

NATIONAL SURGICAL TRAINING PROGRAMME

GUIDE TO CORE SURGICAL TRAINING INTAKE 2025

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ROYAL COLLEGE OF SURGEONS IN IRELAND

RCSI SURGICAL AFFAIRS
Guide to Core Surgical Training Intake 2025

Surgical Affairs					
Document Title	Guidance on Core Surgical Training intake				
Revision level	Revision date	Document number	Description of revision	Document owner	Approved by
Version 1	Sept 2022	AD6534	Key dates for 2023 intake. FAQ's revised to include information on submission of centile score. Inclusion of information on desirable standard, call for interview & centile scoring.	JC	CST Committee
Version 2	Sept 2023	AD7505	2023 desirable standard; 2024 intake dates; update to reference section; update to scoring matrix to reflect 5% for personal presentation piece; clarification to Medical Council eligibility piece.		
Version 3	Sept 2024	AD8226	2024 Desirable Standard 2025 Intake dates Updates to scoring matrix to reflect changes introduced from 2025 onwards Update re English Language tests to confirm no online tests accepted Contacting the CST Team	JC	CST Committee

OVERVIEW

The training of a surgeon is a lengthy and expensive process and it is very important that those who are most suited to a surgical career become our future surgeons. The purpose of the selection process for surgical training is to identify and select those trainees who are most likely to become the best consultant surgeons of the future. The process should also identify and select out those who are likely to be unsuccessful or problematic as future surgeons and discourage them from pursuing a career pathway in surgery.

The majority of applicants will be in their intern year, although some trainees may already have completed their intern year. It is not intended that trainees who already have a significant amount of surgical experience would be appointed to commence year one (ST1) of surgical training.

The minimum requirements for appointment to surgical training are the possession of the MB degree, satisfactory completion of an approved intern year and excellent communication skills in the English language. Applicants must be eligible for registration with the Irish Medical Council. Applicants are expected to be completely truthful and honest in their application forms. Submission of false or misleading information will be regarded as a form of professional misconduct: this will lead to disqualification and the candidate may be reported to the Irish Medical Council.

The selection criteria for CST is based on six categories, each worth a defined percentage of the total marks. Please review the scoring matrix in this document for more details noting changes have been implemented for 2025 onwards.

Appointment to surgical training is competitive and selection is through an objective process with a clearly defined marking scheme which is designed to be fair, transparent and reliable. The underlying principles of the selection and appointment process, are equity of access, objectivity in the selection process, and transparency in the appointments.

RCSI reserve the right to apply a Pre Interview assessment to determine the number of applicants brought forward to the next stage of the selection process. The standard will be set following an analysis of the applications, centile scoring and aptitude testing.

Offer of appointment to Core Surgical Training is based on candidates meeting the desirable standard.

The desirable standard each year is set by **subtracting the calculated standard deviation for all those candidates who score ≥ 80 marks – from 80 Marks.**

2021 onwards: Desired Standard or Cut Score

80 Marks - σ (applicants scores ≥ 80 Marks)

The desirable standard for previous years was calculated as follows

Year	Desirable Standard
2021	76.86
2022	75.64
2023	74.74
2024	75.72

All those deemed eligible to be appointed to Core Surgical Training should meet or exceed the "Desirable standard".

The first 100 candidates who achieve above this score are offered a place on the Core Surgical Training Programme. These posts are allocated in the first instance to citizens of Ireland or nationals of another Member State of the European Union, the remaining places are allocated to the highest ranked non-EU citizens.

It is important to note that advocating or lobbying for candidates is not permitted. You are advised that should you wish to discuss your application with colleagues or mentors they should not in turn contact members of the Surgical Affairs team in relation to your application.


Full instructions on all aspects of the interview process will be issued to candidates invited for interview.

