

# NPPF step-two legal examinations candidate handbook

For candidates attending the national police promotion framework (NPPF) sergeants' or inspectors' examinations in 2021

First published 19 January 2021

Written by College of Policing

## How to use this handbook

Use the slide over page contents menu or scroll down to see the different sections in this handbook. A full downloadable version of the handbook can also be found in the related resources section at the bottom of this page.

## Introduction

This version of the handbook contains the rules, syllabus and candidate information for NPPF step two legal examinations to be conducted online for 2021. It supersedes all previously published rules and syllabus documents and candidate handbooks.

Candidates must make themselves aware of the 2021 version of the candidate handbook for online examinations. Any enquiries about the examinations should be made to the relevant Force Examinations Officer in the first instance and not to the Selection and Assessment Unit at the College of Policing directly.

Candidates should also ensure that they refer to the [online examinations candidate guide](#) for specific information relating to the examination itself and preparing for it.

The move to online examinations was in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and was to allow the continuation of examinations for 2020. The College of Policing has made the decision, in conjunction with the relevant stakeholder groups, to deliver the examinations for 2021 online too. A full review of the online platform and delivery method of the NPPF step two legal examinations will be conducted during 2021 to inform the delivery of exams from 2022 onwards.

## Overview

The national police promotion framework (NPPF) governance board reserves to itself the interpretation of its rules.

The national police promotion framework (NPPF) consists of four steps;

- step one: competence in current rank
- step two: legal knowledge examination
- step three: assessment against rank specific competencies and matching to vacancies
- step four: temporary promotion and work-based assessment

## Dates

The dates for the 2021 online NPPF exams are:

- NPPF sergeants' examination – 9 to 11 March 2021, between 8am and 8pm each day
- NPPF inspectors' examination – 12 October 2021, between 8am and 8pm

## NPPF sergeants' examination over three days

This will be held over three days to allow us to enable us to provide a responsive and timely service for the higher volume of candidates taking this exam. The College of Policing will work with forces to assign candidates to specific days and you will be asked to take the exam on the day assigned to your force. Your force examinations officer will advise you on which date this will be.

There is no facility to offer alternative times or dates for candidates to sit the inspectors' examination.

## Eligibility

In order to be eligible to enter the NPPF step two legal examination to the rank of sergeant or inspector, officers should meet the eligibility criteria for the NPPF step one. NPPF step one confirms that candidates have:

- demonstrated competence in current rank through their Performance and Development Review (PDR), or Student Officer Learning and Assessment Portfolio (SOLAP)/acceptable equivalent

- no live written improvement notices issued under the Police (Performance) Regulations 2012 or reduction in rank under those procedures in the previous 18 months
- no live written warning, final written warning or extended final written warning issued under the Police (Conduct) Regulations 2012 (a finding of misconduct but where no separate penalty is applied – Regulation 35(1)(b)- does not debar an officer from proceeding to Step Two)
- adhered to the attendance management policy, taking full account of the Police Advisory Board for England and Wales' (PABEW) guidance on attendance management.

## **Sergeants' specific eligibility criteria**

Admission to the NPPF step two legal examination to the rank of sergeant is restricted to regular constables (those appointed to office of regular constable) who, by the date of the NPPF step two legal examination, will have:

- completed two years' service
- completed their probationary service; and
- not previously obtained a pass in a recognised police promotion examination (i.e. are not already an OSPRE Parts I and II qualified Sergeant)

Candidates nearing completion of their probation may only register for the examination if they are supported by their force and will have achieved substantive rank by the date of the NPPF step two legal examination. It is for candidates and forces to ensure that candidates have met these criteria. Officers who have applied early but who have not been made substantive in the rank of constable will not be permitted to take the examination.

## **Inspectors' specific eligibility criteria**

### **OSPRE parts I and II qualified sergeants**

OSPRE Parts I and II qualified sergeants are eligible to apply for the Inspectors' NPPF step two legal examination from the commencement (day one) of their sergeant posting provided that they have not previously obtained a pass in a recognised police promotion examination i.e. are not already an OSPRE Parts I and II qualified Inspector.

An officer promoted to sergeant under the OSPRE route is required to complete a probationary period of one year (or longer) in the role as sergeant before they can be substantively promoted to

inspector under Regulation 5 of The Police (Promotion) Regulations 1996 (as amended). However, any candidate who holds the substantive rank of sergeant is immediately eligible to commence step one of the NPPF process and take the NPPF step two legal examination during this probationary period. OSPRE qualified sergeants are therefore entitled to take the NPPF step two legal examination for promotion to inspector at any time following promotion to sergeant because they are a substantive sergeant from day one.

## NPPF qualified sergeants

NPPF qualified sergeants are eligible to take the Inspectors' NPPF step two legal examination for promotion to the rank of inspector once they have successfully completed the NPPF route and been made substantive as a sergeant.

Only candidates who hold the rank of sergeant are eligible to take the Inspectors' NPPF step two legal examination.

