

# Regulations and Information for Candidates

European Diploma in HIV Medicine

European AIDS Clinical Society (EACS)

August 2025 Edition

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# 1. Introduction

The European Diploma in HIV Medicine is designed as an exam that will promote minimal standards of education and training in HIV Medicine whilst ensuring the delivery of a uniform standard of clinical care in the practice of HIV Medicine.

The European Diploma in HIV Medicine is awarded by the European AIDS Clinical Society (EACS) and delivered in partnership with Royal College of Physicians of Ireland (RCPI). Success in the Diploma demonstrates a high level of clinical knowledge in HIV medicine, aligned with the European clinical guidelines. While the diploma is not yet formally accredited by a regulatory authority or equivalent to a medical specialty certification, it is widely recognised as the benchmark standard of professional development and commitment in the field.

The following Regulations apply to all candidates entering the Royal College of Physicians of Ireland (RCPI) examinations. Any decision on the interpretation of these Regulations made by the College is binding. The acceptance of any application is at the sole discretion of the College.

The European Diploma in HIV Medicine is made up of one examination held once a year.

All RCPI examinations are conducted in the English language.

# 2. Applications

## 2.1 Entry Requirements

Candidates who take this examination need to have a primary medical degree, be currently practising and have at least three years of direct patient care experience in HIV management.

## 2.2 Method of Application

All exam applications are submitted online through RCPI website. Candidates will be prompted to include required documentation and make payment as required for the examination. The College accepts payment by credit/debit card or PayPal only.

Applications after the published closing date will not be accepted.

Candidates (first-time applications only) must upload a passport style photo (colour, full-face, minimum 100x100 pixels, neutral background).

The candidate's full name must be given at the time of application for the examination. The name the candidate provides will be used on all official correspondence (such as diplomas, qualifications and certificates) issued by RCPI. Candidates who change their name(s) by marriage or deed poll must upload documentary proof of this, if they wish to be admitted to the examination in their new name.

## 2.3 Examinations Locations

The RCPI written examinations are delivered by remote invigilation through our online exam provider TestReach. Remote invigilation allows a candidate to sit the computer-based exam from their own computer e.g., at home or at work.

Candidates are supervised remotely by invigilators/supervisors throughout the exam.

Candidates are required to adhere to the following requirements to sit an exam by remote invigilation:

- A quiet, secure environment – a room where the candidate can take the exam without interruption.
- A PC or laptop computer with a reliable internet connection, webcam and microphone. The device must have permissions and be enabled to install software (the remote invigilation app).
- Multiple screens, headphones and earbuds are not permitted.
- Prove your identity with a driving licence, passport or public services card.
- Scrap/rough paper is not permitted. A virtual notepad is available for use during the exam.
- The candidate's mobile phone must be within reach in the room where sitting the exam. The phone is for registration/technical support purposes only and should not be used to take the exam.

For more information about remote invigilation visit our website; [remote invigilation link](#)

## 2.4 Visa

If a candidate requires a visa to sit an examination, it is the responsibility of the candidate to ensure that the visa application is made in sufficient time before the examination date for which it has been sought. A refund will not be given if a candidate is unable to attend the exam as a result of visa-related problems. Please note the visa requirements apply to in-centre examinations. This examination is conducted online via remote invigilation.

## 2.5 Examination Fees

The fees payable on application for the EACS European Diploma in HIV Management are published on the relevant examination website RCPI European Diploma in HIV Medicine Exam Format, which is updated regularly.

Candidates will be permitted to take the examination only when all fees are paid in full.

## 2.6 Withdrawal from the Examination

Notice of withdrawal from an examination must be given in writing to the College. A refund less 10% will be made if written notice of withdrawal is received by the College on or before the closing date of application to the examination. Refunds will not be made where candidates submit their withdrawal request after the application closing date.

For Written examinations candidates may request a deferral of their application to the next diet. Examination deferral requests must be submitted from the closing date of applications to no later

than seven working days before the examination date. A non-refundable administrative fee of €100 applies. By submitting a deferral request and paying the fee, candidates will be removed from the registration list for the current examination. The administrative fee must be paid within seven working days of submitting the deferral request. If you need to request a late deferral and/or a deferral fee waiver based on extenuating circumstances, you must do so in writing to the Examinations Operations Manager to [exams@rcpi.ie](mailto:exams@rcpi.ie). Please see the [RCPI Cancellation Policy](#).