Professor Kevin Barry
Director of the National Surgical Training Programmes

KEY TIMELINES & LINKS FOR APPLICATION PROCESS FOR JULY 2025 CST INTAKE

- Applications open:
Thursday, 17th October 2024 - 5pm (Irish time)
- Closing date:
Thursday, 21st November - 5pm (Irish time)
- Key information, eligibility criteria and link to the application site can be found at <http://www.rcsi.ie/surgical-training-programmes>
- CST intake webinar **Thursday, 10th October 2024 at 7pm**, details will be circulated via the Forum of Postgraduate Training bodies and via the Intern Networks. The link will also be available on the RCSI website on our intake page.
- Interviews will take place week beginning week beginning **Monday, 24th February 2025**
Note: dates remain subject to change until confirmed with candidates.
- Interviews will be virtual via the MS Teams platform. Candidates will be informed of any changes in this regard.

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	Category	Submission / topic	Scoring % available in this category	Scored
1	Undergraduate Academic Record 	Centile score from Medical School Mandatory submission as part of your application.	5	scored at application point
2	Surgical Aptitude Tests Undertaken online following submission of application. 	<i>Online surgical aptitudes measure:</i> Physicomotor skills Visuospatial ability Perception	10	scored at application point (Note: Following the closing date for submission of applications all candidates will be contacted with details on how to complete this component)
3	Clinical Judgement 	<i>Review and discussion of:</i> Structured Clinical Scenarios	10	scored at interview
4	Interpersonal Skills 	<i>Topics may include:</i> Communication Teamwork/Leadership Crisis Management Negotiation/conflict resolution	15	scored at interview
5	Professional Development 	<i>Topics may include:</i> Clinical Research projects Attendance at meetings/courses Audit projects Teaching activities	20	scored at interview
6	Suitability for Specialty Training 	<i>Topics may include:</i> Motivation /drive Knowledge of Specialty Time/stress management Work ethic/professionalism	30	scored at interview
7	Personal Presentation 	<i>Topics may include:</i> Medical School and Intern history; Highlights of your undergraduate academic record; achievements in your career since graduation; surgical experience; attributes which may make you a good surgeon; extracurricular achievements/ interests; other relevant information	10	scored at interview

CENTILE SCORING

As part of your application to Core Surgical Training, you will be asked to submit evidence of your centile/decile score as provided by your university.

Centile Scores have a maximum of 5 marks available.

Marks will be awarded as outlined here:

Range	Centile	Bucket
20	80 - 100	5
19	60 - 79	4
19	40 - 59	3
19	20 - 39	2
19	0 - 19	1

Points to Note:

If you do not supply a centile/ decile ranking, you will be awarded the lowest score of **1 mark**.

If your university does not provide centile/decile ranking, along with your transcripts you must submit an official letter from your university confirming this.

If you submit a letter from your university confirming it does not provide centile/decile rankings along with your transcripts, **2 marks** will be awarded.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Please review the FAQ's for information on range of topics including:

- General information
- Eligibility for the training programme
- Irish Medical Council registration
- The CST training programme
- The online application
- Technical troubleshooting & queries

GENERAL INFORMATION

Q: Is there a fee for the training programme?

A: No, but there is an application fee of 50 Euro (non-refundable), payable via credit card at point of submission of application.

Q: Is there an application fee?

A: Yes, it is 50 Euro (non-refundable), payable via credit card at point of submission of application.

Q: Can I get a scholarship/fellowship for CST?

A: There are no scholarships or fellowships available for this programme. Each trainee is employed by the HSE and receives a contract in advance of commencement on the programme and their employment date (Second Monday of July annually) from the allocated Hospital.

Q: Is there limit on how many times I can apply to CST?

A: No, there is currently no limit to number of times you can apply to the CST Programme.

Q: Should I have my MRCS completed before I apply for the programme

A: No, however, you must have passed both parts of MRCS to be eligible for an ST3 interview. You can review data on MRCS amongst successful CST applicants in the Trainee Progression Data document on our 'How to apply' page on our website.

Q: I have missed the application deadline, what can I do?

A: No applications can be submitted after the deadline. If you have missed the deadline you must wait to apply the following year. We advise all applicants to ensure you have all your documentation prepared well in advance of the published deadline.

Q: I am due to have my certain aspects updated (work visa status / nationality etc) but will not have proof of this until after applications close. Can I follow up with proof at a later stage?

