

The CESR process and equivalence to the FRCOphth examination (Updated 2019):

The CESR process is governed by law passed in parliament and the GMC implements these rules. The rules state clearly that a CESR candidate does not have to have passed the FRCOphth examination to be successful in the CESR process provided he or she provides alternative evidence of equivalent skills and knowledge which is usually in the form of an alternative qualification with associated syllabus or curriculum. The GMC also allows alternative evidence of knowledge including research papers and publications within the specialist field (including oral and poster presentations), membership of professional bodies or organisations and teaching and lectures given.

The only examination that is automatically equivalent to the FRCOphth examination is the Specialty Fellowship in Ophthalmology examination from the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh taken between January 2001 and August 2012 or the FRCSEd passed prior to June 2000. The restructured FRCSEd examination introduced from April 2008 to date is not automatically equivalent to the FRCOphth examination.

If you are not in possession of these specific FRCSEd examinations then equivalence assessors have to make a judgement with regard to the specialty exam that you submitted and hence it is vital to also submit the exam syllabus or curriculum as part of the application. If you do not think your postgraduate exam covers all aspects of the FRCOphth examination then it is important that further evidence as outlined above is submitted to cover the areas of omission.

If you are unable to demonstrate success in the FRCOphth the other supporting evidence must be very strong and current. The following are examples of part of a portfolio of evidence to demonstrate knowledge but it is unlikely that one item on its own would be sufficient.

- Other examinations in ophthalmology (including overseas qualifications) with evidence of success in the examination together with validated evidence of what the exam covers and to what level. The syllabus / curriculum should be provided.
- Strong evidence of Research. The spectrum of research presented should reflect a wide coverage of all the seven subspecialties mentioned in the Specialty Specific Guidance (SSG) document.
- Postgraduate degree gained through research.
- Peer reviewed publications – you should include the front page of each publication. The best evidence would be first name publications in high impact peer reviewed journals relating to knowledge / skills normally achieved within the last 5 years of the CCT curriculum. If you are not first author you should include information on the scope of your involvement in the publication.
- Presentation at national and international meetings – you should include as evidence a programme detailing the title of the presentation, where presented and any feedback. Evidence of conversion of such presentations to peer reviewed publications will be essential.

- Evidence of strong audit participation, demonstrating changes in Clinical Practice (such as modifications to existing practice, bringing in changes to National Guidelines, etc) and Quality Improvement (such as better record keeping being highlighted as a result of an audit or efficiency savings in the form of time or finance, changes in patient pathway , etc.)

Remember that there are no qualifications from outside England that enable automatic entry to the Specialist Register. An evaluation is made on the basis of the applicant's whole career and therefore two applicants with the same qualification but different training and/or experience may not receive the same outcome.

Remember that the GMC requires that you list any failed attempts at examinations relevant to your speciality. Please list unsuccessful attempts at examinations in your application form.

Alternative evidence of knowledge often fails for the following reasons:

- Does not display the depth and breadth of knowledge across the curriculum
- Is too old
- The applicant's contribution was not substantive (not first name)
- The applicant's contribution was not peer reviewed

Making judgements on equivalence of knowledge from a combination of examination syllabus or curriculum and other portfolio evidence can be difficult for both the applicant and the evaluator. It is strongly advised by the College that the applicant should pass the FRCOphth examination prior to submitting their portfolio of evidence to guarantee that the knowledge aspect of the assessment process has been passed.

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Chair – Training Committee
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