



The Governance
Institute

ICSA instructions for exam candidates

This document is for the use of students registered to take exams at ICSA exam centres and as a reference for ICSA presiding officers, invigilators and Assessment Review Panel members. This content is sourced from, and links to the ICSA examination policy and procedure and the ICSA instructions for presiding officers and invigilators.

Updated September 2018

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Section 1: Registering for an exam

These instructions set out all the information you need about the administration and organisation of ICSA exams, including what you need to do before the exam, the rules in the exam and what you can expect from us. You can contact us for further information and advice at studentsupport@icsa.org.uk.

Exam registration

CSQS and International Finance and Administration (IFA) exams are set in June and November. You need to register to sit an exam at any of these sessions by completing and sending us the exam entry form, with payment, before the closing date for registration, which is 1st of April for the June exams and the 1st of October for the November exams.

When you register for an exam, you need to state the exam session at which you are going to sit, if not you will automatically be entered for the next available session. You are allowed to attempt the exam for each module four times only for CSQS and 2 times for IFA.

Changing your exam date

If you register for an exam and then find you are unable to attend, you should find out whether it is possible to change your exam date to a later session. In this way, you can avoid being registered as absent. This can be done in three ways:

- (i) **Deferral** – You can defer an exam for which you have registered at any point up to the closing date for registration. You can only defer to the next available exam session. There is an administrative fee for deferral but you do not need to provide a reason for deferring.
- (ii) **Withdrawal** – After the close of registration, if problems occur which prevent you from studying for or sitting the exam to the best of your ability, you can let us know in writing that you want to withdraw your exam entry. As the cost of your exam sitting has already been incurred by ICOSA at this point, your exam entry fee will not be returned, but withdrawing your entry ensures that your absence from the exam will not be counted as an exam attempt.
- (iii) **Postponement** – If you have experienced serious illness or bereavement in the week of the exam, you may be able to postpone. You would need to sit the exam at the next session. There is a postponement fee and a deadline for postponement applications, which is usually four weeks after the exam week. You will be asked to provide the reason, in writing, for missing the exam and you will usually be asked to provide documents to support your claim.

Section 2: Exam cycle and deadlines

You will be updated about exam dates, closing dates for exam registrations and other important information via notices on the MyICSA area of the website (which can be accessed with a student login) and by email.

Stages	What happens?	When? (June exams)	When? (November exams)
Announcement of next exam session	Includes notice of exam dates, deadline for exam registration and dates for publication of pre-released material	Early December	Early June
Close of exam registration	Last date on which you can register for the exam or defer an existing exam registration to a later session	1 April	1 October
Publication of pre-released material (CSQS)	Pre-released case studies for Strategy in Practice, Corporate Secretarial Practice and the Chartered Secretaries Case Study for the CSQS students are published online six weeks before the exam date	Around 20 April	Around 15 October
Admission slips	Download and print your exam admission slip and the latest version of instructions for candidates	End April	End October
Exam week	Exams take place Tuesday – Friday of exam week	Usually first week of June	Usually last week of November
Exam papers online	PDF versions of the exams published in MyICSA	Week after exams	Week after exams
Postponement deadline	If you missed the exam and have a good reason, you can ask to have your exam postponed to the next session – there is a deadline for this	Early July	Early January
Release of results	Exam results published in MyICSA, students emailed with results	Around 4 August	Around 2 February
Exam reports and info	Pass rates and suggested answers are published; you can apply for script reports	August – September	February – March

Section 3: Extenuating circumstances

Policy on extenuating circumstances

ICSA aims for all its students to receive fair and equitable treatment in the assessment process. To this end, adjustments can be made in individual cases to allow students to sit the exam under special arrangements. Decisions can also be made during or after the exam which allow for problems occurring during the exam which affected a whole group of candidates.

Wherever adjustments are made, certain core principles are applied:

- All candidates are treated equally by the examiner or marker in the initial assessment of the exam script; the examiner/marker does not have information about any individual candidate's personal circumstances or past exam record.
- Where adjustments are made to individual candidates' exam conditions, the adjustments will not grant a student unfair advantage over others taking the exam.
- In taking action on extenuating circumstances considered after the candidate has sat the exam, if a candidate passes the exam, any extenuating circumstances will not be considered.

