



Exceptional Circumstances and Special Consideration

Policy and Procedure

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Exceptional Circumstance and Special Consideration Policy and Procedure

1. Purpose and Scope

The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RANZCOG/College) acknowledges that due to exceptional circumstances, a person or organisation engaging with RANZCOG may not be able to meet the expectations outlined in Regulations and Policies. In those circumstances, the affected person or organisation must make an application under this Policy for appropriate relief or remedies.

1.1 Policy

This Policy outlines definition of exceptional circumstances that may justify special consideration when applying for an exception to a Regulation or Policy.

Prior to applying for special consideration, persons engaging with this policy should be aware that:

- RANZCOG aims to employ its Organisational Values in all activities regarding its wider community. Therefore, it is expected that all persons engaging with this policy will also abide by our values of Advocacy, Education, Excellence, Integrity, Kindness, and Respect.
- Persons applying for special consideration must be the main contact person. RANZCOG will not correspond with anyone other than the applicant or nominated person in case the applicant is an organisation. In the case where an applicant becomes incapacitated, RANZCOG will engage with a nominated representative on their behalf.
- Timeframes stipulated in the policy should be read in conjunction with all relevant College policies or Regulations. To the extent that there is any inconsistency, the relevant College policies or Regulations shall prevail.

1.2 Definitions

Applicant	An applicant is an individual or organisation who believes they warrant an exception to RANZCOG Policies or Regulations on the grounds of exceptional circumstances that may justify special consideration.
Assessment	<p>An assessment is any process of documenting clinical and non-clinical knowledge and skills in measurable terms. The assessments include but not limited to the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selection applications and interviews for all RANZCOG programs, • Hospital Accreditation applications and renewals, • Applications and Interviews for all Specialist International Medical Graduate pathways, • All examinations that are part of RANZCOG program(s), • Continuing Professional Development requirements, • All other requirements as deemed necessary by the College for obtaining RANZCOG qualification.
Fail/Not Count	<p>A term for an examination attempt that does not impact the applicant's future number of attempts.</p> <p>A Fail/Not Count does not have any bearing on future fees an applicant may be required to pay for other attempts.</p>
Financial	To be deemed a financial, the individual will have no outstanding monies owing to RANZCOG, including any fees.
Overseeing Body	<p>The RANZCOG Body responsible for reviewing special consideration requests. These person/s include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Committee or Working Group • Executive Director or Head of the relevant Unit
Reasonable Timeframe	RANZCOG will solve issues or provide outcomes in the most efficient time possible without impacting the integrity of a decision or outcome.

2. Exceptional Circumstances

RANZCOG recognises that an individual's circumstances may occasionally be exceptional, and exceptions or adjustments may be needed to accommodate the applicant. For this policy, RANZCOG has defined exceptional circumstances as an event that is not ordinarily encountered or anticipated and is beyond the applicant's control. The events have substantially affected the applicant's ability to perform as expected during a RANZCOG assessment or meet requirements as directed by a RANZCOG Regulation or Policy.

RANZCOG reserves the right to deny an application requesting exceptional circumstances if RANZCOG believes that the application is disingenuous or does not meet the criteria listed in *Appendix 1*.

2.1. Assessing Exceptional Circumstance

When an overseeing body has received an application requesting special consideration, the following will be considered when reviewing the request:

- the extent to which the circumstances cited in the application are considered to be exceptional in that they could reasonably be seen as preventing the applicant from meeting the requirement(s) described by the relevant Regulation(s) or policy(ies), or performing at an acceptable level in an assessment and they are not circumstances in which a medical practitioner might be expected to continue to practice;
- The extent to which the circumstances are foreseeable and/or avoidable by the applicant;
- the degree to which the exceptional circumstances claimed in the application are supported by the documentation provided;

3. Special consideration

RANZCOG recognises that an individual's circumstances may be such as to warrant granting a variation to the application of RANZCOG regulations and/or policies by way of a special consideration. A request for special consideration may fall into one of the following pathways:

- Exceptional Circumstances Special Consideration;
- Extension of Time Special Consideration; or
- Technical Special Consideration.

Where special consideration is granted to offer flexibility to complete an assessment, it must be recognised that this will not exempt an applicant from an assessment required as part of a RANZCOG program, which has been objectively set for reasons of public interest or patient safety.

