

CQI and IRCA Online Exams: Guide for Learners

1. Introduction

Welcome to the CQI’s learner guide for online exams. The purpose of this document is to provide you with all the information you need to take a CQI and IRCA online exam. It includes details of our regulations and requirements as well as advice on how to ensure your exam runs smoothly on the day.

CQI and IRCA online exams are delivered through an online assessment system called SARAS. You will have access to two SARAS portals – one for your practice questions and the other for your exam. The portal links are shown below.

<https://practice.quality.org/TNA/PracticePortal>

<https://assessment.quality.org/TNA/TestPlayer/Login/Login.aspx>

To log into your practice questions and exam you will need a username and password. You will receive two emails from the CQI - one with login instructions for the SARAS practice portal and the other with login details for the SARAS exam portal. If you haven’t received the emails in your inbox, please check your junk email folder. If you provided your work email address to your training provider and you haven’t received the emails, please also check with your IT team to see if the company’s mail server has blocked the emails. If you have not received the emails by the end of your course, please contact your training provider.

Once you have logged into SARAS, you will have access to your learner homepage. This will either display details of your scheduled practice questions or your scheduled exam, depending on which portal you have logged into. Please check these details are correct. If any information is incorrect, please contact your training provider.

2. Exam Format

All Lead Auditor and Auditor Conversion online exams are structured as follows:

Lead Auditor exam	
Exam duration	1 hour 45 minutes (40 questions in total)
Exam content areas:	Recommended time for each section:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Section 1: Concepts and principles of Management Standards and Systems • Section 2: Audit concepts and auditor responsibilities • Section 3: Planning the audit • Section 4: Conducting the audit • Section 5: Reporting and closing out the audit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 10 minutes (6 questions) 10 minutes (6 questions) 10 minutes (6 questions) 45 minutes (14 questions) 30 minutes (8 questions)

Auditor Conversion exam	
Exam duration	1 hour 35 minutes (34 questions in total)
Exam content areas:	Recommended time for each section:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Section 1: Concepts and principles of Management Standards and Systems 	10 minutes (6 questions)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Section 2: Planning the audit 	10 minutes (6 questions)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Section 3: Conducting the audit 	45 minutes (14 questions)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Section 4: Reporting and closing out the audit 	30 minutes (8 questions)

The exam questions will be a mix of:

- Multiple choice (choose one correct answer)
- Multiple response (choose several correct answers)
- Fill in the blanks (drag and drop the correct words into the sentence)
- Matching (drag and drop responses to correctly match items)
- Sequencing (drag and drop responses to form the correct order)

The last two sections of the exam will include scenario questions related to conducting, reporting on, and closing out audits. You will be asked to evaluate the scenario presented to you and select the correct course(s) of action.

All questions will be computer-marked. **Once you have answered a question and clicked Next, you will not be able to navigate backwards to review or change your answer. This is a security measure to reduce the risk of cheating.**

The exams are open book, so you can refer to your notes from your training course. However, you are not permitted to use the internet to search for answers to questions. You will need access to a copy of the ISO management systems requirements standard associated with your course to answer some of the questions. The standards can be paper or electronic format.

To help you prepare for your exam, we have created 24 practice questions for the Lead Auditor exam and 20 for the Auditor Conversion exam. We strongly advise you take the practice questions before taking your online exam to familiarise yourself with the question types and how SARAS works.

You will have 30 days from the last day of your course to take your exam. The practice questions may be available earlier, depending on when your training provider uploads your details to the CQI.

3. Remote Proctoring

CQI and IRCA online exams are invigilated remotely, using Easy Proctor. The system will:

- (a) Take an image of your photo identification (photo ID) and your face
- (b) Record you for the duration of your exam using your webcam and microphone
- (c) Record your computer screen for the duration of your exam

Details of acceptable forms of photo identification can be found below in the section 'Online Exam Regulations'.

Once you have completed the exam, Easy Proctor will compare your photo ID with your facial image to verify you are the same person and will analyse the recording of your exam session for any anomalies such as unexpected sounds, movements, objects, or people. It will then flag these incidents to the CQI for further investigation.

