Irish College of Ophthalmologists

Eye Doctors of Ireland

Protecting your Vision

IRISH COLLEGE OF OPHTHALMOLOGISTS

GUIDELINES FOR CANDIDATES TO BASIC SPECIALIST TRAINING

Contents

Introduction	2
Applying to the National Basic Specialist Training Programme in Ophthalmology	2
Eligibility Criteria	3
Application Form	6
Shortlisting	7
Interviews	7
Important Dates	8

Introduction

The Irish College of Ophthalmologists (ICO) is the nationally accredited postgraduate training body responsible for the delivery of Specialist Training in Ophthalmology in Ireland. The ICO is recognised for this purpose by the Irish Medical Council (IMC) and the Health Service Executive (HSE).

The specialty of ophthalmology in Ireland includes two career structures:

1. Medical Ophthalmology
2. Surgical Ophthalmology

The ICO delivers the National Specialist Training Programme in Medical Ophthalmology (BMT) and Surgical Ophthalmology (BST). The National Training Programme (NTP) is the route to qualification as an Ophthalmologist in Ireland. The Basic Programmes are three years in duration.

On successful completion of the three-year basic programme, candidates can apply to the corresponding higher training programme via a competitive interview, Higher Surgical Training Programme (HST) or Higher Medical Training (HMT) Programme in Ophthalmology.

Applying to the National Basic Specialist Training Programme in Ophthalmology

Recruitment to basic specialist training in Ophthalmology Ireland is managed by the ICO on behalf of the HSE. As the number of applicants exceeds the number of places available, not all applicants will be successful in gaining a place at the first attempt. Applicants are assessed in a two-stage process: shortlisting, based on information provided in the application form; and, for those shortlisted, a structured panel interview.

Applicants who are interested in both Medical and Surgical pathways can apply to both programmes, however, separate applications must be completed. The ICO also encourages any doctor interested in applying to both programmes to get in contact with the ICO. If an application is unsuccessful, the applicant can reapply to the programme (s) in a subsequent year. There is no limit to the number of times an application can be made.

Prior to submitting an application, interested candidates are strongly encouraged to consult the selection scorecard for the relevant training programme which is available on the ICO website.

Candidates should determine via the scorecard and in advance, the most appropriate section for their documentation to be uploaded on the application form in order to maximise their score. Candidates should note that they will not be awarded marks where documentation is duplicated.

Eligibility Criteria

To be eligible to apply a doctor must have:

- Their Medical Degree
- Registration with the Irish Medical Council
- Evidence of eligibility for the trainee specialist division with the Irish Medical Council.
- Eligibility to work in Ireland (if applicable, evidence must be provided in the application)
- Confirmation of achieving English language requirements (If applicable).

Medical Degree

Eligibility Requirement	Supporting Documentation
Medical Degree	**A copy of your academic transcript from your medical school**, listing your complete academic history: programmes attended, a breakdown of marks/grades achieved, the degree awarded, your overall grade and conferring date. If the medical degree was taught in English but this is not stated in the transcript of results, applicants must provide a letter from the relevant university confirming that the degree was taught and examined solely in English. If you completed your degree in a non-English speaking university, your transcripts must be a translated into English and the translation certified.

Eligibility for Trainee Specialist Division

All applicants will be required to provide evidence of their eligibility for the Trainee Specialist Division. Further guidance on eligibility for the Trainee Specialist Division can be found here.

In line with the 2020 amendment to the Regulated Professions (Health and Social Care) (Amendment) Bill 2020, eligibility for the Trainee Specialist Division will now include all doctors who are currently registered on or have established eligibility for registration in the General Division.

All registration queries should be directed to the Irish Medical Council website:

Eligibility for the Trainee Specialist Register (TSR)

Criteria	Required Supporting Documentation to support TSR
A. Doctors who have graduated from an Irish Medical School and have successfully **completed** their internship in Ireland.	**Certificate of experience from IMC OR a copy of previous IMC intern registration certificate**
B. Doctors who have graduated from an Irish Medical School and **will complete** their internship in Ireland by July 2027.	**Certificate of registration** from Medical Council indicating intern registration & Irish Medical Degree
C. Doctors who are currently registered with the IMC on the General or Trainee register	**Current IMC registration certificate**
D. Doctors who were previously registered with the IMC on the General or Trainee register	**Previous IMC registration certificate**
E. Doctors who have been made eligible for IMC registration and issued with an email from the IMC confirming eligibility	**Email from the IMC confirming eligibility**
F. Doctors who have successfully completed their medical Qualification in one of the following countries – Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Netherlands, Romania, Spain, Switzerland or Slovak Republic.	**Medical Degree** from one of the listed EU Countries

English Language Requirements

The ability to communicate clearly with patients and colleagues is a key requirement for all healthcare professionals Proficiency in the English language is therefore a core competency for all NCHDs working in the Irish public health service. The HSE requires that as part of the application process for training positions on specialist training programmes, that all applicants are required to demonstrate their competency in the English Language in line with HSE specifications.

All NCHDs taking up employment with the HSE who were not registered with the Irish Medical Council in any of the divisions of the Register of Medical Practitioners prior to 1st January 2015, or who did not complete the entirety of their under-graduate medical training in the Republic of Ireland, are required to provide evidence of their English Language competence. For further details on the requirements, please see the HSE Circular 063 2020- English Language Requirements for NCHDs.