Candidates nearing completion of their temporary promotion to sergeant may only register for the examination if they are supported by their force and will have achieved substantive rank by the date of the NPPF step two legal examination. It is for candidates and forces to ensure that candidates have met these criteria. Officers who have applied early but who have not been made substantive in the rank of sergeant will not be permitted to take the examination.

## Fast track programme

Candidates participating in the fast track programme should refer to the guidance for fast track officers.

Fast track candidates will take the examination in accordance with their programme timescales. Entry into the examination is not automatic and the responsibility remains with the participating force and the programme member to register for the NPPF step two legal examination to ensure attendance at the Inspectors' knowledge examinations. Candidates must register in the same way as other candidates for the examination (see Section 2.2).

## Direct Entry for Inspectors

Candidates participating in the [direct entry inspectors programme](#) should refer to the guidance

for this.

Candidates will take the examination in accordance with their programme timescales. Entry into the examination is not automatic and the responsibility remains with the participating Force and the programme member to register for the NPPF step two legal examination to ensure attendance at the Inspectors' knowledge examinations. Candidates must register in the same way as other candidates for the examination (see Section 2.2).

## Rejoiners to the Police Service

Officers rejoining the police service sits outside of the NPPF, however, officers who are returning to the police service at a higher rank than they left and to the ranks of sergeant and inspector are required to comply, in part, with the NPPF.

Unlike all other officers, rejoiners to the ranks of sergeant and inspector will recommence their service at the rank to which they applied to rejoin. Rejoiners will not undertake the NPPF steps in the usual order, however will still be required to undertake the step two legal examination for the relevant rank at the earliest opportunity as well as complete the step four work-based assessment. Rejoiners are provided with two opportunities to pass the relevant step two legal examination; if the officer fails to attain the required standard, there may be grounds to invoke Regulation 13 of The Police Regulations 2003 dispensing of the officer's services.

Rejoiner members will be considered as meeting the step one eligibility criteria. Candidates must register in the same way as other candidates for the examination.

Rejoiner members required to undertake the knowledge examination at rank of sergeant or inspector, will hold that rank at point of re-entry. Officers meeting the required standard for the knowledge examination will move to NPPF step four. Those rejoiner members failing to meet the required standard in the examination will be afforded one opportunity to resit and this must be done at the earliest opportunity.

## Career breaks

There is provision for officers to take the NPPF step two legal examination whilst on a career break, providing that the terms and conditions of the career break agreed by their chief officer allows for this.

The force must inform the Selection and Assessment Unit of any such requests by the closing date for entry to the NPPF step two legal examination in question, together with confirmation from the chief officer confirming their approval.

## Overseas duties

Due to restrictions on firewalls and browsers, as well as the stability of internet connections, we cannot guarantee that candidates will be able to take the examination outside of the United Kingdom. Currently serving officers on deployment in another country who are supported by their force or organisation to take the examination, should contact their Force Examinations Officer. The College cannot provide support to officers who wish to take the examination abroad while on holiday.

## Suspension

Candidates who are suspended from duty will be required to provide written authority from their chief officer allowing them to take the NPPF step two legal examination. This written authority must be provided to Selection and Assessment prior to the examination.

## Pregnant officers

An officer may, if they so wish, take the NPPF step two legal examination if it falls within a period of pregnancy. It may be possible to provide reasonable facilities to assist with an officer's attempt at the NPPF step two legal examination whilst pregnant. Applications should be made as early as practicable (See Section 3- Reasonable adjustments and accommodations for more information). If a force provides a testing centre, additional accommodations may need to be arranged directly with the force.

A copy of the most recent pregnancy related force risk assessment may be submitted to the Selection and Assessment Unit prior to the candidate sitting the NPPF step two legal examination, to allow any appropriate provision of reasonable facilities to be made for pregnant officers. Every

effort will then be made to ensure that reasonable accommodations are provided and that any hazards identified within the risk assessment are minimised by adequate control measures.

## Maternity leave

The NPPF Governance Board/College of Policing shall not act or encourage candidates to act contrary to Section 72 of the Employment Rights Act 1996, which specifies that an employee whilst on compulsory maternity leave must not work, or be permitted by their employer to work, during the two-week period from the date of childbirth.

However, an officer may, if they so wish, take the NPPF step two legal examination if it falls within a period of maternity leave. It may be possible to provide reasonable accommodations to assist with an officer's attempt at the NPPF step two legal examination whilst on maternity leave. If a force provides a testing centre, additional accommodations may need to be arranged directly with the force.

Any application for accommodations requests should be made no later than the closing date for entries for the NPPF step two legal examination.

## Paternity leave

An officer may, if they so wish, take the NPPF step two legal examination if it falls within a period of paternity leave. It may be possible to provide accommodations to assist with an officer's attendance at the NPPF step two legal examination whilst on paternity leave.

Any application for accommodations should be made no later than the registration closing date for the NPPF step two legal examination.

