



Licence in Dental Surgery

Examination Regulations 2026 (applicable for LDS exams being sat from May 2026 onwards)

IMPORTANT NOTICE: Candidates are advised that it is **ESSENTIAL** to read the LDS Examination Regulations alongside the LDS Candidate Guidance documents available on the RCS England website. It is the candidate's responsibility to fully understand the eligibility criteria, exam format and application process that is included in both sets of documents.

1. Introduction	2
2. Eligibility for the award of the LDS	2
3. Assessment Structure	4
4. Overview of LDS syllabus.....	5
5. Process for Application.....	6
6. Examination fees.....	6
7. Time restrictions and attempts allowed.....	6
8. Infringement of the regulations	6
9. Plagiarism	7
10. Appeals	7
11. Withdrawals and Refunds.....	7
12. Exemptions	8
13. Appointment of examiners.....	8
14. Feedback to candidates	8
15. Procedure for applying to the Faculty of Dental Surgery for enrolled membership.....	8
16. Procedure for registration of the LDS with the General Dental Council UK.....	8
17. Disability and equal opportunities	8

1. Introduction

Aim of assessment

- 1.1 The examination is offered by the Faculty of Dental Surgery to assess the competencies set out in the GDC's Safe Practitioner Framework document
- 1.2 The assessment is not limited to recent graduates.

2. Eligibility for the award of the LDS

Eligibility for entrance to the examination

To be eligible to enter each part of the examination all candidates must:

- 2.1 If previously registered on a course of study at a UK undergraduate dental school, produce evidence that they have satisfactorily completed a five-year curriculum as described and recognised by the General Dental Council (GDC) and have passed the dental school's final examinations, and are registered with the GDC.
- 2.2 If in possession of a qualification awarded by a European Economic Area (EEA) university or licensing body that is recognised by the GDC for purposes of full registration in the UK, produce evidence of qualification, certificates of the courses of study attended and examinations passed for such a qualification.
- 2.3 If holding a qualification awarded by an overseas university or licensing body that is NOT recognised by the GDC for purposes of full registration in the UK, produce evidence of qualification and a NARIC certificate. In addition, it is necessary to provide certificates showing that the studies and courses undertaken were in line with the standards described in Preparing for Practice (General Dental Council, revised edition 2015). A NARIC certificate is required unless temporary registration with the GDC is current and can be verified.
- 2.4 Produce evidence of having had no fewer than 1600 hours clinical experience where they have personally treated patients in the dental chair. The number of hours of this clinical experience will either be hours spent undertaking appropriate investigations and administering dental treatment during the dental degree, during post-qualification experience, or a combination of the two and must have occurred prior to sitting Part 2 of the examination.
- 2.5 Demonstrate their recent linguistic competence by means of the Academic International English Language Testing System (IELTS) or the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL). IELTS test result should be within the last two years at time of submission and show a minimum overall score of 7.0, with no individual sections lower than 6.5. The TOEFL test result should show a minimum overall score of 5 with reading score minimum 4, listening score minimum 4.5, speaking score minimum 4, writing score minimum 5. The LDS will be held only in English and insufficient command of English will not be accepted as an excuse for poor performance in any part of the examination.
- 2.6 Exemptions only apply to those applicants who:
 - 2.6.1 have indefinite leave to remain; or

- 2.6.2 have a recent primary dental qualification or postgraduate dental degree from a UK institution or that has been taught and examined entirely in English; or
- 2.6.3 have qualified in a country where English is the first language; or
- 2.6.4 have recent and continuous experience of practising in a country where English is the first language.

By 'recent' we require evidence of English language competence that is less than two years old at point of submission. When we refer to a country where English is the first language, we refer to any country on the UK governments list that exempt applicants from proving knowledge of English when applying for British citizenship (www.gov.uk/english-language/exemptions).

By 'continuous' we require evidence of practising for a minimum of six months during the two-year 'recent' experience period.

2.7 Produce a Certificate or Letter of Good Standing

- 2.7.1 This is a certificate or letter issued by the dental authority of the country in which the candidate was last working, which states that s/he is legally entitled to practice dentistry in that country and that s/he has not been suspended, disqualified or prohibited from working as a dentist. This document cannot be more than three months old at the time of application. The original certificate or certified copy.
- 2.7.2 The candidate must also produce a Certificate or Letter of Good Standing from the dental authority in the country in which s/he qualified if this is different to the country in which s/he last worked or is currently working.
- 2.7.3 If a candidate cannot obtain this document, an affidavit or affirmation witnessed by a solicitor or other legal professional can be submitted in its place. This is only acceptable if it is not possible to obtain a Certificate or Letter of Good Standing. The candidate must be prepared to swear under oath in the affidavit/affirmation that s/he cannot obtain the Certificate or Letter of Good Standing despite having tried to. In the affidavit/affirmation the candidate must state that s/he has the right to practice dentistry in the relevant country and has not been suspended or prohibited from practicing as a dentist. Reasons For being unable to obtain a Letter or Certificate of Good Standing must be included. The Royal College of Surgeons of England may also seek confirmation from the relevant authority.
- 2.7.4 A registration certificate or an annual practicing certificate or a reference from a candidate's university will not be accepted as a Letter or Certificate of Good Standing. The Letter or Certificate of Good Standing must be issued by the registration authority for dentists in that country.

