

Officers sit first national online exam in policing

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National Investigators' Exam moved online in response to COVID-19 pandemic with officers from 46 forces in England and Wales taking test

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More than 1,390 officers in England and Wales have become the first in policing to sit a national online exam for career progression. The move comes as part of the College of Policing's response to ensure officers continue to be promoted during the pandemic.

Officers from 46 forces across England and Wales sat the National Investigators' Exam on 8 September as part of the process to becoming a police investigator.

Previously, the tests were taken in large exam centres with often hundreds of officers in the same room.

The challenge we faced was ensuring officers continue to be promoted while at the same time keeping them safe during a pandemic.

Moving the exams online should have been a two-year process but this was undertaken in six months to meet the demand from forces and officers.

This emergency solution is one that we want to be fair and consistent to officers across the board and we wish them all the very best.

Deputy Chief Constable Bernie O'Reilly, College of Policing

Under new rules, officers were given a specific day to sit the exam between 8am-8pm which allowed them flexibility as well as a safe environment.

Security has remained a top priority and the exams will be taken through a system also used by the Civil Service. In addition, each officer was issued with a strict statement of integrity and confidentiality to ensure the legitimacy of the exams.

'Like any "first" in policing we will be monitoring and assessing how the exams are run and how the grades compare with previous years,' said DCC O'Reilly.

While the method of the exam has changed, the format, content, structure and timing of the exam are largely the same, with the same number of questions as in previous years.

The COVID pandemic has provided an opportunity to look into new ways of hosting exams; with the move to online examination. This has presented opportunities around the flexibility of candidates to take the exam, setting up their own environment and timings and also for forces to be able to decide how to host exams. The online exam has removed some of the wider administration, meaning that candidates will have results delivered directly to them.

I have worked closely with the College to address concerns and questions around the online exam, in particular the integrity of the exam being taken in a non-invigilated environment. Whilst there are some assurances around this I am keen that together we will continue to review and refine as we move forward to ensure that we learn and evolve from the NIE to the next set of online exams.

Assistant Chief Constable Kerrin Wilson, chair of the Professionalising Investigation Programme (PIP) Board

Future Inspectors' and Sergeants' exams will be taken online later this year.

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