



The Royal College's Response to COVID-19's Impact on Postgraduate Medical Education



June 2020

THE CONTEXT



The world is facing a global pandemic and Canada's healthcare system is under significant pressure. This will have an impact on our postgraduate medical education (PGME) system, including:

- COVID-19's impact is being felt differently by each program, specialty, school, and region.
- PGME offices are facing impacts on regular residency training operations. Despite best efforts to maintain the educational mandate of programs, there may be residents and trainees who, due to changes in patient load, redeployment, limitations to clinical activities or personal illness, may miss a portion of the requirements for training.
- Many residents and trainees have committed years to their training. The Royal College and universities are working together to ensure all risks are managed and mitigated.

To ensure success at all levels across the country, the Royal College is working closely with multiple stakeholders, including PGME offices, academic partners, federal and provincial bodies and healthcare partners in identifying and responding to ongoing needs.





THE UPDATES

The Royal College is providing guidance and support for the following areas which are impacted by COVID-19:

- 1. Competence by Design Launch**
- 2. Faculty Development**
- 3. National training standards**
- 4. National certifying examinations**
- 5. Postgraduate Accreditation activities**
- 6. CPD and in practice activities**



THE TASK



Foundational to the success of this strategy is:

1. A pledge to work transparently with stakeholders to understand needs and co-create solutions.
2. The Royal College working in partnership with schools and programs, including providing support as we all adapt to the new realities of training within this pandemic.
3. A collaborative effort to maintain standards of residency education, with a clear understanding that the Royal College must provide guidance and flexibility within these unprecedented circumstances.
4. Demonstrate that the Royal College has a strategic and coordinated approach in operating throughout this pandemic which encompasses all aspects of postgraduate medical education.





THE APPROACH

*Collaboration,
support and flexibility*



CONNECT. Open lines of communication to understand front line challenges and best ways to provide ongoing solutions for our stakeholders.



PLAN. Use data and feedback to inform decision-making in collaboration with stakeholders.



