

THE COLLEGE OF  
FAMILY PHYSICIANS  
OF CANADA



LE COLLÈGE DES  
MÉDECINS DE FAMILLE  
DU CANADA



*Candidate Guide*  
to the  
**Certification Examination  
in Family Medicine**

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## Preface

This guide is intended for all candidates planning to sit the Certification Examination in Family Medicine of the College of Family Physicians of Canada (CFPC). It is intended to provide some of the background information needed to help prepare for the examination.

When meeting all requirements, examination candidates who challenge and pass this exam will be granted Certification in Family Medicine (CCFP).

Those who qualify for the Certification Examination in Family Medicine as residency eligible candidates will have an opportunity to discuss and practice various components of the examination within your Family Medicine program. For those candidates who qualify as residency eligible from one of the approved jurisdictions outside Canada, or as practice eligible candidates, you are invited to approach the nearest university Department of Family Medicine or the provincial Chapter of the CFPC to arrange for some practice sessions. Some of the training programs and College Chapters run examination orientation workshops prior to the spring and fall exams. Contact information for the CFPC Chapters is available at [www.cfpc.ca](http://www.cfpc.ca)

The Certification Examination in Family Medicine is a comprehensive assessment of a physician's knowledge and skills. Candidates will be examined on the application of the patient-centered clinical method as applied to the breadth and depth of clinical family practice. *Breadth of practice* is considered to be the delivery of care in the office, hospital or home as well as a variety of other settings for both female and male patients of all age groups. *Depth of practice* is considered to be a practice which is not restricted to a single disease, or organ, or body system and which includes an organized approach to health maintenance as well as management of illness involving any organ or body system.

The content of the examination is drawn from clinical family practice. Those candidates who have been residency trained, or whose practice is broadly based, should not encounter any questions or topics they would not find in their own day-to-day practice. Candidates who have limited their practices e.g., excluding obstetrics or paediatrics, should expect to find questions on these topics in the examination and would be advised to review their knowledge of these areas in preparation for the exam.

The College continually tries to improve the quality of its examination. As part of this process it will occasionally test various examination components during the conduct of the examination in one or more sites. This is a necessary activity to ensure the continued high quality of the examination and is commonly done by most examination bodies. The CFPC will ensure that no candidate is ever hindered or unfairly assessed as a result of these studies.

The security of the examination is critical to its continued effectiveness. At the time of application, all exam candidates **must** sign a non-disclosure statement that they will not divulge the nature and/or content of any questions and/or answers on the Certification Examination in Family Medicine.

We wish you the best of luck and look forward to welcoming you as a new certified member of the College of Family Physicians of Canada.

## Candidate Code of Conduct

Any action that might compromise the proper conduct of the Certification Examination in Family Medicine of the College of Family Physicians of Canada is considered unprofessional behaviour and is in breach of the Candidate Code of Conduct. Such actions might include:

- Giving or attempting to give to, or receiving or attempting to receive information from other candidates (talking or passing notes) or from any other source (i.e., using an electronic device) during the examination,
- Observing or attempting to observe the answers of, or showing or attempting to show answers to, another candidate,
- Copying or attempting to copy or, removing or attempting to remove examination materials from the examination site, or
- Divulging or attempting to divulge to anyone the nature or content of any question or answer on the Certification Examination in Family Medicine.
- Demonstrating behavior that is disruptive, aggressive or that threatens the safety of staff or other candidates.

Any candidate found to have violated the Candidate Code of Conduct will face penalties to be determined by the CFPC Board of Examinations and Certification. Consequences of unprofessional behaviour may include forfeiture of examination fees, invalidation of examination results, suspension or disqualification from future examinations and being reported to the medical regulatory authorities.

## Non-Disclosure Statement

The CFPC's Non-Disclosure Statement reads as follows:

"The certification examination in family medicine has become an important part of the licensure of family physicians in Canada. This relatively new role for the examination has resulted in candidates seeking every means to be successful. To help colleagues prepare for the examination, some candidates have undertaken to memorize the content of the examination and circulate this information to candidates who would be sitting future examinations.

