



College of Surgeons of East, Central and Southern Africa (COSECSA)

Written Examinations Guidelines

Table of Contents

FOREWORD FROM THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE EXAMINATIONS AND CREDENTIALS COMMITTEE.	1
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	2
IMPORTANT INFORMATION	3
COSECSA EXAMINATIONS ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS	4
APPLICATION PROCESS	5
EXAMINATION COMMUNICATION GUIDE	6
Secretariat through chair to candidates	6
Secretariat through ECC Chair to Countries.	7
Examination Venue Transfer Requests.	8
Handling of Candidates Examination and Grade Complaints within the College	8
WRITTEN EXAMINATION INSTRUCTIONS	9
Access to Electronic Examination:	9
NOTE:	9
NOTE:	10
Upon entry of the correct student ID and Access Code	10
After reading the instructions	11
Main Examination Window.	12
Instructions	12
NOTE:	16
EXAMINATION RESULTS	17
View the results?	17
NOTE:	18
INSTRUCTIONS TO INVIGILATORS	19
At the examination venue:	20
Addressing queries to exams questions during the examinations	20
APPENDIX	21
COSECSA Written Examinations Timeline	21

FOREWORD FROM THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE EXAMINATIONS AND CREDENTIALS COMMITTEE.



This document is intended to serve as a guide to the **Part I - multiple-choice question (MCQ)**, fully digital examinations offered by the College of Surgeons of East Central and Southern Africa (COSECSA). These include the Membership level (MCS) and all Fellowship level (FCS) exams.

This Manual is produced by the Examination and Credential Committee (ECC) with the primary intention of providing an overview of the COSECSA Written Examination and to help exam candidates familiarize themselves with the norms, processes, and role and responsibilities associated with the successful conduct of the examination. We hope this brief document will guide programme directors, country representatives and trainers in the preparation and organization of the exams during the entire Part 1 Written Examinations timeline.

COSECSA fully recognizes that your successful performance on these examinations plays an important role in your career as a surgeon and hopes the following information assists you in your preparation. Hence, we kindly request all our candidates to read these guidelines carefully before sitting for the COSECSA Written Examinations.

The college welcomes all suggestions and recommendations that could improve the conduct of our examination processes.

**Dr. Hanne Getachew,
Chair, Exams & Credentials Committee.**

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would also like to acknowledge the efforts of the Examination and Credentials Committee in the Examinations development, review process and delivery of the COSECSA Written Examinations.

ECC Members

Dr. Hanna Getachew	Chairperson, ECC
Mr. Christopher Minja	Senior Examination Officer, COSECSA Secretariat
Mr. Amani Pascal	Examination Officer, COSECSA Secretariat
Prof. Abebe Bekele	Secretary General
Dr. Tiyamike Chilunjika	
Dr. Bothwell Mbuwayesango	
Prof. Emmy Nkusi	
Prof. Ahmed ElSayed	
Prof. Sherry Wren	
Dr. Akutu Munyika	
Dr. Seke KAZUMA	

COSECSA Specialty Panel Heads

Court of Examiners
External Examiners

Prof Eric Borgstein

Registrar, COSECSA

COSECSA Countries

Stella Itungu

Diana Kaiza

Jonathan Omongole

Godfrey Sama

Niraj Bachheta

Local Organizing Committees

Chief Executive Officer COSECSA

Administrative Officer COSECSA

Finance Officer COSECSA

Research & Patient Outcome Coordinator

Education Officer COSECSA

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

- Examination date will be communicated to all candidates at the beginning of each year.
- Examination venue will be communicated to all candidates a few months before the examination but it is expected to be within your respective countries.
- There will be 2 separate examination papers (Paper I & Paper II)
- Each paper will be timed for 90 minutes with a 30-minute break in-between the exams.
- Each Paper consists of at least 60 single best multiple-choice questions.
- Candidates must notify the invigilator, immediately, if any errors are found in the examination papers or if they face any difficulties before or during the examination period.
- Candidates will be required to complete attendance procedures set-up by the College and/or by Examination organizers.

