

Transition Considerations

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Author and Approval		
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Dental Examinations Executive	Author	17 th July 2025
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Document Revision History		
Version No	Date	Summary of Revisions
V1.0	17 th July 2025	Approved for publication.
V1.1	13 th September 2025	- Paragraph 4 – clarification for MFD. The MFD exam will need to be passed before May 2027 to be considered an alternative. - Paragraph 7 has been added for DPH reciprocity for Part A ISFE to May 2029.
V1.2	18 th December 2025	- Clause 4, now clause 8 – Amendment to the clause, previously, 4, now number 8 for the addition on the validity period for the RCSI MFD. - Clause 7 and 9 added. - Clause numbers amended 5 to 4, 6 to 5 and 7 to 6.
V2.0	16 th March 2026	- Clause 4 paragraph added to clarify meaning of ‘knowledge component.’ - Former clause 5 removed as made redundant by clarification to clause 4. - Former clause 9, now clause 8, amendment to reflect changing clause numbers.
V2.1	9 th April 2026	- Branding update – logos and reference to Secretariat amended to Executive. - Removal of ‘<i>and has completed the exam after September 2024</i>’ from clause 8 to enhance accessibility of exam.
V3.0	26 th April 2026	- Clause 8: Minor wording refinement and alignment with preceding clauses (6–7). - Clause 9: Minor clarificatory amendment to phrasing, improving consistency with Clause 8:

		• Addition of clause 10.
V3.1	14 th September 2026	• Further clarity on MFDS exceptions and requirements added to Clauses 1 and 2. • New clause 3 added and subsequent clauses renumbered. • Explanatory text and summary at start of document expanded.
V3.2	18 th September 2026	• Previous clauses 1 and 2 removed to avoid duplication across Eligibility Criteria. • New clause 1 added and subsequent clauses renumbered. • Explanatory text amended.

Understanding the Transitional Considerations

The following considerations will be in place for a temporary period of transition to assist Dental Specialty Fellowship Examination candidates impacted by the change in curricula and as a result, new exam arrangements. The arrangements are temporary and may apply depending on a candidate's training pathway, qualifications, and previous examination history.

Requirement to hold MFDS

The standard Dental Specialty Fellowship Examinations Eligibility Criteria apply unless a candidate falls within one of the transitional arrangements set out in this document.

Clause 1

Candidates who completed or who will complete a UK or Ireland university postgraduate clinical programme which parallels the NTN training programme between 1 September 2023 and 31 December 2026 are exempt from the requirement to hold MFDS when applying for the Dental Specialty Fellowship Examinations Part 1 and Part 2. The exemption applies until 30 April 2028 only at which point the standard eligibility criteria will apply to all candidates who completed training in this time period.

Furthermore, candidates currently undertaking specialty training in the UK (and/or Ireland in the case of postgraduate university courses) which began before 1 January 2026 are also exempt from the requirement to hold MFDS.

Clauses 2, 5 and 6: Qualifications accepted as alternatives to MFDS

Certain qualifications obtained before the introduction of the new examination arrangements may be accepted as evidence of meeting the MFDS requirement. The period for which these qualifications will be accepted varies by qualification, with most arrangements continuing until 1 May 2031. In exceptional circumstances, applications may be considered beyond this date on a case-by-case basis.

Clause 3: Reciprocity for existing specialty membership examinations

Candidates who have successfully completed the knowledge component of an existing specialty membership examination may not need to repeat an equivalent assessment within the Dental Specialty Fellowship Examinations. Instead, they may only need to complete the remaining clinical component, provided the original examination result remains valid under the relevant regulations.



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Clause 4: Dental Public Health arrangements

A specific transitional arrangement applies to candidates who have previously passed Part A of the Intercollegiate Specialty Fellowship Examination (ISFE) in Dental Public Health. Eligible candidates may receive an exemption from the Short Answer Questions (Part 1) component of the new examination, subject to the time limits outlined in these arrangements.

Clauses 7 and 8: Case-by-case consideration of reciprocity arrangements

Candidates with previous examination achievements who are unable to apply within the stated timeframes may still be considered on a case-by-case basis by the Dental Specialty Fellowship Examinations Executive Committee until 1 May 2040.

Clause 9: Individual eligibility enquiries

Candidates who are unsure whether these arrangements apply to them, or whose circumstances do not clearly fit within the provisions set out in this document, should contact the Dental Examinations Executive at info@dsfe.org.uk before submitting an application. The Executive reserves the right to consider individual cases where appropriate.

Summary

- Candidates will be required to hold MFDS (or an accepted alternative qualification) as a standard eligibility requirement unless one of the transitional arrangements below exempt them from this.
- Certain legacy qualifications may be accepted as alternatives to MFDS for a limited period.
- Some candidates who have already passed the knowledge component of a legacy specialty membership examination may receive reciprocity.
- Special transitional arrangements apply for some Dental Public Health candidates.

