Conduct of Oral Examination Policy

1. Background

The Fellowship Training Program Oral Examination is designed as an assessment tool that aligns with and assesses the intended Fellowship Training Program Curriculum Learning Outcomes from the following Domains of Professional Practice:

- Medical and Health System Expertise
- Medical Management, and
- Communication

Learning outcomes from other domains may also be assessed as they apply to the above domains.

The standard to be met is that the Candidate is able to demonstrate the knowledge, skills and professional approach at the standard expected of an independent registered Specialist Medical Administrator in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand.

The Censor in Chief is responsible for the conduct of the Oral Examination and is supported in this activity by Censors and staff in the College Office.

The Terms of Reference of the Committee of Censors and the Position Description for the Censor in Chief are available on the College website. The Committee of Censors has been refining eligibility criteria, standard setting, formatting and moderation processes for the Oral Examination on a continuing basis and this Policy is updated to reflect recent changes.

2. Purpose

The purpose of this Policy is to outline the standard, rules and procedures for the conduct of the RACMA Fellowship Training Program Oral Examination.

3. Scope

This Policy details the business rules associated with eligibility to sit the Oral Examination, pre-Examination standard setting, formatting of the Examination, post-Examination moderation of results and notification of outcomes.

Jurisdictions may conduct optional Practice Examinations which utilise the principles and format of the Oral Examination, with the exception that feedback is offered to the Candidates as part of these examination sessions.

4. Policy Statement

4.1 Eligibility to sit the Oral Examination

4.1.1 Candidates who commenced training from the 2025 training year

Candidates who commenced training from the 2025 training year or have formally transitioned to 2025 program arrangements will be eligible to sit the Oral Examination if, at the time of application, they meet the following criteria:

a) Are in the Advanced Phase of training.

b) Have completed 4 of the 5 RACMA core subjects from an approved Masters program.

c) Have attended the Advanced Phase Workshop.

d) Have completed 5 Advanced Phase Workplace-Based Assessments (WBAs).

e) Are in an accredited training post currently undertaking supervised practice, or are on an approved interruption to training and are within 6 months from the commencement of the interrupted training period.

f) Have not had more than three unsuccessful outcomes for the Oral Examination during their candidacy (excluding any 'unsuccessful - attempt not count' outcomes).

g) Are in financial good standing with the College.

4.1.2 Candidates who commenced training prior to the 2025 training year

Candidates who commenced training prior to the 2025 training year and who have not formally transitioned to 2025 program arrangements will be eligible to sit the Oral Examination if, at the time of application, they meet the following criteria:

a) Have been credited with 92 weeks full-time equivalent time in supervised practice (inclusive of any time in supervised practice awarded through Recognition of Prior Learning and Experience).

b) Are in an accredited training post currently undertaking supervised practice, or on an approved interruption to training and are within 6 months from the commencement of the interrupted training period.

c) Have not had more than three unsuccessful outcomes for the Oral Examination during their candidacy (excluding any 'unsuccessful - attempt not count' outcomes).

d) Are in financial good standing with the College.

4.1.3 Candidates are permitted to sit the Oral Examination four times before their candidacy compliance will be considered to have been breached.

4.2 Applying to sit the Oral Examination

The Oral Examination is held twice per year. Candidates must complete and submit the application form that address the eligibility criteria by the required date.

All Candidates will be notified of Examination dates as soon as details are confirmed.

A Candidate will be expected to attend the Examination session scheduled for them by the College. Every attempt will be made to accommodate distance travelled and circumstances of those Candidates who have been approved for Special Consideration relating to their participation in the Examination. The Examination for each Candidate will be conducted on one day. Sufficient Examination sessions will be provided to allow all eligible Candidates who apply, to be assessed.

4.3 Format of the Oral Examination

The Oral Examination is an open-book Examination that encourages Candidates to analyse and critique responses to set scenarios, for verbal discussion with Censors.

The Oral Examination consists of four (4) interview stations and the Candidates present at all four stations.

Each station process is 40 minutes duration consisting of 20 minutes for the Candidates' preparation of responses and 20 minutes for the interview:

- In the 20 minutes for Candidate preparation, Candidates will be presented with one scenario.
- Candidates then have 20 minutes to present the prepared response and answer questions from a panel of two Censors. The 20 minutes is split evenly with 10 minutes for the Candidate's prepared response and 10 minutes to address questions from the Censor panel. The questions from the Censor panel will explore the Candidate's understanding of issues that are relevant to the scenario and matters which arise from the Candidate's response.

Pre-moderation

After the Candidate has left the room, the Censors complete the assessment of the Candidate's performance using a marking rubric against the knowledge, skills and professional approach required by the scenario. The Censor pair will assess independently for five minutes and will each award a score out of 15.

Post-moderation

When the Censor pair have recorded their independent scores, they will conduct a discussion about their respective scores. Based on this discussion one or both Censors may amend their scores. There is no requirement for absolute consensus, however each Censor is to be prepared to explain the score during the moderation meeting with all examining Censors. A final summed score out of 30 is recorded by the Censor pair.

