

SPECIALIZATION EXAM CANDIDATE GUIDE

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Table of Contents

1. INTRODUCTION	2
2. APPLICATION PROCESS	2
3. ASSESSMENT ACCOMMODATIONS.....	3
4. SPECIALIZATION EXAM BLUEPRINT	3
5. ANSWERING MULTIPLE-CHOICE QUESTIONS	5
6. EXAM DAY EXPECTATIONS	6
7. ETHICAL CONDUCT DURING EXAM.....	8
8. SCORING THE EXAM.....	9
9. RELEASE OF EXAM RESULTS.....	9
10. NUMBER OF ALLOWED EXAM ATTEMPTS	10
APPENDIX A – SAMPLE QUESTIONS.....	11
APPENDIX B – REFERENCE MATERIALS.....	12

1. INTRODUCTION

The [Specialization Exam](#) is a requirement for Regulated Canadian Immigration Consultants (RCICs) who graduated from an Immigration Practitioner Program (IPP) and who wish to obtain the RCIC-IRB class of licence. To obtain this class of licence, RCICs must be in good standing, meet all licensee requirements, complete the education pathway successfully and pass the exam. The purpose of the Specialization Exam is to confirm that RCICs who have not completed the Graduate Diploma Program have the required knowledge, skills, and judgment to practise before the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (IRB).

The Specialization Exam is a closed-book exam that contains 190 multiple-choice questions and case-based multiple-choice questions. The exam must be completed within a 4-hour time limit.

2. APPLICATION PROCESS

Exam Registration:

- Once you have successfully completed the Specialization Program, your results will be updated on your profile, and you will receive an email from the College confirming your eligibility for the exam.
- To register for an upcoming exam, log in to the [College Portal](#), navigate to the *Ongoing Education* tab, then to the *Specialization Exam* section. The dates and deadlines for upcoming exams can be found on the College [website](#).
- If your exam fee is not paid by the deadline, your registration will be cancelled.
- Once you have registered and paid for an exam, schedule your exam session promptly.

Deferrals:

- To request a deferral of your registration to another scheduled exam date, you must submit a deferral request through the *Specialization Exam* section of the *Ongoing Education* tab in the [College Portal](#) and pay the \$75 deferral fee. Deferral deadlines are published on the College's [website](#).

Compassionate Waiver:

Once the deferral deadline has passed, you are expected to write the exam as scheduled. If you experience any last-minute unexpected or exceptional circumstances that prevent you from writing the exam, such as sudden illness, an accident or a close death in the family, you may submit a Compassionate Waiver request.

- Compassionate Waiver requests are made through the *Specialization Exam* section of the *Ongoing Education* tab on the [College Portal](#) and are subject to a \$75 fee.
- The request form will be available from immediately after the deferral deadline until 2 weeks following the exam date.
- Your request must include relevant supporting documentation.

- Requests will be reviewed with care on a case-by-case basis, and final decisions are made at the Registrar's discretion.

You are responsible for monitoring all communications from the College in your College Portal Dashboard, as they contain important information and time-sensitive requests.

3. ASSESSMENT ACCOMMODATIONS

To request an assessment accommodation, you must submit the [Assessment Accommodation Request Verification Form](#) when registering for your chosen exam date on the College Portal. The registration deadline (and the deadline for submission of this Form) is based on the exam date you select.

The Assessment Accommodation Information and Assessment Accommodation Request Verification Form (in PDF format) includes the following:

- INFORMATION FOR CANDIDATES – You must read and review this section before proceeding with your assessment accommodation request.
- INFORMATION FOR MEDICAL EVALUATORS – This section must be given to the medical evaluator completing the form on your behalf.
- ASSESSMENT ACCOMMODATION REQUEST VERIFICATION FORM – This form must be fully completed **by you and your medical evaluator**.

If necessary, your medical evaluator may attach additional documentation to the completed form. All medical documentation must be signed and must include the name, contact information, and licensing/registration number of the medical evaluator.