4. Reasonable Adjustment

If you need extra support or time to take the exam due to a physical or learning disability or require a female CQI member of staff to review your proctoring video recording for religious reasons, you must notify your training provider as soon as possible and well in advance of taking your exam so they can submit a reasonable adjustment request to the CQI on your behalf. If you are taking your exam in English, and English is not your first language, you can request an additional 30 minutes. If you are unable to take your exam within the scheduled 30 day period e.g. due to illness, you can request an extension to your exam schedule. Please refer to Appendix 1 CQI's Reasonable Adjustments Policy for more information.

5. Equipment and System Requirements

To take the exam you will need:

5.1 A computer or laptop with a working webcam and microphone (***Please note, smart phones, iPads/tablets, touchscreens, and 2-in-1/hybrid laptops with front and rear cameras are not permitted.***)

- You may use a second screen if you need to access a digital version of the standards and/or your course notes
- If using a laptop, we recommend you connect to an external monitor to optimise your online exam experience

5.2 A system that meets the following minimum requirements:

	Minimum Windows operating requirements	Minimum Mac operating system
Hardware		
Available free disk space	15 GB	15 GB
Display resolution	Best view in 1280 x 1024	Best view in 1280 x 1024
Network adapter	1 Gbps Network Interface Card	1 Gbps Network Interface Card
Software		
Operating system	Windows 8.1 or above (excluding Windows 10S)	Catalina (10.15.5 to 10.15.7) Mojave (10.14 to 10.14.6) Sierra (10.12 to 10.12.6) Big Sur (11.0 only)
Browsers	Chrome version 85+. Firefox version 85+ and Microsoft Edge version 91+ are permitted but Chrome is the preferred browser	Chrome version 85+

5.3 **Continuous, stable internet connection.** Cellular connection and/or VPN are not suitable due to their unreliability and unstable nature. A wired connection is ideal, but a strong and stable Wi-Fi connection should be sufficient.

5.4 To enable video proctoring, the following bandwidth is required:

Camera resolution	Bandwidth required
1 megapixel (1280*720)	5-7 megabits per second (Mbps)
2 megapixel (1920*1080)	7-10 Mbps
4 megapixel (2560*1440)	10-12 Mbps

NB: the bandwidth requirement for HD cameras increases between 10-12 Mbps.

The landing pages for the practice and exam portals contain the following tools:

- System Check Tool
- Test Your Camera
- Test Your Microphone

The System Check Tool also has a link to an Audio and Video Streaming test. We strongly recommend that you use these tools to check that your laptop or computer meets the minimum requirements, and your webcam and microphone are working correctly.

<https://practice.quality.org/TNA/PracticePortal>

<https://assessment.quality.org/TNA/TestPlayer/Login/Login.aspx>

Please test the device that you are going to use for your exam. Do not assume, for example, that if your work laptop meets the IT requirements, then your personal laptop will too.

It's a good idea to run the system test at about the same time of day you expect to take your exam to get a better feel for the internet connectivity you are likely to have. If you run the system test at 10:00 pm and take your exam at 2:00 pm, the bandwidth available may be quite different.

6. Online Exam Regulations

Please read the following regulations carefully. Before you can start your exam, SARAS will ask you to confirm that you have read, understood, and accept CQI's regulations for online exams. If you decline, you will not be able to take the exam.

Photo identification

At the start of the exam you will be required to show photo identification so that we can verify the identity of the person taking the exam. You must present one of the following forms of government-issued identification:

- Current valid passport
- Current photocard driving licence
- National identification card

If you do not have any of the above, please contact the CQI by completing our [online help request form](#) as soon as possible to discuss alternative arrangements.

Learners who do not present valid photo identification may be disqualified.

Exam conditions

You can take your exam in any location, provided it meets the following requirements:

Quiet: Somewhere where you will not be disturbed by others or by external noise e.g. building work or traffic noise.

Well lit: Do not sit in front of a window or other bright light. If you are backlit, draw shades or curtains and/or turn off lights behind you

Private: Make sure others cannot see your computer or monitor

Access to a power socket: So you can plug in your laptop to ensure it does not run out of battery during the exam

Learner conduct

You must always behave professionally and honestly during the exam.

