



**Guidelines for Resident Support**  
**RCPSC (Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada) Psychiatry Exam**  
**General Psychiatry Residency Program**

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**Background**

The overarching goal of residency training is to prepare residents for unsupervised or independent practice. Certification in Psychiatry requires that a resident complete all the required components of residency training as articulated by the RCPSC and University of Toronto, General Psychiatry Residency Program. Completion of the RCPSC written and practical exams in Psychiatry is a key assessment *informing* preparation for practice and in Competence by Design (CBD) and typically occurs in the Core of Discipline (COD) stage of training.

The purpose of these guidelines is to ensure that in supporting residents to prepare for the RCPSC exam in Psychiatry:

1. Residents continue to receive core teaching as required by the RCPSC and UofT General Psychiatry Residency Program.
2. Residents have protected time for exam preparation.
3. Learning and service requirements are integrated with considerations regarding learner well-being, professional and patient care responsibilities.

**Values**

Excellence – Academic and Operational

Accountability and Transparency – Principle-based approach with key stakeholder input

**PGY4 Academic Half Day (AHD)**

- July-December and spring following written exam (depending on timing of practical exam)
- January-April/May (depending on timing of practical exam) no AHD to support attendance at review courses, protect time for exam preparation, and ensure sufficient attendance on core rotations

**Protected Time for Exam Preparation, Test-Taking, and Review Courses**

- Half-day (0.5) protected time for exam preparation in the year residents are writing their Royal College Exam

Implementation guidance

- Protected time for RC Exam studying is on Wednesday afternoons
  - From January-April/May (depending on timing of practical exam) residents may negotiate a different day with supervisors on a case-by-case basis but in general it is recommended that Wednesday afternoons be maintained across the program
- July-December residents will have full-days protected on Wednesdays for AHD in the morning followed by RC exam study time in the afternoon (0.5 day for AHD and 0.5 day for RC exam study time)
- January-April/May (depending on timing of practical exam)
  - All residents receive 0.5 day protected per week for exam preparation, recommended to be on Wednesday afternoons and as noted above, another 0.5 day can be negotiated with the primary supervisor

- The residency program supports residents working with primary supervisors to **combine two protected half-days for a full day** of RC exam study time (on Wednesday or another day). *This would mean that a resident would not have a protected half-day for RC exam studying either the week before or after combining half-days.*
- Residents cannot accumulate the 0.5 day protected RC exam study time and use them as several consecutive days off a rotation – the intent is that the protected time is used weekly.
- In deciding about granting a full day off for RC exam study time (by combining two half-days), residents and supervisors are advised to consider the following:
  - Residents’ role as service providers: As per PARO principles in the collective agreement which notes that decisions regarding time away as *“having regard to the professional and patient responsibilities of the hospital department.”*
  - Residents’ role as learners in terms of sufficient time on rotations such that residents have opportunities to be observed meeting rotation specific competencies, acknowledging that there will be resident absences due to review courses and protected time as per the PARO collective agreement for exam leave.
  - Resident well-being
    - The residency program has agreed to the following to support resident well-being:
      - 0.5 call in the year a resident is writing the RC exam
      - 0.5 day protected for RC exam study time from July 1<sup>st</sup> until the practical exam is completed
      - An additional 5 consecutive weekdays to attend a review course such that residents can use PARO professional/education leave for a review course and do not need to use vacation time or unpaid education leave to attend a second review course
      - Residents who require further protected time outside of what is provided by the residency program to support their well-being should contact the Office of Learner Affairs with regards to accommodations, as applicable.

The residency program advises that PG Site Directors and supervisors consider some flexibility or “give and take.” For example, for a resident with time away from their core rotation for review courses, the RC exam, vacation, PARO education leave, post-call days, psychotherapy and any other protected residency program days, the supervisor could consider alternating weeks in which the resident is excused from clinical duties such that they have a full day to study for the RC exam on some weeks.

