



Irish College of
Ophthalmologists
Eye Doctors of Ireland
Protecting your Vision

THINKING OF A CAREER IN OPHTHALMOLOGY?



*A short guide from the
Irish College of Ophthalmologists*



Ophthalmology is a fast-paced, innovative and exciting career choice in medicine, and a speciality which has experienced rapid advances in new treatments and technologies over the past two decades

Specialist Training in Ophthalmology

Ophthalmology is the branch of medicine that deals with the anatomy, physiology and disease of the eye and visual system. Ophthalmologists diagnose, medically treat and perform surgery to preserve and prevent sight loss in patients.

The specialty of ophthalmology in Ireland offers a unique opportunity for a range of sub-specializations including paediatrics, neuro-ophthalmology, glaucoma, oculoplastics/orbit, cornea & anterior segment, refraction, ocular oncology, trauma, and surgical or medical retina.

Ophthalmology is a fast-paced and exciting career choice in medicine, and a speciality which has experienced rapid advances in new treatments and technologies over the past two decades. A significant proportion of sight threatening conditions which previously had a poor prognosis for patients are now largely preventable with early diagnosis and treatment, making it an extremely rewarding area of medicine to work in.

The advent of new therapies which are enabling greater prevention and management of eye diseases in tandem with evolving patient demographics have increased the demand for the skills and competencies of ophthalmologists. Ophthalmic practice is an innovative specialty and frequently adapts and implements new and emerging technologies such as imaging techniques, laser, the use of intraocular lenses and stents. The eye is not an isolated unit and has complicated relationships with numerous other bodily systems and functions including that of the brain and nervous system. Ophthalmologists work in close collaboration with other specialists including diabetologists, rheumatologists, neurologists, endocrinologists, ENT and maxillo-facial surgeons as well as paediatricians, general practitioners and geneticists.

Ophthalmologists also work closely with public health specialists to support the early detection and prevention of avoidable sight loss through the National Screening programme for children's vision and for diabetic retinopathy.

The Irish College of Ophthalmologists (ICO) is the Medical Council accredited postgraduate body responsible for the delivery of Specialist Training in Ophthalmology.

The specialty of ophthalmology in Ireland includes two career structures:

- **Medical Ophthalmology and Surgical Ophthalmology**
- **Entry to the Basic National Training Programmes (NTP) in Medical Ophthalmology and Surgical Ophthalmology** is by annual competitive interview run by the Irish College of Ophthalmologists.

To apply for the Basic Training, the applicant must be registered with the Medical Council of Ireland and eligible for trainee specialist registration.



Training posts are advertised via the ICO website www.eyedoctors.ie in November/December of each year.