3.1 Special Consideration Pathways

When applying for Special Consideration, the applicant should notify RANZCOG which of the Special Consideration pathways is most suitable for their situation. Below are the three RANZCOG Special Consideration Pathways:

3.1.1 Exceptional Circumstances Special Consideration:

An Exceptional Circumstances Special Consideration is when an exceptional circumstance impacts the applicant's ability to complete an assessment.

The applicant must apply prior to undertaking the assessment. RANZCOG will not accept an exceptional circumstance application once an assessment has commenced. Where possible, an applicant claiming exceptional circumstances must apply seventy-two (72) hours prior to the assessment. RANZCOG may allow an application to be made verbally if the exceptional circumstance occurs immediately prior to an assessment. However, a formal submission must be made within seventy-two (72) hours after verbally notifying RANZCOG.

The application needs to detail the nature of the exceptional circumstances and specify how they affected the applicant's performance. RANZCOG may require evidence of exceptional circumstance claimed.

3.1.2 Extension of time Special Consideration:

An Extension of Time Special Consideration is for applicants who require more time outside the regulated timeframes to complete an assessment.

An overseeing body may request justification for an extension beyond the regulated timeframes. RANZCOG may require documentary evidence when applying for an Extension of Time.

Applications should be received by RANZCOG seventy-two (72) hours prior to the assessment date.

3.1.3 Technical Special Consideration:

Technical Special Consideration is for applicants who could not attend or complete an assessment due to unforeseen technological or operational issues. The fault or error must be under RANZCOG's purview otherwise a special consideration cannot be considered.

Areas that are not considered for a Technical Special Consideration:

- When issues are the result of an applicant's device or technology (including internet connectivity);
- A time delay in the commencement of part or all of an assessment;
- A change in assessment venue or location, including changes to RANZCOG's preferred software/technology.

A special consideration application will not be accepted if the issue is resolved within a reasonable timeframe or is reasonably mitigated.

RANZCOG will accept a verbal request for a Technical Special Consideration, however, formal documentation must be submitted within seventy-two (72) hours of the assessment.

3.2 Special Consideration Application Process

All applications for special consideration must be made on the [prescribed form](#) and be accompanied by relevant supporting documentation. Applications need to be addressed to the overseeing body responsible for the matter and be submitted via email.

The application should indicate the special consideration pathway the applicant wishes to seek and the nature of the circumstance(s) that affected the individual's performance in the assessment.

Individuals should advise RANZCOG of circumstances they feel may warrant special consideration as soon as they know such circumstances exist. Initial notification may be verbal or written; however, formal notification to the College must be in writing on the prescribed College form and be submitted and received by RANZCOG within the timeframe stipulated.

Special consideration may be refused where an application is not received within the prescribed timeframes.

Applicants must read Regulations and/or Policies to understand the parameters that apply to their request noting that the overseeing body has the discretion to grant special consideration that it deems appropriate under this Policy.

3.3 Supporting Documentation

Where relevant and possible, applicants may be required to provide further information or documentation to support their special consideration application. At any time, RANZCOG can request further information to assist with their decision.

Please see RANZCOG's Privacy Policy for obligations of privacy and confidentiality that may apply to an application.

Documentation that may be required to support a Special consideration submission:

- If the application is based on medical/psychological grounds, a medical certificate or formal letter from the treating practitioner indicating the nature and severity of the physical or psychological condition, the date(s) on which the applicant was examined/treated, and the duration of the illness/condition.
- In the case of applications based on compassionate grounds due to the death or serious illness/incapacity of an immediate family member, partner or close relative, a bereavement notice and statutory declaration stating the individual's relationship to that person or a notice from that person's treating practitioner (as applicable).
- In the case of a violent crime or similar incident, a copy of the police report.