Chief Residents and residents in our CResT, Clinician Scientist/Scholar Programs will also need to be mindful of time away from core rotations with the 0.5 day protected for these special positions/streams. As noted in other guidelines, most chief residents will need to *integrate* the 0.5 day across a week given that their duties are not focused on a single day.

Please note with regards to **vacation requests**: As residents are required to be at AHD on Wednesday mornings from July-December and in the spring of each academic year and are required to be on core rotations for the half-day from January until the practical exam is completed, there are specific professional responsibilities residents must fulfill. **Residents must request Wednesdays off for vacation** – it is not a “day off” or an additional vacation day that the residency program is providing in addition to the PARO collective agreement.

- Spring of RC exam year (depending on timing of practical exam) – Wednesday AHD returns for PGY4s - 0.5 day for AHD and 0.5 day clinical duties given that RC exam has been completed.
- Psychotherapy – It is expected that residents integrate psychotherapy requirements into the regular work week. Residents can request 0.5 day protected time from their rotation supervisors for psychotherapy on Wednesdays if they are able to book all psychotherapy supervision and patient care during the half-day – however, most residents are unable to do so. Administrative and Psychotherapy (A&P) Time only applies to PGY2s and 3s and is still considered a workday – please see residency program guidelines for details.
- Alongside the 7 working days of professional/educational leave provided through the PARO collective agreement, the residency program will grant *5 consecutive weekdays of protected exam review course time* in either the academic year prior or current year that residents are writing their Royal College Exam (typically PGY3 and 4)
  - *Residents must submit confirmation of enrollment in a review course to the residency program no later than 4 weeks prior to the review course, alongside confirmation of primary supervisor approval [if residents are using the residency program’s exam review course protected time or unpaid education leave]*
  - *The exam review course protected time (5 consecutive weekdays) can only be used once during residency training – any other time that residents wish to take to attend review courses can be done ideally via PARO professional leave as per the terms of the collective agreement (alternatively residents can use vacation time or take an unpaid education leave as per UofT PGME guidelines regarding leaves of absences)*
  - *Please note that residents who are sitting for the RC Exam in the current academic year will be prioritized to attend review courses*
- For the written component (test taking) – this is a protected day for residents that does not count towards the 7 working days of educational leave as per PARO
- The residency program will comport with all provisions of the PARO collective agreement with regards to professional leave
  - One allotment of 7 days of paid leave in the 4 weeks before written and/or practical components – these 7 days can be split between both components or taken altogether for a single component of exam
    - Please note the following clarification from PARO member services:
    - The intent of the 7 consecutive days is to allow resident time to prepare to challenge the RCPSC or CFPC certification examination. The language found in Article 12.1 of the PARO-OTH Collective Agreement is such that the **days should be taken consecutively, including weekend days** to ensure that residents are free from all clinical and call duties.

- Reasonable travel time to and from the site of the examination for the practical exam – usually this is one day travel to the exam, the exam day itself, and one day travel back – a total of 3 days.

### **STACERs**

As per RCPSC standards, all residents are required to complete two successful STACERs in the Core of Discipline (COD) stage of training, which is generally during PGY4. Residents who started residency training from July 1, 2020 onwards will be required to successfully complete (i.e. “pass”) one PGY4/COD STACER (previously known as an Exit STACER) prior to sitting for the RC Exam. Residents who are unsuccessful at their first attempt at a COD STACER will be provided with coaching/supports as needed and be re-booked for a make-up STACER. There is generally no limit to the number of STACER attempts; however, repeated unsuccessful STACERs may indicate the need for an enhanced support plan.

Residents accepted into subspecialty training for PGY5 - Geriatric Psychiatry or Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (CAP) program - should inform the residency program as soon as possible as they will need to complete all COD requirements, including passing two COD STACERs, prior to proceeding to subspecialty training.

All other residents in the General Psychiatry Residency Program will complete their second COD STACER following the practical portion of the RC Exam.

### **Role of Psychiatry Competence Subcommittee (PCS)**

The PCS will advise the PRPC as to residents on track to sit for the RC Exam following regular PCS meetings (fall and spring of each academic year) and at the call of the Chair of the PCS as needed.

