

SPECIALIZATION EXAM CANDIDATE GUIDE

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College of Immigration and Citizenship Consultants
Collège des consultants en immigration et en citoyenneté

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Specialization Exam is a requirement for RCIC-IRB class of licence for a Regulated Canadian Immigration Consultant (RCIC). RCICs must complete the exam successfully as part of their certification process. The purpose of the Specialization Exam is to confirm that RCICs who have not completed the new Graduate Diploma in Immigration and Citizenship Law have the required knowledge, skills, and judgment to practice before the IRB.

2. QUICK FACTS

- You are responsible for completing the exam application, including the qualifying pathway, in advance of the exam so that there is sufficient time for your application to be reviewed by the College.
- You will be presented with 95 multiple-choice questions and 95 case-based multiple-choice questions for a total of 190. The exam must be completed within a 4-hour time limit and is closed-book.
- Provided you meet the application requirements for each exam attempt, you may write the exam a maximum of 4 times.
- Requests for special accommodations will be considered on an individual basis.
- You may not attempt the Specialization Exam until your application has been approved and all invoices have been paid.

3. KEY POINTS FOR THE EXAM DAY

- If you are writing the exam via a virtual proctor, log into the virtual proctoring site 3 minutes before the scheduled start of your session and be prepared to wait up to 45 minutes for the proctor to start your exam.
- If you are scheduled to write the exam with an in-person proctor at an exam centre, arrive 30 minutes before your exam is scheduled to start.
- Be prepared to show original government-issued photo identification.
- The Specialization Exam is a closed book exam. During the exam, you will not be allowed to access other electronic or computer-based reference materials, including other websites or e-books on the same computer.

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

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 (for the latter see the section 2).

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.

A fundamental component of a formal approach to exam development is a thorough description of the content domain being measured. The competencies outlined in this document define the content domain requirements for the development of the exam. 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
<p>1. Foundational Knowledge RCICs apply knowledge of the Canadian legal framework and immigration legislation and regulations to provide competent client services.</p>	17.6%
<p>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.</p>	19.2%
<p>3. Legal Research and Informatics RCICs conduct research using information technology sources to support the formation of the legal strategy.</p>	8.8%
<p>4. Business Management and Leadership RCICs demonstrate principles of leadership and management to establish and maintain competent and ethical immigration and citizenship consulting practice.</p>	12.8

Competency	Approximate Percentage of Scored Questions on Form
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%

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 to an exam will not be reflected in the exam questions.

5. SCORING THE SPECIALIZATION EXAM

The College applies the Bookmark method methodology to set the pass mark for the RCIC 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 RCICs. The panel examines test items and estimate 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 RCICs' 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 RCICs. Each successful licensee's performance must meet or exceed the final pass mark.

6. ANSWERING MULTIPLE-CHOICE QUESTIONS

- The questions will be based on the exam blueprint as listed 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.
- 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.

7. EXAM DAY EXPECTATIONS

1. Virtual exam – You are responsible for creating your ProctorU account using the same email address provided for your exam application. Once you are approved to write the Specialization Exam and have paid all invoices, you are responsible for scheduling your online proctoring session within the chosen window. If you do not do so, your exam attempt may be considered forfeited.

2. Virtual exam – You are responsible for ensuring the environment of your exam room and your designated workstation within it meet the following standards:
 - a. No other person or persons should be present.
 - 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 the door is behind you and on camera.
 - f. 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.
 - g. If your computer only has a built-in webcam, you will need to have a small mirror available in the room which you can use to reflect the screen of your computer to the proctor before your exam starts.
 - h. The surface area of the table or desk (your designated workstation) that you will use should be cleared of all clutter aside from your computer, computer peripherals (mouse, keyboard, microphone/headset), your identification, and any explicitly permitted materials.
 - i. The room should be well lit so that you are visible on the video feed. RCICs 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.
3. In-person exam – The exam centre will ensure that the exam room meets the necessary standards.
4. PERMITTED MATERIALS that may be on your designated workstation are:
 - a. A clear, resealable container of water, with no labels
 - b. The computer and necessary peripherals to run your exam (RCICs writing in-person will be provided a computer setup by the exam centre). Necessary peripherals are:
 - i. webcam (can be internal),
 - ii. microphone,
 - iii. speakers,

