



CANDIDATES INSTRUCTIONS

COECSA WRITTEN EXAMS

OCTOBER 2026

15th October, 2026

Dear Applicant,

This is information regarding the COECSA Online Written Examinations:

- Part 1A: Visual/Basic Sciences
- Part 1B: Optics, Refraction, and Instruments
- Part 2: Clinical Ophthalmology

To be eligible for the Exams, an applicant must meet the below criteria;

a) Part 1A and Part 1B

- ✓ A Resident who has been in training for at least 12 months will be eligible to sit for Part 1A and/or Part 1B.
- ✓ A practicing Ophthalmologist who would like to become a Fellow of COECSA or wish to assess their ophthalmic knowledge will be eligible.
- ✓ A candidate can sit Part 1A and Part 1B during the same sitting, and in any order.

b) COECSA Part 2

- ✓ A candidate will be eligible to sit for COECSA Part 2 Exams after passing Part 1A and Part 1B.
- ✓ A candidate who sat and passed ICO Part 1A and Part 1B before June 2023, will be eligible to sit COECSA Part 2 Exam.

Please note that candidates are required to submit certified copies of academic and registration certificates, in evidence of their eligibility to sit these examinations. The structure of these examinations is based on the COECSA Fellowship curriculum available on the COECSA curriculum website.

The above information has been agreed by the COECSA Examinations Committee and approved by the College Senate. It is subject to be changed at the discretion of the Committee and Senate.

Yours sincerely,
Exams Committee
COECSA

Introduction

The College of Ophthalmology of Eastern, Central and Southern Africa (COECSA) is a specialized virtual college that was registered in 2012. One of the objectives of the College is to promote the excellence of eyecare, by encouraging individuals to acquire and maintain a high standard of Ophthalmic knowledge for the practice of Ophthalmology. The Basic Sciences Examinations, Optics, Refraction and Instruments Examinations and the Clinical Ophthalmology Examinations are part of this initiative.

Objectives

The members of The College of Ophthalmology of Eastern, Central and Southern Africa believe that every ophthalmologist is required to have a good knowledge of Basic Science and Optics, Refraction, and Instruments to understand the principles underlying their clinical practice. The College also believes that every ophthalmologist should acquire the breadth and depth of knowledge of the Clinical Sciences related to ophthalmology, to enable them to recognize and treat the disease of the eye with which they will come into contact in everyday practice.

Structure of the Examination

- a. Visual/Basic Science
- b. Optics, Refraction, and Instruments
- c. Clinical Ophthalmology

A. The *Visual/Basic Science Examination* is aimed at doctors in training who are in their first/second year of training. The Examination will be directed by Examiners appointed by the Examinations Committee of COECSA.

1. The Examination will be held annually in March and September. At present it is conducted in English only. The Examination will be held in a location close to where the candidate is studying or working.
2. The Visual/Basic Science Examination will consist of 100 multiple-choice questions (MCQ) over a 2.5-hour period.
3. The candidates will take the Examination via an online portal provided by COECSA in partnership with MeritTrac and will enter their answers onto the system after reading each question. The answers will be computer marked. A positive mark will be awarded for each correct answer. No mark will be given to those questions left blank or marked incorrectly. The computerized results are then analyzed by the Examiners.

4. Questions will be asked from all or some of the following subjects related to Ophthalmology:

- **Anatomy of the Eye, the Orbit, and related structures**
- **Embryology**
- **Vision**
- **Neuro Anatomy**
- **Ocular Physiology, Biochemistry and Cell Biology**
- **Pharmacology**
- **Epidemiology and Statistics**
- **Genetics**
- **Pathology**
- **Microbiology**

B. The *Optics, Refraction, and Instruments* examination is aimed at doctors in training who are in their first/second year of training. The Examination will be directed by Examiners appointed by the Examinations Committee of The College.

1. The Examination will be held annually in March and September. At present it is conducted in English only. The Examination will be held in a location close to where the candidate is studying or working.
2. The Optics, Refraction, and Instruments Examination will consist of 50 multiple-choice questions (MCQ) over a 1.5-hour period.
3. The candidates will take the Examination via an online portal provided by COECSA in partnership with MeritTrac, and will enter their answers onto the system after reading each question. The answers will be computer marked. A positive mark will be awarded for each correct answer. No mark will be given to those questions left blank or marked incorrectly. The computerized results are then analyzed by the Examiners.
4. Questions will be asked from all or some of the following subjects related to Ophthalmology:
 - **Optics**
 - **Refraction**
 - **Use of Instruments**

C. The ***Clinical Ophthalmology Examination*** is offered to ophthalmologists who have passed the COECSA Basic Science and Optics, Refraction, and Instruments Examinations. The Examination will be directed by Examiners appointed by the Examinations Committee of COECSA.