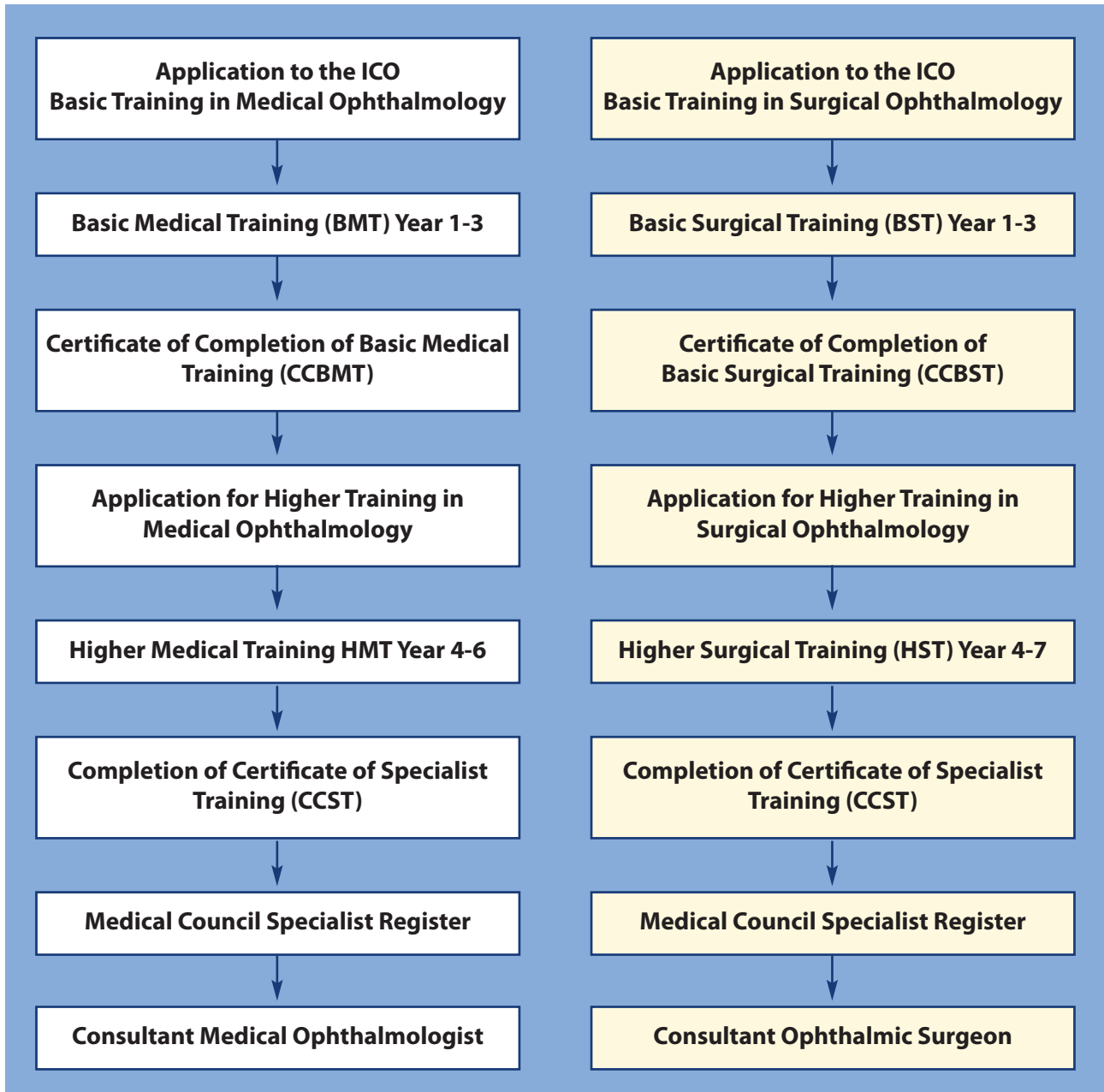
Your undergraduate performance, together with your personal and professional attributes, such as leadership and communication ability in order to lead the Integrated Eye Care Team, and personal motivation, are all relevant.

Training Pathway in Ophthalmology

Medical Degree (4-6 years)



Intern Year (1 year)



MEDICAL OPHTHALMOLOGY

The ICO is seeking the next generation of leaders and specialists to join our National Training Programme in Medical Ophthalmology, opening the door to a fulfilling career as a Consultant Medical Ophthalmologist.

The Medical Ophthalmology Curriculum is a six-year competence-based curriculum consisting of three core years (BMT1, BMT2 & BMT3) followed by three years (HMT4, HMT5 & HMT 6) of subspecialty training in paediatrics, glaucoma and medical retina.

Medical Ophthalmology is a fast-paced, high-tech, and hi-skill specialty suited to driven individuals who can adapt to its evolving and dynamic nature.

Advances in the specialty have afforded the ICO the opportunity to strategically plan to deliver the best eye care for our population in the 21st century coupling our ageing demographics and chronic eye diseases with preventable treatments, timely therapeutics and avoidable blindness.

Consultant Medical Ophthalmologists lead and work as part of the Integrated Eye Care team (IECT). Ophthalmologists work alongside ophthalmic nurses, orthoptists, optometrists and ophthalmic technicians in the IECT.

There has been significant investment in the specialty in recent years due to patient demand. This will continue with the roll out of the Integrated Eye Care Team and the appointment of new Consultant Medical Ophthalmologist posts nationally.

Basic Training in Medical Ophthalmology (BMT Year 1-3)

The purpose of the first three years of Basic Training in Medical Ophthalmology is to provide a broad based initial training with attainment of knowledge skills and professional behaviours relevant to the practice of ophthalmology in any specialist discipline.

Following successful completion of BMT1–BMT3 Training which requires passing the [MRCSI](#) exam, candidates can compete to enter Specialist Training in Medical Ophthalmology.

Information on Basic Medical Ophthalmology Training application and entry process is available on the ICO website www.eyedoctors.ie

Higher Training in Medical Ophthalmology (HMT Year 4, 5 & 6)

The purpose of the Higher Specialist Training in Medical Ophthalmology programme is to provide in-depth training to equip doctors with the skills and expertise they require to independently practice as ophthalmologists. The programme has a modular approach and is framed around the three subspecialties located at the core of future patient demand – medical retina, glaucoma and paediatric ophthalmology.

In medical retina, new advances in intraocular injections and laser have revolutionised the treatment of two common sight-threatening conditions; age-related macular degeneration and diabetic maculopathy. As these conditions are very responsive to the new therapies, the work is very rewarding.

Over the next 20 years Ireland will see a significant increase in both older patients and those with diabetes and therefore, the number of medical ophthalmologists required to treat these patients is also increasing.

