

Joint Surgical Colleges Fellowship Examinations

9 July 2020

Statement by the JCIE on behalf of the surgical Royal Colleges

As everyone knows, 2020 is proving a year of considerable uncertainty and significant on-going global disruption. As JCIE Chair, responsible for the delivery of the Joint Surgical Colleges Fellowship Examinations (JSCFE) I fully appreciate the world-wide impact that the coronavirus pandemic is having on examination candidates and on surgical careers and this understanding is shared by the JSCFE Secretariat, the examiners and the Presidents of all four Surgical Royal Colleges of the UK and Ireland. Most importantly, however, we hope that you and your families have remained safe and well over the past few difficult months.

It is appropriate that I update you with respect to the JSCFE forward planning for the remainder of 2020 and beyond. What I will state below is correct as of Thursday 9 July 2020 but clearly matters are subject to change and sadly will do so adversely if the world experiences further waves of COVID-19. We will aim to provide regular updates over the coming months but for now I am sure you will all appreciate the difficulties of forecasting the global position.

Section 1 Examinations

We intend to resume JSCFE Section 1 examination activity from September 2020. Our partner for Section 1 delivery, Pearson VUE, is currently planning how many candidates can be accommodated to allow for social distancing and personal safety. As far as possible we will adhere to the published examination timetable but some of the dates may prove subject to minor alteration. Once we have confirmation of capacity for each specialty and applications have been screened for eligibility, we will contact all relevant candidates as soon as we are able to. **Please do not make any travel or accommodation arrangements until you receive confirmation that you have an examination place.** Applicants must also note that at this point in time we cannot guarantee when candidates who are successful in Section 1 will be offered a Section 2 place - the implications of the pandemic are greater for Section 2 than for Section 1 such that waiting lists have built up.

Section 2 Examinations

The coronavirus pandemic resulted in the cancellation of the Cardiothoracic Surgery Section 2 examination in February 2020 and the Trauma and Orthopaedic Surgery Section 2 examination in June 2020. Both examinations had been scheduled to take place in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Unfortunately, we have to confirm that there will be no JSCFE Section 2 examinations throughout the remainder of 2020 which means that not only will these two specialties not be re-scheduled for this year but there will also be no General Surgery Section 2 examination at its usual time in October. Several factors, most notably travel restrictions and requirements for quarantine, make it impossible to stage Section 2 examinations this year from a practical perspective but we also must consider the safety of candidates, examiners, staff, our local hosts and volunteer patients. At the time of writing we cannot provide any confirmed dates for the resumption of Section 2 Examination activity, but we do hope that we will be able to plan for early 2021. When Section 2 examination activity does resume, priority will be given to candidates who were directly affected by the 2020 cancellations.

In summary, therefore, the current plan for JSCFE examinations is as follows:

- Section 1 to re-commence in September 2020. Dates and examination places will be confirmed as soon as possible.
- Candidates who do enter and are successful in Section 1 this year do so on the understanding that the JSCFE Secretariat cannot guarantee when it will be possible to sit Section 2. Given the waiting lists that have built up secondary to the 2020 Section 2 cancellations **it is unlikely that successful candidates will be offered a Section 2 place in 2021**. Candidates should bear this in mind when considering whether they wish to sit Section 1 this year.
- There will be no further JSCFE Section 2 examinations in 2020.
- The JSCFE Secretariat is working on forward planning for 2021. It is hoped that Section 2 examinations will re-commence in early 2021 but this is all dependent on the global health situation. Further information will be provided as soon as possible but any plans that are released may be subject to change.

I apologise again for the disruption of the 2020 examinations but as I am sure everyone appreciates it has occurred on account of circumstances beyond our control.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. McGregor', with a horizontal line underneath the name.

JOHN R MCGREGOR

CHAIR – JOINT COMMITTEE ON INTERCOLLEGIATE EXAMINATIONS