4.4   Outcomes

After all Candidates in the session have completed four stations, all examining Censors conduct a moderation session to review the scores awarded for each of the four stations and to each individual de-identified Candidate. This session is led by the Censor in Chief.

The examining Censors:

- identify any scenarios that appear to have consistently anomalous scores (very high, very low) or other discrepancy
- agree on how to moderate the outcomes from each station in which there may be anomalies
- determine the outcome for each Candidate according to the following algorithm:
    - A Candidate has been **successful** if the summed score from both Censors is at or above 18/30 for each of the four stations.
    - A Candidate has been **unsuccessful:**
        o if the summed score from both Censors is below 18/30 for two or more stations
    - A Candidate who has been considered **neither successful nor unsuccessful** may be offered a fifth, supplementary station on the day. A Candidate will be offered a supplementary station:
        o if the summed score from both Censors is at or above 18/30 for three stations
    - A Candidate who achieves a summed score from both Censors of at or above 18/30 for the supplementary station will then be considered to have achieved a successful outcome.
    - If a Candidate declines to sit the supplementary station, that Candidate will then be considered to have been unsuccessful at the Examination.

Censors examining a fifth supplementary station will not have assessed the Candidate in any other station that day and will have no conflicts of interest.

Candidates who are clearly successful or unsuccessful will be asked to leave the Examination space (without being told their outcomes). Candidates who are eligible for a fifth, supplementary station are invited to remain in the Examination space to present for a fifth station.

All Candidates undertaking a fifth station on any one day will use the same pre- prepared 'fifth station' scenario.

After completion of the supplementary station, Candidates will be asked to leave the Examination space (without being told their outcomes).

The Censor in Chief is informed of the summed scores for the fifth supplementary station and the outcome of the Examination for all Candidates as either Successful or Unsuccessful.

4.5   Examination Results

Results from the Oral Examination are compiled and presented by the Censor in Chief (or delegate) to a specifically convened Education and Training Committee meeting conducted as soon as practicable following completion of the examination.

Candidates are notified of their Oral Examination outcome after endorsement of their results by the Education and Training Committee. The Candidate's Training Supervisor, Preceptors and the relevant Jurisdictional Coordinator(s) of Training are also notified of the Candidate's outcome.

4.6   Standard setting and Moderation of Examination outcomes

Calibration takes place in the pre-event preparatory activities of an examination and involves:

- Design
- Standard setting and consistency
- Delivery, and
- Agreement on outcomes.

Moderation is the process that ensures the consistency of marking of summative assessment tasks in terms of:

- Alignment of assessment tasks with intended learning outcomes
- Appropriateness of assessment content in terms of curriculum coverage
- Standardisation of level of challenge, and
- Fairness to Candidates of processes.

4.7   Oral Examination Topics

Candidates will be assessed on their ability to convey to the Censors that they have the requisite knowledge, skills and professional approach to satisfactorily deal with the Examination scenarios.

The topics for assessment in this format are drawn from the learning outcomes from the Medical and Health System Expertise, Medical Management and Communication Domains of Professional Practice described in the Fellowship Training Program Curriculum Learning Outcomes. Learning outcomes from other domains may also be assessed as they apply to the above domains.

The scenario settings include critical care, acute care and sub-acute care; community practice, public and private hospitals; and government and non- government health services.

4.8   Examination Questions

The Principal Censor for question development, selection and determining exam day question sets coordinates the drafting, evaluation, calibration and finalisation of questions for the Oral Examination, in consultation with Censors nominated for examination question development.

Working with the Censors, the Principal Censor is responsible for preparation of a customised marking rubric for each scenario – which is based on the published RACMA template.

The Principal Censor ensures that the standard for the writing of the questions and the wording in the rubrics is consistent.

The selected scenarios are provided to the examining Censors who will be examining each scenario before the Oral Examination calibration meeting for their information and review. The Censors meet before the Oral Examination to collectively familiarise themselves with the scenarios and calibrate the expected responses.

That calibration meeting is also an opportunity to identify to the Censor in Chief any previously undeclared conflicts of interest.

4.9   Previous Examination Questions

Examples of previous station scenarios are available to Candidates, Preceptors and Training Supervisors on Canvas and the RACMA Website. These examples allow Candidates to familiarise themselves with the scope, format and style of scenarios and acceptable responses to the Examination scenarios. Candidates practising past Examination questions with their Preceptors and Training Supervisors will be able to identify where they may have training or knowledge gaps. Many Candidates prepare by participating in Jurisdictional Practice Examinations.

4.10   Declaration of interest

All Censors must declare, to the best of their knowledge, any interests that may create real or perceived bias in the assessment of Candidate performance. These may include, but are not limited to:

- personal or family relationships with a Candidate or another Censor;
- any professional relationship or conflict of interest with another Censor that should be considered when allocating Censor pairs;
- prior knowledge of a Candidate which may introduce perceived bias (positive or negative, such as being on job interview panel, being a referee or previously working together, direct report etc.); and
- having been a Candidate's Preceptor/Executive Coach or Training Supervisor

To maintain the integrity of the Examination process, planning will account for the need to avoid a Candidate being assessed or observed by the same Censor more than once on the examination day.