# Applications

## NPPF step one

Applications to enter the NPPF step one are only acceptable when approved and submitted as meeting the eligibility criteria on behalf of the candidate by their chief officer.

1. The step one eligibility form should be completed in force and signed by the candidate's line

- manager, or equivalent to state that the candidate meets the eligibility criteria for step one;
2. The step one eligibility form should be returned to the force examinations officer ahead of the registration closing date;
  3. The force examinations officer will verify the candidate's eligibility based on the completion of this form and will verify and allocate the candidate to the examination on the registration platform. Candidates must not be verified without the candidate's line manager (or equivalent) confirming they are eligible to sit the exam.

## NPPF step two

All candidates will register for the NPPF examinations using the assessment information management system (AIMS). This is an online system developed to support the administration and delivery of national examinations. AIMS is an intuitive cloud-based system and is designed to work on a variety of mobile devices.

Candidates will be provided with details of how to register, along with a link to access the platform when registration opens. It is a straightforward process and does not take long. Candidates will be asked to enter their personal and biographical details and to confirm which examination they are registering for. Candidates must take care to ensure that their personal details are entered correctly. When accessing feedback reports and results after the examination, candidates will be asked to confirm their date of birth, national insurance number and email address. If these are entered incorrectly during registration this will cause a delay in getting results.

Candidates will not receive an email confirming their application has been received until one week before the exam. When completing their application, they will get a confirmation screen, which candidates should take a screen shot of to keep a record that their application was created and submitted. Candidates should not register again as this will create duplicate entries in the system.

The relevant force or organisation will then be asked to verify that candidates are eligible to sit the examination and assign them to the correct examination by the registration closing date.

## Registration periods

The candidate registration periods are as follows:

## • **NPPF Sergeants' examination**

- opens on 14 January 2021
- closes at 6pm on 17 February 2021

## • **NPPF Inspectors' examination**

- opens on 24 August 2021
- closes at 6pm on 22 September 2021

Candidates should be aware that the above closing dates are the final dates for registrations to be verified and allocated by forces. Forces and organisations may have earlier closing dates that candidates need to register by. Candidates should check with their force examinations officer to confirm the closing date for registration in their force.

It is the responsibility of each candidate to ensure that they have registered within the timeframe specified by the force examinations officer. Late candidate registrations will only be considered if exceptional circumstances can be proved as to why it was outside of the candidate's control to register in time. A heavy workload or being unaware of the registration period will not be accepted as exceptional circumstances.

## **General data protection regulation (GDPR)**

Candidates registering for the NPPF examinations are requested to provide personal and biographical data on the AIMS registration platform. In accordance with the Equality Act 2010, it is good practice to know the demographic of people applying for examinations so that policing can build an accurate workforce picture. Through this platform, we ask for your name so we can effectively manage examination logistics. Your name or any identifiable information will not be shared with any other organisation except your force or organisation, and will not be used for any other purpose. We ask for your help to develop an understanding of workforce diversity so that we can monitor any potential barriers faced, providing this information is voluntarily given.

The information you provide will be held by the College for the purposes outlined above and in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), the Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA 2018) and our duties under the Equality Act 2010. We will use the information collected from

you to report on the demographics of those attending. Your information will be used to form statistics and high-level reports that will not identify you or any other individual. We will only hold your information in an identifiable form for as long as is necessary and in accordance with our privacy notice. You have certain rights under the GDPR regarding your personal data, which include the right to access data held about yourself, to ensure it is accurate, and the right to request that it be deleted or no longer processed. You also have the right to complain about the processing of your information if you are not happy about any aspect of it.

The privacy notice can be found on AIMS. For more information about your rights, please see our [full privacy notice](#).

You can also contact our data protection officer by emailing [data.protection@college.pnn.police.uk](mailto:data.protection@college.pnn.police.uk)

## Reasonable adjustments and accommodations

### Reasonable adjustments - disability-related requests

Candidates who can demonstrate that they have any form of disability, as defined by the Equality Act 2010, may apply for reasonable adjustment. This includes candidates with a neurodiversity, such as dyslexia.

Candidates are advised to notify their force examinations officer of their disability, as well as their intention to request reasonable adjustment, in the first instance. The force examinations officer should ensure that the candidate provides a report containing a diagnosis of their disability and recommendations for reasonable adjustment from an appropriate specialist in the area of their disability. The candidate may wish to discuss options with their local force occupational health department prior to sourcing a specialist. In making their recommendations, it is helpful if the specialist has a clear understanding of the format of assessment that the candidate will be undertaking. Please note that registering an intention to submit a request for reasonable adjustment on AIMS at registration is not a formal request. It is candidate's responsibility to ensure they provide the necessary documentation and request form via their Force Examinations Officer in sufficient time.