Supporting Documents required to confirm eligibility for basic specialist training:

<table>
<tr><th>Eligibility Requirement</th><th>Supporting Documentation</th></tr>
<tr><td>Proof of English Language Competence</td><td>
Category 1: Doctors who completed their Medical degree in English from any of the following countries: Australia, Canada, New Zealand, The United States of America or The United Kingdom must provide
A copy of their Medical Degree Certificate
<u>Or</u>

Category 2: Doctors who completed The Irish State Leaving Certificate examination or A Levels in the United Kingdom and a Medical Degree in English must provide <u>all three</u> of the following:
A copy of Irish Leaving Certificate/UK A-Level transcript results
A copy of their Medical Degree
Certificate/confirmation from their University confirming their Medical degree was taught and examined solely in English
<u>Or</u>

Category 3: Doctors who meet the English Language requirements by attaining certification via the recognized English Language Tests <u>must</u> submit a certificate of test results from either
<table>
<tr><th>IELTS</th><th>Minimum Scores</th></tr>
<tr><td>Listening</td><td>6.5</td></tr>
<tr><td>Reading</td><td>6.5</td></tr>
<tr><td>Writing</td><td>6.5</td></tr>
<tr><td>Speaking</td><td>6.5</td></tr>
<tr><td>Overall</td><td>7.0</td></tr>
</table>
<u>Or</u>
<table>
<tr><th>OET</th><th>Minimum Grade</th></tr>
<tr><td>Listening</td><td>B</td></tr>
<tr><td>Reading</td><td>B</td></tr>
<tr><td>Writing</td><td>B</td></tr>
<tr><td>Speaking</td><td>B</td></tr>
<tr><td>Overall</td><td>B</td></tr>
</table>
</td></tr>
</table>

	• While a doctor may sit either of the above test as often as they wish, the above scores must have been achieved at only one sitting. **<u>Additional Information</u>** • As outlined above doctors who have not previously been employed with the HSE/section 38 organisations who apply for an NCHD position or to a national Training Programmes must provide evidence of a valid IELTS/OET test dated within two years at application stage. • NCHDs applying for national Training Programmes who have completed IELTS/OET and are currently in employment or were previously employed by the HSE must provide evidence at application stage that a valid IELTS/OET test was completed and submitted to the employer at the time of first employment with the HSE. Test results cannot be combined. The HSE will only accept one test result. • In addition to providing evidence, as required, of the IELTS/OET the NCHDs communication skills must be independently assessed, by employer or training body, as part of the application and interview process, before the NCHD is recommended for appointment or contract of employment issued (excludes Interns). Potential applicants must be informed of these requirements as part of the recruitment process.

APPLICATIONS WHICH DO NOT MEET THE ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA WILL NOT BE PROGRESSED AND WILL BE REMOVED FROM THE SELECTION PROCESS.

Application Form

The application form for July 2027 intake is an online application form. Applications open **Friday 30th October 2026** and **close 4pm Friday 8th January 2027.** The application form will be available from the application opening date.

Applicants will be redirected to the Irish College of Ophthalmologists Applications Portal website**.** In order to complete an application form, first-time applicants will be required to **create an account** on the website by clicking the **"Register"** button and submitting the required information. Applicants must provide an email address and password to register their account. Applicants should ensure that they will have continued access to this email address as all correspondence will be via email.

Before completing an application form, applicants should refer to the scoresheet which is available on the ICO website. Applicants should note that points cannot be **duplicated** on the form, marks will not be awarded in duplicated areas. Marks are awarded once for research, publications, presentations and audits. It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure that documents are submitted to the most appropriate section of the form in order to maximise their score. Once the application is submitted, this cannot be altered.

Once logged in, applicants can select the relevant Basic Specialist Training Programme (BMT or BST) that they wish to apply to and complete the application form. Applicants who wish to apply to Basic Medical Training and Basic Surgical Training can do so but should note that two separate application forms must be completed. Applicants can save their progress on the form and return to the form in their own time. There is no requirement to complete the form in a particular order, applicants can move between the sections as they wish.

Applications received by post or by email, including supporting documentation, will NOT be accepted.

Shortlisting

Applicants who have met the eligibility criteria will progress to the shortlisting stage. Shortlisting is based on the information supplied on the application form. This information determines which applicants are invited to interview. Applicants must meet the minimum score in order to be deemed **eligible** for shortlisting.

Minimum Score for July 2027 Intake

Details of the minimum scores for both training programmes are available on the BST and BMT scorecards on the ICO website. Applicants should note that meeting the minimum score is not a guarantee that they will be invited to interview.

All candidates will be contacted by email following the completion of the shortlisting process.

Interviews

Applicants successful at shortlisting will be notified by email of the interview time and date. On receipt of this applicant's will be asked to confirm their attendance. Failure to confirm attendance by the closing date indicated by the ICO will remove a candidate's application from the selection process. Interviews for July 2027 will take place in-person in Dublin.

Applicants are advised to review Section 3 of the scorecard in advance of their interview. Applicants will be assessed on the following four categories at interview:

1. **Suitability for a career in Ophthalmology**
2. **Communication Skills & Self-Management**

3. **Research & Experience**
4. **Clinical Scenario**

The interview will consist of a panel of assessors in a multi-station format. Candidates should be able to clearly and concisely demonstrate their knowledge of Ophthalmology as well as in the communication, clinical decision making and self-management domains.

Following the interview, the overall score is calculated, this score combines an applicant's scores in Sections 1, 2 & 3 of the scorecard. Scores are rechecked for quality assurance.

Candidates will be informed by email of the outcome of their interview following the completion of the selection process.

Important Dates

Friday 30th October 2026	Online Applications Open
Friday 8th January 2027 @4pm	Online Applications Close
Wednesday 3rd February 2027	Shortlisting
February 10th 2027	BMT Interviews
February 11th 2027	BST Interviews