Trainees, irrespective of preference and future career choice, need to complete all three subspecialty modules to successfully complete their training. To reflect the diversity of the future career path of a Consultant Medical Ophthalmologist, training is located in hospital-based training units and will also take place in community clinics as the new Consultant Medical Ophthalmologists take up their posts and non-acute facilities are developed.

The European Board of Ophthalmology Diploma (EBOD) Exam and Higher Medical Training Modular sub-specialty Structured Oral Examination (SOEs) are the formal exit appraisals for the HMT in Ophthalmology programme and for doctors to be eligible for the Specialist Registrar of the Medical Council in the Division of Ophthalmology.

Further information on the entry criteria for a career in medical ophthalmology is available on the ICO website [here](#).



Training Pathway for Specialist Training in Medical Ophthalmology

	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4
Training Level	Medical School	Intern Year	<i>Basic Training in Medical Ophthalmology</i>	<i>Higher Training in Medical Ophthalmology</i>
Duration	4-5 years	1 year	3 years	3 years
Entry Process	Graduate or direct entry	Entry through the HSE Intern Match	Entry based on competitive interview	Entry based on competitive interview
Mandatory Examinations	As per curriculum	N/A	MRCSI	European Board of Ophthalmology Diploma Sub-specialty Structured Objective Oral Examination
Application Date	CAO process opens in November	Application process opens in October	Application process opens in November	Application process open in November
Programme Operated by:	Undergraduate Universities	Intern Networks	Irish College of Ophthalmologists	Irish College of Ophthalmologists

Career models or variants after specialist registration in Ophthalmology

Medical ophthalmologists have varying roles in health care in Ireland. Consultant Medical Ophthalmologists work in the acute and/or non-acute setting and lead the IECT.

Graduates of the NTP are trained to deliver general ophthalmology care with subspecialty expertise in glaucoma, paediatric ophthalmology and medical retina. Graduates may opt to continue with further subspecialty Fellowship training and practice in either the public or the private sector. Many ophthalmologists combine private practice with their HSE role.

Ophthalmologists work in close collaboration with other specialists including diabetologists, rheumatologists, neurologists, ENT and maxillo-facial surgeons as well as paediatricians and geneticists.

Positive Work/Life balance

A career in medical ophthalmology offers an attractive and flexible career pathway for ambitious and focused medical graduates.

The streamlined Medical Ophthalmology training programme also makes it one of the shortest specialists training programme to complete to reach qualified specialist status and eligibility to apply for a Consultant post.

The ICO also understands the importance of work-life balance. We support flexible timetables and advocate for your continued health and wellbeing throughout your career.

Further information on the entry criteria for a career in Medical Ophthalmology please visit the website of the Irish College of Ophthalmologists www.eyedoctors.ie

SURGICAL OPHTHALMOLOGY

The Surgical Ophthalmology programme is a seven-year competence-based curriculum consisting of three core years (BST 1, BST 2, BST 3) followed by four years (HST4-7) of subspecialty training.

Surgical ophthalmologists perform microsurgical intraocular operations such as cataract extraction surgery or retinal detachment repair surgery. Most surgical ophthalmologists perform cataract surgery as well as sub specialising in another area. Although the eye is a very small organ there are a numerous subspecialties in ophthalmology.

Basic Specialist Training in Surgical Ophthalmology

Basic Surgical Training is the entry route to Higher Specialist Training Surgical Ophthalmology in Ireland.

Entry on to the programme is by competitive interview held at the Irish College of Ophthalmologists. Consideration is given to an honours medical degree, prizes /medals achieved during undergraduate years, postgraduate degrees and presentations, research and /or publications. Personal and professional attributes such as, ability to work as a team, communications skills and personal motivation are also important.

The purpose of the basic years is to provide a broad based initial training in ophthalmology with attainment of knowledge, skills and professional behaviours relevant to the practice of ophthalmology in any specialist discipline. Following successful completion of Basic Training in Surgical Ophthalmology (requires passing the MRCSI exam) candidates can compete to enter Higher Specialist Training in Surgical Ophthalmology.

Information on Basic Training application and entry process is available on the ICO website www.eyedoctors.ie



Higher Specialist Training in Surgical Ophthalmology

After successful completion of basic years of training, trainees can compete to enter the specialist training program provided they meet the selection criteria. Progression is based on performance in core training and by competitive interview held centrally in conjunction with the RCSI. There are clearly defined competencies which must be achieved in order to progress from Basic to Higher Specialist Training in Surgical Ophthalmology.