College staff will review your request and consider it for approval. You will be notified and provided with written confirmation of any assessment accommodations that are to be provided.

If we do not receive your request before the deadline, you will be given the option of sitting the exam without accommodations being made or transferring to the next available exam session.

For admissions purposes, the College may set limits for any assessment accommodation requests. Accommodations granted to you by other organizations do not guarantee your request will be approved by the College.

4. SPECIALIZATION EXAM BLUEPRINT

The Specialization Exam Blueprint specifies the requirements and guidelines on how the competencies are to be represented within the exam and the specific parameters of the exam itself.

The table below shows the percentage of questions coming from each competency area. Competencies have been developed for RCICs to capably consult on matters related to Canadian immigration and citizenship law.

It is important that you take the time to review both the [Essential Competencies for RCIC Practice](#) and the percentage of questions on the exam presented by competency category. This information will help you better prepare for the Specialization Exam.

Competency	Approximate Percentage of Scored Questions on Form
1. Foundational Knowledge RCICs apply knowledge of the Canadian legal framework and immigration legislation and regulations to provide competent client services.	17.6%
2. Case Management RCICs apply relevant legislation at each stage of the immigration process in a timely manner to protect the clients' immigration status and eligibility.	19.2%
3. Legal Research and Informatics RCICs conduct research using information technology sources to support the formation of the legal strategy.	8.8%
4. Business Management and Leadership RCICs demonstrate principles of leadership and management to establish and maintain competent and ethical immigration and citizenship consulting practices.	12.8%
5. IRB and Administrative Tribunals RCICs demonstrate the competence required to engage in activities related to the tribunal processes of the Immigration and Refugee Board (IRB).	8.8%
6. Professionalism RCICs adhere to the Code of Professional Conduct for the profession to provide competent and ethical services.	8.8%
7. Cultural Competence RCICs apply principles of cultural awareness to effectively interact with different individuals and to positively impact relationships with the clients.	6.4%

8. Communication, Counselling and Advocacy RCICs use effective communication, counselling, and advocacy skills to achieve common goals and enhance relationships in the provision of services.	11.2%
9. Critical Thinking, Problem Solving, and Evidence-Based Practice RCICs integrate critical thinking and problem solving to inform decisions and actions.	6.4%

Please note that there are 10 questions on the exam that are not scored and are not included in this table. These questions are to help monitor the overall difficulty of an exam and ensure fairness and consistency across exam administrations (See section 8 for more information about how the exam is scored).

The College has implemented a 90-day cut-off to prepare each exam in a timely fashion. Any changes to the immigration and citizenship legislation, regulations, and government policies and procedures made 90 days prior to an exam will not be reflected in the exam questions.

5. ANSWERING MULTIPLE-CHOICE QUESTIONS

The questions will be based on the exam blueprint described above, so you will know what to expect. Each question consists of 4 options: 1 correct answer and 3 options that are plausible but incorrect.

Your task is to select the BEST answer from those listed. Do not concern yourself if a choice you were expecting is not listed and be aware that the choices are written to seem plausible or possible.

The questions are not designed to “trick” you. Do not overthink your responses.

Incorrect answers or “distractors” are often based on common misconceptions.

There is no penalty for guessing or selecting an incorrect answer. It is best to answer ALL questions, even if you are unsure.

There is a feature in the exam software that allows you to flag questions you may want to go back and review.

When you have finished, and if you have sufficient time, review any questions about which you are unsure. Information you read in later questions may jog your memory about content of earlier questions.

