

Joint Committee on Intercollegiate Examinations

1 June 2022

Statement by Mr John R McGregor, Chair JCIE and JSCFE

Dear Candidate

Joint Surgical Colleges Fellowship Examinations (JSCFE) Update

Everyone at the Joint Committee on Intercollegiate Examinations (JCIE) and the four Surgical Royal Colleges of Great Britain and Ireland is grateful for the patience shown by all JSCFE candidates throughout the Covid-19 pandemic. We apologise most sincerely for the enforced suspension of almost all examination activity since early 2020 but happily the JCIE is now able to provide more detail of its plans to re-commence the JSCFE programme. In doing so, the JCIE, in conjunction with the Presidents and Councils of the Surgical Royal Colleges, is making some changes to the JSCFE suite of examinations, one of which will increase the opportunities available to candidates. This important update communication will therefore cover:

1. The plans to re-start Section 1 and Section 2 examination activity.
2. Revisions to the eligibility criteria, which will only impact on new candidates seeking Section 1 entry once the application system is opened.
3. The option for the successful Section 1 candidate (i.e. the candidate granted eligibility to proceed from JSCFE Section 1) to transfer to Section 2 of the UK/Ireland Intercollegiate Specialty Examination on the condition that certain additional entry criteria are met.
4. A revised format for JSCFE Section 2 examinations.
5. Updated post-nominals which candidates who are successful in JSCFE Section 2 are entitled to use after they have affiliated to and remain in good standing with one of the four Surgical Royal Colleges.

All current and future JSCFE candidates are therefore encouraged to read this entire communication carefully.

1. Re-start of Examinations

As previously intimated, the JCIE needed to be able to stage Section 2 examinations before re-starting Section 1. To do otherwise would only add to the waiting lists for Section 2 places and the JCIE knows that uncertainty over the time interval between Section 1 and Section 2 is particularly frustrating for candidates. The following statements summarise the current JCIE plans:

- **Section 2**

A Section 2 examination in General Surgery took place in Dubai at the end of March 2022 and this is being followed by a Section 2 examination in Trauma & Orthopaedic Surgery in June 2022, also in Dubai. The JCIE is currently planning that Section 2 examinations in Cardiothoracic Surgery, Neurosurgery and Urology take place between late 2022 and early 2023. Eligible candidates will be informed as soon as dates and venues are confirmed. Unfortunately, there are too few eligible Otolaryngology candidates to stage a Section 2 diet in this specialty at present.

- **Section 1**

With the intention of all the relevant specialties completing a Section 2 examination by the early part of next year, Section 1 will recommence from March 2023. The examination dates are now live on the JSCFE website [JSCFE Calendar](#)

The online application system is open and you must complete an application through your personal profile. The JSCFE Secretariat will not automatically enrol you to an examination.

The Section 1 format and delivery method is outlined on the JSCFE website [JSCFE Application](#). All candidates should note that the format of all Section 1 examinations changed in January 2021 from one Single Best Answer (SBA) paper and one Extended Matching Items (EMI) paper to two SBA papers.

2. Revised Eligibility Criteria

For those submitting a new application to the JSCFE, a pass in the MRCS examination of one of the Surgical Royal Colleges of Great Britain and Ireland is required. It does not matter where the Part B MRCS OSCE was taken (in the UK/Ireland or internationally) but proof of success in a relevant examination is necessary. This does **NOT** apply to candidates who have previously been granted eligibility for JSCFE Section 1 entry and are therefore already registered in the JSCFE system, but MRCS status will impact on candidate options for such individuals gaining eligibility to proceed from Section 1 (see Section 3 of this document).

3. Options for Candidates Gaining Eligibility to Proceed from Section 1 JSCFE

The default position for candidates who achieve the required standard in JSCFE Section 1 will remain as eligibility to proceed to JSCFE Section 2 in the same specialty.