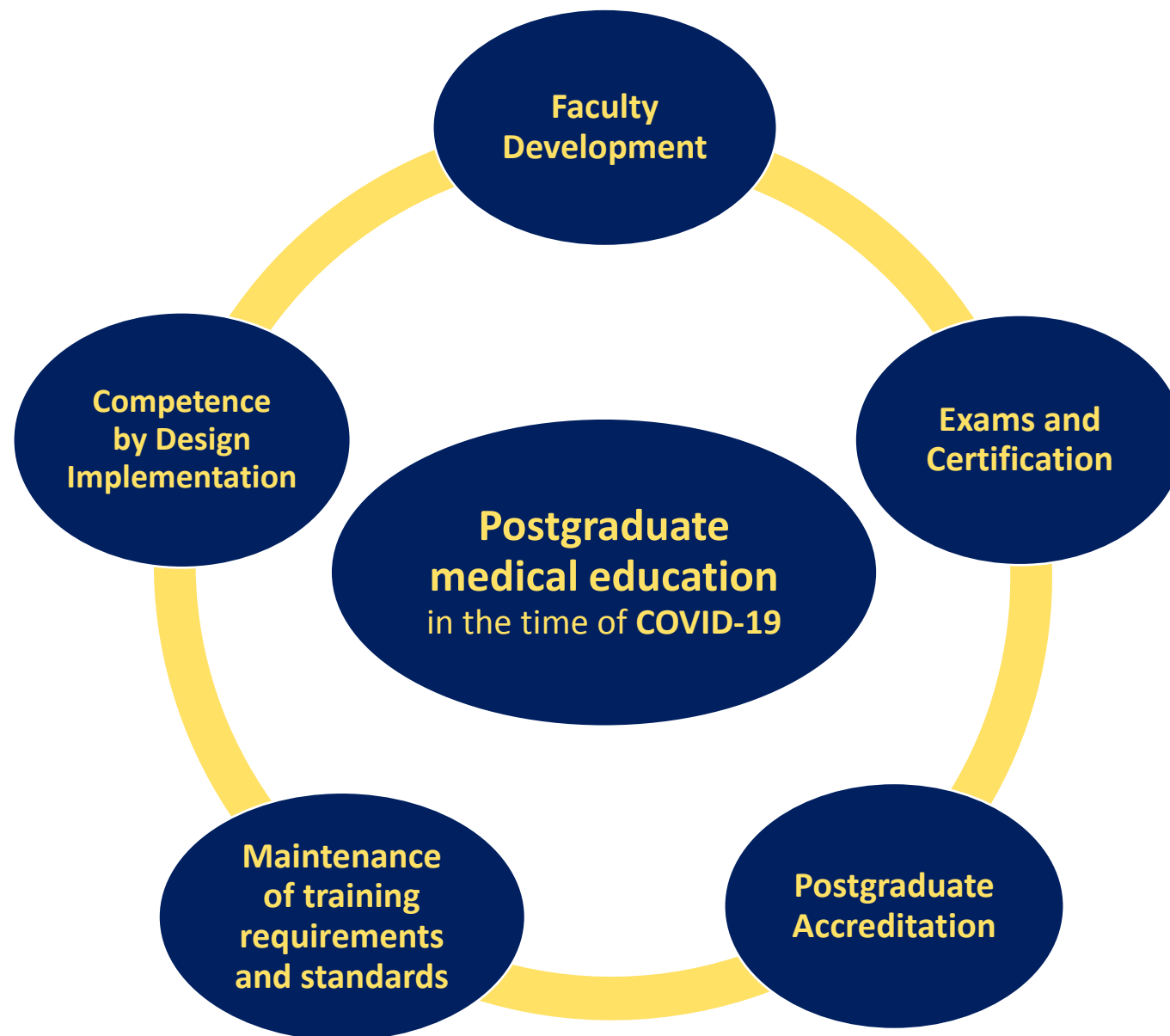
SUPPORT. Provide leadership, guidance and support during a time of crisis.





THE COORDINATION

In collaboration with the postgraduate deans, we are working together to address all impacted areas of residency education





EXAMS AND CERTIFICATION



The Royal College is working together with PG deans and PGME offices, as well as with federal and provincial authorities and healthcare partners, to produce a **four-point plan** to deliver exams:

1. Applied exams will not be required for the 2020 cohort.
2. The date for the written exams will be provided a minimum of six weeks in advance.
3. Test sites will be expanded to allow candidates to take the exam closer to home.
4. Fees for the oral exam will be refunded.

[LINK TO LATEST EXAM UPDATES](#)





COMPETENCE BY DESIGN IMPLEMENTATION



- We are providing guidance on how to achieve CBD program goals and standards in an environment where assessment and teaching is challenged. This includes regular discussions with PG Deans, speciality committees and CBME leads to find flexible solutions that prioritize the safety of residents and patient care.
- We have realigned workshop schedules for 2021 and beyond to support social distancing. We are working with each specialty to discuss options to ensure their expectations for launch or delay of launch are met.
- We are in consultations with schools and programs to understand and respond to impacts caused by COVID-19 to ensure programs receive support from the Royal College.
- Faculty development support has been prioritized with the creation and distribution of new virtual teaching and learning resources, online learning activities, tools and tip sheets.

[LINK TO LATEST
CBD UPDATES](#)





2020 CBD Launch Readiness Survey | April 16

Consultations with program directors

- Gathering information from those impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic to inform decisions relating to the July 2020 launch.
- Designed to get a better national picture of program readiness for launch before proposing next steps.
- Survey answers informed discussions with Specialty Committee Chairs, Postgraduate Deans, and CBME Leads to determine which disciplines would proceed to a 2020 launch.