## **Accommodations - non-disability related requests**

Candidates with conditions that fall outside of the Equality Act 2010 definition of disability – for example, conditions that are short-term and/or do not have a substantial adverse effect on the candidate's day-to-day activities – may be eligible to apply for an accommodation. We aim to provide all candidates with a fair assessment and we will aim to support requests for accommodation where these are appropriate. However, in considering whether an accommodation is appropriate, it is important to ensure that the accommodation does not change the standard that the candidate is being measured against, nor that the candidate is provided with an unfair advantage over other candidates.

Candidates who believe they may be eligible for an accommodation in the examination should contact their force examinations officer in the first instance. Candidates may need to obtain a specialist report, although this may not be necessary in all cases, depending on the nature of the request.

Please note that a candidate whose force or organisation is not aware of their disability, and who wishes to maintain confidentiality of it, can approach the selection and assessment unit at the College of Policing directly. Candidates should, however, be aware that confidential requests for reasonable adjustments may diminish the extent to which reasonable adjustments can be made.

## **Offering reasonable adjustments and accommodations**

A psychologist will consider the recommendations within the report or request. Where a candidate has a disability and this is evidenced by their report, the psychologist will confirm what would constitute reasonable adjustment for the specified assessment process. Candidates will be advised in good time, prior to the examination, of any adjustment or accommodation that is being offered.

Any adjustments or accommodations offered will be applicable to the examination applied for. If a candidate is re-entering the examination and has previously submitted and accepted a reasonable adjustment, there is no need to resubmit a report if they are content to receive the same reasonable adjustment as previously. However, please note that candidates will still need to notify their intention to request a reasonable adjustment. Due to online delivery of examinations, some previous adjustments may not be applicable and we will advise candidates regarding this.

The candidate is required to provide written confirmation to the selection and assessment unit of their acceptance of the reasonable adjustment or accommodation offered prior to undertaking the examination process.

## Further information on reasonable adjustments and accommodations

For further details on applying for reasonable adjustments and accommodations, candidates should refer to the [reasonable adjustments policy](#). Candidates and Force Examinations Officers should refer to this document before obtaining a report or making a request for an accommodation or reasonable adjustment.

The report must be submitted to the selection and assessment unit no later than the closing date for registrations:

- NPPF Sergeants' examination: 17 February 2021
- NPPF Inspectors' examination: 22 September 2021

Failure to submit in accordance with this closing date could affect our ability to coordinate the request with the candidate's force or organisation in time for the examination. Applications for reasonable adjustments and accommodations received after the notified closing date will therefore not be accepted, unless extenuating circumstances can be provided in writing. It is the candidate's responsibility to plan ahead to ensure that the closing date for reasonable adjustment and accommodation applications is met.

## Examination structure and syllabus

## Structure

The sergeants' and inspectors' NPPF step two legal examinations consist of a single examination containing 150 question multiple choice questions of three-hour duration.

Questions will test candidates' knowledge and understanding of four areas: Crime, evidence and procedure, road policing, and general police duties.

The syllabus content examined is cross-referenced to, and only contained within, the 2021 edition of the Blackstone's Police Manuals. These texts are the only official resource endorsed by the College of Policing and contain the required legal knowledge for prospective sergeants and inspectors. Examination questions are drawn solely from the contents of these manuals. Candidates will be examined on the law and procedure only as it appears in the 2021 edition of the Blackstone's Police Manuals. Candidates are advised not to rely on previous editions which will contain out of date material.

The College of Policing strongly recommends that all candidates use the 2021 edition of the manuals. A 30% discount is available to all Police officers and staff in England and Wales. You can find out how to [get the discount code](#) by going to the CollegeLearn site from the [managed learning environment](#) (opens a new website). Links will only work on police networked computers.

## Syllabus updates

Usually, no further updates or supplements to the NPPF syllabus will be issued during its year-long lifespan. However, in exceptional circumstances, the College of Policing may issue an amended syllabus in advance of the next scheduled annual publication date. Any changes to legislation or case law following publication of the 2021 edition will only be included in the examination paper under exceptional circumstances and only if suitable prior notification is given. For example, a major change to a key area of legislation or procedure during the lifespan of the current NPPF candidate handbook might render a significant part of the current NPPF syllabus content obsolete. In such circumstances, it may be necessary for an update or supplement to the syllabus to be issued, to guide candidates on any additional material that would be examinable.

Any updates or supplements to the syllabus will be made available through the College of Policing

website and will be distributed to all Force Examinations Officers. We will ensure that any syllabus updates or supplements are distributed well in advance of the examination date, so candidates have sufficient preparation time to familiarise themselves with any additional examinable material. Where possible, any additional study materials would be provided to candidates free of charge.

Please note that syllabus updates will only be made in exceptional circumstances and will not be made for every change to legislation included within the syllabus. Unless we provide notification through the channels outlined above, all of the syllabus will remain examinable regardless of any changes within the law. For further guidance on this issue, candidates should regularly check the College of Policing website or consult their Force Examinations Officer during their preparation period. Candidates should not contact the Selection and Assessment Unit at the College of Policing directly with queries.