The nature of our written examination is relatively vulnerable to this kind of activity, as we must reuse questions in order to ensure that we are maintaining a reliable and valid instrument. The circulation of examination content among candidates has jeopardised our ability to provide a reliable and valid instrument without increasing exam fees to cover the additional cost of preparing entirely new examinations each year. We hope to be able to minimize this by the institution of a non-disclosure statement which we will require all candidates to sign at the time of application as part of their eligibility to sit the examination.

In recognition of the duty of The College of Family Physicians of Canada and of myself to the public to ensure that only physicians who fully and fairly pass the certification examinations be granted certification by The College of Family Physicians of Canada,

I hereby attest that I will not perform any action that might compromise the proper conduct of the Certification Examination in Family Medicine and I will abide by the Candidate Code of Conduct as printed above.

I understand that failure to comply with this attestation may result in penalties to be determined by the Board of Examinations and Certification which may include: forfeiture of my examination fees, invalidation of my examination results, disqualification from future examinations of The College of Family Physicians of Canada and being reported to the medical regulatory authorities.

I am a candidate for the Certification Examination in Family Medicine of the College of Family Physicians of Canada, and I have read and am in agreement with the above statements.

## Examination Description

### *Defining competence for the purposes of certification by the College of Family Physicians of Canada: The evaluation objectives in family medicine*

The [evaluation objectives](#), including topics and key features which guide the CFPC's Committee on Examinations in the development of the test items for the Certification Examination in Family Medicine, is available on the CFPC website. These materials/documents will serve to ensure that the examination maintains acceptable validity and reliability. To do this the evaluation objectives have been designed to clearly describe the domain of competence to be tested within each topic area. The majority of cases will be based on these evaluation objectives.

## Examination Components

The Certification Examination in Family Medicine is comprised of two components: a written examination and an oral examination. The written component includes short-answer management problems (SAMPs). The oral component includes five simulated office orals (SOOs). The content to be assessed for each setting of the examination is distributed among both the written and oral components. In order to be successful on the overall examination, candidates must demonstrate a passing performance on both components. Candidates will be involved in testing over a period of two days.

## Examination Weekend Schedule

<b>Certification Examination in Family Medicine</b>	
<b>Written Examination</b>	<b>Oral Examination</b>
SAMPs	SOOs
Wednesday or Thursday or Friday	Saturday or Sunday
4.5 hour appointment time, includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 4 hours testing time with an additional 15 minutes added to the content time to allow candidates to take an unscheduled break</li><li>• 15 minutes dedicated time for confirmation, non-disclosure, tutorial and end test screens</li></ul> Plan to spend 5 hours at testing site	Five 15-minute interviews Plan for 3 hours at testing site

### **The Written Examination**

The written examination is comprised short answer management problems (SAMPs) designed to test a candidate's recall of factual knowledge and problem solving abilities in the area of definition of health problems, management of health problems, and critical appraisal.

This portion of the examination will be delivered using computer-based technology. It will be held in Prometric testing sites in various locations across Canada and will be approximately four hours in length.

Candidates will be directed to a website where they will select the time and location for their testing appointment.

\*Please note\*, if completing both the SAMPs and SOOs during the same administration, the onus is on the candidate to schedule their SAMPs with Prometric that will allow sufficient time to travel to the SOO exam site.

Please refer to the CFPC website ([www.cfpc.ca](http://www.cfpc.ca)) for an online demonstration of the [SAMP examination](#) and [further resources](#).

### **The Oral Examination**

The oral examination is comprised five simulated office orals (SOOs) each 15 minutes in length. SOOs take place on Saturday or Sunday of the examination weekend.

SOOs are designed to duplicate, insofar as possible, the actual "setting" in which the family physician conducts a practice. Family physician examiners are trained to role-play patients presenting with specific complaints. The physician playing the role of the patient notes the management of the case by the candidate and he or she will score the candidate according to pre-defined criteria.