2.8 Candidates will also be required to sign a health declaration, which states:

I declare that to the best of my knowledge I am not suffering from, nor am I a carrier of, any infectious disease, blood borne virus or other transmissible disease, which might jeopardise the well-being of patients. I further declare that I have no reason to believe that such infectious or transmissible diseases may be present.

If a candidate is unable to provide the above health declaration, they must provide:

- Original Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C, and HIV certificate, which have been authenticated from an accredited UK laboratory to show their full serology status
- The certificates must be no more than three months old and be presented to the RCS England Examinations Department within three months of successfully completing the LDS Part 3 examination. Without the declaration or certificates, a candidate cannot be registered with the UK General Dental Council (GDC).

3. Assessment Structure

3.1 The Content and Format of the Examination

The examination is in three parts, the scope of which is outlined in the Learning Outcomes document. Candidates are permitted the maximum number of attempts at each part as follows: four attempts at Part 1; three attempts at Part 2; and three attempts at Part 3. All three Parts must be passed within a five-year currency period.

These are the maximum number of attempts permitted for each Part and not the minimum number of attempts guaranteed. Places are allocated on a first-come, first served basis and candidates should be advised that they are not guaranteed a place on every exam they apply for. Candidates should prepare well for the examination and aim to pass on the first or second attempt.

3.2 Part 1

3.2.1 This examination is comprised of two papers (paper A and paper B), each of up to three hours' duration. The papers assess the relevant competencies as outlined in the Learning Outcomes document available on the RCSEng website. The format of the papers is Single Best Answer (SBA) questions centred on knowledge and its application to:

- a. Clinically applied dental science and clinically applied human disease.
- b. Aspects of clinical dentistry, law and ethics, and health and safety.

3.2.2 In order to progress to Part 2, both Part 1 papers will need to be passed at one sitting. If either paper is failed candidates will be required to re-sit all of Part 1.

3.2.3 The Part 1 LDS examination is held at least once per year and is usually delivered remotely online.

3.2.4 Four attempts are allowed at the Part 1.

3.3 Part 2

Candidates will be required to pass Part 1 before submitting an application for Part 2. Candidates will not be permitted to apply for both sections of the examination at the same time.

- 3.3.1 The examination will test knowledge application and clinical skills (including management of medical emergencies) across the range of major competencies outlined in the Learning Outcomes document and will employ the following formats:
- a. An objective structured clinical examination (OSCE) of up to two hours duration.
 - b. A structured clinical reasoning (SCR) examination of six 20-minute SCR cases
- 3.3.2 This examination will be conducted over one or two days at least twice per year in the UK.
- 3.3.3 Part 2 and Part 3 must be passed within five years of obtaining Part 1. Three attempts are allowed for the Part 2.

3.4 Part 3

- 3.4.1 This examination will constitute an operative test on a dental manikin of up to three hours' duration
- 3.4.2 This examination will be conducted over one or two days at least twice per year in the UK.

4. Overview of LDS syllabus

- 4.1 The syllabus (in the form of an examination matrix) has been devised with reference to competence, knowledge and familiarity in different aspects of dentistry as outlined in the GDC's Safe Practitioner Framework document.
- 4.2 A successful LDS candidate will:
- have had a broad academic and dental education and be able to function in all areas of clinical dentistry;
 - be trained in biomedical science;
 - be able to work together with other dental and health care professionals in the health care system;
 - have good communication skills;
 - be prepared to undertake continuing professional development supporting the concept of life-long learning; and
 - be able to practice evidence-based dentistry based through a problem-solving approach, using basic theoretical and practical skills.
- 4.3 The detailed Learning Outcomes, along with an indicative overview of their assessment in each of the three Parts of the LDS can be found in the LDS Learning Outcomes document.
- 4.4 Candidates will not be assessed on their familiarity with the National Health Service (NHS) or British culture other than the ways in which this might affect how patients are treated.

5. Process for Application

- 5.1 Guidance on the online application process, and further essential information published in “LDS Candidate Guidance”, are available on the RCS England website and should be read alongside these regulations.
 - 5.1.1 Examinations will normally be held at least twice per year on the dates decided by the Faculty Examination Board.
 - 5.1.2 Applications for all parts of the exam are made through online applications via the RCS England website. The closing date for all exams will also be advertised on the website.
 - 5.1.3 Online applications for admission to the examination must be fully completed, accompanied by any supporting information specified in the application and the full fee payable. Candidates have a maximum of one week after the closing date to provide any missing supporting documents. If the supporting documentation is not received within one-week of the closing date, the application will be withdrawn and you may forfeit any fees paid. Please refer to the Candidate Guidance document for more information on the application process.
 - 5.1.4 Candidates will need to pass: Part 1 before applying for Part 2; and Part 2 before applying for Part 3. Applicants are not permitted to enter more than one Part of the examination at the same time.
- 5.2 When a candidate submits a completed online application plus all of the required documents and payment, they will be invited to enter for the examination.
- 5.3 Candidates applying for the LDS are expected to be ready and committed to sit the examination.