## 2.7 Cancellation of Examination

RCPI reserves the right to cancel, reschedule the date, or change the location of an examination. In the event of a reschedule or cancellation by RCPI, the College will endeavour to inform all applicants at least six weeks prior to the examination date. If an examination is cancelled or rescheduled by RCPI, candidates will be offered a full refund or option to transfer to another date if applicable. For further details, please see the [RCPI Cancellation Policy](#).

## 2.8 Absence

Candidates who do not attend the examination without notifying RCPI will be recorded as absent.

Absence will count as an attempt of the examination.

Examination fees are non-refundable in the event of an absence. For further details, please see the [RCPI Cancellation Policy](#).

## 2.9 Examination Registration

All candidates taking the examination via remote invigilation will be emailed by our online exam provider, TestReach approximately 10 days in advance of the examination date. This email will contain the candidate's login credentials and instructions to download the Exam Application on the device the candidate will use to take their examination.

A few days after the first email, candidates will receive a second email notifying them that they have been assigned to the examination. The second email contains instructions for the candidate to login to the application and test their device, webcam, microphone, and speakers. The candidate is also instructed to book a time slot to start their examination. The start time of the examination is based on the candidate's location and time settings on their device. **This step must be completed at least 72 hours before the examination**, or the candidate will not be able to start the examination.

On the day of the examination candidates are instructed to login into the Exam Application at least 15 minutes before their exam start time. This is to allow time to connect with the invigilator/supervisor and to complete the pre-validation process (including proof of identity check), before beginning the examination.

Any candidates who arrive or login after their allocated registration time, **will not be permitted to take the examination**.

## 2.10 Limited Attempts Policy

Candidates sitting the European Diploma in HIV Medicine will be allowed a maximum of six attempts.

Candidates who reach six attempts at any examination will be allowed to apply for one final additional attempt. To allow for sufficient additional training and education there must be a minimum of six months or one examination diet between the sixth and the additional (seventh) attempt. The maximum time allowed between the sixth and the additional (seventh) attempt is three examination diets. Only one additional attempt will be permitted.

The number of attempts is counted from a candidate's first sitting of the examination, not from the effective date of this policy.

Examination	Maximum Number of Attempts	Time limit to Pass	Additional Attempt	Maximum Time limit for completing Additional Attempt
European Diploma in HIV Medicine Written	6	Unlimited	1	Three diets from the 6 <sup>th</sup> attempt

Please refer to our [limited attempts policy](#) for more details.

### 3. Preparation for the Examination

Preparation requires a wide breath of knowledge and you should review what you have learned during your specialist training, and access relevant textbooks, journals, and clinical guidelines.

The exam is based on the EACS core curriculum, available at [EACS Core Curriculum](#).

Whilst not mandatory, we recommend that candidates also access the EACS e-Academy and the educational activities listed under Education at the EACS website [EACS Home Page](#).

## 4. Examination Format

### 4.1 Examination Format

This examination is designed to comprehensively assess candidates' knowledge-based professional competencies in HIV management via Single-Best Answer (SBA) questions. It supports EACS's commitment to the following objectives:

- i. Clinical Practice Harmonisation: Harmonising HIV care standards according to EACS Guidelines ensures that candidates embody best practices, resulting in positive patient outcomes and supporting professional mobility.
- ii. Professional Competence Certification: Establishing minimum knowledge standards through certification validates successful candidates' clinical proficiency, ensuring they meet benchmarks for effective HIV management.
- iii. Continuous Professional Development: Encouraging ongoing competency enhancement in knowledge, attitudes, and collaboration offers candidates a structured learning and development opportunity that fosters a culture of professional innovation.

The examination consists of one paper with 120 Single Best Answer (SBA) format questions. Candidates have a maximum of three hours to complete the paper. The examination is delivered online via remotely invigilation.

Each question consists of an initial stem followed by five possible answers. Candidates should select the single best answer.

Each question is equally weighted. There is no negative marking, so candidates are strongly advised to give a considered response to every question.

## 4.2 Blueprint

The questions are selected to achieve a balanced spread of questions across the topics. The categories of the 120 questions used in the examination are determined by the percentages outlined in the table below. The skills will be examined across the specialties and not necessarily within any individual specialty.