1. The Examination will be held annually in January and June. At present it is conducted in English only. The Examination will be held in a location close to where the candidate is studying.
2. The Clinical Ophthalmology Examination will consist of 150 multiple-choice questions (MCQ) over a 3.5-hour period.
3. The candidates will take the Examination via an online portal provided by MeritTrac and will enter their answers onto the system after reading each question. The answers will be computer marked. A positive mark will be awarded for each correct answer. No mark will be given to those questions left blank or marked incorrectly. The computerized results are then analyzed by the Examiners.
4. Questions will be asked from all or some of the following subjects related to Ophthalmology:
 - **General Medicine related to Ophthalmology**
 - **Community and Public Health**
 - **Ophthalmic pathology and ocular tumours**
 - **Neuro-Ophthalmology**
 - **Paediatric Ophthalmology and Strabismus**
 - **Orbit, eyelids, and lacrimal disease**
 - **Trauma, External Eye Disease and Cornea**
 - **Ocular inflammation and uveitis**
 - **Glaucoma**
 - **Lens and Cataract**
 - **Retina and vitreous**

Important Reminders

1. The MCQ Paper/Questions are not available to candidates after the examination.
2. The candidates will be informed if they have passed or failed. The marks of each section will be given to each candidate to enable them to assess their strengths and weaknesses.
3. To aid the Examiners and to ensure the quality of Examinations, the answers to each part will be analyzed. This information will be used to determine the pass mark and will ensure that the result of the Examination is comparable from year on year.
4. Visual Acuity will be given in LogMAR, in brackets, the metric Snellen, the Imperial Snellen and the decimal notations.
5. Answering the question accurately is the best way of obtaining a pass grade. It is still possible to pass the Examination without completing all the questions.
6. The question bank is large and only 10-15% of questions will be repeated from year to year.

Certification

Provided a candidate has satisfied the regulations, she/he will be issued with a signed certificate, with the following grades.

- PASSED with Distinction
- PASSED with Merit
- PASSED

Examinations Regulations

1. The structure of the examination is described on pages 2,3 and 4.
2. The certificate will be presented to those who have achieved the appropriate level in the Examination and who have complied with the regulations.
3. The fees and dates of the Examination are obtainable from the COECSA Office and Website.
4. Application forms must reach the COECSA Office before the closing date as indicated on the call for applications. Applications received after the closing date will not be processed.
5. The appropriate fee must be paid and cleared before the closing date.
6. Applications for admission to the Examination must be accompanied by a photocopy of the candidate's medical qualification and certificate of registration, together with a small passport-size photograph. (No certificates are required for 2nd and subsequent entries.)
7. Candidates wishing to withdraw their applications must do so *in writing*. For withdrawals received 40 days before exam date, a refund will be given, but there will be a 20% deduction to cover administrative charges. No fee refund will be given to candidates wishing to withdraw after the closing date for applications, or less than 40 days before the exam date.
8. A candidate withdrawing an application on or after the closing date for applications - as shown in the Examination Calendar - or who fails to appear for the Examination for which his entry fee has been accepted, *will not be entitled to any refund or transfer of the fee*.
9. A candidate who may desire to make representations about the conduct of their Examination must address them to the COECSA CEO and not, in any circumstance, to an Examiner.
10. *On Examinations Day candidates must arrive at the venue at least 15 minutes before the Examination start time. They must bring an HB pencil, a sharpener and eraser in case the Examination, for any reason is conducted on paper.*

Curriculum

The summarized COECSA Curriculum is available on request from COECSA Secretariate: exams@coencsa.org

Other requirements:**1. Identification**

Please bring to the Examination room proof of identity with photo. National ID, Driving licence or Passport.

2. Examinations Platform

The Examination Platform that the COECSA is using is Merittrac. This allows COECSA to use AI and Live proctoring, enabling secure online examinations. The system will monitor facial, backgrounds, noise, and screen navigation.

3. Confidentiality

The Question materials MUST NOT be removed or copied for outside of the Examination Room.

Thank you and best wishes.