6. Examination fees

- 6.1 Fees for the examination are determined by the Faculty Board and are subject to change from time to time. The current fees are available on the RCS England website.

7. Time restrictions and attempts allowed

- 7.1 The examination is in three parts. Candidates have five years to complete all remaining Parts of the LDS after passing Part 1.
- 7.2 Candidates are permitted a maximum of: four attempts at Part 1; three attempts at Part 2; and three attempts at Part 3.

8. Infringement of the regulations

- 8.1 Any candidate who infringes the regulations or who is considered by the examiners to be guilty of behaviour prejudicial to the proper management and conduct of the examination may be refused admission to the assessment or to proceed with assessment. A copy of the College policy relating to Malpractice can be found on the RCS England website.

- 8.2 No electronic equipment, bound or unbound materials, or unauthorized writing instruments are allowed into the room where the examination is being held. Candidates in breach of this rule will have the items confiscated and will be ejected from the examination (or result withheld) and the application fee will be forfeited. Candidates who infringe the regulations may not be permitted to continue with LDS examination. Candidates are required to use a personal computer or laptop for the Part 1 exam, but use of internet search engines or accessing unauthorised material is strictly prohibited. Please see the Candidate Guidance document for full information.

9. Plagiarism

- 9.1 Cases of suspected plagiarism will be dealt with according to the College policy on suspected candidate misconduct.

10. Appeals

- 10.1 Appeals will be dealt with in accordance with the College Appeals Policy.
- 10.2 Candidates who wish to make representations with regard to their eligibility for the examination must address them to the Examination and Assessment Office in accordance with arrangements set out in the appeals procedure and within one month of the initial decision.
- 10.3 Candidates who wish to make representations with regard to the conduct of their assessment must address them to the Royal College Examinations and Assessment Office in accordance with arrangements set out in the Appeals Policy. Representations must be made as specified in the appeals procedure within 28 days of the announcement of the result.

11. Withdrawals and Refunds

- 11.1 Candidates wishing to withdraw an application for admission to an examination must do so in writing and will be refunded the fee less a 20% administrative charge provided that the withdrawal is received before the closing date of the examination.
- 11.2 Candidates who withdraw from the examination after the closing date, or who fail to attend the examination, for which the candidate has been accepted, will not normally be entitled to any refund of fee. The transfer of examination fees to future diets will only be granted under exceptional circumstances, such as on medical or compassionate grounds or other similar event beyond the candidate's control. Request for transfer of fees must be accompanied by a supporting letter from the candidate's general medical practitioner, postgraduate dental dean or a local tutor in order to be considered.
- 11.3 Requests for a refund under exceptional circumstances, such as medical or compassionate grounds or other similar events beyond the candidate's control must be accompanied by a supporting letter from the candidate's general medical practitioner, postgraduate dental dean or local tutor in order to be considered.
- 11.4 Failure to comply with the condition of the regulations, or failure to meet the eligibility requirements, will not be sufficient grounds for a refund.

11.5 The Examination and Assessment Office reserve the right to review admission to the examination on an individual basis in exceptional circumstances.

12. Exemptions

12.1 There are no exemptions. All candidates must pass all three Parts in order to pass the LDS examination.

13. Appointment of examiners

13.1 The appointment of examiners will be carried out in accordance with the College policy on recruitment, selection and training of examiners.

14. Feedback to candidates

14.1 Feedback will be provided to all candidates with the result letter or in a separate letter following the result letter. Please check the LDS Candidate Guidance for full information relating to the feedback format.

15. Procedure for applying to the Faculty of Dental Surgery for enrolled membership

15.1 Successful LDS candidates will be eligible to apply to The Royal College of Surgeons of England's Membership Office for enrolled membership of the Faculty of Dental Surgery. Following each LDS Part 3 diet and an application form for enrolled membership will be sent to all successful candidates.

16. Procedure for registration of the LDS with the General Dental Council UK

16.1 The successful candidate's name will be sent to the UK General Dental Council for registration. Further information relating to GDC registration is provided in the LDS Candidate Guidance document on the RCS England website.

17. Disability and equal opportunities

17.1 Regulations relating to disability and equal opportunities are detailed in the College's policy statement.

18. Reasonable Adjustment and Access Arrangements

18.1 Candidates wishing to apply for special consideration must notify the examinations department via email to dentalexams@rcseng.ac.uk upon application or as soon as possible following the commencement of the disability e.g. sudden accident/illness.

18.2 All requests must be accompanied by scanned original medical documentation. In the case of dyslexia, a full Educational Psychologist report is required.

18.3 The submission of a reasonable adjustment or access request is required for each examination and supporting evidence is required for each exam application.

18.4 It is the candidate's responsibility to specify which of the recommended adjustments within their documentary evidence they require for decision by the College in each application.

Further information regarding reasonable adjustments and access arrangements can be found in the Candidate Guidance document.

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