- 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 one monitor).
5. 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, Bluetooth headsets, digital wrist watches, cell phones, pagers, PDAs, tablets, laptops, desktops, and secondary monitors.
 - c. Any reference materials, whether they be hardcopy (physical) or softcopy (electronic documents, websites, etc.).
 - d. Any other materials or objects that are not explicitly listed as permitted.
6. Virtual exam – You are expected to remove all small, movable nonpermitted materials covered in 5.a, 5.b, and 5.c from your exam room.
- a. You are not expected to remove large furniture from the exam room. The room should be clean and as free of clutter as possible, with the designated workstation being clutter-free. You should not interact with any other objects in your room.
7. In-person exam – You will be provided a space at the front or back of the exam room to secure your belongings. In some facilities, you will be asked to place your belongings in a secure location outside of the exam room.
- a. Any electronics must be turned off and secured with your belongings.
8. Be on time for the scheduled session of your Specialization Exam. If you are late, you may not be able to take the exam.
- a. Virtual exam – You should turn on your computer at least 10 minutes in advance of your scheduled session to allow time to troubleshoot any computer problems that may occur at start-up. You should sign into the virtual proctoring site 2-3 minutes before your exam session is due to begin. Virtual exam sessions cannot be launched early, nor can they be launched if more than 30 minutes have lapsed since the scheduled start time.
 - b. In-person exam – You should arrive at the exam centre at least 30 minutes before the start of the exam, unless otherwise notified by the College, to register and confirm identification. If you choose to enter after the exam has begun and within the 30-minute grace period, you will not be given any additional time to write the exam. If you arrive after 30 minutes from the start of the exam, you will not be admitted into the room and will not be permitted to write the exam.

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- c. A refund will not be issued if you are too late to write the exam.
 9. Have your identification ready for your proctor to verify your identity.
 - a. All licensees have previously provided the College with a valid photo identification such as a driver's licence or passport. Similar identification is to be presented to your proctor on their exam day.
 - b. Virtual exam – You will be required to present the original identification as a part of your onboarding process with the virtual proctoring site.
 - c. In-person exam – You must present the proctor with the original identification to be admitted into the exam room.
 - d. If you are unable to present the proctor a valid and recognizable photo identification, your proctor will not launch your Specialization Exam session.
 - e. If the name on your presented identification is later found to not match that on the identification which was previously provided to the College or be otherwise unacceptable, you may incur an administrative fee of up to \$150, and your exam attempt may be considered forfeited.
 10. 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 end 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.
 11. Do not talk to or try to communicate with any other person during the exam, aside from your proctor as needed.
 12. 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 while you do so.
 - a. Virtual exam – You will be asked to resecure your designated exam room once you have returned from the restroom.
 - b. In-person exam – You will be escorted to the restroom by a proctor.
 13. 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.

8. SPECIAL ACCOMMODATIONS

You must request and submit supporting documentation for special accommodations no later than the deadline to submit a special accommodation request for the exam session you select.

Your request must be accompanied by a currently dated electronically scanned medical documentation which makes precise requests for the accommodation in relation to your needs and the format of the Specialization Exam. The medical professional should be aware that the RCIC Specialization Exam is a 190 case-based multiple-choice questions exam with no essays, is taken on a computer, has a standard time of 4 hours and is closed-book. The requested accommodation should be specific wherever possible. For example, a request for 2 five-minute breaks rather than a request for breaks. We accept the following medical documentation:

- A letter from your doctor including the diagnosis and the acknowledgement of the above description of the exam format; or
- A medical evaluation which provides you with the diagnosis.

All medical documentation must be signed and must include the name, contact information, and licensing/registration number of the medical professional.

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

If we do not receive adequate notice to consider your request, 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 special accommodation requests. Accommodations granted to you by other organizations do not guarantee your request will be approved by the College.

9. ETHICAL CONDUCT DURING EXAM

The College maintains strict security over the exam content before, during and after the test to eliminate unfair advantages among RCICs and avoid the cost of replacing the exam questions. Unethical conduct will not be tolerated during the Specialization Exam. Should an RCIC 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 an RCIC 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 RCIC 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 RCIC 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.

RCICs must keep the content of the exam, including all questions, scenarios, and responses, confidential and private before, during and after the exam. RCICs 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. RCICs 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.

10. RELEASE OF EXAM RESULTS

The results will be sent to your email address on record approximately 8 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 5). As the number of exam questions may vary from one exam sitting to the next, the passing criteria are different for each exam.

11. NUMBER OF ALLOWED EXAM ATTEMPTS

You may attempt the exam a maximum of 4 times. The dates for the upcoming Specialization Exam sessions can be found on our [website](#).

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. Each application for an additional attempt will be reviewed for approval based on the application requirements at the time the new application is submitted, not the requirements that were active at the time of the first attempt.

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

If you are granted a compassionate waiver to reschedule your exam date, you will not be considered to have completed an attempt. Similarly, declined applications do not count as attempts.

APPENDIX A – REFERENCE MATERIALS

Check the College’s website for:

- The [Code of Professional Conduct](#)
- [Regulations on Practice Management \(Client Account Regulation, etc.\)](#)

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
Canada-United States-Mexico Agreement (CUSMA)	https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/corporate/publications-manuals/operational-bulletins-manuals/temporary-residents/foreign-workers/international-free-trade-agreements/cusma.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>Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, Part I of the Constitution Act, 1982</i>	https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/Const/page-12.html
<i>Citizenship Act</i>	http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/C-29/
<i>Citizenship Regulations</i>	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/
<i>Immigration and Refugee Protection Regulations</i>	http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/regulations/sor-2002-227/

Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC)	
Temporary Foreign Workers Program	https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/services/foreign-workers.html

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