COSECSA EXAMINATIONS ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

GENERIC CANDIDATE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MCS candidates should be in the second (2nd) year of training. • FCS Neurosurgery and Cardio thoracic surgery candidates should be in their Fourth (4th) FCS year of training in a COSECSA accredited training institution. • The rest of the FCS program candidates should be in their third (3rd) year of training. • All must have paid the full COSECSA Programme entry and full COSECSA Examination fee. • Keep an up-to-date logbook. • Should complete all modules published on the COSECSA e-learning platform. • Submit a duly filled progression evaluation form. • Candidates should be cleared by the Programme Director and Country Representative as eligible and ready to sit the examinations.
MMED CANDIDATE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MMED candidates cannot sit for the COSECSA exams before completing their MMED programs. • It is Mandatory for all MMED applicants to submit a copy of their MMed degree, an official temporary degree, a letter from the MMED program or their national registration/license as a qualified surgeon as a confirmation of completion of their MMED program. • MMED candidates cannot sit for the COSECSA exam during the same year that they plan to complete their 4 years MMed program. The MMed must be fully completed and relevant evidence provided before applying to sit for COSECSA fellowship exams. • MMED candidates from a 5-year MMED program can sit for the COSECSA exams at the same year of their graduation from the MMED Program. However, will be required to complete the MMED program prior to sitting for the COSECSA Exams. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All the mandatory preconditions underlined under “Generic Candidates” should be fulfilled.

REPEAT CANDIDATES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Should have paid the repeat examination fee. • Should have paid the repeat examination fee. • Should repeat the exam year in a COSECSA accredited training institution. • Should repeat and complete all modules published on COSECSA e-learning platform. • Keep an up-to-date logbook. • Submit a duly filled progression evaluation form. • Candidate should be cleared by the Programme Director and the Country Representatives as eligible and ready to sit the examinations.
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APPLICATION PROCESS

- The deadline for application to sit for the examination is **March 31st** of the year of the examination.
- Candidates must complete the **application online and pay** the prescribed examination fee online. Upon confirmation of the registration by the CR, PD and the COSECSA secretariat, the candidates will be informed about the precise times, dates and places for the exams.
- By applying to the examination, a candidate agrees to be bound by the **rules and regulations** of the College.
- If a candidate withdraws from an exam more than 6 weeks before the exam is due, then the fee can be transferred to the next exam date. Fees will not normally be returned if the candidate withdraws permanently, unless due to special circumstances as determined by the college.
- Candidates are allowed only **three (3) attempts** at the written examination to pass. Any candidates who **fail to pass** at the third (3rd) attempt will be **disqualified** from the training program.
- The written examination results remain valid for two (2) years. Candidates who pass the written exam need to sit for and pass the **Part II clinical examination** within two years of passing the written exam. If a candidate fails to succeed at the clinical examinations within two years of the written exam, he/she needs to repeat the written examination

APPROVAL BY PROGRAMME DIRECTORS AND COUNTRY REPRESENTATIVES IS MANDATORY TO SIT FOR THE EXAMS.

EXAMINATION COMMUNICATION GUIDE

Secretariat through chair to candidates

1. Candidates will be informed on what their requirements are. These include:
 - Approval from Country Representatives & Programme Director.
 - Up-to-date logbook.
 - Good standing on e-learning assessments.

2. Candidates will be informed about the details of the examination.
 - Exact date and time of the examination.
 - The approved In-Country venue.
 - Online examination portal used.
 - Any additional requirements such as Laptop, Internet, Security, etc.

3. Candidates will be informed what they will receive before the examination and after the examination. That is:
 - Mock Examination to familiarize with the examination system.
 - Log-in Credentials before the examination.
 - Final results after the examination.

4. Candidates will be provided with opportunities to ask as many questions as possible.

5. The secretariat will create a written examinations WhatsApp group for ease of communication.

Secretariat through ECC Chair to Countries.

COSECSA Country Representatives (CR) and Local Organizing Committees (LOC) will be informed on the following through email communication as well as through the virtual preparatory meeting held every two (2) weeks.