Topic	% +/-5%
1. Antiretroviral Therapy	22%
1.1 ART in Clinical Management and Preventive Contexts	
1.2 Pharmacological Basis of ART and Resistance Development	
1.3 Novel and Emerging Therapies in HIV Treatment	
2. HIV Diagnostic Methods and Interpretation	5%
2.1 Virological and Immunological Tests for Diagnosis and Monitoring HIV Infection	
2.2 Diagnostic Process and Interpretation of Genotypic Resistance Testing	
3. HIV Pathogenesis, Clinical Presentations, and Disease Progression	8%
3.1 HIV Virology and Pathogenesis	
3.2 Disease Progression and Clinical Presentations	
4. Complex Management Issues in HIV Care	18%
4.1 Clinical Management of Virological Failure and Drug Resistance	
4.2 Diagnosis and Management of Opportunistic Infections and Co-infections	
5. Managing Comorbidities in People Living with HIV	14%
5.1 Cardiovascular and Metabolic Health	
5.2 Systemic Conditions and Disorders	
5.3 Mental Health	
5.4 Cognitive Impairment	
6. HIV Care for People in Specific Populations	14%
6.1 HIV Care in Pregnancy and the Neonatal Period	
6.2 Tailored HIV Care Approaches for Specific Populations	
6.3 HIV Care for Older Persons	
6.4 Mitigating Frailty in HIV	
6.5 Non-HIV Malignancies	
7. HIV Prevention and Sexual Health Strategies	15%
7.1 Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs)	
7.2 Treatment as Prevention: PrEP, PEP, and TasP	
7.3 Harm Reduction and Vaccination Strategies in HIV Care	
8. HIV Epidemiology, Health Systems, and Policy	4%

8.1 HIV Epidemiology	
8.2 HIV-Related Stigma and Discrimination	
8.3 Public Health Interventions and Illness Prevention in HIV Care	
	100%

### 4.3 Marking

The standard necessary to achieve a pass is set to a high level proficiency in HIV management.

Every question is carefully reviewed and assessed for difficulty.

Each correct answer will be awarded one (1) mark, making a total of 120 available for the paper. There is no negative marking; therefore, all candidates are encouraged to answer all questions.

Data files containing candidates' answers are automatically verified and scored against an answer key in the system. Mathematical performance indicators are then calculated and scrutinised by the Examination Board, to confirm the fairness of every question. The pass mark is approved by the Examination Board for each examination.

## 5. Examinations Rules and Guidelines

These Regulations apply to all examination candidates of the College. Candidates should note that by applying to sit an examination, they are deemed to have understood and agreed to comply by these Regulations.

5.1. Candidates will not be permitted to take the Written examination if they do not register their start time in advance or if they login to the examination after their allocated start time.

5.2. Candidates must have a government issued photo id (e.g., passport or driver's licence), as proof of identity, the candidate's name must be stated in the same manner as on their examination application. Candidates will not be admitted to take the examination unless they produce photographic identification.

5.3. Candidates should note that drugs will almost always be referred to by their European approved names rather than their trade names. Biochemical and other measurements will be expressed in SI units.

5.4. Candidates are not permitted to have in the exam environment where they are sitting the remote exam, smart technology, additional laptop computers, headsets, tablets, calculators, textbooks, documents, any recording equipment or personal items of any kind other than those specifically allowed for that particular examination and previously notified to them. The use of 3rd party software is not permitted and candidates must ensure that all applications are close prior to starting the examination. Any candidate found to be in possession of any of above during the examination will receive an infringement warning from the exam invigilator/supervisor.

5.5. Candidates may not carry any device that can store or record information or be used for communication (e.g., mobile phones or smart watches), headsets, calculators, textbooks, documents



or personal items of any kind other than those specifically allowed for that particular examination while in the examination. Any candidate found to be in possession of any of the above during the examination will have their examination suspended and will automatically fail the examination.

5.6. It is strictly forbidden for candidates to talk or attempt in any way to communicate with anyone other than the examiner/invigilator/supervisor while the exam is in progress.

5.7. Candidates taking written examinations are not permitted to switch the webcam off, lean out of the webcam view, block the webcam, commence hand movement that could be interpreted as sign language, glance at other areas of the room that the invigilator cannot see, look away from their screens repeatedly or look at their hands or wrists, behave in an unsuitable or inappropriate manner to the invigilator/supervisor. If invigilators identify any of the above behaviour, they will make a record of this, and it will be reported to RCPI.

5.8. Smoking or vaping is not permitted during the examinations.

5.9. One brief (<5 minutes) comfort break is permitted during the written examination. No additional time will be added to the examination to compensate for breaks. The supervisor will record the time that the candidate leaves their desk and when they return. If a candidate takes more than one break, or a break longer than five minutes, their performance will be subject to an enhanced review of the proctoring record and analysis of their keystroke/clickstream data obtained after the examination. Candidates who require to take an additional break for medical reasons should request this through reasonable adjustments process in advance of the examination taking place. Supporting evidence will be required for such requests.