Readiness to launch - An Important Consultation with 2020 Launch Disciplines (COVID)

Readiness to Launch - An Important Consultation with 2020 Launch Disciplines (COVID)

We know the current COVID-19 pandemic is having these impacts are variable across sites and programs. We would like to understand how COVID-19 is impacting you. Responses to this survey will be analyzed and discussed with Chairs to determine what assistance may be needed. As with any launch of new CBD programs, the expectation is that you will be able to launch on time. This is even truer in these exceptional circumstances, making flexibility a necessity. If your discipline is heavily impacted by COVID-19, you have flexibility in implementing the program in the next academic year, and it is not the expectation that a delay will be necessary. Finally, we realize that things are changing quickly and your answers based on the current trajectory of your program and the consent is implied by participating.

Demographics

1. Please select your discipline. *

-- Please Select --

2. Please select your institution. *

-- Please Select --

Readiness to Launch

We would like to understand how the COVID-19 situation has impacted your readiness to launch, including motivation, capacity, and specific readiness tasks.

3. For your program and considering the current COVID-19 situation, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
There is adequate local support (program assistant, CBD lead, assistant program director, etc.) to implement change in my residency program, and this support is or will be available for launch in July 2020.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Given the current COVID-19 situation, people in my department/division see CBD implementation as a manageable task by July 2020.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Implementing CBD by July 2020 is a priority for my department/division and people are committed to implementing it.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

4. Please choose your response to the following questions based on the extent to which you agree your program has each activity currently present in your program or planned to be present by July 2020, given the current COVID-19 situation

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
You have a document (curriculum map) that links stage-specific learning experiences (rotations, academic sessions, etc.) to competencies of your discipline.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Your program is prepared to perform workplace-based entrustable professional activity (EPA) assessment as of July 2020.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
An electronic portfolio is in place to record observations and inform decision making.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
EPAs have been or will be uploaded into the electronic portfolio by July 2020.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
A Competence Committee is in place and will be prepared to review resident progressions after July 2020.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Faculty have been trained on CBD and are ready/will be ready to implement CBD when their CBD residents begin.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

[LINK TO SURVEY RESULTS](#)
WHEN AVAILABLE





Disciplines

that will launch CBD as planned

- General Surgery
- Neurology (adult and pediatrics)
- Nuclear Medicine
- Orthopedic Surgery
- ***Pediatric*** Cardiology
- Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation
- Plastic Surgery
- Psychiatry





Disciplines that will defer for one year

i.e., remain time-based for the 2020-21 academic year

- **Adult** Cardiology
- Clinical Immunology and Allergy (adult and pediatrics)
- Neonatal Perinatal Medicine
- Pediatric Surgery
- Respiriology (adult and pediatrics)
- Vascular Surgery





Deferred disciplines

Why were some disciplines deferred?

Deferral decisions were driven by a number of unique factors, including:

- Significant disruptions to residency training resulting in setbacks to implementation
- The mental and physical fatigue experienced by our educators, residents and overall healthcare system during this time was a major consideration

Soft-launch option:

For programs eager to start CBD despite the delay, there is the option to soft launch elements of CBD

- Programs will still need to meet time-based requirements for another year
- Encouraged to ‘soft launch’ – i.e., incorporate and pilot elements of their CBD design within their time-based training





Disciplines proceeding to 2020 launch

Why are some able to go ahead?

- Consultations showed that many programs/disciplines had many of the essential ingredients of CBD in place and were ready to proceed

Permissive launch option:

Some launch programs that have been impacted by COVID-19 may benefit from a permissive launch

- The transition to competency-based training during COVID-19 will take time, patience, and flexibility
- A permissive launch builds upon current policies to allow for the phasing in new national standards and training requirements as of July 2020





Defining a permissive launch *in light of COVID-19*

Clear and coherent guide to training	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Link EPAs and key competencies with the training experiences• This will help trainees and faculty understand the focus of training, even if it disrupted in light of COVID-19
Phase in CBD requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Focus on the early stages of a residents training (i.e., Transition to Discipline, Foundations) and phase in CBD overtime
Some observations are better than none	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Start with observations and coaching, as programs are able• During this transition, it is likely acceptable that there will be fewer EPA observations being recorded
Reviews of resident progress aren't needed on Day 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Competence committees do not need to be in place on Day 1• Recommend programs 'soft launch' their committee (perhaps virtually) by the time residents need to progress to the second stage of training
Set up for success with the early use of an electronic portfolio	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Early CBD experiences underlined the importance of having an electronic portfolio to capture observations• Strongly recommend the use of an electronic portfolio early on, to avoid challenges integrating one later on.