3.4 Consideration of Applications

All applications are reviewed by the overseeing body who will determine the outcome of the request. The body will be assessing the content of the request against the below criteria:

- The request meets the exceptional circumstances defined in *Appendix 1*.
- If circumstances could be seen as preventing the applicant from meeting the assessment requirements or performing at an acceptable level.
- If the circumstances are such that a medical practitioner might reasonably be expected to continue to practice
- The extent to which the circumstances cited are considered to have been foreseeable and/or avoidable by the applicant;
- The extent to which the request impacts RANZCOG's obligation to the wider community, public interest, or patient safety;
- If the request severely conflicts with existing Regulations and Policies;
- If it is within the overseeing body's delegated authority to approve the request
- If the evidence provided is sufficient to support the applicant's claims

- If the request is considered fair and reasonable and does not disadvantage others undertaking the same RANZCOG programs or processes

3.5 Late applications

For Special consideration applications made outside of the required timeframes detailed above, an applicant must submit an Extension of Time Special consideration to the relevant overseeing body. Such applications will only be considered if RANZCOG is satisfied that the application could not be made by the required date or on the prescribed form.

Late applications must include an outline for the reasons the application was not submitted by the required date and all other documentation and information stipulated in this Policy and other relevant Regulations/Policies.

3.6 Outcomes

Once an application has been reviewed and an outcome is determined, RANZCOG will aim to provide special consideration outcomes within a reasonable timeframe. However, timeframes cannot be guaranteed and can vary due to the complexity of the request, the need to obtain additional documentation, and/or the level of authority required to review the application.

Applicants are notified in writing via their nominated email address of the outcome of their application. Where applicable, applicants will be provided with justification for the decision by the Overseeing Body.

The potential outcomes for a special consideration application concerning a RANZCOG assessment are detailed in *Appendix 2*. However, it must be noted that applications made for assessments after the publication of results will not be accepted or reviewed by RANZCOG.

4 Reconsideration, Review and Appeal of College decisions

Following notification of the outcome made pursuant to this policy, applicants may request a Reconsideration of a decision under the College's established Reconsideration, Review and Appeals Procedures, which may be accessed via the College website.

5 Wellbeing Support

We recognise that Applicants under this Policy may need extra support and advise the following support available to them:

Internal support

RANZCOG Training Support Unit is a confidential service for trainees and SIMGs to discuss any concerns related to their wellbeing on +61 (08) 6102 2096 or by email at trainee liaison@ranzcog.edu.au.

External counselling or assistance

There are a range of organisations external to the College who can assist, including Employer Assistance Programs (EAPs); Practitioner Advisory Services; Australian Medical Association support bodies; New Zealand Doctors Health Advisory Services; and organisations such as Beyond Blue and Lifeline.

Converge International, specialists in psychology and wellbeing, is a service available for College Fellows, RANZCOG trainees, SIMGs, PTP, APTP trainees and staff.

All sessions are entirely confidential, and the first four sessions (in any 12-month period) are fully subsidised by the College. To contact Converge, call 1300 687 327 (Australia), 0800 666 367 (New Zealand) or from other countries on +61 3 8620 5300. To book a session online visit the Converge website.

Other external resources:

- Beyond Blue
- Lifeline
- Lifeline Aotearoa
- [DRS4DRS](#) (For Associates (Procedural and Adv. Procedural in Australia)
- [Doctors Health Advisory Services \(DHAS\)](#) (For Procedural and Adv. Procedural in Australia or New Zealand) Additional information and contact details for organisations mentioned above is available in the Member Support and Wellbeing Hub on the College [website](#).

6 Related RANZCOG documents

- RANZCOG Constitution
- RANZCOG Regulations
- RANZCOG Code of Conduct
- RANZCOG Organisational Values
- Reconsideration, Review and Appeal of Decisions Policy
- Special Consideration Request Application Form
- Complaints Policy
- Conflicts of Interest Policy
- Bullying, Harassment and Discrimination Policy
- Privacy Policy