A: No, all information including IMC status, proof of English language, nationality, medical school results, MRCS status and work visa category are assessed at the time of application. We do not accept supplemental documentation following the close of applications.

Q: I have not worked in Ireland before, will this affect my chances of getting a place on the programme?

A: It is not necessary to have worked in Ireland prior to applying for the CST Programme, however, it is of benefit to have some knowledge of the Irish Health Service ahead of interview.

ELIGIBILITY FOR THE TRAINING PROGRAMME

Q: Am I eligible for CST?

A: Please see eligibility criteria documentation on the webpage [here](#).

Q: Can I join the programme without a Medical Degree?

A: No, you must hold a full Medical Degree to apply for CST.

Q: Do I need to complete an intern year?

A: Yes, please see more details with regard to Registration on the Irish Medical Council website at www.medicalcouncil.ie.

Q: I completed my Medical Degree in English in non-English speaking country. Do I still need to provide IELTS or OET results?

A: Please see documentation in relation to this [here](#).

Q: I am a non-EU national, am I eligible for CST?

A: Please see eligibility criteria documentation on the webpage [here](#).

Q: I am booked to sit my English Language exam but will not get results until after applications close. Am I permitted to submit my application and follow up with exam results at a later date before the interviews?

A: No, all information including IMC status, proof of English language, nationality, medical school results, MRCS status and work visa category are assessed at the time of application. We do not accept supplemental documentation following the close of applications.

MEDICAL COUNCIL QUERIES

Q: How can I apply for Medical Council Registration (IMC)?

A: Please visit the Irish Medical Council website www.medicalcouncil.ie for information re eligibility for Registration.

Q: Do I need to pay my registration fee for the IMC before applying?

A: No, you must prove you are eligible for the General Division of the Register, not that you have already registered. An email from the IMC is sufficient proof of your eligibility status.

Q: Why do you ask for an IMC number?

A: While we do not require registration with the IMC to have been completed by the time of application to CST, it can be a lengthy process. To ensure that there will be no delays in completing registration before commencement on the programme, your application to the IMC must be started by the time of application. It also serves as a unique identifier for applicants.

Q: My application with the IMC is still pending, how do I input an IMC number?

A: You will have received an application number with your application to the IMC. This number will become your IMC number for life once your registration is complete. This is a 6 digit number and should be input where the application requests an IMC number.

Q: Am I eligible for the Medical Council

A: The CST office is not in a position to assess potential applicants for eligibility to the medical council. The onus is on the applicant to provide proof that they are eligible to register on the General Division of the Medical Council. The proofs that we accept in this regards are 1) your registration (current or previous) or 2) an email from the Medical Council citing you by name, confirming that you are eligible to register on the General Division at the time of application to CST. Communications that reference being eligible to apply to the medical council or emails that reference eligibility at a future date will not be accepted.

Q: I was previously registered on the Irish Medical Council but have allowed my registration to lapse. Do I need to register again?

A: No, for the purposes of applying to the CST scheme, you will be required to upload your most recent

registration certificate. You will be required to renew your registration before beginning on the scheme should you be successful in being offered a place.

Q: I currently hold intern registration on the Irish Medical Council Can I apply to CST with only intern registration? What proof do I need to upload?

A: Please upload your Intern registration certificate. This will satisfy the CST Office that the IMC has reviewed your registration documents.

Q: Can I submit online English Language test results to the Irish Medical Council?

A: No, the Irish Medical Council advise that they accept OET and IELTS results from exams run in a test centre only. OET@Home and the IELTS Online are NOT accepted.

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### **REFERENCES**

**Q: Do I need referees?**

**A:** You are not required to submit references at this point in the application process. (This is a change from previous years) You will be required to submit two references at a later stage in the process should you be successful in round one or subsequent offers rounds. We will communicate this to you at that stage of the process with full instruction on how to submit your references. We advise that you are prepared to contact referees from your clinical posts at that time, with one being from your current or most recent post.

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THE APPLICATION

Q: Where can I find the CST application?