FACULTY DEVELOPMENT



The Royal College is working to **modify the faculty development strategy** to provide support and resources that facilitate a flexible delivery of faculty development in virtual and challenged learning environments. This plan includes:

- **Launch of a new virtual teaching resources webpage**
- **Development of new educational resources and tip sheets**
- **Free access to the CanMEDS Tools Guide**
- **On-going support for specialty programs preparing to launch Competence by Design or for those who are already operating in a competency-based program**
- **Launch of a targeted Competence by Design webinar series**
- **Weekly e-support emails to highlight relevant resources**

[LINK TO VIRTUAL TEACHING RESOURCES](#)





HOW TO MEET ROYAL COLLEGE TRAINING REQUIREMENTS



To help support training programs, we have developed three guides outlining how programs can meet national standards in this disrupted environment:

1. Guide for time-based training programs
2. Guide for competency-based training programs (Competence by Design)
3. Guide for Areas of Focused Competence (AFC) training programs

These resources aim to identify solutions, provide support, and emphasize where there is flexibility for programs, while also upholding national discipline-specific standards.

[LINK TO TRAINING REQUIREMENTS GUIDES](#)





PRINCIPLES FOR DECISION-MAKING IN A CHANGING ENVIRONMENT

Safety
comes first

Maintain
education
activities,
where
possible

Graduating
residents and
trainees must
be competent
to practice
unsupervised

There is no 'one
size fits all'
solution

Patient care
takes
precedence

Perfection is
not the goal

COVID-19
redeployment
may count
towards
training
requirements

Documentation
is critical



POSTGRADUATE ACCREDITATION



In response to the COVID-19 global pandemic, CanRAC met to discuss the impact on accreditation activities. Their current updates include:

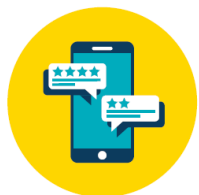
- **Regular Accreditation reviews:** Timing of upcoming regular accreditation reviews remains the same; however, the situation is being monitored closely by CanRAC, in consultation with impacted stakeholders.
- **External reviews:** CanRAC is working closely with those who had visits scheduled this spring. For all upcoming visits, CanRAC is developing criteria to determine where a virtual model will be feasible. For any that are postponed, new deadlines and/or adjustments will be handled on a case-by-case basis.
- **Internal Reviews and Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI):** Institutions and programs are encouraged to continue CQI activities as much as possible, including mid-cycle internal reviews.
- **Follow-up deadlines:** We are committed to applying as much flexibility as possible, while ensuring the rigour of the accreditation process is maintained.
- **Annual Resident and Faculty Surveys:** Postponed until spring 2021.
- **Committee meetings:** It is anticipated that meetings of the residency accreditation committees will continue; however, meetings will be conducted virtually until it is safe and feasible to consider in-person meetings.

[LINK TO
CANERA UPDATES](#)





NEXT STEPS: CONTINUED COLLABORATION AND SUPPORT



Consultation with key stakeholders



Collaboration to modify PGME strategies



Distribute **guidance** documents and resources



Commitment to ongoing regular communications

[LINK TO
LATEST REPORTS](#)



WHAT DOES SUCCESS LOOK LIKE?