Decision-making

ICSA employees in the exams department are responsible for making arrangements for reasonable adjustments to exam conditions and for recommending action on other extenuating circumstances.

The ICSA Assessment Review Panel (ARP) is the independent body which approves the exam results. ARP is responsible for approving the policy on extenuating circumstances and for approving action taken at each exam session.

Categories of extenuating circumstance

The matters ICSA deals with can be broadly grouped into three main categories:

(i) Reasonable adjustments which can be made in advance of the exam; (ii) personal extenuating circumstances; and (iii) extenuating circumstances arising during the exam.

- (i) Reasonable adjustments made in advance

If you believe that a disability, injury, learning difficulty or other condition is going to affect your upcoming exam performance, ICSA will consider whether reasonable adjustments can be made to assist you. For example, if an injury prevents you from writing at your normal speed, and this can be verified, extra time in the exam could be allowed.

You need to inform ICSA about such problems in advance of the exam so that reasonable adjustments can be made. We will give you an advice sheet to give to the professional who you are asking to supply this guidance.

If a request is made in the four weeks before the exam we will try to make adjustments, but cannot guarantee that there will be time to do this. Please let us know as far in advance of the exam as you can.

If you fail to attend an exam at which reasonable adjustments have been made for you, ICSA may not continue to bear the expense of adjustments made at your subsequent exam sessions.

- (ii) Personal extenuating circumstances

Difficult personal circumstances can arise in the period leading up to the exam, such as changing work commitments, redundancy or a period of illness which mean that a student's preparation for the exam is

disturbed or they do not feel able to perform at their best on the exam day. It is not possible for ICSA to make adjustments to exam conditions in such cases and the examiner/marker can never be asked to take personal extenuating circumstances into account.

If you become aware of such problems before the closing date for registration you should just defer your exam entry and you do not need to provide a reason. If the problems occur after the closing date you should write to ICSA as soon as possible to describe the problem and ask to withdraw your exam entry (see p.4, above for description of deferral and withdrawal).

In cases where a serious illness or the death of a close family member occurs in the week of the exam, you may apply to postpone your exam entry shortly before or after the exam has taken place. You will need to provide supporting evidence which will help ICSA to understand and verify the circumstances. For example, in the case of serious illness, you would need to arrange for a medical professional to explain in writing why you were unable to sit the exam.

As described on p.4, above, you should be aware that fees apply to deferral, withdrawal and postponement applications.

(iii) Exam centre extenuating circumstances

Incidents can occur on the day of the exam or during the exam which affect exam candidates' performance, such as external noise or other problems with the venue.

If such problems occur during your exam, the presiding officer has some discretion to allow extra time in the exam (up to about 30 minutes). Extra time can be granted for individual students or a whole group of candidates sitting the same exam, but only the presiding officer has the power to make the decision about this and candidates must respect the decision made (see p.16, 'Dealing with problems').

If you are not satisfied with the way in which circumstances in the exam were dealt with, you need to inform ICSA as soon as possible after the exam. The deadline for reporting extenuating circumstances in the exam is four weeks after the exam date – this is the same date which is published for postponement of exams.

As with personal extenuating circumstances, the examiner cannot be asked to take extenuating circumstances in the exam into account. However, in the event that the presiding officer did not take action, or the action taken was insufficient, it may be established that candidates were not treated fairly and that further action should be taken. In such cases, discretion can be applied by ICSA to treat the exam sitting as a postponement, so it does not count as a failed attempt on a candidate's record.

Section 4: Preparing for the exam

What to take

As you are only allowed to have certain permitted items at your exam desk, we advise you to take only these items into the exam. You will be asked to store any other items away from your desk and will do so at your own risk.

You must bring to the exam:

- Your admission slip and photo ID (official identification document with name and photograph Eg: Passport or driving license)
- Pens and other equipment for writing and taking the exam.

It's a good idea to take the ICSA email address and/or phone number with you on the day of the exam, in case of problems on the way to the venue.

