

Changes to the RCEM EM-ACP Credentialing Regulations: Removing barriers to credentialing (May 2026)

RCEM has made several changes to the **ACP Credentialing Regulations** that aim to make credentialing more accessible, achievable and equitable for all ACPs working in Emergency Medicine.

Following the introduction of the revised RCEM EM-ACP curriculum in 2022, a number of our members raised concerns that several of the regulations – primarily the requirement for all mandated workplace-based assessments to be completed within three years of submission - created disproportionate challenges for some ACPs, especially those working less than full time or requiring extended periods of absence (for example maternity and parental leave, or serious illness or injury).

In response, RCEM established a Task and Finish Group - comprising mainly of ACPs - to explore the impact of these regulations. Evidence was gathered from over 200 ACPs, both members and non-members of RCEM, reflecting a wide range of lived experiences. Although consensus was not reached on all issues, several clear themes emerged and these formed the basis of several recommendations which were presented to the ACP Credentialing Sub-Committee in December 2025. These recommendations were accepted in full by the RCEM Council in March 2026 and have been implemented with immediate effect. Details of these changes are provided below.

Additionally, in response to concerns raised by both ACPs and the ACP Forum, the College will continue to accept a Postgraduate Diploma (PGDip) - equivalent to 120 credits at Level 7 (Level 11 in Scotland) - in advanced practice. This reverses the decision taken in 2023 to require a Master's degree to bring the credential in line with the NHSE Advanced Digital Badge.

We recognise that previous regulations may have felt challenging or limiting for some ACPs, and we want to acknowledge the impact this may have had. As part of the College's three-year Academic Strategy, we are committed to fostering fairer and more inclusive training cultures for everyone, including removing unnecessary barriers that can contribute to differential attainment.

Thank you to everyone who shared their experiences and ideas. Your feedback has been vital in helping us improve the flexibility and fairness of the RCEM EM-ACP credentialing process, while continuing to uphold the high standards required for safe and effective emergency care. We hope these changes help more colleagues feel supported and confident to pursue credentialing.

If you have questions about any of these changes and what they might mean for you, please contact the ACP team at ACP@rcem.ac.uk.

Permitted timescales for mandatory evidence



- ❖ The currency period for mandated evidence (primarily workplace-based assessments) has been extended **from three to five calendar years**;
- ❖ The five-year evidence window applies equally to all ACPs, regardless of working pattern or time out of practice during training;
- ❖ Level of entrustment must still be demonstrated; therefore, all mandated assessments must be completed under the 2022 ACP curriculum;
- ❖ Assessments completed under the 2017 curriculum will be accepted as supporting (i.e. non-mandated) evidence, providing they have been obtained within five years of submission.

Implementation

As the level of entrustment must still be demonstrated (which requires mandated assessments to be completed on the 2022 ACP curriculum), implementation will be phased and will depend on:

- ❖ when you started or transitioned to the 2022 ACP curriculum;
- ❖ when you intend to submit your portfolio to the ACP Credentialing Panel.

Examples:

If you started or transitioned to the 2022 ACP curriculum when it was introduced in September 2022, you may submit mandated assessments as follows:

- **Autumn 2026:** completed within 4 years of submission
- **Spring 2027:** completed within 4.5 years of submission
- **Autumn 2027:** completed within 5 years of submission

If you started or transitioned to the 2022 ACP curriculum in March 2025, you may submit mandated assessments as follows:

- **Spring 2028:** completed within 3 years of submission
- **Autumn 2028:** completed within 3.5 years of submission
- **Spring 2029:** completed within 4 years of submission
- **Autumn 2029:** completed within 4.5 years of submission
- **Spring 2030:** completed within 5 years of submission.

Submitting the portfolio following an extended period of absence



- ❖ Following an absence of three months or more, the period that you will be required to be back in practice before submission will now:
 - be determined by your ACP Educational Supervisor;
 - be calculated pro rata, based on the length of absence;
 - have a minimum requirement of six weeks.

For example (for illustration only):

- a 6-month period of absence may require 3 months back in practice
- a 12-month period of absence may require 4 - 5 months back in practice.

This replaces the previous fixed requirement of six months back in practice, regardless of the length of absence.

- ❖ The return to practice period should be discussed and agreed with your ACP Educational Supervisor at the pre-return-to-work meeting and again prior to

Pausing the portfolio timeline during extended periods of absence



- ❖ ACPs may now pause their portfolio timeline during extended periods of absence such as for:
 - maternity or parental leave, *or*
 - serious illness or injury.
- ❖ The duration of the absence will be excluded from evidence-currency calculations to prevent mandatory evidence falling outside the permitted timescales.

Submitting while on maternity leave



- ❖ ACPs may now submit their credentialing application while on maternity leave, provided that before the leave commences:
 - the stipulated period working in advanced practice within an Emergency Department has been successfully completed.
 - the **Final Educational Supervisor Report (ESR) for Credentialing** has been completed
 - the **Final Faculty Educational Governance Statement (FEGS) for Credentialing** has been completed.

Academic qualification requirement for credentialing



In 2023, the minimum academic requirement for RCEM ACP credentialing was changed to a Master's degree in advanced practice, thus bringing it in line with NHS England's requirements for attainment of the **Advanced Digital Badge**. This superseded the previous minimum requirement of a Postgraduate Diploma (PGDip), equivalent to 120 credits at Level 7 (Level 11 in Scotland).

Following representation from both ACPs and the ACP Forum, who raised concerns that this change risked disadvantaging ACPs who had completed a PGDip prior to commencing the credentialing pathway, and for whom 'topping-up' to a Master's was not a feasible option, the College will continue to accept a PGDip in advanced practice as the minimum academic requirement.

- ❖ All ACPs submitting from Autumn 2026 will now require an advanced practice qualification that:
 - is at Level 7 (England, Wales and Northern Ireland) or Level 11 (Scotland)
 - is a minimum of a Postgraduate Diploma (equivalent to 120 credits)
 - has been awarded by a UK Higher Education Institution (HEI) or an awarding body commissioned by one of the statutory education bodies responsible for healthcare education and training in the devolved nations
 - contains modules covering the topics of:
 - history taking and physical assessment
 - clinical decision making and use of diagnostics
 - independent prescribing.

(The programme may not have modules with the specific titles listed above, but they must meet the learning outcomes specified by the College).

- ❖ The advanced practice qualification must be evidenced by:
 - submission of relevant postgraduate certificates and transcripts
 - mapping the HEI learning outcomes to the learning outcomes specified by RCEM in the **Academic Credentialing Declaration** form on [risr/advance](#).

ACPs who hold a Master's degree in advanced practice awarded by an HEI in England are not required to complete the Academic Credentialing Declaration form if their programme is accredited by the NHSE Centre for Advancing Practice. A list of NHSE-accredited programmes can be found on the [Centre for Advancing Practice website](#).

Advanced Digital Badge (England only)

The [Advanced Digital Badge](#) is awarded by the Centre for Advancing Practice (NHS England) and signifies the holder has met the capabilities outlined in the [Multi-Professional Framework for Advanced Practice](#). ACPs practising in England who are awarded the RCEM EM-ACP credential, and hold a Master's degree that has been accredited by the Centre, may be eligible for the Advanced Digital Badge.

ACPs who do not achieve the RCEM credential may still be eligible for the Advanced Digital Badge if they have completed either a Centre-accredited Master's degree in advanced practice, or the Centre's [ePortfolio \(supported\) route](#).

ACPs who are awarded the RCEM ACP credential will not automatically receive the Digital Badge and must complete the Centre's own application process.