This examination will assess both the definition and management of health problems. The scoring system has been devised to focus on the candidate's approach to dealing with patients, including their ability to understand the patient's unique experience and to establish a positive doctor-patient relationship.

Getting the "right diagnosis" plays only a minor role in the scoring. There are no hidden agendas.

A library of released SOO scripts and some video demonstrations are available on the CFPC website.

Please also visit the Preparing for the Family Medicine Examination section for further resources

## GENERAL INFORMATION

### Personal Belongings

**No personal items will be permitted in the examination room.** You will be directed to place all your personal belongings such as keys, papers, wallets, cell phones, watches, coats, etc. in a designated area during the examination. While every effort will be made to store them safely, the CFPC is not responsible for your belongings. Please bring as few of them as possible.

Please note, you are **not permitted** to wear watches or electronic bracelets of any kind (i.e. digital, analogue or smartwatches) on exam day. Time remaining on your exam will be clearly indicated on your computer screen during the SAMPs. Clocks will be provided in every SOO examination room.

### Must Bring Items:

Both testing days:

- government issued photo identification (e.g., driver's license or passport)

### Travel

- Information about the examination site(s) and the days of the candidate's oral and written examinations will be provided approximately six weeks prior to the examination.
- It is the candidate's responsibility to arrange for travel to and from the examination centre. Candidates are encouraged to schedule travel arrangements that allow for unforeseen delays. The Board of Examinations and Certification will not accept responsibility for candidates arriving late.
- Departure travel should not be scheduled prior to 8:00 pm on the day of your SOO exam unless informed otherwise.
- When making travel arrangements, candidates are welcome to use the CFPC's corporate travel provider, [www.visiontravel.ca](http://www.visiontravel.ca)

### Health, Wellness and Nutrition

- If an exam candidate feels their performance will be adversely affected due to health or personal reasons, they should not sit the examination. Please inform the CFPC or the exam centre coordinator immediately. Illness is not grounds for an appeal of a failing grade.
- As a courtesy to other candidates and examiners, candidates are asked to please refrain from wearing perfume, aftershave, or any other scented products during the examination.
- Food should not be consumed during the examination. However, candidates with special dietary requirements may make arrangements with the College prior to the examination. If approved by the College, the food must be packaged in a clear plastic bag.
- Candidates who require any type of modification to the testing environment (i.e., private space to express breastmilk, additional break time, access to medications or devices, etc.) must make prior arrangements to ensure exam sites are able to meet these needs.

### Emergencies

In the event of an emergency on the day of the examination, please leave a message for CFPC staff at 1-800-387-6197 ext. 405 or ext. 206.

## Late Arrivals

### SAMPs

Plan to arrive at least 30 minutes before the scheduled appointment to allow time for check-in procedures. (For example, if your scheduled appointment time is 8:00 am, you should arrive at the testing center at 7:30 am.) You will be checked-in on a first-come first-served basis. Your actual examination start time may vary slightly depending on the time it takes to check you in.

Candidates who enter the written examination more than 30 minutes after their scheduled test start time will not be allowed to start their exam. Attendance will be recorded as “no show”. Fees will not be refunded to candidates who are denied entry due to late arrival. Lost time due to late arrival does not constitute grounds for appeal.

### SOOs

Your entrance letter will specify the time you are expected to arrive at the examination site. Plan to arrive on time so that you are checked-in and ready to begin the exam session on time.

Candidates who arrive at the examination site after the start of their first scheduled oral may be accommodated at the discretion of the local examination coordinator ONLY if the schedule allows. In the event that the center is unable to accommodate the candidate, the attendance will be recorded as a “no show,” and will not count as an exam attempt. Fees will not be refunded to candidates who are denied entry due to late arrival.

