Frequently-asked questions - FRCSEd Ophthalmology Examination Pathways

Why have you changed the FRCSEd Ophthalmology Examination pathway?

The objective is to make the pathway more simple, streamlined and cost-effective for our candidates, members and fellows, through our collaboration with the highly-respected International Council of Ophthalmology (ICO).

The previous system required candidates to travel long distances – often internationally - to complete the membership-level exam, the FRCSEd (Ophth) Part B. Each diet was only held once annually in Egypt, India and UK respectively. This was time-consuming and expensive, particularly for those candidates who were required to re-sit elements of the exam. Under the new system, candidates who wish to achieve MRCSEd (Ophth) need only sit three written examinations via the ICO at their convenient centres across the world.

- In the past, those candidates who sought to gain Fellowship of the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh (FRCSEd (Ophth)) were required to travel to Edinburgh to sit the exam. Under the new system, the exam will be delivered internationally – and in a quicker and more streamlined manner - in order to better serve our Fellowship candidates.

When was this change implemented?

The new examination pathway was launched in 2019.

How do candidates now achieve Membership with the RCSEd?

Simply apply to our partners, the ICO, to sit their three written exams:

- Visual Sciences
- Optics, Refraction and Instruments
- Clinical Ophthalmology

The ICO offer two diets of each exam every year in 137 exam centres in 83 countries around the world.

Once you have passed these examinations, you are eligible – and warmly
encouraged - to apply for membership with the RCSEd.  

**What if I passed some of my examinations with RCSEd before this change?**

Candidates who had already successfully completed Part A and Part B of the FRCSEd Ophthalmology before 2020 are eligible for membership of RCSEd.

Those candidates who had successfully completed Part A but had not passed FRCSEd Part B Ophthalmology will need to:

- Pass the ICO Clinical Sciences (Ophthalmology), and the ICO Advanced Examination (115 Questions), in order to be eligible for MRCSEd (Ophth). Candidates should note that there is a limited number of diets remaining for these exams; if all of these are not completed and passed, candidates will need to complete all three of the new ICO exams: Visual Sciences; Optics, Refraction & Instruments and Clinical Ophthalmology.
- Pass the three new improved ICO examinations

**If I passed all of my examinations with ICO, am I eligible to become a Member of the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh?**

Yes – Candidates who have successfully completed the ‘old’ ICO Examinations of Basic Sciences, Optics & Refraction, Clinical Sciences (Ophthalmology) and the ICO Advanced Examination (115 Questions) are eligible for the MRCS (Ophth) with the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh.

Those who have passed the three updated ICO exams from 2019 - Visual Sciences; Optics, Refraction & Instruments and Clinical Ophthalmology - are warmly welcomed to apply for membership with the RCSEd.

**Can I apply for GMC Registration if I hold MRCSEd (Ophth) or FRCSEd (Ophth)?**

Yes, but you will only have automatic exemption from the GMC’s requirement to pass the PLAB (Professional and Linguistics Assessment Board) if you passed the ‘old’ FRCSEd (Ophth) Part B with an OSCE element, or if you wish to progress and complete the ‘new’ FRCSEd (Ophth).

If you have taken the ICO exams to achieve membership of RCSEd, you will need to sit the PLAB if you wish to seek GMC registration. We strongly recommend that you contact the GMC for more information on their process for registration and to view their list of acceptable post-graduate qualifications for exemption from the PLAB. You can visit their website at https://www.gmc-uk.org/.

We appreciate that not all of our candidates and members wish to seek GMC registration, so this new pathway is much more convenient and efficient for the majority of our candidates who wish to achieve Membership and Fellowship of RCSEd.
Does RCSEd offer a Fellowship in Ophthalmology?

Yes – After gaining their MRCSEd (Ophth), candidates only need to pass the ICO Advanced 180 examination, have four years' clinical practice and pass a face-to-face viva conducted by RCSEd examiners in order to qualify for the Fellowship in Ophthalmology; the FRCSEd (Ophth). This prestigious qualification allows candidates to apply for registration with the GMC directly, without the need to sit the PLAB.

We had intended to begin offering diets of the FRCSEd (Ophth) in May 2020, but this has been interrupted by the Covid-19 global pandemic. We are hoping – subject to government policy – to run the first diets later this year or early next year.

Why should I join the RCSEd?

By joining The Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh (RCSEd) as a Fellow or Member, you become part of a prestigious network of some 25,000 professionals in over 100 countries across the world. You are also welcomed into an organisation dedicated to the pursuit of excellence and advancement in surgical practice; and renowned for its friendliness and approachability.

The College is proud of its culture of innovation and is committed to supporting our membership throughout their careers. Fellowship or Membership of the College provides professional accreditation from one of the oldest, most prestigious and respected surgical bodies in the world. Fellowship and Membership of our College, first and foremost, is a professional qualification which indicates that a surgeon has gone through a rigorous process to ensure his or her professional competence.

With over 500 years of education, assessment and advancement of the profession of surgery, we pride ourselves on our exacting standards and the positive difference they make to patient outcomes and care. In addition to this mark of quality which Fellowship and Membership of the Edinburgh College carries, we provide support for our membership on key professional issues and an impressive range of professional and personal benefits, during your career and beyond.

Where can I find more information?

International Council of Ophthalmology – assess@icoph.org

Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh Examinations Department – surgical. exams@rcsed.ac.uk

Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh Membership Department - membership@rcsed.ac.uk