5.10. Dress and appearance are an important aspect of professionalism.

5.11. To facilitate the assessment of non-verbal communication skills and interaction with patients, examiners, and invigilators, RCPI will require examination candidates, for the duration of the examination, to remove any clothing and/or other item which covers all, or part of, their face.

5.12. Candidates will be prevented from proceeding with the examination if the invigilators/examiners believe that they are too unwell to continue or if their conduct is likely to endanger patient safety, cause distress or disrupt other candidates. Candidates who are considered by examiners to be acting in an unprofessional, improper, or inappropriate manner during examination will be asked to stop that particular part of the examination and may be prevented from continuing with the examination. RCPI may also report these issues to candidates' employers or supervisors.

## **6. Emergency and Fire Evacuation**

6.1. Candidates taking written examinations via remote invigilation: if there is an emergency at the location where you are taking the exam, notify the invigilator/supervisor and follow the evacuation guidelines for the location. The invigilator/supervisor will submit your examination and notify the RCPI Examination Department of the incident. Each incident will be reviewed by the RCPI Examination Department on a case-by-case basis.

6.2. A written report of the evacuation will be filed by the College.

6.3. In the event that it is not possible to resume the examination within a reasonable time period, the examination will be re-scheduled. In this case, candidates will be contacted by the Examinations

Department regarding alternative examination arrangements. Candidates may then leave when safe to do so.

## **7. Examinations Code of Conduct**

This code applies to all examinations candidates and includes behaviour and all contact with examiners, invigilators, patients and RCPI staff, before, during and after the examination. By submitting an application for an RCPI examination, candidates are confirming that they have read, understood and will abide by these regulations, the candidate code of conduct, and the supporting regulations and guidance on the RCPI website. Misconduct includes, but is not restricted to:

- Any attempt to communicate with another candidate or any person other than an invigilator/supervisor during the examination.
- Any attempt to gain access to or plagiarise the work of another candidate.
- Any attempt to gain or pass on information with regard to the content of the examination in advance of, during or after the examination.
- Any attempt to remove materials or content from an examination other than those specifically permitted.
- Any form of cheating or conduct likely to give an unfair advantage to the candidate or others.
- Bribery of another candidate or examination official.
- Bringing in or removing any materials or audio or communication devices (including mobile phones and 'smart' watches), other than those specifically permitted into any examination.
- Failure to act with respect for fellow candidates at all times.
- Failure to abide by the instructions of an invigilator/supervisor or other examination official.
- Failure to ensure patient, surrogate or actor comfort and safety at all times during clinical exam interaction.
- Failure of a candidate to inform RCPI if any limitations on medical practice are placed on them by the Irish Medical Council or the equivalent regulatory body in the country in which they practice.
- Failure to maintain strict confidentiality regarding patient identity or details, before during or after the examination.
- Failure to respect patient, surrogate or actor dignity and modesty at all times.
- Falsification or alteration of any results document or qualification.
- Impersonation of a candidate.
- The use of any recording equipment (including all photographic, video and audio recording equipment).
- Unacceptable, inappropriate or disruptive behaviour at all times, including but not limited to harassing and/or bullying RCPI staff, invigilators, examiners, patients, surrogates and actors.
- Aiding or abetting any of the above.

Any candidate acting in breach of any of the above Regulations, or of any further rules and regulations communicated to them by RCPI or an Exam Provider, or misbehaving in any way, may be suspended from the examination, or be deemed to have failed the examination. If an infringement of the College Regulations is deemed to be particularly severe, the candidate concerned may be permanently disbarred from entering any future College examinations.

## 7.1. Reporting Procedure of Examinations Misconduct

Suspected misconduct may be reported to the College by examiners, invigilators/supervisors, candidates, patients and any other person who becomes aware of suspected misconduct.

Where an invigilator/supervisor suspects a candidate of violation of examination rules and guidelines, they will:

- a. Confiscate any unauthorised material in the possession of the candidate.
- b. Make a note of the time when the alleged infringement was discovered.
- c. Allow the candidate(s) to continue the examination.
- d. For a remote invigilation examination, the invigilator may terminate the candidate's exam session in the case of major violations of the exam rules, such as leaving the room without authorisation or communicating with unauthorised persons.
- e. Inform the candidate(s) at the end of the examination that a written report of the incident will be submitted to the Examination Manager and the Examination Board Chairs.
- f. Within one working day of the examination, the invigilator/supervisor will submit a written report on the alleged infringement.

## 7.2. Investigation Procedure of Examinations Misconduct

RCPI will endeavour to ensure that investigations will be completed as quickly and efficiently as possible and candidates will be kept informed of progress.