If an area of the syllabus is repealed or changed and not tested upon in the examination, there is still an expectation that candidates will ensure they are familiar with the new legislation for their own professional development. Forces and organisations should ensure candidates are familiar with new areas of relevant legislation which are not tested in the examination to avoid any gaps in knowledge.

## Examination development

All multiple-choice questions contained within the examination paper are written by trained question writers who have attended the College of Policing Multiple Choice Question Writing course.

All questions are linked to the syllabus to ensure that all of the examination questions are relevant to the rank of sergeant or inspector.

The questions are quality assured by the College of Policing's Legal Services Unit and by independent legal experts, who check the legal accuracy of all of the questions. All questions undergo this quality assurance process to ensure currency and that the examination is legally accurate.

## Validation questions

To ensure that the questions are a fair test of the syllabus, the questions are validated before

being used as an actual examination question. All of the examination questions are evaluated against standard criteria, which are used to show whether questions are of an acceptable standard. Only questions that meet the necessary psychometric criteria are included in future examinations, because only these questions have been shown to be a reliable and fair test of the syllabus.

Each question paper will contain 10 questions that are being validated, meaning that candidates will be scored on 140 questions. In order to trial as many validation questions as possible and to ensure the examinations are continually updated with reliable and fair tests of the syllabus, multiple variations of the examinations are created. The variations of the examination paper only apply to the 10 validation questions. All candidates receive the same 140 marked questions.

The use of validation questions within examinations is accepted as good practice among major testing organisations. Validation questions are included in the examination for trial purposes only.

The questions do not contribute to the candidate's final score, and candidates are not informed of the location of the validation questions within the paper.

Validation questions are included within the examination so that candidates answer them in the same way that they would answer the live questions, therefore providing more realistic statistics by which to decide whether or not the questions can be used in future examinations. This does not mean that all questions covering new areas of the syllabus are validation questions. Questions may have been validated in another way and candidates are advised to treat all questions equally.

By continuing this cycle of pre-testing within the examinations, the College of Policing can continue to provide examinations that test a representative range of the syllabus, while also ensuring that all of the questions that are included in the scored examination will reward those candidates who have prepared sufficiently for the test.

## Subject content

The subject content for each of the examinations has been identified using a nationwide survey of operational sergeants and inspectors, together with strategic input from the NPPF Governance Board.

This survey produces a blueprint of those areas within the syllabus that are considered both

important and frequently encountered by officers holding that rank.

The established blueprint is reflected in the balance of questions included in each paper. This means that potential sergeants and inspectors are more likely to be tested on those areas of legislation that have been identified as the most relevant and frequently encountered by the officers already serving at the target rank. However, it should be noted that candidates may be asked questions which relate to any part of the syllabus. The syllabus is approved by the NPPF Governance Board and reflects all aspects of the roles nationally. Therefore, some areas of the syllabus may be less relevant to different roles depending on force, region and role; however, all areas are examinable as the examination needs to reflect the rank at a national level.

Although the syllabus content is similar in many respects for both ranks, some rank specific areas are different as indicated in the Blackstone's Police Manuals and within the content detailed in the appendices of this document. Whilst there are some key areas where a high level of knowledge is required, the examination is not aimed at testing pure factual recall of those matters, which would be readily available for immediate reference in the workplace. Candidates will not be examined on their ability to simply recall information that is contained solely within the tables in the Blackstone's Police Manuals. However, where the text directly refers to a paragraph of one of the Codes of Practice to the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984, candidates will be expected to know the relevant provision(s) of that Code.

The appendices of this document set out the general areas to be tested within the NPPF Step Two Legal Examination syllabus and are intended primarily as an aid to help candidates in planning their study for the respective ranks. The definitive reference source for examinable material is the 2021 edition of Blackstone's Police Manuals.

## Further guidance

### [Further guidance and information about the NPPF examinations.](#)

Candidates should also ensure that they have a copy of the [online examinations candidate guide](#) and that they follow the instructions in that document prior to the examination. This will help candidates to be fully prepared and limit the chances of experiencing issues on the day. You can also read [technical support for the exam](#).

Any queries about the examination should be directed to Force Examinations Officers. Candidates

should not contact the Selection and Assessment Unit at the College of Policing directly with queries.

## Rules on examination day

Candidates must refer to the [online examinations candidate guide](#) or from Force Examinations Officers. This document provides a comprehensive guide for preparing for the examination, accessing the examination on the day and what to expect when taking the examination.

## Testing environment

There is no national requirement for candidates to take the examination at a testing centre or under supervision. Candidates are responsible for ensuring they have a suitable testing environment, as per the guidance in the Online Examinations Candidate Guide. We cannot accept appeals regarding an unsuitable testing environment so candidates must ensure they take the time to plan appropriately for this. Some forces may wish to provide an optional testing centre for their candidates and forces should refer to the Online Examinations Force Guidance for advice on setting up a suitable centre.