A: Applications are hosted on our dedicated application portal CSTOnline. We do not provide copies of the actual application to the candidates before applications open. Please visit our website dedicated to applicants at: <https://www.rcsi.com/surgery/training/surgery/cst/apply>. On this site you will find eligibility requirements, a checklist which outlines what documents you should be compiling in order to apply amongst other documents. This will provide potential applicants with an idea of what information will be required once the application portal opens.

Q: Is there a certain Document Format for Online Applications?

A: Allowed file extensions: ".jpg", ".jpeg", ".jpe", ".png", ".gif", ".txt", ".doc", ".docx", ".pdf", ".xls", ".xlsx", ".rtf"
If you upload a PDF this will increase the size of the document.

Q: Is there a limit to characters when uploading a document?

A: Yes, please limit to 150 characters including file name and file path

Q: Is there a limit of characters on different sections of the applications?

A: Please see below:

- Title of Publication, Audit, presentations and case reports limit is **100 characters**.
- Title of research limit is **500 characters**
- Details of research limit is **4000 characters**
- Verified attendance at meeting limit is **4000 characters**
- Details of clinical Experience limit is **2000 characters**

Q: On the personal details page of the application I am asked to select Stamp 4 "YES" or "NO" – how do I know what to select here?

A: If you do not require a working visa in order to work in Ireland you should select "NO". If you require a working visa in order to work in Ireland and have not yet been granted a Stamp 4 permission you should select "NO". If you require a working visa in order to work in Ireland and have been granted a Stamp 4 permission and possess proof of same you should select "YES" (you will then be prompted to upload your verification)

Q: What is your degree entry method if you attended an international university?

A: Please choose 'other' and state direct entry or graduate entry etc as appropriate

Q: How do I provide my medical school centile score?

A: You are required to submit an official document from your medical school outlining your centile mark. If your medical school does not provide such evidence please request a letter confirming that they do not provide this. You must also provide your university transcripts for calculation purposes. Failure to submit either an official centile score or a letter confirming that your medical school do not issue such confirmation may be detrimental to your score. A copy of your medical degree will not suffice.

Q: What proof is required when submitting presentations?

A: An invitation or email from the meeting or conference team confirming your presentation slot.

Q: What supporting documents are required for Research in Progress?

A: A letter or email of confirmation from your supervisor (must be Consultant level, not another trainee)

Q: How do I provide proof of audit?

A: A letter from you consultant stating the nature/ name of the audit and confirming your participation or published abstract from a national meeting programme including your name as a listed author or a published paper from a journal listing you as an author.

Q: What does it mean by 'standards used' for audit?

A: There are a number of specific standards that can be used for developing criteria when performing a clinical audit such as STROBE and NICE. Where a specific criteria for standards has not been used a brief summary of the standards used can be input in this section. Your audit supervisor should be able to guide as to what is the most appropriate for this section.

Q: Can I list an audit with an expected finish date?

A: Audits in progress cannot be added to the audit section, however can be included in the additional information section of the application or as research in progress.

Q: How are different aspects of the application marked (i.e. MRCS status, publications, master's degree, audits, presentations, etc.)?

A: There are no defined scores awarded but would demonstrate a commitment to lifelong learning which would be taken into account under professional development during interview.

Q: I am due to have my work published/ accepted for presentation/ but this won't happen until after applications close. Can I update this information on my application afterward?

A: No, the CST Office is not in position to accept any documents or updates to applications following the close of applications.

Q: When can I expect to get details regarding the online aptitudes?

A: All candidates who submit an application will receive details by email on how to complete the aptitudes in the weeks following the closing date. You are advised to check your spam/junk folders when awaiting an email from CST.

Q: If I do not complete the online aptitudes can I still be considered for interview?

A: No, completion of aptitudes is mandatory. Please note that completion of the aptitudes does not constitute a call for interview.

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### **THE TRAINING PROGRAMME**

**Q: Can a CST trainee avail of the HSE Flexible training scheme or family friendly rotations?**

**A:** The HSE Flexible Training scheme is open to trainees from CST year 2 onwards. Family friendly rotation requests will be reviewed on an individual basis. You can read more on such policies as Job sharing and Post reassignment [here](#) under General Policies and Procedures & Employee/HR Guidelines and Procedures.

