



Exceptional Circumstances Professional Examinations



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1. Scope of this Policy

The procedures laid out in this document apply to all Professional Examinations conducted by RCSI in Ireland or in our overseas centres.

2. What to do if you can't attend an examination

There may be occasions when your attendance at an examination is affected by circumstances beyond your normal control. These circumstances may include personal health/personal problems or bereavement of an immediate family member.

In the first instance, it is important that you inform the Professional Exams Team pgexams@rcsi.ie to ensure you are made aware of the options available to you regarding your examination.

If you have circumstances that will affect your attendance at an examination you are required to submit an Exception Circumstances Application. This document outlines the Exceptional Circumstances process and the form for completion is available at the end of this document.

The deadline for submission of your Exceptional Circumstances Form is within **3 working days** of the date of the affected examination, completed forms should be emailed to pgexams@rcsi.ie.

3. What are Exceptional Circumstances?

Exceptional Circumstances are defined as serious and extraordinary circumstances outside the candidate's control, normally unforeseeable and unpreventable which affect the candidate's ability to attend an examination.

In general, Exceptional Circumstances will be of a personal medical or personal nature affecting the candidate and must be corroborated by independent evidence.

Key points to note:

1. The circumstances have to be exceptional. Unfortunately, all of us can expect to experience some unwanted events and we have to manage our lives around them. This includes being able to manage or compensate for the minor illnesses and disruptions that, in the normal way of things, may occur in everyone's life from time to time. Listed below in section 4 are some circumstances which might be viewed as exceptional, and in section 5 some circumstances which are not accepted as being exceptional.
2. Applications for Exceptional Circumstances **must be made within 3 working days** of the date of the examination. Retrospective applications will only be considered where there are valid reasons for non-submission within the usual timeframe.



3. RCSI reserves the right to verify all and any evidence provided by you in support of your submission. In cases where a fraudulent submission is reasonably suspected, candidates will be dealt with under Malpractice Regulations.

4. What counts as Exceptional Circumstances?

Some examples of circumstances that might be upheld as exceptional are given below, together with examples of documentation to support your submission.

Circumstance	Supporting Documentation
Personal illness which prevented you from attending on the day of the examination.	Letter/certificate from a health professional.
Unforeseen major travel disruption which caused you to miss an examination.	Letter from transport company.
Legal matters of a personal nature	Letter/documents from court/solicitor.
Bereavement of an immediate family member	Supporting evidence of bereavement, e.g. Death Certificate or letter from health professional.

PLEASE NOTE THAT IF YOU PRESENT YOURSELF FOR AN EXAMINATION AT THE TIME OF THE EXAMINATION YOU HAVE DECLARED YOURSELF FIT.

5. What does not count as Exceptional Circumstances?

Long term issues, such as ongoing health, anxiety, personal or financial issues, which affect your ability to study or attend an examination generally, do not count as Exceptional Circumstances.

The following are examples of circumstances which are not likely to be upheld:

- work or religious commitments;
- a minor ailment;
- personal illness that impacted your preparation for an examination;
- a minor domestic upset;
- a long-standing condition;
- misreading the examination schedule;
- failure to follow procedure to schedule an online examination;
- attending family engagements, holidays;
- chronic ill health (unless there has been a sudden and temporary flare-up);
- prolonged personal difficulties
- travel disruptions that are known or ongoing at the time of your application e.g. airline strikes



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6. What to do if you are unable to attend an examination?

If you are unable to attend on the day of an examination you must inform the SARA Office pgadmin@rcsi.ie of your absence.

A candidate who absents himself or herself from any examination without prior notification will be considered to have withdrawn from the examination and will forfeit their examination fee in full.

To claim Exceptional Circumstances, see section 9 below for the procedures on how to initiate such a claim and sections 4 and 5 in relation to determining what may constitute as “Exceptional Circumstances”. Applications for Exceptional Circumstances must be submitted within 3 working days of the examination and be accompanied by all relevant documentation at the time of submission.

7. What if I am unable to secure a travel visa?

When applying for an examination a candidate must ensure they are familiar with any travel requirements to enter the country where the examination is being held. Failure to apply for a travel visa in a timely manner will not be considered an exceptional circumstance. Only candidates who have evidence of visa refusal before the examination date will be considered under this policy.

8. Outcome of an exceptional circumstance application

When you submit an Exceptional Circumstance Application this will be reviewed in line with this policy. We will contact you within 30 days of receipt of your fully completed application (including all supporting documentation) to inform you of the outcome of your application.

If your exceptional circumstance application is upheld the following options may be available to you.

- Refund of examination fee less 20% administrative charge
- Transfer to a future diet, subject to 20% administrative charge

Where the Exceptional Circumstance is not approved the decision is final and will not be reconsidered.

All Exceptional Circumstances are dealt with in a confidential manner and all copies of applications are retained by the PPE (Professional & Postgraduate Examinations) Team. By submitting your application, you agree to allow summarised information to be presented to persons relevant for the purposes of decision making.

9. How and when do I submit Exceptional Circumstances Form?

The Exceptional Circumstances Form is available at the end of the policy. The deadline for submission is within 3 working days of the examination date.

Claims for Exceptional Circumstances cannot be accepted after this deadline unless you can provide sufficient evidence as to why the submission was not made on time. If you wish to submit a claim of Exceptional Circumstances you should submit a form even if you are still waiting supporting documentary evidence e.g. death certificate.



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Please note that a medical certificate that does not have enough detail may be rejected. All supporting documentation must be submitted with the application.

If work commitments prevent attendance the College is not responsible and will not refund or transfer any part of the examination fee.



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10. RCSI Exceptional Circumstances Form

This form MUST be submitted by **the candidate** to the Professional Examinations Team pgexams@rcsi.ie for all circumstances which affect candidate examinations.

All claims for consideration of Exceptional Circumstances must be submitted on this form, with supporting evidence attached as appropriate. Forms **must be** signed and dated.

Name:	
Candidate Number	
Examination	
Date of Examination	
Examination Centre	
Nature of the Circumstances	
List of supporting evidence attached. If you do not have evidence, or cannot attach such evidence, please explain why.	
Signature:	
	Date: