

NIE candidate handbook

For candidates attending the national investigators' exam (NIE) in 2021

First published 1 January 2021

Written by College of Policing

How to use this handbook

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Introduction

This handbook contains the rules, syllabus and candidate information for the national investigators' examinations (NIEs) to be conducted online in 2021. This document 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 NIE liaison contact 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 the examination itself and preparing for it.

The move to online examinations was in response to covid-19 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 NIE will be conducted during 2021 to inform the delivery of examinations from 2022 onwards.

Overview

The NIE is phase 2 of the professionalising investigations programme (PIP). Please refer to the [PIP programme policy](#), published by the College of Policing investigative skills team, for further

information on the structure of the PIP 2:

The purpose of the NIE is to identify the candidates who have sufficient levels of knowledge, understanding and application of relevant law and procedure to perform effectively in the PIP2 and as a trainee investigator.

It is recommended that candidates spend a minimum of 14 weeks completing independent study, using the prescribed syllabus for the examination, which is the blackstone's police investigators' manual.

Dates

The dates for the 2021 online NIEs are:

- 2 March between 8am and 8pm
- 8 June between 8am and 8pm
- 14 September between 8am and 8pm
- 30 November between 8am and 8pm

There is no facility to offer alternative times or dates for candidates to sit the NIE.

Eligibility

Admission to the NIE is open to warranted officers, police staff investigators and individuals in other agencies or bodies with an investigative capacity who have been selected as a potential student for the PIP2.

The NIE is a prerequisite of the PIP2. All candidates applying to sit the NIE must be able to demonstrate current investigative competency against the assessment criteria for the PIP level 1. It is the responsibility of the candidate's force or organisation to demonstrate that a candidate has reached this standard. The College reserves the right to reject a candidate if this cannot be evidenced.

Career breaks

There is provision for officers to take the NIE while on a career break, providing that the terms and conditions of the career break, as agreed by their force crime training manager (or equivalent),

allow for this. It is the responsibility of the force or organisation to inform the College of any such requests by the candidate registration closing date, together with confirmation of approval from the force crime training manager (or equivalent).

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 NIE liaison contact. The College cannot provide support to officers who wish to take the examinations abroad while on holiday.

Suspension

Candidates who are suspended from duty will be required to provide confirmation from their force crime training manager (or equivalent) allowing them to enter the NIE. This written authority must be submitted to the College at the time of registration.

Pregnant officers

An officer may, if they so wish, take the NIE if it falls within a period of pregnancy. It may be possible to provide accommodations to assist with an officer's attendance at the NIE while pregnant. Applications should be made as early as practicable (see the reasonable adjustments and accommodations section). 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 or organisation risk assessment may be submitted to the selection and assessment unit prior to the candidate sitting the NIE, to allow any appropriate provision of accommodations to be made for pregnant officers. Every effort will then be made to ensure that accommodations are provided and that any hazards identified within the risk assessment are minimised or reduced by adequate control measures.

Maternity leave

The NIE board and the 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 on compulsory

maternity leave must not be permitted by their employer to work during the two-week period from the date of childbirth. If a force provides a testing centre, additional accommodations may need to be arranged directly with the force.

However, an officer may, if they so wish, take the NIE if it falls within a period of non-compulsory maternity leave. It may be possible to provide accommodations to assist with an officer's attempt at the NIE while on maternity leave. See the reasonable adjustments and accommodations section.

Paternity leave

An officer may, if they so wish, take the NIE if it falls within a period of paternity leave. It may be possible to provide accommodations to assist with an officer's attempt at the NIE while on paternity leave.

Applications

Candidates will register for the NIE using aims (assessment information management system), 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 for 2021 are as follows:

March examination

- Opens on 11 January
- Closes at 6pm on 10 February

June examination

- Opens on 19 April
- Closes at 6pm on 19 May

September examination

- Opens on 26 July
- Closes at 6pm on 25 August

November examination

- Opens on 11th October
- Closes at 6pm on 10 November

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 NIE liaison contact 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 NIE liaison contact. 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 NIE are requested to provide personal and biographical data on the

registration platform (AIMS). 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 see [our full privacy notice](#).

You can also contact our data protection officer by emailing 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 NIE liaison contact of their disability, as well as their intention to request reasonable adjustment, in the first instance. The NIE liaison contact 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.