1. CRs & LOCs will be informed on the exact date of the Written Examinations.
2. CRs & LOCs will be informed on what their requirements are. That is:
 - Venue suitable to host the examinations.
 - Connectivity (Wi-Fi) requirements and backup recommendations.
 - Technological gadget recommendations.
 - Information Technology (IT) Personnel.
3. CRs & LOCs will be informed on the mode by which the examinations will be held. **As of 2021 COSECSA Part 1 examinations will be fully online.**
4. CRs & LOCs will be informed on support measures set-up by the Secretariat along with guidance documents.
5. CRs & LOCs will be informed how the online examinations will be conducted through a mock demonstration conducted weeks before the actual examination date.
6. CRs & LOCs will be provided with all the required documents for the examination period.
7. CRs & LOCs will be informed what candidates receive before the examination and after the examination. That is:
 - Mock Examination to familiarize with the examination system.
 - Login Credentials before the examination.
 - Final results after the examination.

Examination Venue Transfer Requests.

- Request will be brought to Secretariat through official letters by the candidate and the Programme Director or COSECSA Country Representative.
- Upon approval by the Country Representatives of both sites (original site and expected site), the respective specialty panel head and the Examinations chair, the candidate will be granted or denied the transfer through an official letter from the College.

Handling of Candidates Examination and Grade Complaints within the College

- Appeals against examinations and grades must be made in writing through official letters to the COSECSA Council within thirty (30) days after completion of the examination.
- The President of the College will appoint an impartial committee to investigate the appeal and require a detailed report to be filed by the Chairman of the Examinations Committee.
- The impartial appeals Committee will take all considerations and its own findings into account and recommend a decision which will remain final and officially binding.

WRITTEN EXAMINATION INSTRUCTIONS

Access to Electronic Examination:

Candidate will be provided with the following important details days before the examination:

- **Link to the examination portal**
- **Student ID**
- **Access Code**

To access the examination portal, candidates must visit the following **LINK** <https://ZipGrade.com/student/> and login under **LOGIN TO STUDENT PORTAL** section with their corresponding **Student ID** and **Access Code** provided to them (See the screenshot below)

NOTE: Student ID number is NOT your COSECSA programme entry number, but a unique number.

The image displays two screenshots of the ZipGrade student portal interface. The top-left screenshot shows the 'LOGIN TO STUDENT PORTAL' form, which includes input fields for 'ZipGrade Student ID' and 'Student Access Code', a 'Login' button, and a red dashed circle highlighting the input fields. The top-right screenshot shows the 'ACCESS OPEN SUBMIT QUIZ' form, which includes a 'Start' button. The bottom screenshot shows the 'LOGIN TO STUDENT PORTAL' form with blue arrows pointing to the input fields, labeled 'ENTER STUDENT ID' and 'ENTER ACCESS CODE'.

NOTE:

- Recommended Browsers: Mozilla Firefox/Google Chrome
- **Student ID:** is a 3-digit number provided by the COSECSA Secretariat.
- **Student Access Code:** is a seven (7) character, case sensitive code to be entered as is (example: 1XowQnP)
- **DO NOT OPEN MULTIPLE WINDOWS ON YOUR BROWSER AFTER YOU START THE EXAM.**
- **DO NOT ATTEMPT TO REFRESH OR CLOSE THE EXAM WINDOW ONCE YOU START THE EXAM.**
- In case of any problem please notify the invigilator immediately.

Upon entry of the correct student ID and Access Code

The student portal will open.

Click the **ASSIGNED QUIZZES** button. This will redirect candidates to where the examination categories will be listed (see the screenshot below.)

Student Portal
Name: N a
Student ID: 1 3
[Show Posted Papers](#)

ASSIGNED QUIZZES

Search

Quiz	Class	Start	End	Time Limit	
Mock 2021	Test	2021/08/18 10:55 AM	2021/09/03 12:55 PM	40	Begin Quiz Submitted: 2021/08/18 12:06:33 PM

Click on the **Begin Quiz** button to read the pre-examination instructions.

After reading the instructions

Click the **"Begin Quiz Now"** button to start the Examination (see the screenshot below.)

Student Portal
Name: N a
Student ID: 3
Quiz: Mock 2021

CONFIRM NAME & ID

You will have 40 minutes to complete this quiz once started. If you encounter any connectivity issues, you may login to the student portal to continue your quiz.