- Clear, agreed upon goals that balance maintaining standards while providing flexibility within an unprecedented environment
- A collaborative effort to maintain standards of residency education, while also providing guidance and flexibility that encompasses all aspects of postgraduate medical education.
- Communications is timely, clear and consistent
- Ensuring system of quality residency education





How we are working with you

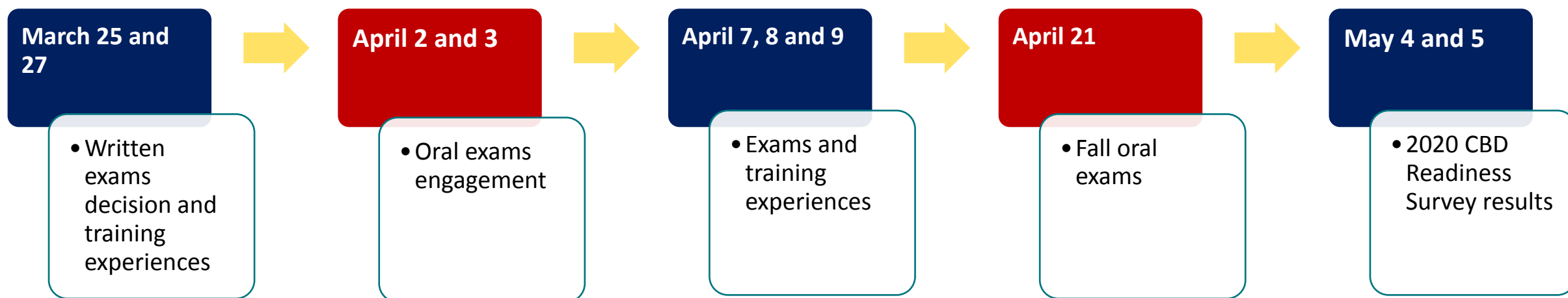
Sample of recent activities





Specialty Committee Chairs | 10 Town Halls

Planning how to support programs experiencing impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic



Plus: Two town halls will be held the week of May 11th and two the week of June 1st for Specialty Committee and AFC chairs and program directors to discuss issues related to residency education.

[LINK TO LATEST SPECIALTIES UPDATES](#)



Royal College webinar held April 9 | 459 registrants!

CBD during the COVID-19 pandemic: Sharing adaptations and strategies

- Identified common challenges and innovative solutions.
- Guest speakers conducted a positive, solution-oriented discussion with emphasis on support and safety of faculty and residents.

Participant feedback:

“Concrete experiences and solutions with diverse perspectives”

“Clear direction and creative strategies were discussed”

“Very useful. Love the idea of sharing academic learning across Canada”



- Issues raised have been collected to inform shared decision-making

[LINK TO
WEBINAR RECORDING](#)