Items which can be kept on the desks

You will be allowed the following items on your exam desk:

- An official identification document with name and photograph (for example, a passport or driving license)
- A print-out of the ICSA exam admission slip
- Blue or black pens – exam answers must be written with blue or black pen
- Other stationery items which can be used to draw tables or diagrams, e.g. ruler, pencil, coloured pens or pencils or a highlighter pen
- A calculator (see rules below)
- A small bottle of still (non-carbonated) water.

No other items are allowed on the exam desk. You will not be allowed:

- Phones, laptops, e-readers or any other electronic equipment
- Any written material, including hand-written or printed notes, books, dictionaries or statutes
- Spare paper or note-pads (invigilators will supply 'continuation sheets')
- Correction fluid
- Food or drink (though a small bottle of still water is allowed).
- You must not bring any wearable technology to the exam, which includes earphones, smart watches and devices that can store data to run programmes. If an invigilator asks you to remove a watch/device you must comply with the instructions, even if you know that the item does not have the functionality

Calculators

You need to bring your own calculator to the exam, if you are taking an exam which requires one. Exam centres do not have spare calculators available and you will not be able to borrow from other exam candidates during the exam.

Calculators used in ICSA exam halls must be noiseless and cordless. Students are not allowed to use a calculator which is programmable or which is able to store formulae, functions, graphs and databases.

Examples of calculator types which are acceptable:

- Scientific calculators with basic programming functions
- Calculators with standard memory functions
- Solar or battery-powered calculators.

Calculators with the following functions or of the following type are not permitted:

- Alphanumeric keyboards (including text, equations or alphabetic formulae)
- Personal organisers
- Checklists and memo-pads
- Capability for external programming (whether by detachable modules or the insertion of cards, tape, barcodes or cassettes or by any other means)
- Graphical displays (can often be identified by model types that end in the letter 'G' and generally have large screens)
- Symbolic algebraic capability
- Calculators which do not have their own internal power supply.

Invigilators may inspect a student's calculator to ensure that it is compliant with these regulations. As noted above, the same rules apply to the watches and other wearable technology.

Planning your journey

We suggest that you travel the route to the exam centre on a day before the exam, to become familiar with the journey and find out how to access to the exam venue.

Remember to check for any travel problems on day of the exam and leave plenty of time to get there – we recommend that you arrive around 30 minutes before the start of the exam.

Section 5: Exam administration and rules

This section outlines the procedure and rules by which ICSA exams are run. You are advised to read this section before each exam as part of your preparation for the exam. However, you are not required to remember all the rules contained here – the exam invigilators will give you instructions in the exam about what to do.

ICSA presiding officers and invigilators

The presiding officer is the ICSA representative at each exam centre who has overall responsibility for the exam hall. At all exams there should be at least one invigilator who reports to the presiding officer. The invigilators (including the presiding officer) are responsible for ensuring the exam is administered in accordance with ICSA rules and procedure. You must comply with the instructions of the invigilator in the exam hall and if you are accompanied from the hall during the exam.

Entering the exam hall

We advise you to arrive at the exam hall no later than 20–25 minutes before the exam starts.

Procedure for exam venues may vary, but you should check in with an invigilator on arrival. Students may only enter the exam hall with permission from the invigilator.

Before entering the exam hall you will need to:

- Have required items such as admission slip, identification and blue/black pens ready to place on your desk.
- Put other items which cannot be placed on the desk (see previous section for details) secured in a bag.
- Make sure mobile phones and other electronic items are switched off.

If you arrive late to the exam you may not be allowed to enter. If you arrive late but during the first 30 minutes of the exam (including any reading time period) the presiding officer may exercise discretion to allow you to enter the exam late – in this case you must take care to enter quietly and not to disturb other candidates.

Format of the exam

Exams in ICSA exam venues will follow this format:

- 1 Administration time: Students enter the exam hall, store bags, find desks, complete attendance cards and fill in details on the front cover of the answer booklet, in accordance with invigilator instructions.
- 2 Reading time (if applicable): Question booklets are distributed and students have 15 minutes to read through the questions. During the reading time period, students are allowed to read and write on the question booklet but cannot open the answer booklet.
- 3 Answer time: The invigilator will instruct students to open the answer booklet. Students can start writing answers and the two or three-hour exam time starts at this point.
- 4 End of exam: Following a series of announcements about time remaining, students will be asked to stop writing and must put down pens and close question and answer booklets.
- 5 Final administration time: The invigilator will ask students to check their details are complete on the front cover and on continuation sheets. Students are allowed to open answer booklets only to complete administrative information such as filling in the exam candidate number on continuation sheets. Students will also be asked to attach continuation sheets to the answer booklet.
- 6 Return of papers: Invigilators collect question and answer booklets.
- 7 End of exam: The invigilators will announce when students can leave.