## Accessing the examination

Prior to sitting the examination, candidates will be asked to test their device and will be offered the chance to familiarise themselves with the platform. A few days before the examination, candidates will receive details of the URL that they will use to access the examination platform on the day of the examination, as well as information about how to log in to the examination.

## Declaration notice

The decision to take the NPPF examination is that of the candidate. All candidates must read and agree to the declaration notice, which will be provided on the online examination platform, before being permitted to take the examination. This is to confirm that candidates agree to abide by all rules of the examinations and are fit and suitably prepared in relation to their knowledge, understanding and application of the law and procedure contained within the syllabus.

Any candidate who declines to agree to the declaration for the NPPF examination will not be eligible to take part.

## **Attempting to gain an unfair advantage**

Candidates must not gain, or attempt to gain, any unfair advantage during the examination. All officers are expected to act with integrity and in line with the principles and standards of behaviour set out within the Code of Ethics. Candidates must not help, or accept help from, anyone else during or after the examination. The design of the examination and mechanisms that have been introduced into the delivery of the examination mean that attempts to cheat are likely to be ineffective. Any candidate who is suspected of cheating or disclosing the content of the examination in any way will be investigated and could have their examination result nullified and/or be banned from entering the examination in future. Candidates suspected of cheating or disclosing the content of the examination will also be referred to their force's Professional Standards Unit. This includes discussing question content on social media or any other format before, during or after the examination.

Candidates must not allow another person to gain access to AIMS or the examination using their login details, nor must they attempt to gain access via anyone else's login details. Any attempts to do so will be classed as a breach of the rules and reported to the candidate's Professional Standards Unit.

## **Disclosing content of examination questions**

Making and/or keeping copies of the questions in any format is prohibited. The questions remain the intellectual property of the College of Policing and we reserve the right to reuse questions. If people keep and share copies of questions, this affects the future integrity of examinations. Candidates can take the examination within a 12-hour window on the examination day. If the examination content is shared before a candidate has chance to take the examination, this could lead to them having an unfair advantage and affect the integrity of the examination. It is therefore paramount that you do not discuss examination content with anyone after the examination, including comments on social media, as this is likely to provide others with an unfair advantage.

Discussing the content of questions in any form, including on social media platforms, is prohibited and presents a huge personal risk for that candidate and their future career. Any candidate who is

suspected of disclosing the content of the examination in any way will be investigated and could have their examination result nullified and/or be banned from entering the examination in future. Candidates suspected of keeping or sharing the content of the examination will also be referred to their force's Professional Standards Unit.

Candidates must not take screen shots of questions under any circumstances. Any candidate found to have done this will be referred to their force's Professional Standards Unit for a breach of examination rules.

## Code of Ethics and conduct

The Code of Ethics applies to all officers, staff and volunteers across the police service in England and Wales. Candidates will be expected to:

- take personal responsibility for promoting and reinforcing the principles and standards set out in the Code
- actively seek to embed the Code by ensuring regular reference to it in their day-to-day decision making and professional responsibilities within policing

The highest standards are expected from all police officers and staff (or equivalent) and this is especially important for those in roles where greater autonomy and decision making is expected. It is therefore essential that candidates participate in the NPPF examination with the Code fully supporting their actions, contributions and decision making. Candidates who are found to have acted in a manner that contravenes the Code, or any of its principles, may be removed from the promotion process by their force or organisation.

Any information entrusted to you during your examination, including the questions within the examination paper, has been disclosed to you in the course of your duties as a police officer or police staff member (or equivalent). In accordance with the standards expected of all officers and staff, this information must not be used for personal benefit, nor should it be divulged to other parties, except in the proper course of police duty. The College regards the improper disclosure of such information as a serious breach of confidentiality and will ensure that any reported instances are fully investigated under the police complaints procedure.

## Non-attendance

## Withdrawals

As dates for registration are close to the examination dates, candidates should fully consider if they intend to sit the NPPF examination before registering. Candidates who wish to withdraw from the examination after registering will need to inform their force examinations officer immediately, specifying their reason for withdrawing.

It is not possible to substitute a withdrawn candidate with another unregistered candidate. Candidates who withdraw from an examination will not automatically be re-entered into the next examination. A verbal indication that the candidate would like to sit the subsequent examination is not sufficient to ensure registration.

Once a candidate has withdrawn from the examination, they cannot be re-entered.

## Absence

Candidates who do not take the examination within the 12 hour window will be marked as absent from the examination.

All potential candidates are encouraged to consider carefully whether they genuinely wish to attempt the examination before they submit their registration. Forces may implement their own penalties for absent candidates, and therefore candidates should report their reasons for absence to their force examinations officer.

## Sickness

A candidate who is either medically or self-certificated unfit for work, or is on restricted duties through illness or injury, must provide a certificate from their force medical examiner (FME) (or equivalent) confirming their fitness to sit the examination, even if sitting at home. Candidates must submit the FME's certificate of fitness at the time of registration, via their force examinations officer.