- Your face must be uncovered for the duration of the exam. If you wear a headscarf, you must show your ears. Hoodies, hats, and sunglasses are not permitted

- Your webcam and microphone must remain switched on for the duration of the exam. When using your webcam, please ensure that your head is positioned in the centre of the camera image, facing the camera head on and that the webcam is not pointing to the side, above or below your face.
- You must remain silent for the duration of the exam
- You are permitted a 10 minute break. You must use the 'Take a break' button so that it is logged as an official break for proctoring purposes. If you leave the room at any other time, the proctoring system will record your absence and flag to CQI for further investigation.
- Do not bring any food into the exam room. You are allowed to bring a drink but at your own risk as spillage may compromise the functionality of your computer and therefore your ability to complete the exam
- Smoking and vaping are not permitted
- You must not attempt to communicate either in person or electronically with anyone inside or outside the exam room
- Do not bring any unauthorised electronic devices into the exam room. This includes mobile phones, iPads/tablets, smart watches, headphones, and earphones. The only electronic equipment you are permitted to use is the device you are using to take your exam

You must not do anything that could infringe CQI's intellectual property rights and/or compromise the confidentiality and integrity of CQI online exams. Examples of misconduct include but are not limited to:

- Providing access to, disclosing, distributing, copying, photographing, recording, downloading, transmitting any exam questions, answers or content in any form or by any means
- Misrepresenting your identity or impersonating another individual during the exam
- Being in possession of any non-authorised items whilst taking the exam such as mobile phones, electronic devices, smart watches, headphones, earphones
- Helping others with the exam or receiving assistance either online or in person during the exam
- Using the internet to research answers to questions.
- Turning off your webcam and/or microphone, obscuring your face with a face covering, positioning your webcam so that there is not always a clear image of your face
- Continuously looking around in any direction or looking at your wrist

CQI will investigate any potential breaches of the Online Exam Regulations in accordance with our Malpractice and Maladministration policy. If you are found to have committed malpractice, CQI reserves the right to void your exam result and disqualify you from future CQI exams either for a fixed period or indefinitely.

7. Exam Results

Once you have completed your exam, the CQI will review the findings from your proctoring recording and if there are no issues, the results will be available for your training provider to download within 10 UK working days. If you have not received your results within 14 working days of taking your exam, please contact your training provider.

8. Special Consideration

You can submit a request for special consideration if you feel that your exam performance was adversely affected by an event outside of your control either during or just prior to taking your exam e.g. death of a relative, illness. Please refer to Appendix 2 CQI's Special Consideration Policy for more information.

9. Appeals

An appeal considers whether the correct policies and processes have been followed and applied fairly.

You can submit an appeal in relation to the following:

- Appeal against a 'Fail' result
- Appeal against a malpractice decision
- Appeal against a decision made in relation to a reasonable adjustment or special consideration

Please refer to Appendix 3 CQI's Appeals Policy for more information.

10. Exam Checklist

At least 3 days before taking your exam:

- ✓ Check you have the correct IT equipment and systems
- ✓ Check your webcam and microphone are working properly
- ✓ Log into SARAS to confirm your username and password are working and that you are registered for the correct exam
- ✓ Check the suitability of your chosen exam location
- ✓ Check you have the required Photo ID and ISO standards
- ✓ Inform colleagues, family and friends of the date and time you intend to take your exam and advise them that you cannot be interrupted during the exam and will not be available to respond to emails/messages/phone calls etc
- ✓ Take the Practice questions

On the day of your exam:

- ✓ Run the systems check again and test your webcam and microphone to confirm they are still working correctly
- ✓ Check you have your photo ID and ISO standards
- ✓ Disable your pop-up blocker to enable the exam software to launch
- ✓ Turn off any auto updating applications if possible
- ✓ If you are using freeware anti-virus tools, please switch them off. If your exam is blocked by an antivirus tool, please go to the antivirus setting and enable the exam software to run

- ✓ Make sure you are taking the exam in a quiet, well-lit environment
- ✓ Remove any smart phones/smart watches/cameras/ tablets/earphones/ear pods and other electrical devices from your exam environment
- ✓ Remind others that you do not want to be disturbed during the exam
- ✓ Grab a drink

When you are ready, log into your learner home page on SARAS and click 'Start Exam'.

SARAS will ask you to hold up your Photo ID to your webcam and take a picture. The picture of your ID must clearly show your name and photo and fit within the red frame on the screen. You will have a chance to review the picture before submitting it to SARAS, so please check all the required information is visible. Next SARAS will ask you to take a photo of your face. Please ensure that your head and face are not covered by a hat or face covering, that you are looking directly at the camera and that your face fits within the oval red frame on the screen.