7 Appendix

Appendix 1 - Exceptional Circumstances

7.1.1 Circumstances regarded as adequate grounds for applying for Exceptional Circumstances	
MEDICAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A serious illness or injury (physical or psychological), including physical impairments or the incapacity of the applicant. Stress resulting from Discrimination, Bullying, extreme hardship or trauma (e.g., victim of violent crime). Noting that special consideration does not allow for the investigation of claims made. Acute and substantive illness or injury of a partner, immediate family member or close relative. Disability impacting the applicant's ability to perform during an assessment (physical or psychological). Serious complications due to a pregnancy, a recent birth, or a recent adoption.
COMPASSIONATE GROUNDS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bereavement (including, the death of an immediate family member, partner, child or a close friend, a miscarriage or stillbirth, cultural responsibilities in relation to the death, organising estate or financial issues) Domestic violence impacting the applicant or an immediate family member or close relative. Significant damage or loss to personal home or effects, including, storm damage, house fire or theft.
CATASTROPHIC EVENTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A catastrophic event caused by the effect of nature or natural causes (e.g. flooding, bush fires, cyclone, earthquake).
RELIGIOUS GROUNDS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where the scheduling of a College assessment significantly impacts the persons ability to practice their religion or culture.
7.1.2 Circumstances that are not regarded as adequate grounds for applying for Exceptional Circumstances	
RANZCOG WOULD NOT NORMALLY REGARD THE FOLLOWING EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES AS GROUNDS FOR APPLYING FOR SPECIAL CONSIDERATION:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stress or anxiety that would ordinarily be associated with preparation or performance in examinations or other forms of assessment, including stress due to travel arrangements made by the applicant. The Applicant knowingly attempting an assessment with inadequate preparation, in the absence of factors that may be considered exceptional by their nature. Stress or anxiety resulting from relationship difficulties other than that associated with the complete breakdown of a marriage, de facto relationship or equivalent. Minor illnesses or medical conditions. Pre-existing illness or medical condition affecting the applicant, immediate family member, partner or close relative which is not regarded as acute and substantive. Excessive work commitments, including specific rostering arrangements.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work-related anxiety and stress caused during standard medical practice, including adverse outcomes, medico-legal issues. • The inability of an individual to organise their time effectively to meet administrative requirements/deadlines. • Ignorance of relevant published regulations or policies. • Computer-related or similar technological failures occur as a fault on the applicant's side. • Loss or theft of books or notes or similar materials. • Decisions to undertake optional commitments of a personal nature. • Personal or lifestyle choices where appropriate allowance or consideration has already been made (e.g., weddings, holiday). • Where alternative arrangements were available (e.g., deferral, extension of time, or other special arrangements) and application was not made for such arrangements.
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Appendix 2 - Special Consideration Outcomes

Special Consideration Pathway requested	Nature of Assessment	Potential Special Consideration Outcome
EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES SPECIAL CONSIDERATION	All assessments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The applicant may be allowed to withdraw from the assessment and may be entitled to a full or partial refund of fees paid. The assessment attempt is deferred to the next applicable date. Fees, with approval, can be deferred to cover the next assessment attempt. Other considerations as deemed appropriate may be granted. The application may be declined, and no action taken.
EXTENSION OF TIME SPECIAL CONSIDERATION	All assessments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The applicant may be granted additional time to complete assessments for a program. The applicant may be allowed to apply for an assessment after the closing date. Other considerations as deemed appropriate may be granted. The application may be declined, and no action taken.
TECHNICAL SPECIAL CONSIDERATION	Examination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The applicant may be granted a further attempt at the examination without affecting the number of attempts available to them under relevant College regulations. This will be categorised as a Fail/ Not Count. When the outcome results in the applicant being granted additional attempts at an examination, the decision will include a recommendation regarding charging future examination fees. Where additional attempts at an examination are granted, all extensions of time requests for a RANZCOG program must be made to the overseeing body. The granting of Technical Special Consideration can never result in an applicant being credited a <i>pass</i> but may result in the examination being classified <i>Fail/Not Count</i>. The application may be declined, and no action taken.
	Selection interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> RANZCOG may allow an applicant to continue the assessment from the point the technical issue occurred within seventy-two (72) hours of the assessment date with approved RANZCOG assessor/s. The application may be declined, and no action taken. Other considerations as deemed appropriate may be granted.

	Other assessments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The applicant may be granted additional attempts. Other considerations as deemed appropriate may be granted. The application may be declined, and no action taken.
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Version	Date of Version	Pages revised / Brief Explanation of Revision
v1	February 2012	Creation
v2	January 2016	Revision
v3	May 2018	Revision
v4	August 2022	Revisions and removal of Reconsideration processes into a separate policy
v4.1	September 2022	Minor revisions approved by CEO
v5	November 2022	Revision to address timeframes mentioned in other relevant policies
v6	September 2023	Revision and removal of application fee
v7	February 2024	Policy revised to reflect change in nomenclature.

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