However, with effect from January 2023 it will be possible for successful Section 1 candidates to transfer to Section 2 of the UK/Ireland Intercollegiate Specialty Board (ISB) Examination. To be permitted to transfer, however, the following criteria must be met:

- The candidate must provide evidence of having passed the MRCS Examination of one of the four UK/Ireland Surgical Royal Colleges (if not done at the time of JSCFE Section 1 entry).
- The candidate must have worked in the UK and/or Ireland for a minimum of one year during which time he/she must have participated in the mandatory requirements for the maintenance of professional competence.
- While working in the UK/Ireland the candidate must have registered with the Intercollegiate Surgical Curriculum Programme (www.iscp.ac.uk) and provide evidence of completion of work placed based assessments.
- The candidate must provide a new Principal Referee Statement that meets the criteria for ISB entry applicable to all candidates not aligned to a UK/Ireland training programme. For the criteria, please visit [Candidate Applications \(jcfe.org.uk\)](#) – document G43 Applicants 2023, point 4 b).

Candidates in General Surgery should note that if they opt to transfer, they will need to state a special interest category that aligns to the ISCP curriculum since part of the ISB Section 2 examination focuses on the special interest component. Similarly, Cardiothoracic Surgery candidates who entered JSCFE Section 1 will need to select cardiac or thoracic surgery at the time of transfer. Further information is available on the JCIE and ISCP websites.

All Candidates should be aware that ISB Section 2 examinations are only delivered in the UK and Ireland, but it is assumed that if a candidate chooses this route, the examination will be taken while working in the British Isles.

All candidates eligible to take up the option of transfer to ISB Section 2 are advised to carefully consider their career intentions in conjunction with their mentors and referees. If it is the intention to apply to the General Medical Council (GMC) for a Certificate of Eligibility for Specialist Registration

(CESR) to gain entry to the UK/Ireland Specialist Register, then candidates are strongly advised to consider and prepare for the ISB Section 2 route. **ONLY** the ISB Section 2 is recognised by the GMC and the Medical Council in Ireland as the test of knowledge within the approved UK/Ireland surgical curricula. While obtaining a CESR is not impossible following success in JSCFE Section 2, the submission will need to be accompanied by an additional portfolio of evidence. Details are available on the CESR guidance pages of the GMC website ([Specialty specific guidance for CESR and CEGPR - GMC \(gmc-uk.org\)](https://www.gmc-uk.org/specialty-specific-guidance-for-cesr-and-cegpr))

4. Format of JSCFE Section 2 Examination

Except for Urology, the format of JSCFE Section 2 has changed and there will be no patients in the clinical section. Patients that were previously present in the Cardiothoracic Surgery, General Surgery, Neurosurgery and Trauma & Orthopaedic Surgery Section 2 examinations have been replaced by clinical scenarios and the same will apply to Otolaryngology once that specialty has enough eligible candidates to stage a Section 2. Candidates are directed to the JSCFE website for further details [JSCFE Candidates](#). For all specialities, however, the examination syllabus is unchanged and candidate preparation is therefore unaltered.

5. Post-Nominals Awarded by the Surgical Royal Colleges

Candidates who pass Section 2 of either a JSCFE or ISB examination are entitled to affiliate to one of the four Surgical Royal Colleges of Great Britain or Ireland and are thereafter permitted to use the agreed FRCS post-nominal. The Presidents and Councils of the Colleges have recently agreed some changes to the post-nominals and these revisions help clarify the differences between the ISB and JSCFE Section 2 examinations.

With effect from January 2023, the post-nominal that applies to Royal College affiliation following success in JSCFE Section 2 is **IntFRCS (College)** where 'College' is the recognised abbreviation of the relevant College e.g. IntFCRSEng, IntFRCSEd, IntFRCSGlasg, IntFRCSt. Candidates should note that there is no reference to the specialty in which the JSCFE is taken. The prefix 'Int' makes it clear that the post nominal refers to success in a JSCFE rather than an ISB examination. This is important as for the reasons outlined in Section 3, the ISB examinations and JSCFE are not equivalent.

Candidates who transfer to ISB Section 2, who are successful in this examination and subsequently affiliate to a College are entitled to use the post nominal **FRCS (College) (Specialty)**. Clarification of the appropriate post nominal will be sent at the time of Royal College affiliation by the relevant College.

All successful candidates should note that the post nominals can only be used by individuals who affiliate to a Royal College and who remain in good standing. For the avoidance of doubt that means maintaining the annual subscription applicable to the category of Fellowship.

I hope this information is helpful and as mentioned above, a further update will be provided to advise of dates and the opening of applications for Section 1 and dates, venues, and application dates for Section 2.

Yours sincerely



JOHN R MCGREGOR

CHAIR – JOINT COMMITTEE ON INTERCOLLEGIATE EXAMINATIONS