Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada Policy on Academic Certification

1. Background

The Royal College is the national professional association that oversees the medical education of specialists in Canada. In its mandate articulated by a Royal Charter in 1929, it is entrusted with a key role in the oversight of the system of specialty medicine in Canada. The Royal College verifies that a physician has met all the requirements necessary for Royal College certification. Through its standing committee the Committee on Specialty Education, Royal College Council is responsible for evaluating nominations for Academic Certification, ultimately determining whether those applicants meet the criteria.

2. Objective

The Royal College Academic Certification program is intended to assist Canadian faculties of medicine and universities in the recruitment and retention of exceptional international specialists as full-time academic faculty at the rank of full or associate professor, when recruitment of qualified Royal College Fellows or certificants has been unsuccessful. The program is particularly aimed at facilitating the recruitment of clinician scientists & researchers, clinician administrators/leaders and clinician educators. 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 exceptional internationally trained specialists only. It is the objective of this policy to support faculties of medicine in recruiting highly skilled unique specialists and subspecialists who have demonstrated themselves to be academic leaders in their discipline.

This route to Royal College certification is not intended for those who have a reasonable chance of being eligible for another route to certification.

3. Roles and Responsibilities

3.1 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 below in the 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.)

1 Clinical teaching duties alone would not constitute sufficient academic activity.
3.2 The Office of Specialty Education
The Office of Specialty Education (OSE) receives all nomination forms for Academic Certification and reviews them to determine completeness 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.

3.3 Committee on Specialty Education
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.

3.4 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.

4. Procedure for submission of a nomination for Academic Certification

4.1 All nominations for Academic Certification must come directly from the Dean of the faculty of medicine to which the nominee is being recruited. 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.

4.2 The complete nomination package must include:

   4.2.1 A nomination from the Dean of the relevant faculty of medicine with:
      i. 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;
      ii. confirmation that the nominee fulfills the faculty’s criteria for the rank to which the nominee is being appointed;
      iii. 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-specialty (See Evaluation Criteria, section 6.3);
      iv. confirmation that an appropriate search for eligible Royal College certificant was undertaken; and
      v. written acknowledgment from the nominee that they support the application for Academic Certification.

   4.2.2 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.

   4.2.3 Certified copies of degrees, diplomas and certificates.

   4.2.4 A supporting letter from the department head of the recruiting faculty, and, if applicable, chief administrator of the partner organization.
4.2.5 For nominees being recruited from outside of Canada, attestation(s) of academic appointment from the nominee’s originating (foreign) institution(s) describing the type of appointment.

4.2.6 The non-refundable nomination fee.

4.2.7 A description of why another route to certification is not appropriate (could be supplied by the Dean or the nominee).

4.2.8 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.

4.3 The Office of Specialty Education reviews nomination packages to confirm all eligibility criteria have been met and ensure the nomination is complete.

4.4 Completed nominations are presented to the Committee on Specialty Education, the decision-making authority for Academic Certification, with a recommendation from the Executive Director, Office of Specialty Education.

4.5 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.

4.6 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.

4.7 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.

4.8 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).

5. **Eligibility Criteria**

At the time of nomination, the nominee must:

- Hold 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, and;
- Be subject to ongoing evaluation of performance and practice by a supervisor/superior.

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 the route for those employed by a university directly. Examples of affiliated organizations are hospital research institutes or cancer organization research institutes.
Additionally, it should be noted that if a nominee is recruited as an assistant professor and subsequently promoted to associate professor, Academic Certification is not automatic (i.e., promotion does not equate to certification). Final decision on eligibility of nominees employed by affiliated organizations is at the discretion of the Committee on Specialty Education.

6. **Evaluation Criteria**

Along with the nomination package and eligibility criteria described above, in rendering its decision to grant Academic Certification, the CSE evaluates the nomination based on the following:

6.1 The sponsoring Dean and institution have clearly demonstrated a strong commitment to continuing professional development of the nominee and support of the academic career path.

6.2 It would not be reasonable for the nominee to pursue another route to Royal College certification (i.e. completing the specialty or subspecialty Examination).

6.3 The nomination clearly demonstrates, 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 completed for their specialty/subspecialty.)

6.4 The acceptance of the nomination will uphold the highest standards of Royal College certification.

7. **Ongoing Program Conditions**

Once Academic Certification has been granted, the following must be maintained:

7.1 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.

7.2 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.

7.3 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 years of having been granted by the Committee on Specialty Education, unless the sponsoring Dean requests an extension of a specified time.

8. **Appeal policy: Request for Reconsideration of a Committee on Specialty Education Decision**

This policy dictates the procedures that will be followed to ensure a standardized
mechanism in the event of a request for reconsideration of a decision made by the Committee on Specialty Education with regards to Academic Certification.

8.1 Criteria:

A request for reconsideration 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.

8.2 Procedure:

If the sponsoring Dean wishes to appeal the Committee on Specialty Education decision, the Dean may direct a letter to the President of the College requesting a reconsideration of the decision. The nominee must be copied on this letter in or to acknowledge they are aware of the appeal. The President of the College will conduct an initial review of the decision. If the President of the College deems that there are reasonable grounds to reconsider the decision, a panel of three persons drawn from the Executive Committee of Council will be appointed to act on behalf of the Council of the College. The panel will base its decision on the information available in the original nomination package. The original CSE decision may only be modified 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.

The panel may uphold the decision of the Committee on Specialty Education or may modify the decision of the Committee. The decision of the panel is final and will be communicated back to the sponsoring Dean, and the nominee will be copied.