

Exceptional Consideration Policy and Procedure for the Dental Specialty Fellowship Examinations Requirements Post 1 May 2031

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Author and Approval		
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V1.0	16 th March 2026	Approved for publication
V1.1	7 th April 2026	Branding update – logos and reference to Secretariat amended to Executive.

1. Introduction

1.1 The purpose of this policy and procedure is to define the eligibility requirements for entry to the Dental Specialty Fellowship Examinations and to outline the exceptional circumstances in which candidates may request continued eligibility beyond 1 May 2031. This policy also establishes the procedures for applying for exceptional consideration and the evidence required to support such applications.

2. Scope

2.1 This policy applies to all individuals seeking entry to the Dental Specialty Fellowship Examinations but will not be able to meet the 1 May 2031 deadline to use their existing MFDS qualification for eligibility. It also applies to members of the Dental Examinations Executive (“the Executive”) and Dental Specialty Fellowship Examinations Executive Committee involved in the review and decision-making process for extension requests.

2.2 The policy covers applications for exceptional consideration up to 1 May 2040 and the handling, assessment, and evidence requirements associated with those applications.

3. Overview

3.1 Under standard eligibility regulations, those that hold the existing MFDS qualification remain eligible to use this to apply for the Dental Specialty Fellowship Examinations only until 1 May 2031.

3.2 Beyond this date, automatic eligibility ceases unless a candidate can demonstrate exceptional circumstances that prevented them from applying for a Specialty Fellowship examination within the standard timeframe.

3.3 Candidates who believe significant personal, professional, health-related, or other serious circumstances impacted their ability to apply before 1 May 2031 may submit a written application for exceptional consideration up to and including 1 May 2040. All applications must clearly outline the circumstances, explain their impact on examination readiness, and, where possible, include dated, independent supporting evidence.

3.4 Applications are reviewed individually by the Dental Specialty Fellowship Examinations Executive Committee, with sensitive information handled confidentially and only shared on a need-to-know basis.

4. Standard Eligibility

4.1 Entry to the Dental Specialty Fellowship Examinations requires candidates to hold the Membership of the Faculty of Dental Surgery (MFDS) or an accepted equivalent qualification. For the purposes of eligibility up to 1 May 2031, the following qualifications are recognised:

- a. The bi-collegiate MFDS awarded by Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh (RCSEd) or Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow (RCPSG).
- b. The mono-collegiate MFDS awarded by Royal College of Surgeons of England (RCS Eng).
- c. The Membership of the Joint Dental Faculties (MJDF) awarded by RCS Eng.
- d. The Membership of the Faculty of Dentistry (MFD) awarded by Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland (RCSI) is completed in full by 30 April 2027.

4.2 These qualifications represent the current or previous versions of the MFDS/MJDF/MFD qualification. Holders of any of these qualifications remain eligible to apply for the Dental Specialty Fellowship Examinations only until 1 May 2031, after which these qualifications will no longer provide automatic eligibility.

5. Exceptional Considerations

5.1 There may be exceptional circumstances which result in a candidate not being able to apply for the Dental Specialty Fellowship Examinations by 1 May 2031.

5.2 Candidates may apply to use their existing qualification as detailed above for entry to the Dental Specialty Fellowship Examinations after 1 May 2031 up to and including 1 May 2040 if they meet and can evidence where appropriate exceptional circumstances impacting on their progress.

5.3 Applications will be reviewed individually by the Dental Specialty Fellowship Examinations Executive Committee. Each case will be assessed on its own merits and candidates may be considered where significant personal and/or professional circumstances have prevented them from applying for the Specialty Examinations before 1 May 2031.

5.4 Non-exhaustive examples of situations that may be considered include:

- a. Switching from full-time to part-time specialty training.
- b. Caring responsibilities such as providing ongoing care for a dependent adult.
- c. Childcare responsibilities including periods of parental leave or substantial disruption due to childcare demands.
- d. Pregnancy-related circumstances including pregnancy, maternity leave, or pregnancy-related health matters.