In general, the expectation is that residents “progressing as expected” will proceed with sitting for the RC Exam during the COD stage of training. Residents who are undergoing either informal or formal remediation may be delayed in sitting for the RC Exam.

### **Call Requirements**

- Hospital sites will comport with all provisions of the PARO collective agreement with regards to call requirements <https://myparo.ca/your-contract/#professional-leave>
- During the year that a resident is writing the Royal College Exam call requirements will be as follows:
  - 0.5 call
  - Any call accommodations as confirmed by the Office of Learner Affairs or provided on an interim basis by the Program Director will be honoured by hospital sites
  - Reduction in call is subject to consideration of operational requirements of hospital sites, alongside the well-being of *all* residents in the call pool
  - Should there be any unforeseen health human resource constraints, the residency program, at the request of hospital leadership and in consultation with key stakeholders, may reconsider any reductions in call requirements below what is required by the PARO collective agreement following due consideration of all perspectives and relevant issues

Please note that call experiences are a RCPSC Required Training Experience (FOD to TTP):

- Psychiatry – Emergency, including after-hours coverage (FOD)

- After hours coverage for psychiatry and/or one of its subspecialties (COD)
- After hours coverage for psychiatry or one of its subspecialties (TTP)

**Other Curriculum/Program Elements** (for PGY4 residents as of July 1, 2023)

- Psychotherapy – 4-6 hours per week protected time inclusive of supervision
- CResT, CSP and Chief Residents (CAMH, MSH, SHSC, SMH, UHN)
  - half-day protected for Chief duties or CSP
    - Chief resident duties usually require integration of the half-day across the week vs. a single half-day protected
    - CResT and CSP residents are understood to require a single half-day protected per week
  - 2 days protected - 1 day study time + AHD, ½ day psychotherapy, ½ day CSP or Chief Resident from July-December
  - 1.5 days protected – ½ day study time, ½ day psychotherapy, ½ day Chief Resident or CSP from January-practical exam
    - as previously noted, Chief Resident duties should be integrated into the week similar to psychotherapy (vs requiring a discrete half-day)
  - on weeks when a resident is post-call or if there are any full-day residency program events, residents must make every effort to meet minimum standard of 3-3.5 days per week on core rotation (as per Psychiatry Standards of Accreditation – “A resident must not spend fewer than 3 to 3½ days per week, exclusive of his/her [their] academic half-day or day, if offered, on his/her [their] primary rotation”)

**Key references**

PARO <https://myparo.ca/>

**RCPSC** <https://www.royalcollege.ca/en/standards-and-accreditation/information-by-discipline>

Psychiatry Training Experience

Psychiatry Competencies

Standards of Accreditation

Appendix: PGY4 Time Away calculation

4 weeks RC exam study time July to May - 0.5 day RC exam study time x 40 weeks (when vacation, December holiday period deducted) – approximately 20 weekdays or 1 month/block

4 weeks PARO vacation

1 week PARO education leave

1 week PARO exam leave

1 week (5 consecutive workdays) from the residency program to attend a review course

Total: 11 weeks - approximately 2 months and 3 weeks

Other time away from core rotation/longitudinal education activities

- After hours coverage of psychiatry emergency (call) with post-call days
- Psychotherapy – approximately 0.5 day per week

Example of impact on 3-month Addictions rotation January-March

-January – away x 2 weeks for review courses - 2 weeks of rotation

-February – away end of February to early March (about 1 week) for RC written exam – 3 weeks of rotation

-March – RC exam – away x 1 week – 3 (possibly 4) weeks of rotation

For 12-week rotation – present for 8-9 weeks (with additional time away for post-call days, psychotherapy and vacation if requested).

**Prepared by:** Program Director in consultation with PARO, UofT PGME, Call Working Group, Rotation Coordinators and Curriculum Leads, and PRPC

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**Next Review:** 2029-30