International Finance and administration (IFA) and exams Insolvency Practitioners Association (IPA) exams follow the above format but without the reading time.

Exam times and types

As well as administering its own exams, ICSA also organises exams for the Institute of Risk Management and the Insolvency Practitioners Association – candidates for these exams may be together with ICSA students in the exam hall.

The exams which may take place at an ICSA venue differ in length (two or three hours) and in whether or not they have a reading time period. The table below shows the differences.

Exam	Reading time	Writing time
ICSA International Finance and Administration Level 4 (IFA 4) Paper 1 – Core Modules	None	3 hours
ICSA International Finance and Administration Level 4 (IFA 4) Paper 2 – Accounting	None	1.5 hours
ICSA International Finance and Administration Level 4 (IFA 4) Paper 3 – Investment	None	1.5 hours
ICSA International Finance and Administration Level 5 (IFA 5)	None	3 hours
ICSA Chartered Secretaries Qualifying Scheme (CSQS)	15 minutes	3 hours
ICSA Foundation Programme	15 minutes	3 hours
ICSA Standalone qualifications (Charity Law and Governance, Health Service Governance, Sports Governance, Advanced Certificate in Corporate Governance, Academy Governance)	15 minutes	3 hours

Rules inside the exam hall

All students must observe the following general rules at all times inside the exam hall:

- 1 You must not talk to or communicate in any form with other people in or outside the exam hall, except with the invigilator.
- 2 If you need to speak to an invigilator, raise your hand and wait until the invigilator arrives at your desk – then speak quietly so as not to disturb other candidates.
- 3 You must not attempt to read the answer booklet, question paper or continuation sheets of any other exam candidate.
- 4 Smoking is not permitted.
- 5 Eating is not permitted (unless permission has been obtained from ICSA for medical reasons), although all students are allowed to drink from a small bottle of still water.
- 6 You cannot leave the exam hall in the first 30 minutes or the last 15 minutes of the exam.

Exam materials on your desk

Invigilators may have distributed exam materials before students enter the exam hall, or they may hand them out once you are seated. Either way, you will be supplied with the following materials before the exam commences:

- 1 question paper booklet
- 1 answer booklet

- 3 continuation sheets
- 1 treasury tag (to fix continuation sheets to the answer booklet).
- 1 attendance card.

Completing your attendance card

The invigilator will give out (or will have placed on the desk) an attendance card, which you must complete before the exam starts. When you sign this card, you are confirming that you have read the instructions on exam hall rules contained within this document.

Completing details on the front of your answer booklet

Your answer booklet, in which you write answers to the exam questions, will either be on the desk when you sit down or will be given out after everyone is seated. You are not allowed to open the answer booklet until the invigilator instructs you to, but some details on the front cover will need to be completed before the exam starts.

The answer booklet has a front cover with shaded grey areas. You should only fill in the shaded grey areas of the front sheet. You will be asked to fill in the following details before the exam starts:

- The exam candidate number (this is the identification number on the exam admission slip, comprising three letters followed by four numbers, e.g. ABC7/005)
- The make and model number of the calculator being used (if applicable), e.g. Casio, SL300-SV
- Desk number
- The subject title, e.g. 'Corporate Governance'
- The date of the exam session, e.g. June 2016.
- The numbers of continuation sheets used

You will be asked to double-check that your exam candidate number is entered correctly, as this is the only way ICSA can identify your script. You must not use your real name or ICSA student number anywhere on the exam paper.

Writing your answers

Answers must be written in blue or black pen: you are not allowed to write the main text of your answers in pencil. You can use pencil and coloured pens for tables and diagrams only.

You are allowed to use coloured pens and highlighter pens to emphasise or underline key words.