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 NIE liaison contact 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

For further details on applying for reasonable adjustments and accommodations, candidates should refer to the examinations reasonable adjustment policy . Candidates and NIE liaison contacts 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:

March examination

- 10 February

June examination

- 19 May

September examination

- 25 August

November examination

- 10 November

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 proved 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 NIE consists of a single, 80-question multiple-choice examination paper of two hours duration.

Questions will test candidates' knowledge and understanding of four areas:

- general principles, police powers and procedures
- serious crime and other offences
- property offences
- sexual offences

The syllabus content being examined is cross-referenced to, and only contained within, the 2021 edition of the Blackstone's Police Investigators' manual. This text is the only official resource endorsed by the College of Policing and contains the required legal knowledge for trainee investigators. Examination questions are drawn solely from the contents of this manual.

Candidates will be examined on the law and procedure only as it appears in the 2021 edition of the manual. Candidates are advised not to rely on previous editions, which will contain out-of-date material. We strongly recommend that all candidates use the 2021 edition of the manual.

The Blackstone's Police Investigators' q&a and the Blackstone's Police Investigators' mock examination paper contain study questions that have been developed outside of the College of Policing. While these materials are available as study aids, they cannot be presumed to be representative of the style or difficulty level of questions contained within the NIE and are not endorsed by the College of Policing.

Syllabus updates

Usually, no further updates or supplements to the NIE 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 latest edition will only be included in the examination paper for that year 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 NIE candidate handbook might render a significant part of the current NIE 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 NIE pages of the College of Policing website and will be distributed to all NIE liaison contacts. 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 NIE liaison contact 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 role of a trainee investigator progressing in the PIP2.

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 go through this quality assurance process to ensure currency and that the examination is legally accurate.

The NIE design process will help to ensure that those candidates who have made sufficient preparation will be identified as being suitable for progression to subsequent stages of the PIP2.

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 70 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 70 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 investigators, together with strategic input from the PIP board.

This survey produces a blueprint of those areas within the syllabus that are considered to be both important and frequently encountered by investigators.

The established blueprint is reflected in the balance of questions included in each paper. This means that candidates are more likely to be tested on those areas of legislation that have been identified as the most relevant and frequently encountered by investigators. However, it should be noted that candidates may be asked questions that relate to any part of the syllabus. The syllabus is approved by the PIP board and reflects all aspects of the roles nationally. Some areas of the syllabus may therefore be less relevant to different officers, depending on force or organisation and region. However, all areas are examinable, as the examination needs to reflect the role at a national level.

The examination is not aimed at testing pure factual recall of the syllabus, 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 investigators' manual. 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 NIE syllabus

and are intended primarily as an aid to help candidates in planning their study for the examination. The definitive reference source for examinable material is the 2021 edition of blackstone's police investigators' manual (and any syllabus updates that are released in exceptional circumstances).

Further guidance

Further guidance and information about the NIE.

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. This document is available to download through the NIE pages of the College of Policing website or from your NIE liaison contact.

Any queries about the examination should be directed to NIE liaison contacts. 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, which is available through the NIE pages of the College of Policing website or from NIE liaison 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 NIE 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 NIE 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 NIE 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 PIP2 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 and absence

As dates for registration are close to the examination dates, candidates should fully consider if they intend to sit the NIE before registering. Candidates who wish to withdraw from the examination after registering will need to inform their NIE liaison contact 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.

Candidates wishing to sit the NIE at a later date must re-register for the examination and must follow the registration procedure for that exam.

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 NIE liaison contact.

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 NIE.

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 in this document. 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.

Results

The NIE debrief panel will consider the administration of the NIE following each delivery and prior to the results being issued. The panel comprises of the technical skills team training manager, a member of the police federation for england and wales, a member of the College of Policing legal services team, a service member nominated by the PIP board and a representative from the College of Policing selection and assessment unit.

Before we issue results, the NIE debrief panel will:

- consider the impact of any unscheduled events that occurred during the administration of the NIE
- inform any candidate who is suspected of irregular behaviour - for example, breaching confidentiality or attempting to gain an unfair advantage during the NIE - that their result will be withheld until the NIE reports and disqualification panel has considered the circumstances
- ratify the results prior to their release

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

To progress within the PIP2, 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 NIE debrief panel will compare the results of this year's exam with previous years to ensure that the delivery of the exams has been fair.