6. EXAM DAY EXPECTATIONS

1. You are responsible for ensuring the environment of your exam room and your designated workstation within it meets the following standards:
 - a. No other person may be present (including children).
 - b. Dogs, cats, and similar pets should be secured in another room to avoid distraction.
 - c. All television, radio, or other noise-making technology must be turned off and secured (if the device is in another room, you may still wish to have it off as the online proctor monitors ambient sounds).
 - d. The door to your exam room must be closed and remain closed.
 - e. Your exam room should be set up so that, if possible, the door is behind you and on camera.
 - f. If your computer only has a built-in webcam, you will need to have a small mirror or your smartphone (which you will later have to remove from the area) available in the room which you can use to reflect the screen of your computer to the proctor before your exam starts.
 - g. Other technology and Internet-enabled devices, aside from the computer that you will utilize for your exam, should be removed from the room, such as an iPod, a mobile phone, video camera, smart home device, a smartwatch, etc.
 - h. The surface area of the table or desk (your designated workstation) that you will use should be cleared of all clutter aside from any explicitly permitted materials.
 - i. The room should be well lit so that you are visible on the video feed. Candidates who are sitting with their back to a window should cover the window before the exam to avoid the moving sunlight causing a glare on the video feed.
2. PERMITTED MATERIALS that may be on your designated workstation are:
 - a. A clear container of water, with no labels.
 - b. The computer and necessary peripherals to run your exam. Necessary peripherals are:
 - i. webcam (can be internal),
 - ii. microphone (can be internal),
 - iii. speakers (can be internal),
 - iv. mouse or internal mousepad, and
 - v. ONE monitor (if using a laptop, no external monitors may be connected as the internal monitor will be your 1 monitor).

3. NON-PERMITTED MATERIALS that must be removed from your designated workstation are:
 - a. Food or beverages other than water in a clear container.
 - b. Any electronic devices including, but not limited to, graphing calculators, earphones or headsets, digital wrist watches, cell phones, pagers, PDAs, tablets, laptops, desktops, and secondary monitors.
 - c. Any hardcopy reference materials (books, notes, etc.), or softcopy reference materials (electronic documents, websites, etc.) and any note taking materials (such as pen and paper).
 - d. Any other materials or objects that are not explicitly listed as permitted.
4. Be on time for the scheduled session of your exam. If you are late, you may not be allowed to write the exam.
 - a. You should turn on your computer at least 15 minutes in advance of your scheduled session to allow time to troubleshoot any computer problems that may occur at startup.
 - b. Log into the virtual proctoring site at least 5 minutes before the scheduled start of your session and be prepared to wait up to 45 minutes for the proctor to start the onboarding process for your exam.
 - c. Virtual exam sessions cannot be launched early, nor can they be launched if more than 60 minutes have lapsed since the scheduled start time.
5. Have your identification document (ID) ready for your proctor to verify your identity.
 - a. All licensees have previously provided the College with a valid photo ID such as a driver's licence or passport. The same ID is to be presented to your proctor on exam day.
 - b. If you are unable to present the proctor a valid and recognizable photo ID, your proctor will not launch your Specialization Exam session.
 - c. If the name on your presented ID is later found to not match that on the ID which was previously provided to the College or to be otherwise unacceptable, you may incur an administrative fee of up to \$150, and your exam attempt may be considered forfeited.
6. Do not become involved in any unfair or dishonest practice before, during or after your exam.
 - a. If you try to cheat or break the rules in any way, your proctor may terminate your exam session and the exam attempt will be considered forfeited.
 - b. Exam content is not to be copied or shared in any way.
 - c. You may only have permitted materials in the exam room.

- d. Do not talk to or try to communicate with any other person during the exam, aside from your proctor as needed. Do not read aloud, speak to yourself or mouth the words.
7. There are no set breaks during the Specialization Exam. If you must use the restroom, please inform your proctor, and receive approval to do so. Your exam time will not be paused. You will be asked to re-secure your designated exam room once you have returned from the restroom.
 - a. If you leave the exam room without approval by your proctor before the exam has finished, the proctor may terminate the exam or submit the exam on your behalf, and you may not be allowed to resume.

