

Kamila Hawthorne  
Chair of the Royal College of GPs

20th December 2023

Dear Professor Hawthorne,

**Re: Disability diagnosis and exam attempts**

We are writing to you on behalf of the BMA GP Registrars Committee to publicly call for an urgent change in the Royal College of GPs' examinations policy. You will be aware this is an issue the BMA has repeatedly raised with the college since October 2021. The college currently applies a rigid policy which means that registrars who receive a late diagnosis of their disability do not get the same number of fair exam attempts as other registrars. This is because the college does not allow any extra examination attempts where a candidate was diagnosed with a disability after one or more attempt, and would have been entitled to reasonable adjustments (such as extra time) had they known about their condition and been able to obtain a formal diagnosis before their attempt(s).

The GP Registrars Committee believes that all candidates for RCGP examinations should be entitled to fair treatment and the BMA is aware of several cases where the current policy has had a potentially devastating impact on individuals with a disability.

The principle of fairness for all exam candidates should not be controversial and we urge the RCGP to update its policy, acknowledging the [recently published guidance](#) from the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges, which states

“When new information is received by a college, for example a new diagnosis or a change in the recommendation for reasonable adjustment, which might lead to the granting of additional attempts, it should be considered whether this information will have affected all previous attempts, or only some, and the number of remaining attempts calculated accordingly. For example, new information on a diagnosis of a disability which is likely to have affected all previous attempts, could lead to the full number of attempts being granted.”

Regrettably, the college's failure to acknowledge the unfairness and of its policy has caused the BMA to resort to litigation, a process which is ongoing and for which we are now urgently seeking further information from those potentially affected by the RCGP policy. More

**Co-chief executive officers:** Neeta Major & Rachel Podolak

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information about this request for information can be found through [this statement](#) on the BMA website.

It is abundantly clear to the GP Registrar's Committee that the RCGP's policy is unreasonable and discriminatory by unjustifiably disadvantaging disabled doctors wishing to become GPs simply because they weren't aware of their condition earlier. This cannot be right – urgent change is needed. The BMA is proud to support our disabled colleagues and will continue our pursuit of fairness in attempts policies until all candidates can access the same number of fair attempts in their examinations.

Yours sincerely,



**Dr Malinga Ratwatta**  
Chair of the BMA Registrars Committee



**Dr Elliott Philips**  
Deputy Chair, BMA GP Registrars Committee