A candidate who is either medically or self-certificated unfit for work or on restricted duties, and who is not in possession of an FME (or equivalent) certificate of fitness, is not permitted to take the NPPF examination.

If a candidate has an illness or injury that has only become apparent to them on the day of the

examination, they should refer to the [declaration notice section](#). It will then be their decision as to whether they attempt the examination. If a candidate becomes unwell during the examination, it will be their decision as to whether they continue with the examination.

## The NPPF debrief panel

The NPPF debrief panel will consider the administration of each NPPF step two legal examination following each delivery and prior to the results being issued. The panel comprises of a National Police Chiefs' Council nominated Moderator, a member of the Police Federation for England and Wales, a member of the College of Policing Legal Services Team, a representative from the College of Policing Workforce Development Unit, and a representative from the College of Policing Selection and Assessment Unit.

Before the College of Policing can issue results, the NPPF debrief panel will:

- consider the impact of any unscheduled events which occurred during the administration of the NPPF step two legal examination
- inform any candidate who is suspected of irregular behaviour, e.g. attempting to gain unfair advantage during the NPPF step two legal examination, breaching confidentiality, that their result will be withheld until the NPPF reports and disqualification panel has considered the circumstances
- ratify the results prior to their release

The NPPF debrief panel will not consider any reports of extenuating circumstances.

To progress within the NPPF, candidates will be required to demonstrate a standard of performance that indicates that they have a sufficient level of knowledge and understanding of the syllabus. As always, the NPPF debrief panel will compare the results of this year's examination with previous years to ensure that the delivery of the exams has been fair.

If the NPPF debrief panel sees a significant deviation in the success rate for exams, whether higher or lower, it will consider adjusting the pass mark from the previous 55% (77 correct answers out of 140) for the sergeants examination and 65% (91 correct answers out of 140) for the inspectors' examination to maintain the assessment standard of that exam. The cut score may need to be adjusted upwards, if the move to online examination delivery has made the examination easier for candidates than in previous years, or downwards, if it has made the

examination harder.

## When results will be available

Force examinations officers will be able to access a full list of results via AIMS within three weeks of the examination date.

All results and feedback reports will be available to candidates within three weeks following the examination. Candidates will be notified by their Force Examinations Officer when these are available and candidates will be sent a link to access their own feedback report via AIMS. Candidates will be required to verify their date of birth, national insurance number and email address in order to access their result. Any errors in inputting these at registration will result in a delay to being able to access feedback.

The candidate feedback report can be used by the candidate to identify any strengths and developmental needs in the areas that have been examined and assessed. The report includes a summary of candidates' final grading and total percentage score obtained in the examination. This is also broken down into subject areas. Candidates are not issued with certificates following the examination.

The feedback report also acts as proof of the candidate's result and must be retained by candidates for future reference. We are unable to reissue feedback reports.

Candidates can expect to receive their results by:

- Sergeants' examination: 30 March
- Inspectors' examination: 2 November

## Validity

The NPPF Step Two Legal Examination pass is valid for five years (less one day) from the date of taking the examination. For a candidate to be eligible to complete the NPPF Step Three, the date of the Step Three process must fall within this period. If a candidate has not reached this point of the NPPF Step Three within the period from the date of taking the NPPF Step Two Legal Examination, they must return to NPPF Step One. This decision was made by the Police

Promotion Examinations Board (PPEB) and subsequently upheld by the NPPF Governance Board.

The effect is summarised in the following tables:

## Sergeants' National Police Promotion Framework

Date passed NPPF step two legal examination	Must be successful at NPPF step three by
08 March 2016	07 March 2021
14 March 2017	13 March 2022
13 March 2018	12 March 2023
12 March 2019	11 March 2024
9-11 November 2020	10 November 2025

The validity period of the 2015 Sergeants' NPPF step two legal examination has now expired.

## Inspectors' National Police Promotion Framework

Date passed NPPF step two legal examination	Must be successful at NPPF step three by
04 October 2016	03 October 2021
03 October 2017	02 October 2022

Date passed NPPF step two legal examination	Must be successful at NPPF step three by
09 October 2018	08 October 2023
08 October 2019	07 October 2024
13 October to 19 November 2020	18 November 2025

The validity period of the 2015 Inspectors' NPPF step two legal examination has now expired.

## Five year validity period

Candidates can register for the NPPF step two legal examination has now expired if their validity period is near the end without having to forfeit their remaining validity time should a step three process be announced by the force in the months between the registration date and the examination date. If the candidate is successful at the step three process, they must withdraw from the examination at the earliest opportunity and ensure the selection and assessment unit is aware that they will not be attending the examination. Candidates who choose not to enter the examination before the registration date and are subsequently unsuccessful at a step three process will not be allowed to register late for the examination; they will have to wait until the following year to register for the examination.

Any candidate choosing to re-take the NPPF step two legal examination has now expired a year or more before their validity period expires, will forfeit any remaining time left on their original validity period once they have taken the examination regardless of the result (i.e. if the candidate fails, their remaining validity of one (or more) year(s) would not still remain.