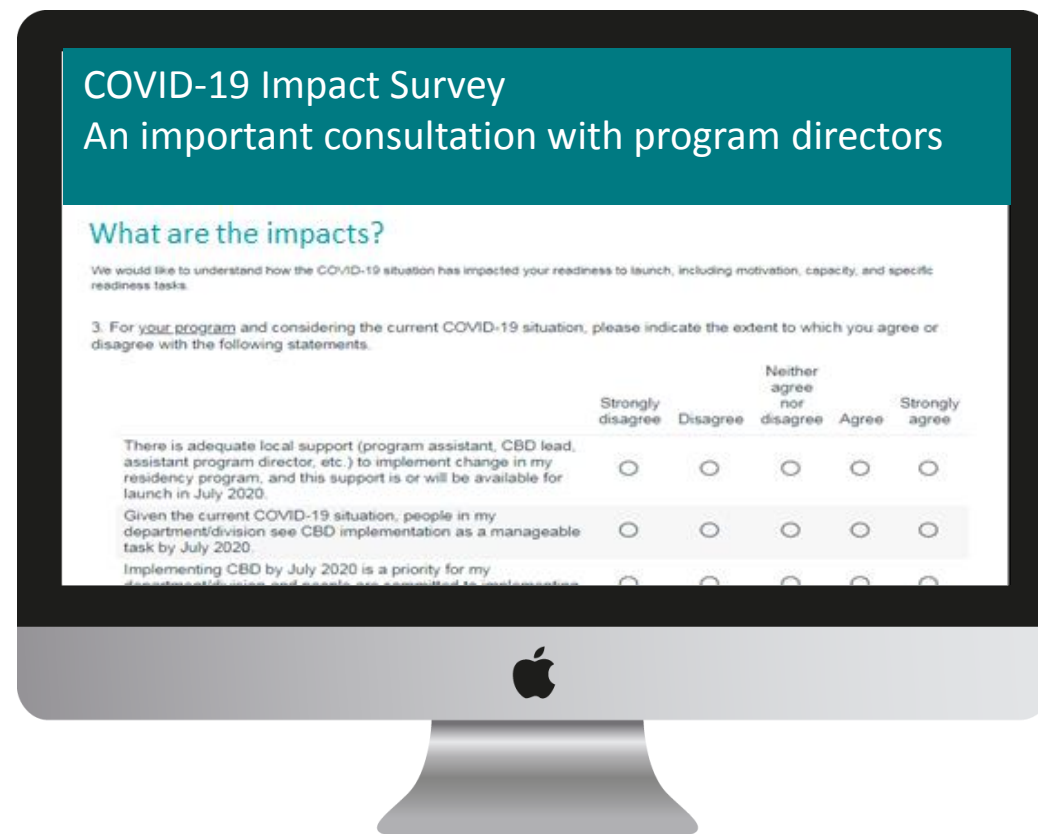




COVID-19 Impacts Survey | June 2020

Consultations with program directors

- Gathering information from those impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic to inform decisions relating to postgraduate medical education.
- Designed to get a better national picture of challenges and share innovative solutions across all programs.
- Survey answers will inform discussions with Specialty Committee Chairs, Postgraduate Deans, and CBME Leads to determine how we might assist in supporting programs throughout the pandemic.



[LINK TO SURVEY RESULTS](#)
WHEN AVAILABLE





Faculty Development | New Resources and eSupport Email Series

Collaborating with clinician educators for on-the-ground support

COVID-19 Specialty Program
e-SUPPORT
for programs seeking solutions during the pandemic.

FINDING SOLUTIONS
SUPPORT RESOURCES FOR YOU

KEY RESOURCES

11 TIPS for Virtual Learning in COVID-19

We know COVID-19 is changing many aspects of your day-to-day operations, including the transition of many face-to-face group teaching (e.g. academic half days, journal clubs, case discussions) to the virtual environment.

As a learner, we know you have questions. Rest assured that program leaders are taking steps to minimize the negative impacts resulting from the changes. To this end, we've developed this resource, which offers tips for virtual learning success, including communication.

- 1. Be patient with you (and others):** Expect that there will be a period of adjustment for your faculty and your colleagues. There are technical difficulties with virtual meeting platforms, and you may be uncomfortable with the technology. Communicate with your colleagues about your experiences.
- 2. Familiarize yourself with your virtual meeting platform:** Prior to the first session, if you have not done so already, take time to explore the platform's features and capabilities (e.g., chat, raise hand, mute/unmute, etc.) so you are able to fully participate during the session.
- 3. Be mindful of your learning space:** Choose a space that has a desk and good lighting, and try wearing earbuds or headphones to minimize background noise.
- 4. Maintain professional boundaries:** While it's perfectly fine to be comfortable, be aware of your decor when you are on camera.

10 TIPS for Virtual Teaching in COVID-19

In the context of COVID-19, safety concerns, PPE shortages, physical distancing constraints, and added responsibilities pose challenges to organizing and hosting traditional face-to-face teaching and learning experiences. This resource is meant to help you continue your faculty development and residency education efforts during the pandemic when feasible by offering best practices for virtual teaching.