- e. Taking a career break, including for further study purposes such as undertaking a PhD.
- f. Ill health including acute or chronic physical or mental health conditions that have impacted examination readiness.
- g. Bereavement including the death of a close family member or significant other.
- h. Other serious and significant circumstances. This is non-exhaustive but illustrative examples include delays due to the impact of gender-based, domestic, or sexual violence, family or relationship breakdown, or the impact of war, conflict, or natural disasters.

6. Candidates Requiring Visas for Examination Purposes

6.1 Obtaining the correct visa and travel documentations for travel to examinations taking place in different location to the candidate's country of origin is solely the candidate's responsibility.

6.2 Failure to obtain the correct documents to enter the required country will not automatically qualify any candidate for a refund on the examination fee or transfer to a different exam diet. Such candidates may still apply under this process, but supporting evidence will be required. For example:

- a. A letter from the relevant embassy, consulate or visa application centre detailing processing or administrative delays.
- b. The formal visa refusal letter from the relevant immigration authority detailing the reason for refusal.
- c. Evidence of unexpected government travel advisories impacting visa issuance.

6.3 Candidates requiring visas for the purposes of taking an examination are advised to seek guidance on this from the relevant immigration authority at the earliest opportunity.

7. Application Process

7.1 Candidates who wish to apply for consideration for use of an existing qualification after 1 May 2031 up to and including 1 May 2040 should submit their request in writing (up to 400 words) to info@dsfe.org.uk making it clear in the subject heading that they are applying for exemption to the 2031 requirement.

7.2 This should provide a clear written statement outlining circumstances that prevented application before 1 May 2031 and how these circumstances directly impacted on their ability to apply within the standard eligibility period.

7.3 Where possible, candidates must supply appropriate, dated evidence that confirms:

- a. The nature of the circumstances to be considered, and
- b. The timeframe in which it occurred.

7.4 It is noted that applications made on the basis of undertaking specialty training part-time do not require supporting evidence other than confirmation from their Training Programme Director of this having been agreed.

7.5 Otherwise, where it is not possible for a candidate to provide evidence of their circumstances, this must be noted clearly in their application and the reasons why detailed. More information on evidence requirements is detailed below.

7.6 Please note that failure to provide evidence may weaken the application, so if you have any questions regarding evidence requirements or suitability, please contact the Executive team in advance of submitting your application.

7.7 An application will be scheduled for review at the next Executive Committee meeting where it has been received at least five working days in advance of the meeting date. Where there is less than five working days to the Committee meeting, the application will be held on file until the next meeting.

7.8 Application outcome decisions will be communicated by email to applicants within five working days of the Executive Committee meeting taking place.

8. Confidentiality

8.1 We recognise that some circumstances are personal and sensitive. Your application and supporting evidence will be treated with the highest degree of confidentiality and care and will only be reviewed in full by a member of the Executive to ensure that all required information has been provided.

8.2 The Chairperson of the Dental Specialty Fellowship Examinations Executive Committee (or their appointed nominee) will be provided with the full application including supporting evidence, and a brief redacted summary of the application only will be provided to the Executive Committee for review.

9. Evidence Requirements

9.1 Evidence of circumstances is required in most cases to support an application.

9.2 The basic following requirements apply to supporting evidence. Evidence should:

- a. Be provided by an independent person, organisation, or support service, for example, a medical practitioner, counsellor, solicitor, government organisation or department,
- b. Confirm matters of fact related to the details of the application statement,
- c. Be dated, and
- d. Be written in English or accompanied by a certified and dated translation by a professional translation service.

9.3 Candidates should avoid providing photographs of people, injuries or accidents when submitting evidence.

9.4 All circumstances and evidence are considered on a case-by-case basis so the below should be considered as indicative examples of evidence that may be used to support an application. It is understood that evidence is not available for every case and this will be considered in conjunction with the documented circumstances.

- a. Death certificate, order of funeral service, public notification of death.
- b. Letter from care provider or social services.
- c. Letter from doctor or medical practitioner. It is not possible for medical information to be interpreted from x-rays, test results, or prescriptions, so these should only be provided where there is additional contextual information available from a medical practitioner.
- d. Letter from counsellor, letter from mental health support practitioner.
- e. Divorce or dissolution paperwork.
- f. Jury citation, court summons, solicitor letter.
- g. Police incident report.
- h. Letter from employer.
- i. Letter from embassy.