's specialty or subspecialty discipline. With the exception of Academic Certification and CMQ Certification (see below), Royal College certification is not time limited (i.e., certification is lifetime, and recertification is not required).

**CMQ Certification:** Specialists who are certified by examination through the *Collège des médecins du Québec* (CMQ) may apply for recognition as a Royal College certificant. CMQ Certificants must maintain Fellowship in order to maintain their Royal College certification status.

## Certification without Examination

**Subspecialty Accreditation without Certification Exam (AWC):** Qualified individuals are issued an *attestation certificate*, equivalent to subspecialty certification. The attestation acknowledges that the doctor is a qualified subspecialist as demonstrated by successful completion of training in an accredited program. Attestations are provided in circumstances in which there was no subspecialty exam in the discipline at the time the individual was trained. The individual is a recognized subspecialist in his/her discipline regardless if he/she chooses to take the subspecialty exam now available.

**Academic Certification:** Deans of Medicine may apply for Academic Certification on behalf of their non-certified full-time clinical faculty at the rank of full or associate professor, with five years' experience. Academic Certification remains in effect only for as long as the Certificant maintains a full-time academic appointment in the same specialty practice, at the same medical school and its affiliated institutions. Academic Certificants must maintain Royal College Fellowship in order to maintain their certification status.

## Attestation with Examination

**Subspecialty Examination Affiliate Program (SEAP):** SEAP Candidates are physicians who have completed a Royal College subspecialty examination, consistent with the national standards, however have done so without completing the Royal College primary specialty examination (for example, completing Maternal-Fetal Medicine, without Obstetrics & Gynecology). Because they have not completed the primary specialty exam, SEAP Candidates are not Royal College certified nor are they eligible for Fellowship. SEAP Candidates receive an attestation of successful completion of the Royal College subspecialty examination in their discipline, and are offered the option to become a Royal College Subspecialist Affiliate.

## Attestation without Examination

**Founder:** Founders are individuals who have been involved in the creation of a new subspecialty (for example, the creation and development of standards, training requirements, and examinations for a new or transitioning subspecialty) and are therefore unable to gain eligibility to the certification examinations of the subspecialty. Recognition as a Founder involves an application process through the Royal College Credentials Unit. Once approved, Founders may include “Founder in [subspecialty name]” as part of their credentials. Following a waiting period, Founders may choose to undertake the subspecialty exam and become certified in the subspecialty. Founder status terminates upon successful certification in the subspecialty.

**Area of Focus Competence (Diploma) (AFC Diploma):** Areas of focused competence (diplomas) are highly specialized disciplines of specialty medicine that address legitimate societal needs, but do not meet the Royal College criteria for a specialty, foundation program, or subspecialty. AFC (diplomas) do not prepare a physician for practice, but rather recognize areas of supplemental or advanced training. Individuals who complete an AFC (Diploma) are offered the option to become a Royal College Diplomate.

## Membership and Affiliate Status

**Fellow:** Those who hold Royal College certification are eligible to apply for admission to Fellowship. Only Royal College Fellows are entitled to use the designations FRCPC or FRCSC. Active Fellows must participate in the MOC Program in order to maintain their Fellowship status and, in most provinces across Canada, their license to practice. Retired Fellows may participate on a voluntary basis. Only Fellows hold rights and privileges of membership, including eligibility to vote and hold office.

**Diplomate:** Individuals who have successfully met all of the requirements of an AFC (Diploma) and who annually maintain their status as a Diplomate of the Royal College receive an added qualification known as Diplomate of the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada, or DRCPSC. Diplomates must participate in the MOC Program in order to maintain their Diplomate status (with the exception of Family Physicians who are not Royal College certified, and are participating in the MAINPRO+ program through the College of Family Physicians of Canada).

**Subspecialist Affiliate:** Subspecialist Affiliates have successfully completed a Royal College subspecialty examination through the Subspecialist Examination Affiliate Program (SEAP). Maintenance of Subspecialist Affiliate status requires ongoing participation in the Maintenance of Certification (MOC) Program.