The Examinations Manager will review the report of the alleged case of misconduct within three working days of the clinical examination, and prior to the results being issued for the remote invigilation examinations. The Examinations Manager will determine whether there is sufficient evidence of a case to be answered after consulting with other members of College staff where necessary. In cases deemed to be of a very minor or technical nature, a letter of reprimand will be issued to the candidate, and no further action is taken.

In all other cases the Examinations Manager will review the report with the Faculty of Paediatrics and the Associate Dean of the Examinations. Following the review, the candidate will be informed of the allegations in writing within 10 working days of the clinical examination, and prior to the results being issued for the remote invigilation examinations.

The candidate will be invited to reply to the allegation of misconduct, within 10 working days from receipt of the email/letter. If the candidate does not respond to the letter within the specified time frame, the College will consider this as an acknowledgment of the allegation and will proceed to the next phase of the misconduct investigation procedure.

Following a response from the candidate, the College will acknowledge the receipt of the response.

Associate Dean of the Examinations will prepare a file which includes the candidate's response if one has been received and send the file to the Examinations Committee for a final decision along with a recommendation of an appropriate penalty.

The candidate will be notified of the final decision within 30 days of the clinical examination date and within 30 days of the results meeting for the remote invigilation examinations.

A candidate who believes that there was an error in the conduct of the investigation may, within 10 working days of receiving the Committee's decision, request a review of the investigation by the College Censors.

The College Censors shall review all information provided by the candidate, to determine if the correct procedure was followed in the conduct of the investigation, and if the investigation was fairly treated. The purpose of this review is solely to determine if such a procedural irregularity has occurred and is not to relitigate the decision.

If the review concludes the investigation to be fair the candidate will be notified within 10 working days from receipt of their request.

If the College Censors determines that there was an error in the conduct of the investigation, she/he may refer the matter back to the Examinations Committee for further consideration. The candidate will be notified of the status of their review request and provided with an estimated timeline for the final decision. The Registrar shall then refer the matter to the College Executive, which shall decide on any appropriate further action. The decision of the College Censors and/or College Executive shall be final.

## **8. Reasonable Adjustment Arrangements**

Any candidate who has a physical disability, learning disability or any other special need that they believe could affect their performance in an examination, may be entitled to adapted examination arrangements. The purpose of any specific arrangement is to compensate for any restrictions imposed by a disability without impairing the validity of the examination.

All such candidates should inform the Examinations Department at the time of application of their circumstances in writing, together with a consultant's report to support their application. Failure to include this information at the time of application may affect the arrangements that can be put in place in time for the examination. The information provided is treated strictly confidentially.

For further details, see Reasonable Adjustments Policy: [Examinations Policies and Procedures](#).

## **9. Examination Results**

The College processes the marking of the examinations as quickly as possible, consistent with ensuring accuracy, fairness and a stable pass standard.

For written examinations, data files containing candidates' answers are automatically verified and scored against an answer key in the system. Mathematical performance indicators are then calculated and scrutinised by the Board, to confirm the fairness of every question. The pass mark is approved by the Board of Examiners for each examination.

Please refrain from telephoning or emailing the College regarding your result during this period, as this will delay the process.

## **10. Recheck Procedure and Appeals Policy**

### **10.1 Recheck Procedure**

Candidates can request a recheck of their examination results in the European Diploma in HIV Medicine written examination. A fee of €150 applies for this procedure. The fee will be refunded if a recheck changes the overall examination result to a pass mark. Exam marks are generated by a rigorous process with multiple safeguards and are also reviewed by the Examinations Board before the results are released. Given the nature of single best answer questions, the quality assurance measures undertaken by the Board, and the exam being conducted via computer-based testing, the margin for error is negligible and therefore it is highly unlikely that a recheck will result in a change to an exam result.

Candidates wishing to request a recheck of their examination results, must submit their request in writing to the Examinations Department [exams@rcpi.ie](mailto:exams@rcpi.ie). The candidate will be required to complete the recheck application form and pay the applicable fee within four weeks of the results release date.

## 10.2 Appeals Policy

An 'appeal' is defined as a request for a review of a decision made by or on behalf of an Examinations Board about the performance in an examination of a candidate subject to the grounds of appeal as set out in the in the appeals policy.

The only accepted grounds for an appeal are if there is clear evidence of procedural irregularity in the conduct of the examination or there were exceptional circumstances which adversely affected a candidate's performance.

Candidates are expected to notify Examinations staff of any irregularity regarding their examination during the examination or within 48 hours of the examination.

Please refer to our appeals policy for more details: [Examinations Policies and Procedures](#).