## Process Errors

If during the course of the examination, an exam candidate feels that a process irregularity has occurred, it should be brought immediately to the attention of the local examination coordinator. This allows the coordinator to either institute some immediate course of action to correct the process error or to provide a written report to the Board of Examinations and Certification at the earliest possible opportunity. Immediate attention to a process irregularity will usually result in a complete and satisfactory resolution. It does not preclude a further request for review on the part of the candidate(s) concerned. On the contrary, it may even be construed as additional evidence of the importance of the process irregularity in the case.



## Cancellation Policy

A refund for a portion of the examination fee will depend on the date of receipt of a written, signed withdrawal/refund request.

- Candidates who withdraw from the examination 60 days or more prior to the date of the examination will be subject to a penalty of \$500.
- Candidates who withdraw within 30 to 60 days prior to the date of the examination will be subject to a penalty of one-half (50%) of the examination fee.
- There is no refund for candidates who withdraw within 30 days of the examination.

Candidates must withdraw and re-apply should they wish to take the examination at a later date. Fees paid for a previous attempt are not transferable to a later session.

## THE MARKING OF THE EXAMINATIONS

Approximately six weeks after the examination the results will have been analyzed and delivered to the CFPC's Board of Examinations and Certification. Numbers are used to identify candidates to the Board of Examinations and Certification to ensure that marking is completely anonymous. The Board reviews all the results and recommends who should receive Certification. Results are usually forwarded by mail to all candidates within eight weeks of completion of the examination. Results are also posted in the secure "MEMBERS" section of the CFPC website. Candidates will be notified by email as soon as the results are available online. Candidates are encouraged to register their user name and password to access the MEMBERS section in advance of the result notifications.

**For reasons of confidentiality the CFPC will not provide exam results by email, phone, or fax.**

The examination is intended to be a comprehensive review of a candidate's knowledge and skills in family medicine. To be consistent with patterns of practice across Canada, the CFPC's Committee on Examinations standardizes the correct answers to the short answer management problem questions and the expected performance on the oral examination. Clear criteria are defined for examiners and markers against which candidate performances will be compared in order to assess their abilities. Candidates will also be expected to demonstrate a level of performance consistent with their peers in order to be awarded Certification.

The Certification Examination in Family Medicine is a terminal assessment instrument that examines a broad spectrum of content. Candidates will be informed of whether they passed or failed the examination as a whole. The result profile will also indicate whether or not they had a passing score on the oral and written components of the examination.

The content to be assessed for each setting of the examination is distributed among all the written and oral components. Therefore, candidates are reminded that to be successful on the overall examination they must demonstrate a passing performance on both components.

### **Notifying Family Medicine Residency Program Directors**

It is the policy of the CFPC to allow Family Medicine Program Directors access to a summary of the results for each of their residents sitting the examination. This information is valuable to help assess the accuracy of their own in-training evaluation process, as well as to indicate whether or not there may be specific strengths or weaknesses in their training program. If, for any reason, a candidate does not wish to have their exam results released to the program director please send a written request to this office ***within one week of completion of the examination***. If notice has not been received from the candidate by this time, exam results will be forwarded to the program director as part of the CFPC's usual policy and process.

### **Awarding Certification**

Certification in Family Medicine for residency eligible candidates requires success on the certification examination as well as documentation of successful completion of training. The College will contact the Canadian training programs to request a certificate of completion of training for all residents. Residents from an approved jurisdiction (USA, UK, Australia or Ireland), must have their proof of completion of training successfully source verified through [physiciansapply.ca](http://physiciansapply.ca) before certification can be conferred. Following the candidate's success on the examination, and the successful completion of the training program, the candidate will be registered as a certified member of the College.

### **Notifying Medical Regulatory Authorities**

The CFPC will forward lists of physicians who achieve Certification to all medical regulatory authorities in Canada immediately following the granting of your Certification status.

### **Maintenance of Certification**

The successful completion of the Certification Examination in Family Medicine is one of the essential prerequisites for an individual to be granted Certification in Family Medicine by the College of Family Physicians of Canada. In order to maintain Certification, the physician is required to maintain membership in the CFPC and to meet the College's continuing medical education requirements for certified members.