Transitional Clauses

1. Candidates who are currently undertaking an NTN training programme that began before 1 January 2026 will be eligible for exemption from holding MFDS.

Candidates who are currently undertaking a UK or Ireland postgraduate clinical masters or doctoral programme which parallels the NTN training programme that began before 1 January 2026 will be eligible for exemption from holding MFDS.

Candidates who completed or who will complete a UK or Ireland university postgraduate clinical programme which parallels the NTN training programme between 1 September 2023 and 31 December 2026 will be eligible for exemption from holding MFDS until 30 April 2028.

2. MJDF will be considered an acceptable alternative to MFDS.
3. A reciprocity agreement is in place for those candidates who have passed the knowledge component of the specialty membership examinations. These candidates will only be required to pass the clinical section of the Dental Specialty Fellowship Examinations to

receive the fellowship qualification. Candidates will receive reciprocity for the knowledge component, where that component remains valid for progression as detailed in the relevant examination's regulations, for 2 years after the last diet of the existing membership specialty examinations.

The knowledge component (commonly delivered through written papers and/or short-answer question formats within existing College examinations) will be used as the reference point for comparison. Given the variation in current examination design across Colleges and specialties, this term is intended to capture the knowledge-based assessment elements broadly rather than denote a specific format.

Relevant examination structures are outlined in appendix 1.

4. A reciprocity agreement is in place for those candidates who achieve a pass in Part A in Dental Public Health in the ISFE examinations. Candidates who achieve a pass in Part A in Dental Public Health but do not attain a pass in Part B by the time of discontinuation of the ISFE examinations will be required to undertake the Dental Specialty Fellowship Examinations. Candidates will be awarded a certificate of completion for Part A, which may be submitted to receive an exemption from the Short Answer Questions (SAQ) element of the new examination. This exemption will be valid for examinations held before May 2029, irrespective of when ISFE Part A was achieved. Candidates who have not achieved a pass at the Dental Specialty Fellowship Examination before May 2029 will not be eligible for exemption and will require to take the new Short Answer Questions (SAQ) examination.

Candidates should note that this exemption is unique to Dental Public Health. An exemption may be granted in the specialty of Dental Public Health, as both the previous and revised examination formats include a comparable component. For the other dental specialties, the revised examination structure does not assess Critical Appraisal in this manner.

Consequently, exemptions cannot be applied in those cases.

There are no reciprocal arrangements in place for Part B Dental Public Health ISFE examinations. Candidates should refer to guidance above.



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5. The bi-collegiate MFDS certification offered by Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh and Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow, and the MFDS certification offered by Royal College of Surgeons of England, will be accepted for applications for the Dental Specialty Fellowship Examinations Part 1 made before 1 May 2031. Please also refer to clause 7.
6. RCSI MFD will be considered an acceptable alternative to MFDS if the candidate has passed the examination before May 2027, at which point the new tri-collegiate MFDS examination arrangements will take effect. The RCSI MFD completed before May 2027 will be accepted for applications for the Dental Fellowship Examinations Part 1 made before 1 May 2031. Please also refer to clause 7.
7. Where a candidate who holds the certificates noted in clause 5 or clause 6 is not ready to apply for Part 1 of the Dental Specialty Fellowship Examinations before 1 May 2031, candidates will be considered on a case-by-case basis by the Dental Specialty Fellowship Examinations Executive Committee until 1 May 2040.
8. Where a candidate who holds the certificates noted in clause 3 or clause 4 is not ready to apply for Part 2 of the Dental Specialty Fellowship Examinations before the date specified in the relevant clause, candidates will be considered on a case-by-case basis by the Dental Specialty Fellowship Examinations Executive Committee until 1 May 2040.
9. Applications to sit an examination may be considered on an individual basis at the discretion of the Dental Examinations Executive. Candidates who are unsure of their eligibility or whose circumstances do not fully align with any clause detailed above are strongly advised to contact the Executive in advance of submitting an application for guidance.

Appendix 1

Examination	College(s)	Parts
M(Orth)	RCS Eng/RCPSG	A three-hour multiple choice/multiple short answer paper relating to any part of the syllabus.
M(Endo), M(Perio), M(Pros)	RCS Eng/RCPSG	- A three-hour written paper with six compulsory short-answer questions in general restorative dentistry; - A three-hour written paper with six compulsory short-answer questions in the specialty of the candidate's choice (endodontics, periodontics or prosthodontics).
M(Oral Surg)	RCSEd/RCS Eng/RCPSG	A written paper of 150 SBA questions.
M(Spec Care Dent)	RCSEd/RCS Eng/RCPSG	A written multiple-choice question paper in two parts. Each part has 90 questions and lasts for two hours.
M(Paed Dent)	RCSEd/RCS Eng/RCPSG	A three-hour written paper.
M(Endo), M(Perio), M(Pros)	RCSEd	A three-hour written paper of 150 Single Best Answer (SBA) questions.
M(Orth)	RCSEd	Two two-hour papers of 90 Single Best Answer (SBA) questions each.