

What is the Practice Eligibility Route to certification?

Approved by the Royal College Council in February 2010, the Practice Eligibility Route (PER) to certification is targeted to physicians who are already licensed and practising as specialists in Canada, but not certified by the Royal College. This route has two pathways to certification: Route A is the examination in its current format; and Route B is a comprehensive, in-practice assessment and examination. Both routes also require an individualized, two-year continuing professional development plan, credentials review and formal multisource feedback from patients, colleagues and co-workers. Candidates must have a minimum of five years of active specialist practice, the last two of which must be in a province or territory of Canada. PER will benefit Fellows and societal health needs by ensuring that all practising specialists across all disciplines maintain a national standard of high-quality health care.

Why is the Royal College implementing PER?

Currently, there are 1,400 uncertified physicians practising as specialists across Canada and licensed to do so under the Medical Regulatory Authorities (MRAs). PER makes assessment against national standards possible for these practising physicians. Key tenets of the Royal College – and ones we share as Fellows – are the promotion of high national standards for specialty medicine and delivery of quality health care for Canadians. The PER enables the Royal College to adapt to Canada's changing health care environment, while honouring our commitment to Canadians to expect the highest standards in specialty medical care.

Who is eligible?

PER applicants must meet the following eligibility criteria:

- minimum of five years of active specialist practice, the last two of which must be in a province or territory of Canada;
- completion of all postgraduate training requirements of the jurisdiction in which training occurred and have eligibility to practise, or previous practice as an independent specialist in the country of postgraduate training;
- minimum of 48 months of postgraduate training, at least 36 of which must be directly related to the specialty; and
- proof of medical licence and a confirmed Certificate of Professional Standing from the MRA in the province or territory of Canadian practice.

PER will not create a *back-door* opportunity for potential Certificants. Individuals whose eligibility has expired in other routes to certification (Royal College examination, Practice Ready Assessment, etc.) are NOT eligible for the PER option. Those candidates finishing Canadian residency training must pursue the standard Royal College examination route.

Why not use the standard Royal College examination for all PER candidates?

The standard Royal College examination is designed to assess the breadth of knowledge and skill in a specialty that is applicable to those exiting the Canadian training program. After certification, many specialists limit their scope of practice over time, resulting in the development of more focused areas of expertise with less time dedicated to maintaining skills outside this scope.

Because of this, the current Royal College examination can be a barrier to licensed specialists who have been competently practising their specialty for over five years. Route B of the PER represents an alternate but equally rigorous assessment of knowledge, skills and judgment to address this need. Whether examination or in-practice assessment/exam, PER assesses the fundamental knowledge that all specialists in the discipline must have against one national standard of excellence, as determined by their specialty committee.

What does a PER assessment involve?

Certification through PER consists of three components:

1. **An individualized continuing professional development (CPD) plan** through the Royal College's Maintenance of Certification (MOC) program. Applicants must submit and complete a **two-year** CPD plan tailored to their approved focus of practice.
2. **Credentials review and confirmation of eligibility criteria.** In addition to confirmation of applicant eligibility, the credentials review will consist of
 - source verification of completion of postgraduate training in the international jurisdiction;
 - a review of the current scope of practice, including feedback from the applicant's Canadian Chief of Staff or other relevant supervisor; and
 - multisource feedback from patients, colleagues and co-workers.
3. **Assessment methods** will be implemented in a phased-in approach and applicants can choose to complete either
 - **Route A** – the specialty certification examinations in their current format, or
 - **Route B** – a context-based, scope-of-practice assessment/exam conducted by peer assessors appointed by the Royal College. The specialty committee will decide upon a PER applicant's acceptable breadth of practice, which is then reflected in the assessment/exam process that will use a combination of the following:
 - Direct observation of care
 - Structured oral assessment, based on practice and/or standardized cases
 - Chart-stimulated review and examination
 - Practice statistics and other performance indicators review
 - Royal College-validated test material as appropriate

What happens if the individual does not pass the PER assessment?

This information will be provided to the Medical Regulatory Authorities who will make decisions regarding licensing. MRAs would then make a decision on the course of action to be followed, which might include limiting or removing the licence, or prescribing additional learning for the individual. Criteria for repeat attempts on either Route A or B remains to be determined.

Why is PER applicable only to specialties and not subspecialties?

An individual must be certified in a specialty before becoming eligible for certification in a subspecialty. If the applicant to PER practises solely in a subspecialty of the recognized parent discipline (or specialty), there is no mechanism to assess competence in the specialty via an in-practice assessment/exam. Certification in a specialty is evidence of competence in the foundational knowledge, skills and experience that lead to competency in a subspecialty.

Will PER result in a dual standard of practice?

No, not only are the Routes A and B assessment/examinations equally rigorous, but the PER certification process draws from the same Royal College expertise and decision-making groups:

- satisfactory completion of an individualized Royal College MOC program;
- credentials validated through the Royal College Credentials unit;
- scope of practice that is approved by the Royal College specialty committee;
- in-practice assessment/exam using national standards identified by the specialty committee and conducted by Royal College trained assessors/examiners;
- Royal College-validated test material, as appropriate;
- assessment results that will be approved by the Royal College examination board; and
- the same oversight mechanisms that are currently in place to ensure high-quality examinations.

Will PER devalue the Royal College Fellowship?

No, specialists certified through the PER will have been assessed against the same national standards as determined by their specialty committee. Moreover, this enhances the Fellowship designation by reaffirming the Royal College as **the** national body that sets the standards for specialty medicine in Canada.

How will PER be implemented?

The first phase of PER is underway with applicants from those specialties that generated the most expressions of interest in seeking certification from recent MRA communications. More specialties will be added in 2013.

How is this new route funded?

The new PER will be funded by the applicants.