## Extensions to validity

Extensions to the validity period will be considered for officers who have taken maternity leave, paternity leave, maternity related sickness leave, maternity support, adoption leave, shared

parental leave or a career break for the purposes of care. Extensions to validity will also be considered for officers who have experienced periods of sickness which have led to long-term absences and/or have had a long-term, substantial adverse impact on an individual's day to day activities.

All applications for extension to validity should be made via your force examinations officer and must include full details of the absences from work including specific dates and reasons for absences and confirmed as being correct by someone in force (i.e. line manager or HR). Being on restricted duties should not prevent an officer from applying for and being successful at a step three process. Therefore, any requests regarding extensions due to the restriction of duties will need to clearly explain why this prohibited the officer from applying for promotion before it will be considered. Extensions to validity will be considered by the selection and assessment unit and will be sent to the reports and disqualification panel in exceptional circumstances.

Reports will be sent to the panel every two months to consider (the first of the month in February, April, June, August, October and December). Please ensure that requests for validity extensions are therefore submitted at least one week before this date or they will not be included in the report on that occasion. Officers cannot apply for a step three process without a valid step two pass and cannot apply before an extension is officially granted and communicated by the panel. It is the responsibility of the officer to ensure they apply for an extension to validity ahead of time.

Extensions to validity will not be considered in cases of lack of promotion opportunities or not achieving promotion to the next rank within the validity period in any circumstances.

## **NPPF reports and disqualifications panel**

The NPPF reports and disqualifications panel comprising a National Police Chief's Council nominated chief moderator, a representative from the College of Policing workforce transformation unit, the head of the College of Policing selection and assessment unit, together with a member of the College of Policing legal services team will formally consider the reports based on unscheduled incidents and reported cases of irregularity or breaches of the rules.

The NPPF reports and disqualifications panel will consider any reports after the results have been notified. Once a decision has been reached, the College of Policing, on behalf of the chair of the panel, will notify the candidate within seven days.

The panel cannot change a fail result into a pass. Once the scoring has taken place and has been signed off by the debrief panel, the results will stand. Any adjustments made to the scoring will render the results invalid and the marking team will not endorse an adjusted result.

Unsuccessful candidates who have previously submitted reports have claimed that an event or series of events has contributed to their result because they were unable to perform to their best. However, in behavioural terms, it is not possible to make assumptions about what candidates would and would not have done had those circumstances not arisen. Different circumstances have different effects on people, and it is not appropriate to attempt to predict what that effect may or may not have been.

Other examining bodies, such as universities, are usually willing to consider both marginal fail results and the possibility of converting such results to a pass. However, they have the benefit of other evidence to consider – such as coursework and portfolios – that may support a conversion to a pass for a candidate that has achieved a lower-than-expected result. Due to other evidence not being available, it is not possible to reconsider the marks awarded at the examination against any other information. Marginal fail results will therefore not be reassessed or awarded a pass mark. Rigorous marking procedures are used following the examinations.

## Disqualification procedure

Any candidate found to be in breach of the rules will be liable to disqualification.

If a candidate's behaviour reduces the reliability of their examination scores, their result may be nullified by the marker notwithstanding any disqualification decision.

In cases of irregularity and misbehaviour, the panel can:

- fail the candidate
- disqualify the candidate from the current attempt and bar them from further attempts for a period of several years
- refer the candidate to their chief officer

## Right of appeal

Candidates have the right of appeal to the chair of the NPPF governance board against the decision of the NPPF reports and disqualifications panel, where there are reasonable grounds for believing that the panel did not act in compliance with its rules, or there is fresh evidence, not available at the time of the original report for further consideration.

Appeals must be made by email to the chair of the NPPF governance board, care of [NPPF.enquiries@college.pnn.police.uk](mailto:NPPF.enquiries@college.pnn.police.uk). Appeals must be countersigned by the candidate's line manager or above. The countersigned appeal must then be submitted by the candidate, and received by the selection and assessment unit, within 21 days of the date of the letter in which the candidate is notified of the decision of the NPPF reports and disqualifications panel.

The selection and assessment unit will forward the appeal to the chair of the NPPF governance board. The Chair of the NPPF governance board will consider whether there are adequate grounds for appeal and will notify the selection and assessment unit. The candidate and relevant force's examinations officer on behalf of the chief officer will be advised by the selection and assessment unit in writing of the chair of the NPPF governance board's decision. The chair of the NPPF governance board cannot convert a fail into a pass but can vary or confirm the decision of the NPPF reports and disqualifications panel.

## Blackstone's Police Manual 2021

Information on sections applicable to both the sergeants' and inspectors' exams can be found in the appendices in the downloadable version of this guide.

## Downloadable resources

A pdf version of this guide is available.

- [NPPF candidate handbook 2021 \(pdf\) 600.59 KB](#)

## Tags

Leadership development