At the end of the time limit, your answer sheet and any answers made at that time will automatically be submitted to your teacher.

Additional Instructions From Teacher

**Use Previous /Next buttons at the top between pages

**Do NOT close or switch Tab or browser after starting the exam.(In case of any problem, please notify the invigilator immediately)

READ THE EXAMINATION INSTRUCTIONS

By checking this box, you agree to the [Terms of Service](#). You agree to do so or have your parent or guardian's permission. You further acknowledge that your responses and entries will be provided to your teacher. Your teacher maintains full authority to edit/remove all data stored by ZipGrade on their account, including these responses.

CHECK THIS BOX

Begin Quiz Now

CLICK HERE TO BEGIN THE EXAM

CLICK TO GO BACK

[Return to Student Portal](#)

Candidates will now access the main examination window.

Main Examination Window.

The examination window is divided into two sections;

1. **Answers Section/Answer sheet (Left)** - Here candidates will see all your particulars and answer sheet.
2. **Question section (Right)** - Here candidates will see the examination questions.

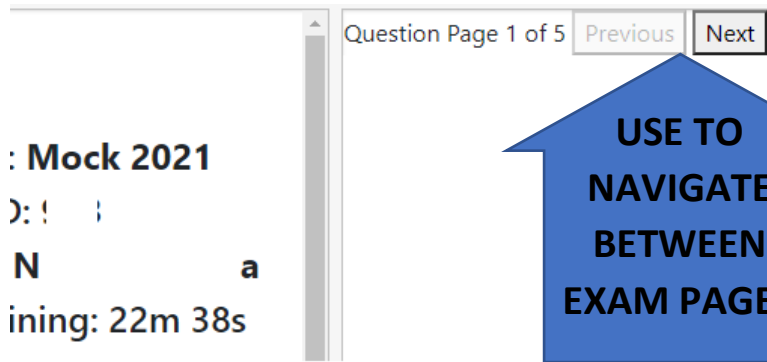
The screenshot shows the examination interface. On the left, there is a section for 'ANSWERS SECTION' with a table for inputting answers. On the right, there is a section for 'QUESTIONS SECTION'. The interface includes a header with 'Question Page 1 of 5', 'Previous', and 'Next' buttons. Below the header, there is a 'Quiz Name: Mock 2021', 'ZipGrade ID: !', 'Name Box: N', and 'Time Remaining: 39m 3s'. A large blue arrow points to the 'CONFIRM NAME, ID, EXAM NAME & PART' field. Another large blue arrow points to the 'EXAMINATION COUNTDOWN TIMER' area. A third large blue arrow points to the 'INPUT YOUR ANSWERS HERE' area. The interface also features logos for the 'COLLEGE OF SURGEONS OF EAST CENTRAL & SOUTHERN AFRICA' and the 'ASSOCIATION OF SURGEONS OF EAST AFRICA'. At the bottom, there is a date 'Date: 25 August 2021', time 'Time: 0800 hrs GMT', and 'Time allowed: 38 MINUTES'.

#	Answer
1	<input type="radio"/> A <input type="radio"/> B <input type="radio"/> C <input type="radio"/> D <input type="radio"/> E
2	<input type="radio"/> A <input type="radio"/> B <input type="radio"/> C <input type="radio"/> D <input type="radio"/> E
3	<input type="radio"/> A <input type="radio"/> B <input type="radio"/> C <input type="radio"/> D <input type="radio"/> E
4	<input type="radio"/> A <input type="radio"/> B <input type="radio"/> C <input type="radio"/> D <input type="radio"/> E
5	<input type="radio"/> A <input type="radio"/> B <input type="radio"/> C <input type="radio"/> D <input type="radio"/> E
6	<input type="radio"/> A <input type="radio"/> B <input type="radio"/> C <input type="radio"/> D <input type="radio"/> E