**Q: How many places are available on the CST Programme?**

**A:** 100 Training places are available each year (subject to review year on year by RCSI, NDTP/HSE)

**Q: Can I defer my place?**

**A:** No deferrals are allowed.

**Q: How can I study a particular specialty?**

**A:** You must first successfully complete Core Surgical Training for competitive entry to your chosen specialty at ST3.

**Q: Can I apply to ST3 in more than one specialty?**

**A:** No, you can only apply in your ST2 specialty. If you want to change specialty in year 2 there is an option to do so.

**Q: When will I choose my specialty?**

**A:** We will contact you with information on this midway through CST year 1.

**Q: Can I defer my application for ST3**

**A:** No, if you do not apply to ST3 directly from ST2 you will be required to apply via the Equivalent Standards Route (ESR) where available, in any subsequent years.

**Q: What is the Equivalent Standard Route (ESR)?**

**A:** Please see information [here](#) under General Policies and Procedures

**Q: Will my CST cert be accepted to apply directly to higher training in other countries?**

**A:** You would need to check this with the the training body in the country where you are applying for Specialty training.

**Q: Where can I get information about progression rates from Core to Specialty training?**

**A:** Please see information [here](#) under Progression Metrics.

**Q: Are year one posts allocated competitively? When do you submit your preferences for these?**

**A:** Yes they are, there is an electronic match based on ranking from intake scoring, candidates rank choices from the full list of rotation sets 1 – 100 if they receive a round one offer following interview.

**Q: Can I get credit for completing a different training programme and do less than two years on CST?**

**A:** No, you must complete the full two year programme.

**Q: Are the year 2 posts paired with any specific posts or does it change from year to year?**

**A:** Year 2 rotations are not linked to year 1 rotations. ST2 posts can fluctuate according to demand and are usually linked pro rata to the number of ST3 SpR posts expected to be available the following year. We offer guidance on indicative numbers when trainees are selecting their preferences.

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TECHNICAL QUESTIONS

Q: Can I do my application on a smart phone?

A: No, we strongly advise that you use a laptop/desktop for optimum performance.

Q: Can I do my application in my hospital?

A: We recommend you don't try to do your application in the hospital as there can be firewall /internet speed issues.

Q: Is there a recommended browser for the CST online application site?

A: For optimum performance on the CST application site we recommend using Google Chrome

Q: I am having an issue accessing the site or uploading my documents, what should I do?

A: If you are experiencing technical issues we recommend you try a couple of things such as clear your cache on your computer; switch to incognito mode on your browser. (You can readily find information online on how to do this)

Q: Can I use my college email for application?

A: You can use any personal email however we have noted issues in the past with college emails on both our application site and on MS teams so it would be advisable to use an alternative email if you can.

Q: When attempting to register for CSTOnline I am receiving the error: "a duplicate user account was found with mismatching information" What should I do?

A: If you are attempting to register with an RCSI email that is, or has been, associated with one of the college portals (student portal, library portal, tutor portal, etc.) you will receive this error message. Please contact corest@rcsi.com providing a screenshot of the error and your RCSI email address in order to have your Portal User Account reset to enable you to proceed.

Q: I'm having a technical issue with my application and the suggestions listed have not helped, what should I do?

A: Please take some screen shots of the error messages or relevant pages & email them to: corest@rcsi.ie

Q: Can I speak with someone if I am having issues or have queries.

A: Please note that due to the high volume of applications it is not possible to deal with applicant queries by phone, please put all queries in an email to corest@rcsi.ie as this is the most efficient way of answering your queries or troubleshooting an issues that may arise, if you are experiencing a technical issue please include a screen shot of any error messages. Note: if you call the main RCSI line you are unlikely to get to speak with someone connected with the intake process so please link with us via the core email address directly.

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**If your query is not answered above please contact us via email at: [corest@rcsi.ie](mailto:corest@rcsi.ie)**





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