The purpose of the Higher Specialist Training Programme in Surgical Ophthalmology is to provide in-depth surgical training so as to equip doctors with skills both in cataract surgery as well as in the subspecialties of anterior segment (corneal transplant), glaucoma (trabeculectomy), strabismus (squint surgery), orbit (enucleations), vitro-retinal (retinal detachment repair), nasolacrimal and oculoplastic surgery.

Specialist trainees, irrespective of preference and future career choice, must undertake training in all subspecialties to successfully complete their training. Most trainees go on to complete a Fellowship in the subspecialty of their choice.

The Fellowship of the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland (FRCSI) is the exit appraisal for the Specialist Training in Surgical Ophthalmology programme.

The FRCSI examination is a test of competence to practice as an independent specialist (consultant) in ophthalmic surgery and is aimed at trainees who are coming to the end of their Higher Specialist Training in Ophthalmology. The [MRCSI](#) is an entry requirement for the FRCSI and candidates for the FRCSI must be in their final year of Higher Specialist Training in Surgical Ophthalmology in Ireland.

Trainees must also have the **European Board of Ophthalmology Diploma (EBOD)**. The examinations take place each year in Paris during the month of May.

The award of the **Certificate of Completion of Specialist Training (CCST)** requires both success in the FRCSI examination and the documented and satisfactory completion of specialist training.

With the Award of CCST doctors are eligible to be registered on the specialist registrar of the Medical

Training Pathway for Specialist Training in Surgical Ophthalmology

	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4
Training Level	Medical School	Intern Year	<i>Basic Training in Surgical Ophthalmology</i>	<i>Higher Training in Surgical Ophthalmology</i>
Duration	4-6 years	1 year	3 years	4 years
Entry Process	Graduate or direct entry	Entry through the HSE Intern Match	Entry based on competitive interview	Entry based on on-going assessment (CAPA), successful completion of the MRCSI exam and Specialty Interview
Mandatory Examinations	As per curriculum	N/A	MRCSI Exam	European Board of Ophthalmology Diploma & FRCSI Exam
Application Date	CAO process opens in November	Application process opens in October	Application process opens in November	Application process opens in November
Programme Operated by:	Undergraduate Universities	Intern Networks	Irish College of Ophthalmologists	ICO / RCSI

For further information on Specialist Training in Surgical Ophthalmology please visit the website of the Irish College of Ophthalmologists www.eyedoctors.ie

Medical Students & Interns – How to get Involved

If you develop an interest in ophthalmology or consider ophthalmology as a career, there are many opportunities to explore to help you make a more informed decision on your future career training choice.

The ICO is always very happy to hear from student doctors who wish to learn more about the training pathway and career opportunities, and encourage you to get in touch with us. There is no substitute for talking directly to people working in the specialty to help you learn more about ophthalmology.

It is worthwhile thinking how you might enhance your portfolio for the application process. Here are just some of the many ways in which you can engage and get involved:

- Keep a check on upcoming Irish and International ophthalmology events which are listed in the events section of the ICO website www.eyedoctors.ie/news-events
- Visit the ICO website to review the application process and annual recruitment www.eyedoctors.ie/trainees
- Visit us at the annual Medical Careers Day event, organised by the Forum of Postgraduate Training Bodies in Ireland, the Medical Council and the HSE
- **Medical Careers Day** Enquire with the ICO about the submission of a paper or poster abstract for consideration at the ICO Annual Conference, held in May each year. The ICO Annual Conference attracts over 200 delegates from Ireland and overseas and renowned international speakers. It provides academic lectures, subspecialty sessions and workshops over 3 days
- The College run a number of events throughout the year which we are happy to welcome you to and would give you an opportunity to meet and talk to trainees and Consultants
- Opportunities are available to participate in clinical or academic research projects at undergraduate levels
- You can broaden your knowledge and experience of the field by undertaking a placement in ophthalmology at home or overseas, working in different healthcare settings, cultures and environments
- Volunteering with a national eye charity (e.g. ChildVision, NCBI, Fighting Blindness) will help you understand more about vision impairment from a patients perspective
- Register for the ICO quarterly newsletter. Please email our communications manager Ciara.keenan@eyedoctors.ie who will add you to our database



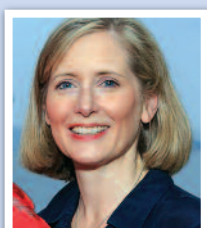
Further Information...

Any interested graduate can contact the ICO Office who will put you in touch with the Dean of Postgraduate Education or other Eye Doctors working throughout the country, whose team, either junior or senior, would be happy to talk to you about a career in Ophthalmology.



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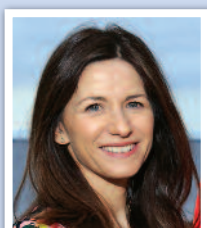
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