7. ETHICAL CONDUCT DURING EXAM

The College maintains strict security over the exam content before, during and after the test to eliminate unfair advantages among candidates and avoid the cost of replacing the exam questions. Unethical conduct will not be tolerated during the Specialization Exam. Should a candidate engage in such conduct, the College may terminate their participation in the Specialization Exam and invalidate their Specialization Exam results if they engage in:

- giving or receiving assistance in answering questions during the exam,
- giving or gaining access to questions before or after the exam,
- reproducing exam content in any manner and/or,
- disclosing exam items to others before, during or after the exam.

If the proctor has proof that a candidate has cheated in any way, including giving or receiving assistance or copying test materials, the proctor is authorized by the College to immediately dismiss the candidate from the exam.

If a proctor believes that cheating may have occurred, the proctor will report it to the College staff who will investigate the occurrence. If the candidate is found to have cheated, or if there is sufficient evidence that cheating may have occurred, their test score will be invalidated, and the Registrar will consider the situation.

Candidates must keep the content of the exam, including all questions, scenarios and responses, confidential and private before, during and after the exam. Candidates must not discuss, share, or reproduce contents of the Specialization Exam in any manner before, during or after their own Specialization Exam attempt to maintain and protect the security and integrity of the exam. Candidates must sign a declaration to acknowledge and agree to comply with these security measures. Failure to comply may result in a referral to the Registrar who will determine an appropriate course of action.

8. SCORING THE EXAM

The College applies the Bookmark method methodology to set the pass mark for the Specialization Exam. The Bookmark method is widely used for setting standards on entry-to-practice exams. This is a test-centered, criterion-referenced method where experts review test items and provide judgments as to the adequate level of performance on those test items.

The Bookmark method involves the participation of a panel of RCIC subject matter experts. The panel examines test items and estimates the probability that a minimally competent licensee will correctly answer the items. The process involves an item-mapping procedure where items are ordered from the easiest item to the most difficult item. Panelists are asked to place a bookmark at the point at which they believe a minimally proficient licensee would no longer correctly answer the subsequent items presented. This selected placeholder corresponds to the cut score. This method considers expert decisions with measurement models (item difficulty) in determining the cut scores.

There is no pre-set pass/fail quota for the exam. All test items on the exam undergo a complete item analysis to help ensure that candidates' final scores are both fair and reliable. Any test item failing to perform in the anticipated manner is eliminated from scoring and the total minimum performance level (or pass mark) for the exam is adjusted accordingly for all candidates. Each successful candidate's performance must meet or exceed the final pass mark.

Due to exam security and integrity protocols, individual exam items, answers, and specific performance by competency cannot be disclosed. Each exam form contains a unique set of questions and an equated cut score, and all exam items are statistically reviewed. Poorly performing or ambiguous items are removed before final scoring to ensure a fair outcome for all candidates.

9. RELEASE OF EXAM RESULTS

The results will be communicated to you through the College Portal approximately [7 weeks](#) after completing the exam.

The College reports the exam result as pass or fail. If your score is lower than the passing mark, you will receive a fail result on the exam. It is the total score that determines whether the result is a pass or fail. A pass may be achieved despite a deficiency in one or more categories.

The College sets the pass mark for each exam using the Bookmark method (see section 8). As the number of exam questions may vary from 1 exam sitting to the next, the passing criteria are different for each exam.

Any technical issues experienced during the exam must be reported to the College prior to the results for that exam being released. To do so, send an email to info@college-ic.ca for College staff to review.

10. NUMBER OF ALLOWED EXAM ATTEMPTS

Provided you are eligible to write the Specialization Exam, you may attempt the exam a maximum of 4 times.

If you fail the first attempt of the exam, you are entitled to apply for a second attempt beginning with the next scheduled exam session. You may not register for a new or upcoming Specialization Exam if you are awaiting exam results. Each registration for an additional attempt will be approved based on the registration requirements at the time the new registration is submitted, not the requirements that were active at the time of the first attempt.

