



## AMA Trainee Forum Meeting Communique Monday 19 October 2020

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### AMACDT AND MEDICAL COLLEGE TRAINEES DISCUSS KEY PRIORITIES FOR CONTINGENCY PLANS FOR DISRUPTIONS TO ONLINE COLLEGE EXAMINATIONS

AMACDT and Specialist Medical College Trainee Chairs and Representatives met via video conference to discuss the recent technical difficulties experienced by some College trainees during their online examinations.

Trainees acknowledged the innovation that has taken place in exam delivery during 2020 and support a continuing focus on alternate and flexible delivery options.

While many online exams run without any technical difficulties, trainees discussed how disruptions to examinations have impacts wider than progression through training, including a significant impact on a trainee's personal life and wellbeing. Trainees acknowledged that it would be extremely difficult to make online examinations 100 percent fail safe. However, given the shift toward remote delivery and online examinations by many Colleges over the last decade, ongoing innovation in this area, and now in the context of COVID, trainees agreed there was a need for best practice standards in contingency planning for disruptions to online College examinations.

More broadly, trainees agreed that recent events provided an opportunity to examine the suitability of one-off, high stakes, barrier exams as an assessment tool for progression to fellowship. They noted the significant stress this places on trainees and the lack of transparency in costs associated with examinations as an ongoing area of dissatisfaction for trainees.

Trainees arrived at the following minimum standard expectations for contingency plans for online College examinations:

1. There is a contingency plan in place to manage a situation where technology causes examination disruption. This should involve a robust back up examination delivery option which maintains the integrity of the exam and ensures minimal disruption time to transition to the contingency plan. Prolongation of the exam time should be prevented where possible and same day completion of the exam is ideal.
2. There is formalised and ongoing College engagement with the Trainee Committee to provide feedback on, and contribute to, the contingency plan.
3. The contingency plan must be available ahead of time to candidates and supervisors, with transparent and open communication throughout the planning process.
4. The contingency plan should identify alternate examination dates for resit examinations in the event of a primary examination failure, to be communicated to candidates as soon as possible following the examination failure. Where predetermined dates are untenable/unsuitable for the candidate, Colleges should, where possible, negotiate individualised re-sit examination dates and procedures for candidates.
5. There should be a reliable internet connection which must be tested and be suitably compatible with the examination format, duration, and considers differences in contextual IT capability frameworks.
6. Robust governance and oversight of exam planning and contingencies, as well as procurement processes for online examination providers should be in place. The appointment of an external auditor to conduct a risk assessment before the exam takes place is appropriate.

In the event of online examination disruption/failure:

1. Timely, clear, transparent, and robust communication to examination candidates in the event of examination disruption should be delivered via multiple formal modalities including candidate phone number, email and updates to a dedicated College examination website, with social media as an optional modality.



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2. There should be provisions for direct College support in the event of examination disruption/failure in the form of College staff, either in person at exam sites where possible, or alternatively, a well staffed College support call line, and information technology support line for any technical difficulties. Exam invigilators should be well educated to provide support to trainees and should understand how to implement any back up plans in case of disruptions.
3. The maximum allowable time of delay before adopting the backup exam modality where possible, or cancelling an examination if not, is recommended as 90 minutes.
4. Where exams are unable to proceed, they should be rescheduled in a timely manner post adequate fail-safe testing and investigating alternative forms of assessment.
5. For complete examination failures, any costs associated with having to administer the exam resit should not be borne by trainees/candidates. There should be a full refund of examination fees with no fee for the rescheduled exam and further waiving of any penalties if the rescheduled exam is subsequently failed (i.e. not counting towards the total number of exam attempts). This has been the precedent in recent College examination disruptions.
6. Communication and personalised attention for each candidate post technical difficulties/examination failure with focused support to prioritise trainee wellbeing and provisions for mental health support should be prioritised
7. Colleges are to develop, support and encourage provisions for additional training time and examination leave for any exam candidate whose progression through training has been significantly impacted by the examination failure.
8. Colleges should investigate the cause of any disruption and release a full report to all involved in a timely manner. This should be an independent, transparent, and robust forensic investigation process with direct trainee input into the terms of reference of the review.

### The Trainee Forum was attended by the following Medical College Trainee Committee Chairs and Representatives:

- Australian Salaried Medical Officer Federation
- Australian Medical Association Council of Doctors in Training
- Australasian College for Emergency Medicine
- Australasian College of Dermatologists
- Australasian College of Sport and Exercise Physicians
- Australian and New Zealand College of Anaesthetists
- Australian Society of Anaesthetists
- Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine
- Australian Indigenous Doctors' Association
- Avant Pty Ltd
- New Zealand Medical Association
- Royal Australasian College of Dental Surgeons
- Royal Australasian College of Medical Administrators
- Royal Australasian College of Physicians
- Royal Australasian College of Surgeons
- Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Ophthalmologists
- Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists
- Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Radiologists
- Royal Australian College of General Practitioners

### Apologies

- College of Intensive Care Medicine of Australia and New Zealand
- Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists

The AMACDT Trainee Forum is designed to increase collaboration between Medical College Trainee Committees and allows trainees to share ideas and solutions to various education and training issues. The AMACDT continues to hold quarterly Trainee Forums to ensure there are regular discussions occurring to help support the various National Medical College Trainee Committees and to enhance cross speciality communication. If you have any feedback or questions, please contact us at [cdt.chair@ama.com.au](mailto:cdt.chair@ama.com.au)