When you are satisfied with the quality of both images, submit your photos. You will then see some instructions on how to navigate the exam and allocate your time. You will also be asked to accept CQI's Online Exam Regulations. Once you click 'accept' you can then start your exam.

If you have any problems during the exam, please contact the CQI by completing our [online help request form](#). Please note, this inbox will only be monitored during UK working hours.

Good luck! And don't forget to complete the Learner Experience Survey at the end of the exam.

Appendix 1

CQI and IRCA Online Exams: Reasonable Adjustment Policy

A reasonable adjustment is an action that helps reduce the effect of a disability or difficulty that would otherwise place a learner at a substantial disadvantage in an online exam situation. Examples of reasonable adjustments include:

- Extending the duration of the exam - for example if a learner is taking an exam in English and English is not their first language or they have a learning disability, CQI can extend the exam duration by 30 minutes
- Providing assistance during the exam such as a reader - CQI's online assessment system supports NVDA and JAWS screen reader software
- Arranging for a female proctor to check the identification and proctoring recording of a female Muslim learner
- Extending the exam schedule – for example if a learner cannot take their exam within the 30 days exam window due to illness.

An adjustment will not be approved if it involves unreasonable costs, timeframes or affects the security or integrity of the exam. This is because the adjustment is not 'reasonable.' A reasonable adjustment must not give the learner an unfair advantage over other learners taking the same or similar exams.

Before the start of the course, you should discuss any reasonable adjustment needs with your training provider. Depending on the reason for the adjustment, your training provider may ask you to provide supporting medical evidence to confirm your request is valid.

If you are taking your exam in English and you require extra time because English is not your first language, your training provider will inform us when they send us your registration details. For all other reasonable adjustment requests, your training provider will complete a Reasonable Adjustments Request Form and email the form to CQI at training@quality.org.

CQI will acknowledge the reasonable adjustments request and will process the request within 2 UK working days. CQI will email your training provider to confirm whether the reasonable adjustment has been approved and what action has been taken. Your training provider will then inform you of the outcome.

If extra time has been requested, the duration of your exam will be increased on the exam schedule shown on the learner homepage of your SARAS Exam portal. If the extra time is not showing, please contact CQI at training@quality.org.

If you are unhappy with the outcome of your reasonable adjustment request, you have the right to appeal (see [CQI and IRCA Online Exams: Appeals policy](#)).

CQI will retain records of all reasonable adjustment requests and their outcomes for five years.

Appendix 2

CQI and IRCA Online Exams: Special Consideration Policy

A learner may apply to CQI for special consideration if they feel their performance during their exam was significantly affected by:

- An unexpected or temporary illness, injury or other indisposition
- An event outside of their control such as a bereavement just before the exam or a serious disturbance during the exam

Special consideration will not be given for the following circumstances:

- Unexpected events which did not occur near to the day of the exam
- Issues caused by the learner's own actions e.g. hardware, software or internet-related problems due to the learner not complying with CQI's online exam requirements
- Issues caused by the learner not sufficiently preparing for the exam e.g. by not attending all of the course or not completing all the requirements

In addition, learners who have received a reasonable adjustment will not be entitled to receive special consideration for the same circumstances.

Special consideration may include a small post-exam adjustment to a learner's mark or the offer of a free resit, depending on the circumstances and level of difficulty faced by the learner. A free resit will only be offered to learners if their performance has been impaired due to a significant technical problem caused by CQI's online assessment system. Issues due to learner equipment failure or internet related issues will not be considered.

Special consideration must not give the learner an unfair advantage neither should it mislead stakeholders regarding the learner's achievement. A learner's result must reflect their achievement in the exam and not their potential ability. The maximum adjustment given will be 5% of the total marks available for the exam. This is to protect the standard and integrity of CQI's exams.

If you have failed and feel that your exam performance was affected by one of the reasons listed above, you can apply for special consideration. Learners are strongly advised to discuss their request with their training provider prior to submission, as a learner who has achieved a low mark will not have their marks adjusted to such an extent that they move from a Fail to a Pass and may not be eligible for a free resit.

If you decide to apply for special consideration, you must complete a CQI and IRCA Online Exams: Special Consideration Request Form (available from your training provider) and submit the completed Special Consideration Request and supporting evidence using our [online request form](#) within 14 calendar days of your exam result being issued to your training provider.