Each time you start to write the exam, it is considered as an attempt, regardless of how much of the exam you complete or how long you have sat down to write it.

If you are granted a deferral from the scheduled exam date, or if you do not attend the scheduled exam session, you will not be considered to have completed an attempt.

APPENDIX A – SAMPLE QUESTIONS

A client whose refugee claim has been refused received a pre-removal risk assessment (PRRA) application from the CBSA. What is the purpose of a PRRA?

- A. To ensure that Canada complies with the principle of non-refoulment.
- B. To evaluate the safe return of the claimant to their country of origin.
- C. To verify the validity of the Refugee Protection Division decision.
- D. To assess the validity of the Federal Court's decision.

A client was found inadmissible for an offence outside of Canada. What should the RCIC inform the client of the type of order that will be issued?

- A. An exclusion order
- B. A departure order
- C. A refoulment order
- D. A deportation order

The following information may be used in more than one question.

A refugee claimant fled their country of origin after facing multiple threats of violence and later becoming a victim of a targeted assault.

The refugee claimant's birth certificate shows a different surname and birthday compared to other documents. What should the RCIC do first when assessing the evidence?

- A. Advise the client that they can provide an explanation at the hearing.
- B. Ask the client to retain a forensic identity expert.
- C. Ask the claimant to provide additional documents to address the discrepancy.
- D. Request the client to obtain a new birth certificate that matches the other documents.

The following information may be used in more than one question.

A refugee claimant fled their country of origin after facing multiple threats of violence and later becoming a victim of a targeted assault.

What is the most important factor for determining the eligibility for protection?

- A. Agent of persecution
- B. Personalized risks
- C. Delay in claiming
- D. Serious harm

APPENDIX B – REFERENCE MATERIALS

Check the College's website for:

- the [Code of Professional Conduct](#)
- the [Practice Management Education \(PME\) Regulation](#)

Agreements	
Canada–Québec Accord relating to Immigration and Temporary Admission of Aliens	https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/corporate/mandate/policies-operational-instructions-agreements/agreements/federal-provincial-territorial/quebec/canada-quebec-accord-relating-immigration-temporary-admission-aliens.html
Safe Third Country Agreement	https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/corporate/mandate/policies-operational-instructions-agreements/agreements/safe-third-country-agreement.html

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC)	
Operational instructions and guidelines	https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/corporate/publications-manuals/operational-bulletins-manuals.html

Department of Justice, Consolidated statutes and regulations of Canada	
<i>Citizenship Act</i>	http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/C-29/
Citizenship Regulations	http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/regulations/SOR-93-246/
<i>College of Immigration and Citizenship Consultants Act</i>	https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/C-33.6/
<i>Immigration and Refugee Protection Act</i>	http://laws.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/i-2.5/
Immigration and Refugee Protection Regulations	http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/regulations/sor-2002-227/

Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (IRB)	
IRB	http://www.irb-cisr.gc.ca/Eng/Pages/index.aspx
Immigration Appeal Division Rules	http://laws.justice.gc.ca/eng/regulations/SOR-2002-230/index.html
Immigration Division Rules	http://laws.justice.gc.ca/eng/regulations/SOR-2002-229/index.html
Refugee Appeal Division Rules	https://laws.justice.gc.ca/eng/regulations/SOR-2012-257/index.html
Refugee Protection Division Rules	https://laws.justice.gc.ca/eng/regulations/SOR-2012-256/index.html
Chairperson's guidelines	https://www.irb-cisr.gc.ca/en/legal-policy/policies/Pages/chairperson-guideline.aspx
Legal and Policy resources	https://www.irb-cisr.gc.ca/en/legal-policy/pages/index.aspx
The 1951 Refugee Convention and 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees	https://www.unhcr.org/media/1951-refugee-convention-and-1967-protocol-relating-status-refugees

If you have any questions about the Specialization Exam that are not answered in this guide, please contact info@college-ic.ca.