You must clearly show which question or question part you are answering on every page by writing the question number and part in the page margin. We advise you to start each answer on a fresh page.

Correcting mistakes and concealing rough work

You cannot use 'scrap' paper in ICSA exams, and anything written during the exam, including rough work or answer plans, will need to be either on the question paper, in the answer booklet or on continuation sheets.

If you do not want the examiner to read something, you should put one clear line through that section of text.

We advise you not to scribble or colour over text, as this is messy and creates a bad impression. You are not allowed to use correction fluid, as this can stick pages together and risks damage to the answer booklet.

Using continuation sheets

'Continuation sheets' are loose A4 sheets of lined paper with the same lines and margin as the pages in the answer booklet. You can use the continuation sheets when you have used up all the pages in your answer booklet.

Continuation sheets contain space for you to fill in your details – this will help ICSA to match up any spare sheets in the event that they become separated from the answer booklet. As you start writing on each continuation sheet you need to enter:

- Exam candidate number e.g. ABC7/002
- Subject title, e.g. 'Corporate Law'
- The sheet number, i.e. the first continuation sheet used is '1', the second sheet is '2' and so on.

In the administration time at the end of the exam the invigilator will ask you to attach continuation sheets to the answer booklet. A treasury tag will be provided to attach these sheets. You will be required to indicate on the front cover of your answer booklets how many continuation sheets have been used.

If you have any unused continuation sheets, these should be left on the desk and the invigilators will collect them.

Leaving the exam room during the exam

If you want to leave the exam hall, you must raise a hand and ask the invigilator for permission to leave. If you leave the exam hall without permission, you will not be allowed to re-enter and continue the exam.

You are not allowed to leave the exam hall for any reason in the first 30 minutes or the last 15 minutes of the exam.

If you want to leave the exam hall and return to continue the exam – for example, to visit the toilet– you will need to be accompanied by an invigilator outside the exam hall. Invigilators will only be able to take one person out of the exam hall at a time, so students wishing to leave may be asked to wait until another candidate returns.

If you want to leave the exam and do not intend to return, you should check that all the administrative details on the front cover of your answer booklet and the continuation sheets have been completed, then raise a hand and ask the invigilator for permission to leave.

Students leaving the exam hall for any reason are asked to be considerate and leave quietly, so as not to disturb other candidates who are still completing the exam.

Dealing with problems

Although careful planning and checking goes into the organisation of ICSA exams, problems can occasionally occur in the exam hall which invigilators need to respond to. For example, invigilators have had to take action to deal with the problem of noise disturbance outside the exam hall in the past.

The presiding officer has three main options for dealing with problems:

- 1 Take action to stop the problem – for example, a presiding officer or invigilator can leave the exam hall to ask people who are making noise to stop, or could leave the exam hall to call ICSA to ask a question.
- 2 Allow extra time – the presiding officer has the discretionary power to allow extra time for students to complete the exam, up to 30 minutes. This can be granted on an individual basis or for the whole cohort, if everyone is affected by the problem.
- 3 Make a record of the incident – the presiding officer should note the problem to ensure that ICSA is alerted. These reports will be used as evidence when ICSA considers extenuating circumstances.

In the event of problems occurring, the invigilator is required to make a judgement about the best course of action from the options above. All students must respect the invigilator's decision and continue with the exam.

If you disagree with the action taken, you can report this to us as an 'exam centre extenuating circumstance' after the exam.

Section 6: Exam feedback and enquiries

Obtaining exam results

The dates for release of exam results are published in advance through the news section of the MyICSA student page and by email. The release of results is usually around ten weeks after the exam date.

You can log into MyICSA on the release day to receive your exam results, but these are also emailed on the same day. You will receive one overall result for the exam expressed as a grade band, indicating the range of marks within which the result fell. For example, a 'Pass' grade indicates that the result was in the 50–64% range (the grade margins are given to you on the results sheet). **Kindly note that you will not be given the exact marks of percentage achieved.**

Enquiries about exam results

You may want to find out more detail about which individual questions you passed or failed in the exam. You can receive comment and advice on your performance by requesting a 'script report'.

(i) Script reports

The script report comprises two elements: an independent clerical and procedural check of the mark awarded, carried out by the education team, and a report by the examiner written to the student.