CQI will acknowledge the email and will process the special consideration request within 10 UK working days. CQI will email you and your training provider to confirm whether the special consideration request was accepted and what action has been taken. If you are unhappy with the result, you have the right to appeal (see Appendix CQI and IRCA Online Exams: Appeals Policy).

Appendix 3

CQI and IRCA Online Exams: Appeals Policy

An appeal is a formal request for a review of a decision. An appeal considers whether the correct policies and processes have been followed and applied fairly.

A learner may make an appeal to CQI in relation to the following:

1. Appeal against a 'Fail' result
2. Appeal against a malpractice decision
3. Appeal against a decision made in relation to a reasonable adjustment or special consideration

Appeal against a 'Fail' result

An appeal may be submitted if the learner considers that:

- An error has occurred in relation to the marking and/or grading process
- There is an issue with the wording or translation of one or more questions which has adversely affected the learner's result

Please note, we will not accept appeals against a 'Fail' result in relation to problems with internet connectivity or pc/laptop hardware or software issues. Learners should follow the Special Consideration process if they experienced technological problems which they feel affected their performance during the exam.

Appeal against a malpractice decision

Malpractice means 'any deliberate activity, neglect, default or other practice that compromises or could compromise the assessment process, the integrity of a CQI and IRCA certified course, the validity of a result or certificate, or the reputation and credibility of the CQI and CQI and IRCA certified courses'.

Examples of malpractice by a learner in relation to online exams include:

- Being in possession of confidential material e.g. exam questions and answers in advance of, and/or during, the exam
- Providing access to, disclosing, distributing, copying, photographing, recording, downloading, transmitting any exam questions, answers, or content in any form or by any means
- Misrepresenting their identity or impersonating another individual during the exam
- Arranging for someone else to sit the exam on their behalf
- Helping others with the exam or receiving assistance either online or in person during the exam
- Copying another learner's answers or knowingly allowing a learner to copy from their work

- Inappropriate behaviour during the exam e.g. using offensive language
- Being in possession of any non-authorized items whilst taking the exam such as mobile phones, electronic devices, smart watches, headphones, and earphones. Possession of such devices will be considered as malpractice whether or not the learner uses them
- Turning off their webcam and/or microphone, obscuring their face with a face covering, positioning their webcam so that there is always not a clear image of their face

Malpractice may be identified during an analysis of the learner's proctoring recording or due to information that CQI receives either before or after the exam. All learners found guilty of malpractice will receive a 'disqualified' result, regardless of whether they have passed or failed the exam and will be provided with details of the malpractice. CQI reserves the right to disqualify learners from future CQI exams either for a fixed period or indefinitely.

Appeal against a reasonable adjustment or special consideration decision

CQI recognises that some learners may be prevented from demonstrating their achievement due to:

- A permanent or long term disability, learning difficulty or medical condition
- A temporary disability, illness or indisposition immediate to or at the time of the exam
- Circumstances at the time of or during the exam

Please see CQI's Reasonable Adjustment and Special Consideration policies for further details. Learners have the right to appeal CQI's decision in relation to these requests.

Process

If you wish to appeal you are strongly advised to discuss your case with your training provider before making a submission. If you decide to make an appeal, you must complete the CQI and IRCA Online Exams: Appeals Submission Form (available from CQI's website and your training provider). You must submit the appeal and supporting evidence using our [online request form](#) within 14 calendar days of receiving your exam result or the outcome of your reasonable adjustment or special consideration request.

CQI will acknowledge the email and will process the appeal as follows:

Reasonable adjustment appeal - within 2 UK working days

Special consideration appeal - within 10 UK working days

'Fail' result appeal - within 10 UK working days

Malpractice appeal - within 10 UK working days

Appeals will be reviewed by a CQI senior member of staff who has not previously been involved in the case and has no personal interest in the outcome.

The person investigating the appeal will re-examine the evidence used to make the original decision and any additional evidence provided by the learner. They will consider whether CQI has applied its processes consistently, properly and fairly in arriving at the decision. For appeals relating to malpractice, the reviewer will consider, on the balance of probabilities, whether there was sufficient evidence to support the malpractice finding and how appropriate the decision was in light of precedents and any additional information provided by the learner.

CQI will email you and your training provider to confirm whether the appeal has been upheld or rejected, and what follow-up action has been taken. No further appeals will be accepted.