- 1. Use a video conferencing platform:** Choose a platform that is easy to access and includes the features you need (see below for recommendations). Some universities and hospitals may have firewalls and/or security policies that limit the platform you can use.
- 2. Turn on your webcam:** With the ongoing pandemic, it's more important than ever to establish your presence and create a sense of connection among your colleagues. To mimic eye contact, position your webcam so that you can look directly into it when speaking. Consider turning it off when presenting materials, as it can be distracting.
- 3. Ensure a quality listening experience:** If possible, test out a few mics to ensure good audio quality (e.g. some webcams have built-in mics, and some platforms offer both "computer audio" and toll-free dial-in options). Vary the pitch and tone of your voice to create energy in the group and help keep learners' attention. Ask learners to mute their mics when not speaking to limit distracting background noise.
- 4. Build a sense of community:** A sense of community is crucial, especially now in the midst of this pandemic. Invite learners to turn on webcams and mics at the beginning of a session to say hello (this may be more challenging with larger groups of 10+ people). It's always good to incorporate ice breaker exercises into your session. Allow time and space to check in with your learners to see how they're doing, share experiences and offer support.
- 5. It's important to limit lecture time:** In an online environment, flip the classroom and send learners readings/materials to look at prior to the class. Use the online time for activities and discussion.
- 6. Engage learners often:** Engage learners often and in different ways. Active learning activities that work well for both smaller and larger groups include poll-taking (if the tool supports that function), and pausing often to ask questions for learners to answer in the chat. If your platform has a "break-out room" feature, you can include small group activities. Some tools allow you to give control to attendees of the presentation to give them a chance to present/teach.
- 7. Use the chat function:** Encourage learners to ask questions in the chat and pause often to answer, making sure to address individuals by name (this helps with engagement, community and a sense of presence). If you can't answer all questions during the session, follow-up with answers later.
- 8. Limit online sessions to 60 minutes:** Unlike an academic half day or a full day workshop, it's very important that virtual sessions are short, even if it means you have to deliver content over multiple sessions.
- 9. Keep your presentation simple:** If you are using a slide deck, avoid animations and transitions to keep things simple and limit the amount of text on slides.
- 10. Follow-up with learners after the session:** Consider sending a summary post-session to reinforce key messages, and/or a reflective exercise to help consolidate their learning.

ROYAL COLLEGE COLLEGE ROYAL CANMEDS

VIDEO CONFERENCING TOOLS

Which one best meets your needs?

	ZOOM	CISCO WEBEX	GOOGLE HANGOUTS (CLASSIC)	SKYPE MEET NOW	JOIN.ME
FREE	●	●	●	●	●
SCREEN-SHARING	●	●	●	●	●
RECORD SESSION	●	●	●	●	●
CHAT TOOL	●	●	●	●	●
BREAKOUT ROOMS	●	●	●	●	●
GIVE CONTROL TO OTHER USERS	●	●	●	●	●
NO SIGN-UPS OR DOWNLOADS FOR ATTENDEES	●	●	●	●	●
CAN HANDLE 50+ PEOPLE	●	●	●	●	●
LIMITATIONS	Security/privacy issues	Generally lower quality video than Zoom	Can only be used if you have a Google account Can only handle up to 10 people	This is a brand-new tool, so too soon to tell	*Can handle up to 50 people Not free - different prices for different plans

ROYAL COLLEGE COLLEGE ROYAL CANMEDS

Resources:
[3 scenarios for Remote Teams, Hybrid Teams, and In-Person Teams](#)
[Teaching Remotely in Response to COVID-19: 10 Tips to Improve your Digital Classroom](#)

LINK TO RESOURCES



Royal College CBD Webinar Series | Adjusted for COVID-19

Support to 2020 Launch Cohort

WEBINAR 1 | May 19, 2020

Resident Development:
A resource for your incoming cohort

Presenter:



Adelle R. Atkinson

Share ideas and “tips and tricks” with colleagues across the country about preparing residents for CBD in light of Covid-19.

WEBINAR 2 | June 9, 2020

Introduction to
Competence Committees

Presenters:



Warren Cheung
Anna Oswald

Define best practices in creating and running a Competence Committee.

- Issues raised are collected to inform shared decision-making

[LINK TO
CBD WEBINAR SERIES](#)

