**IRSE E+PD Committee**

**The Way Forward for the 2020 Exam in the light of Corona Virus (Covid-19)**

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**Background and Purpose**

At the last E+PD Meeting on 26th March, 2020, the committee discussed whether or not the 2020 IRSE Exam should be postponed or cancelled as a result of the worldwide Corona Virus (Covid-19) pandemic. Whilst the meeting discussed options in general terms, it decided to defer a decision until the situation was clearer. A special meeting was convened on 19th May 2020 for this decision to be made.

That meeting considered 9 options, including total cancellation of the 2020 exam and a range of other options for total / partial deferment until a later date.

The meeting chose Option 3, summarised as: *“Proceed with current plans for 2020 exam in October 2020. If restrictions are still in place in some countries, then* ***cancel exam at short notice ONLY IN THOSE COUNTRIES****.****”***

It was felt that this was the option which maximised the opportunity for potential candidates to continue their professional development by taking the exam, whilst preserving the integrity of the exam and which addressed health risks in a proportionate way.

The meeting then considered the process by which that option could be put into place.

The purpose of this document is to outline the POLICY agreed at the meeting and a “road map” for the way forward in implementing that option.

Arising from this document there will be stakeholder specific communications for candidates and others involved.

**Road Map**



(numbers relate to the relevant paragraph below)

# Payment Deadline

The payment deadline for prospective candidates to complete their payment for entry into the 2020 exam will remain unchanged at 30/6/20

# Exam Centre Organisation

The local exam centre facilitator / chief invigilator will be responsible for (additional responsibilities associated with Corona Virus highlighted in red):

* Procuring suitable premises for the exam to be held in, taking account of the number of candidates at that centre and any actual or reasonably foreseeable locally imposed constraints on social distancing etc.
* Arranging any necessary cleaning of those premises before and after the exam in accordance with locally requirements imposed by both the government and the owner of the premises.
* Publicising to candidates any local hygiene requirements (e.g. wearing of face masks)
* Arrangement of sufficient invigilators (with an appropriate level of contingency in case of non-availability)
* Receipt of exam papers from London, and safe keeping of those papers until the exam
* Collection of completed scripts after the exam and secure transmission to London.
* Assessing local circumstances and if necessary, making the decision to cancel the exam at that centre in the event that Corona Virus restrictions prevent the exam taking place. This decision:
	+ May be driven by a national or local government imposed lockdown or similar restrictions on mobility / group meeting.
	+ May be driven by an inability to procure a suitable exam venue because of restrictions imposed by the venue owner
	+ May be driven by other factors like unavailability of invigilators due to self isolation.
	+ May need to be taken at very short notice (down to 48 hours before the exam)
* Liaising with the London HQ office (Contact Judith Ward) for advice and keeping them fully appraised of the emerging local situation and of any decision (or likely decision) to cancel the exam at that centre.
* In the event of cancellation advise all candidates due to take the exam at that centre. (using contact details provided by London HQ)
* Seek to publicise any decision to cancel through any locally available social media etc.

# August Review

On 31/8/20, the situation at exam centres across the world will be reviewed.

If the situation across the world appears to indicate that the chances of the exam successfully taking place in October is very small, but that there is a much better chance of success in November or December (or possibly later), then a single revised examination date in November or December (or possibly later) may be nominated and notified to candidates, subject to arrangements being in place including agreement with facilitators / chief invigilators.

If at the time of the review, due to cancellation of the exam in various centres, less than (circa) 35% of candidates worldwide who have entered the exam (i.e. paid by the time of the payment deadline) will be able to take the exam in 2020, then the exam will be cancelled across the world.

This review and decisions will be taken by a nominated subset of the Education and Professional Development Committee.[[1]](#footnote-1)

# Next Exam Opportunity

In the event of cancellation of the exam in some or all centres, then the next opportunity for the affected candidates to take the exam will be in October 2021.

If the exam is cancelled only in some centres, then the October 2021 exam will be against the lettered modules A-D, as previously planned in the exam migration strategy.

If the exam is cancelled in all centres, then a decision will be taken by December 2020 by Education and Professional Development Committee on whether the 2021 exam will be against the old (numbered) modules 1-7 or against the new lettered modules A-D.

If the 2020 exam has been cancelled in all centres AND if the 2021 exam is against the new lettered modules A-D, then Module A will be offered on a nominated date in February or March 2021 to enable candidates to pre-qualify for the Modules B-D in October 2021.

If the exam in 2020 has been cancelled in some or all centres, AND the 2021 exam is against the new letter modules A-D, then consideration will be given to offering a Module 2 exam additionally in 2021 to give those candidates who were unable to take module 2 in 2020 one last chance. This will be subject to sufficient demand.

# Refund Policy

For those candidates who have paid by the payment deadline, but do not take the examination in 2020, the following refund policy will apply:

* If the candidate could not take the exam because the relevant exam centre was closed – full refund.
* If the relevant exam centre was open, but the candidate did not sit the exam – no refund, subject to extenuating circumstances. The following for example would be considered valid and would result in a full refund:
	+ - The candidate was self-isolating and therefore could not attend
		- Local travel restrictions prevented the candidate from travelling to the centre. (e.g. Interstate travel bans in Australia)

Refunds will normally take the form of a credit note to be used against entry in the 2021 (or subsequent) exams. Cash refunds will only be given in unusual circumstances.

# Communications

As the situation develops, the latest information about which centres are running the 2020 exam will be available on the IRSE website and social media, for example Facebook.

In the event of short notice cancellation of the exam at a particular centre, the exam centre chief invigilator will notify (IRSE HQ first and then) candidates due to take the exam at that centre. This will be supplemented by advice from London HQ.

In the event of total cancellation or postponement to November / December, then all candidates will be advised by London HQ.

The above communications will be by email and will be supplemented by social media postings.

1. Neil Porter, Tony Kornas, Judith Ward, Polly Whyte [↑](#footnote-ref-1)