Procedural check

The clerical and procedural check is carried out by ICSA employees from the education team. The standard check will confirm whether or not:

- Marks stated within the answer booklet have been correctly calculated in the question totals.
- Question totals recorded in the answer booklet have been correctly transposed to the front sheet.
- Question totals on the front sheet have been calculated to arrive at the correct overall mark.
- Any processes required for this particular script have been carried out correctly. For example, a review has been confirmed for a script in the Fail A band, or a reasonable adjustment which was previously agreed was put in place.

The procedural check does not constitute a re-marking exercise.

Examiner's report

The grade for each part of the question with a separate mark allocation will be shown (that, is if a 25-mark question is split into parts (a) and (b), with 12 and 13 marks respectively, you will see a grade for parts (a) and (b) as well as the overall grade for the question. The examiner will write a separate comment for each question about what was wrong in the answer, what was missing and what could have been said to make each answer better. The examiner will conclude the report with some general comments about the candidate's performance and advice for their next attempt.

(ii) Other enquiries

Return of scripts

One of the most common enquiries is for candidates to ask for their exam script to be returned. Exam answer booklets are considered the property of ICSA and once the script is handed to the invigilator candidates do not have any rights to the script except where copyright is concerned. ICSA does not return exam answer booklets and does not allow candidates to view their answer booklet – this is clearly stated in the student terms and conditions and in the notices about script reports.

Further investigation

Candidates are given opportunities before and after the exam to let ICSA know about any extenuating circumstances which may affect their performance, but there may be times when further investigation is required. In such cases, the education team will conduct further enquiries on an individual basis and will seek advice with the Assessment Review Panel (ARP) chairman, who will consult with ARP as and when necessary.

Appendix I: Front page of answer booklet

You will need to complete the grey-shaded areas – including ticking the boxes to show which questions you answered. Please indicate the number of continuation sheets used.

CSQS examination answer script

Form A1

Important

- Please do not write your name or student registration number on your answer script.
- Please write on both sides of the paper, **but** start each answer on a fresh page.
- You must only complete the shaded areas below.

If you are using a calculator, please enter the make and model number:

Make (company name): _____

Model number: _____

Please complete this box:

Candidate number: PAS5003 (as indicated on your admission slip)

Desk number: 05

Subject: CORPORATE LAW

Date: ~~June~~ November* 20 16 * delete as appropriate

Question number	Question attempted (tick)	Mark awarded	Examiner review	ARP review
1	✓			
2				
3	✓			
4				
5	✓			
6	✓			
7				
8				
9				
10				
Total				

Marker (full name): _____

Reviewer (full name): _____

Clerical check (full name): _____

Please do not damage this booklet or remove any pages.



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Appendix II: ICSA contact details

By email:

enquiries@icsa.org.uk

By phone:

+44 (0)20 7580 4741

By post:

Examinations Section

ICSA

Saffron House

6–10 Kirby Street

London EC1N 8TS

Appendix III: Exam checklist

Before the exam

Checklist	Reference
Print admission slip and select photo ID	Section 4
Prepare equipment you need for the exam	Section 4
Check that your calculator is a permitted model	Section 4
Check your route to the exam venue, do a test journey	Section 4

On the day of the exam

Checklist	Reference
Double-check that you've got all the required documents and equipment	Section 4& 5
Take a bag for any items which you're not allowed to keep on your desk	Section 5
Arrive at venue 20–30 minutes early	Section 5
Check in with the invigilator or reception employee at the venue	Section 5

Summary of exam hall rules

Checklist	Reference
Phones and other devices must be switched off and kept in your bag	Section 5
Listen to and follow all presiding officer/invigilator announcements	Section 5
Only open question or answer booklets when you are told to do so	Section 5
Do not talk to or communicate in any way with other exam candidates	Section 5
If you have any questions, raise a hand and wait for an invigilator	Section 5
Indicate which question you're answering on each page in the margin	Section 5
Write the main text of your answer in blue or black pen only	Section 5
If you make a mistake, just put one clear line through the text	Section 5
You can't leave the exam hall in the first 30 or last 15 minutes	Section 5

- END -