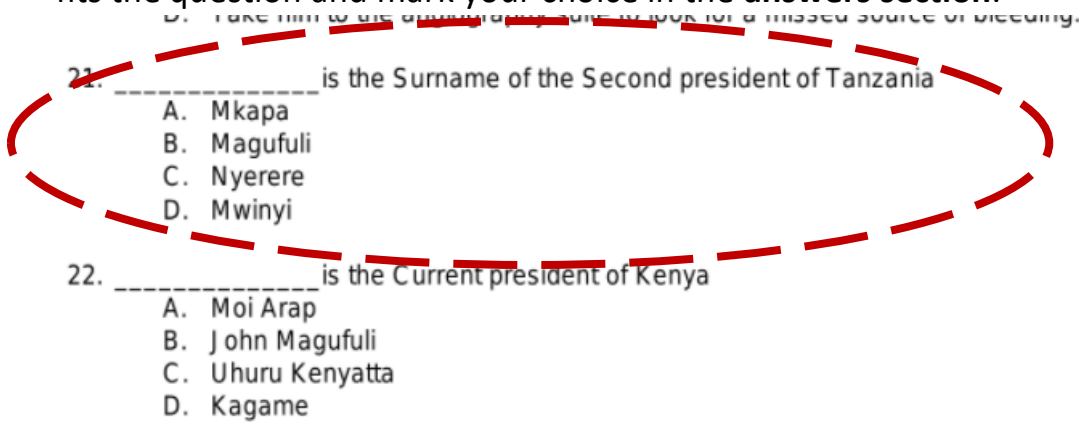
Instructions

1. Attempt to answer all questions.
2. Each question carries one (1) mark. There are no negative marks for wrong answers. Time will be clearly indicated on the examination instructions and a countdown timer will be visible for the duration of the examination.

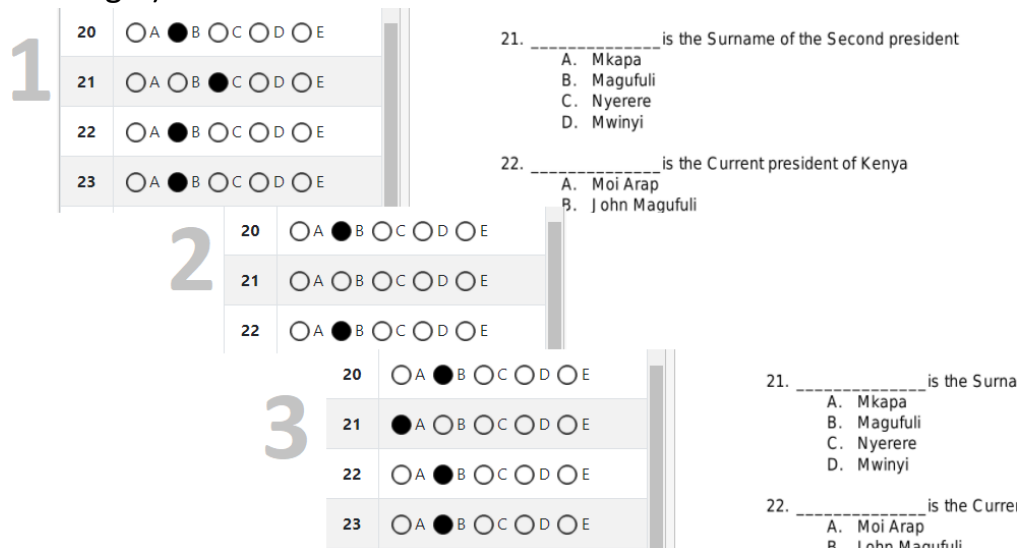
- Use the **Previous/Next** Button on top of the question section to navigate between pages.



- Additional instructions will be provided on a green-boxed text at the bottom of every examination page.
- Each question is followed by multiple choices. Select **ONE** answer that **best** fits the question and mark your choice in the **answers section**.



- If candidates wish to change an answer, unselect the wrong option (by clicking it) and then select the correct one.



7. Please notify the invigilator immediately if any errors are found in the paper.
8. **Do NOT close or switch Tab or browser after starting the exam. (In case of any problem please notify the invigilator immediately).**
9. **DO NOT ATTEMPT TO REFRESH OR CLOSE THE EXAM WINDOW ONCE YOU START THE EXAM.**
10. When candidates finish the exam, click the **Review and submit** Button at the end of the answers section.