Candidates also have the right to declare any potential or perceived conflicts of interest with specific Censors. In such cases, Candidates must provide a clear reason for their declaration.

Both Censors and Candidates are responsible for updating their declarations of interest at any time before the examination if circumstances change.

4.11   Observers

Candidates will be advised when registering to sit the Oral Examination if Examination stations will be monitored either by cameras in the examination rooms (when the Examination is conducted "face to

face" at a venue that allows this) or by remote monitoring (when conducted by Zoom or similar technology).

The Oral Examination is not audio or video recorded.

There may be authorised Observers present in the examination rooms or in the Control Room via remote technology during an examination.

The Observer may be:

- Censors / Censors-in-training who will observe other Censors' behaviour, technique etc.
- an invited delegate from another College or a regulatory body to observe RACMA processes
- Censor in Chief
- Censors undertaking peer review of the Censors
- College Office staff, or
- other person approved by the Censor in Chief for the purpose of Examination integrity or training.

4.12 Post-examination Feedback

For those Candidates who are unsuccessful at the Oral Examination, the College will provide a formal verbal feedback session of the Oral Examination. The session involves the Censor in Chief (or delegate), the Candidate, and where possible an examining Censor. It is strongly recommended that Candidates involve their Preceptors and/or Training Supervisors in the verbal feedback session.

Candidates who wish to participate in a verbal feedback session are required to contact the College by the prescribed date.

4.13 Bernard Nicholson Prize (Meritorious award)

The *Bernard Nicholson Prize* is an annual award conferred upon the Candidate(s) who achieve an outstanding performance in the Oral Examination. The recommended winner(s) is determined at the meeting of the Committee of Censors held after the final Examination day for the calendar year. The awarding of this prize is discretionary, and the College may decline to make the award if, in the opinion of the Committee of Censors, no Candidate has achieved an outstanding result during the examination. If multiple Candidates achieve equally outstanding results, the prize may be awarded jointly.

On the recommendation of the Committee of Censors, the Censor in Chief will approve the award.

Note: *'The Bernard Nicholson Prize was donated by and is awarded in memory of Dr Bernard Nicholson. Dr Nicholson was a past President of the College and played a major role in its establishment.'*

4.14 Appeals

The Oral Examination outcome is a College decision that can be subject to reconsideration, review and appeal under the Reconsideration, Review and Appeal of Decisions Policy.

4.15 Code of Conduct

All Censors involved in and Candidates sitting the examination are expected to act at all times ethically, responsibly and in the best interest of the College. All Censors will adhere to the RACMA Code of Conduct for Officers and Members.

Candidates are expected to comply with the Terms and Conditions for Participation in RACMA Oral Examinations as defined in the Candidate Examination Agreement.

4.16 Censor Peer Review processes

Censors will participate in formal peer review during their activities as a Censor at the Oral Examination. It is expected that Censors will have participated in Censor Peer Review at least once in every three-year term to retain their status as Censors.

4.17 Examination peer review process

At the Oral Examination there will be times when identified experienced Censors will view the scenario discussions of Censors from the Control Room, Examination Room or Examination Centre. The observing Censor will record observations and commentary of the Censor performance on a peer review form.

The peer reviewers will provide their commentary to the Censor in Chief. The Censor in Chief will review the forms and may discuss the commentary with the observing peer review Censors. The forms will be provided by the Censor in Chief to individual Censors shortly after the exam period for reflection and feedback as a part of their own Continuing Professional Development processes.

4.18 Examination score peer comparison process

Significant variations across scores and peer review outcomes will routinely be analysed by the Censor in Chief and reported as components of evaluation of the Examination process.

5. Associated Documents

- Appointment and Training of Censors Policy
- Committee of Censors Terms of Reference
- Censor in Chief Position Description
- Censor and Principal Censor Position Description
- Conflict of Interest Policy
- Exceptional Circumstances and Special Consideration Policy
- Fellowship Training Program Curriculum Learning Outcomes
- Flexible Training Policy
- Privacy of Personal Information Policy
- Recognition of Prior Learning and Experience Policy
- Reconsideration, Review and Appeal of Decisions Policy
- Terms and Conditions for Participation in RACMA Oral Examinations

Document information			
Type:	Policy - Academic	Approval Date:	September 2024
Custodian:	Executive Director Education, Training and Development	Approved by:	RACMA Board
Version:	v7.3	Endorsed by:	Education and Training Committee
Next Review: 3 years from approval date or earlier if required			
Uncontrolled when printed			
Revision history			
Version	Date	Description	
v7.3	January 2026	Administrative updates – change of committee name, removal of reference to panels	
v7.2	January 2025	Minor amendment. Changes to redundant terminology and enhance clarity only.	
v7.1	September 2024	Updated to reflect approved changes to algorithm described in section 4.5	