11. Candidates will be required to review your responses before submitting.

Quiz Name: Mock 2021
ZipGrade ID: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0
Name Box: N a

Your answer sheet has not been submitted yet. Please review your responses below and press 'Submit to Teacher'. Your teacher cannot view responses until they are submitted with the button at the bottom of this page.

#	Answer
1	B
2	D
3	
4	C
5	A
6	
7	
8	
9	
10	
11	
12	
13	
14	
15	
16	
17	
18	
19	
20	
21	
22	
23	
24	
25	B

Go Back to Edit Responses
Submit to Teacher

REVIEW YOUR ANSWERS BEFORE SUBMISSION

CLICK HERE TO RETURN TO EDIT YOUR ANSWERS

CLICK HERE TO SUBMIT

12. Once satisfied with the review, click **“submit to teacher”**. This will submit the answer sheet, and will not be granted access to it again.
13. On submission, candidates will receive a confirmation note, please right click the answer sheet image to **print** or **save** the answer sheet for confirmation purposes.

Quiz Name: Mock 2021

ZipGrade ID: ! ;

Name Box: N a

Confirmation Code: 7t2tZ95emf15Xmaxbi6F

Responses submitted: 2021-09-03 11:03UTC

Online Quiz Code: xwTh3eS

Your responses have been submitted to your teacher for grading. Please print or save this page for confirmation.

Additional Instructions From Teacher:

**Congratulations, you have completed the Mock Exam.

_____ **Your results will be
communicated later through the same portal once approved

_____ **We wish you all the best
in your final preparations

Registration No.

Country

■

1 <input type="radio"/> <input checked="" type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>	14 <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input checked="" type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>
2 <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input checked="" type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>	15 <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input checked="" type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>
3 <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input checked="" type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>	16 <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input checked="" type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>
4 <input type="radio"/> <input checked="" type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>	17 <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input checked="" type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>
5 <input checked="" type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>	18 <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input checked="" type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>
6 <input type="radio"/> <input checked="" type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>	19 <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input checked="" type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>
■	
7 <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input checked="" type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>	20 <input type="radio"/> <input checked="" type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>
8 <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input checked="" type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>	21 <input checked="" type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>
9 <input type="radio"/> <input checked="" type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>	22 <input type="radio"/> <input checked="" type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>
10 <input checked="" type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>	23 <input type="radio"/> <input checked="" type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>
11 <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>	24 <input checked="" type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>
12 <input checked="" type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>	25 <input type="radio"/> <input checked="" type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>
13 <input type="radio"/> <input checked="" type="radio"/> <input checked="" type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>	

Student ID

[Return to Student Portal](#)

NOTE:

- Do NOT close or switch Tab or browser after starting the exam. (In case of any problem please notify the invigilator immediately).
- Please make sure to save an image copy of the submitted answer sheet after submitting (Before Return to student portal)
- Please confirm the submission confirmation before exiting the exam. Save a copy (screenshot or picture) of the submission page.

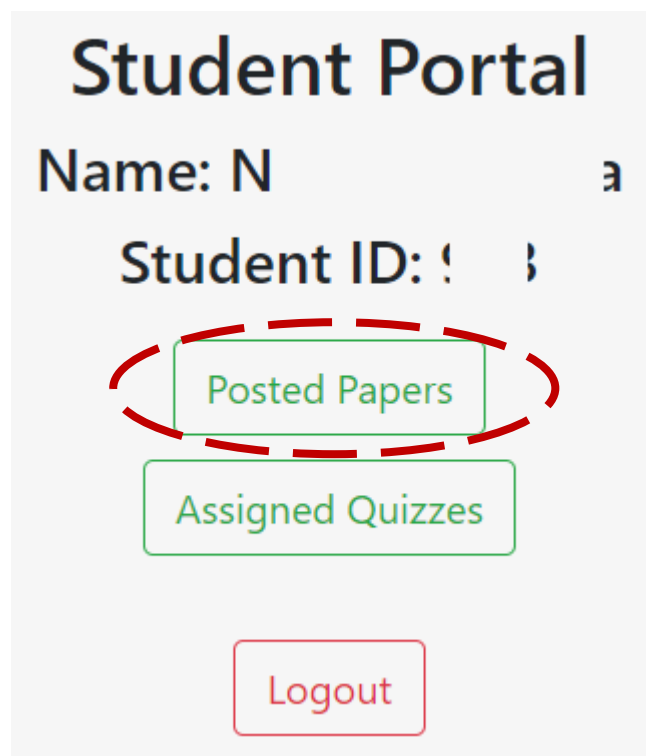
EXAMINATION RESULTS

After approval of the results by the examination committee, the results will be available on the same platform within two (2) weeks of the exams.

View the results?


The following procedures must be followed;

1. Candidate will use the same credentials provided to them (i.e., **Student ID** and **Access Code**) to access the exam portal.
2. Click the **Posted Papers** Button to access the posted papers dashboard.



3. Click on the respective exam icon (**Circled Red**) to view the results.

POSTED GRADED PAPERS

Quiz	Class	Taken	Score	%
 Mock 2021	Test	2021/08/18 12:14 PM		%

Candidates will be able to see their scores together with the original Marked answer sheet for reference.

Quiz: Mock 2021

N

Quiz: Mock 2021
 ZipGrade ID: 933
 Earned Points: 12.0
 Possible Points: 25.0
 Percent Correct: 48.0 %
 Key Version:
 Scanned: 2021-08-18 09:14UTC
 Teacher Comments:
 Congratulations You are now conversant with the system. Pass/Fail of the examination will be visible from this panel **All the best in your final Preparation**

#	Primary Answer	Student	Score	Mark
1	D	A	0 / 1 pts	X

Scanned Image

Registration No.
 Country

MARKED ANSWER SHEET

RESULTS & GRADES

NOTE:

The pass mark will change every year based on standard setting procedures set by the College.

13. Reportable events should be communicated to the ECC chair ASAP. All evidence of the events needs to be copied and transmitted.

At the examination venue:

1. Ensure that all candidates have placed all unused electronic devices/ documents in the invigilators' care for the duration of the examination.
2. Let candidates' power-on their laptops and connect it to the internet. **Only one browser (Mozilla/Chrome) that hosts the exam should be allowed to run on the trainee's computer.**
(Candidates should not be allowed to run any other programme)
In case of network (internet) Failure, please allow the candidates to use their mobile phones/Modem as hotspots to get connected to the internet.
3. Invigilators should note that Examination will be displayed on the portal on the exact time in all the COSECSA examination centers.
4. **If candidates have logged in the exam portal ahead of time, they will need to refresh the page when it's time to start the exam so that the examination can be displayed.**
5. Make sure all the candidates have submitted their examination online. **Do not allow Examinations to be taken on papers.**
6. Recommended to have invigilators stand at the back to monitor and move around.

Addressing queries to exams questions during the examinations

1. Candidates who notice the errors should immediately inform the exam invigilators.
2. The exam invigilators will contact the Senior Exams Officer at the College Secretariat and deliver in full detail the query.
3. The Senior Exams Officer (secretariat) will consult the Panel Head/ custodian of the specialty and communicate back to the exam venues within the duration of the exam.

(All complaints/errors must be recorded, discussed and will be considered on marking of given examination.)

APPENDIX

COSECSA Written Examinations Timeline

Activity	Timeline (Starts)	Timeline (Ends)
Candidates Registrations & Payments	January 1 st of each exam year.	March 31 st of each exam year.
Communications to Candidates & Organizers	May 1 st of each exam year.	First Wednesday of September each year.
Communications between Secretariat and ECC	January 1 st of each exam year.	First Wednesday of September each year.
Preparatory Meetings with Exam Organizers	May 1 st of each exam year (recurring every two (2) weeks.)	First Wednesday of September each year.
Briefing meeting with candidates	Two (2) Days prior to the Examinations Date.	
Mock Examination	Two (2) weeks prior to the actual exam.	
Written Examination	First Wednesday of September each exam year.	
Examination Results	One (1) week after the Examination date. After the approval from the Court of Examiners	