If the NIE 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 55.7% (39 correct answers out of 70) to maintain the assessment standard of that exam. The cut score may need to be adjusted upwards, if the move to online exam delivery has made the exam easier for candidates than in previous years, or downwards, if it has made the exam harder.

NIE liaison 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 NIE liaison 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. 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:

- March examination: 23 March 2021
- June examination: 29 June 2021
- September examination: 5 October 2021
- November examination: 21 December 2021

Resitting the NIE

Unsuccessful candidates will have an opportunity, subject to force or organisation policy, to resit the examination on the next examination date.

If a candidate fails the NIE a second time, a development meeting must take place between the force or organisation and the candidate to identify any issues. Consideration must be made by both parties as to whether the process is the right pathway for that individual at that time. Candidates can be withdrawn or entered for a further NIE. The use of a development plan needs to be formally agreed and written down, so that if the candidate fails the NIE a third time, a further meeting can take place to discuss the development and pathway for that individual.

After two fails, it is suggested that a candidate is given the opportunity to withdraw from the process voluntarily, unless the force or organisation believes that there has been sufficient evidence of development to enter the candidate a third time. At this point, the risk involved in continuing to support and develop the individual, if the individual is already posted into an investigative role, sits firmly with the force or organisation and the chief constable.

After three fails, both the individual and the force or organisation should strongly consider whether this career pathway is the right choice at that time for that individual. The option to withdraw the individual from the process should be given serious consideration. This is likely to affect a very small number of people and any decision needs to consider all information and the individual's circumstances.

Candidates who wish to retake the NIE must register for the next exam in the usual way using the online registration platform. It is the candidate's responsibility to ensure that they register for the next examination before the registration deadline.

Please refer to the [PIP2 investigator process flowchart](#).

Validity

A pass in the NIE is valid for three years (less one day) from the date of taking the examination. It is anticipated that most students will be able to complete the full PIP2 within six to 12 months of passing the NIE. Completion of the programme is confirmed when the individual is signed off as a PIP2 accredited investigator.

Although most students should be able to complete the programme within six to 12 months of passing the NIE, an NIE pass is valid for three years (less one day) to cover absences during this time.

Extensions to the validity period will be considered for officers who have taken leave that is covered by the employment rights act 1996, such as maternity leave, paternity leave, maternity-related sickness leave, maternity support, adoption leave, shared parental leave and a career break for the purposes of care. Extensions to validity will also be considered for officers who have experienced periods of sickness that have led to long-term absences and/or have had a long-term, substantial adverse impact on an individual's day-to-day activities under the equality act 2010.

All applications for extension to validity should be made via your NIE liaison contact, who should send it to the selection and assessment unit at the College of Policing on your behalf. Applications must include full details of the absences from work, including specific dates, and must be confirmed and endorsed by a line manager and/or your hr department. Extensions to validity will be considered by the selection and assessment unit in conjunction with the policing standards manager for investigation, and will be communicated to candidates and their force or organisation. All extensions to validity must be granted by the College and not by forces or organisations directly.

Extenuating circumstances and unscheduled incidents

Extenuating circumstances

Extenuating circumstances are likely to be a serious event or a series of events. Lack of preparation and/or a heavy workload prior to attendance are not considered to be extenuating circumstances.

Sickness through illness and injury cannot be rendered as extenuating circumstances as there is a separate policy dealing with this. Extenuating circumstances reports from NIE candidates relating

to illness will not be considered. It is the decision of the candidate as to whether they sign the declaration notice and attempt the NIE or decline to sit.

Please refer to section the declaration notice section.

Unscheduled incidents

The College of Policing will not, under any circumstances, accept appeals of unscheduled incidents relating to a force-provided or candidate-provided testing environment directly after the exam. Any appeals of unscheduled incidents relating to a force-provided venue received by the College of Policing will be sent to the force exams contact to action and will not be considered by the results and disqualification panel. It is therefore recommended that candidates follow the online examinations candidate guide to ensure they have a suitable testing environment for the exam.

Any candidate who wishes to report any unscheduled incidents that they believe may have adversely affected their performance in the NIE, other than the testing environment, must do so in the form of a written report. It is the responsibility of the candidate to provide all of the supporting evidence at the time of writing.

The report must be countersigned by the candidate's line manager or above. The countersigned report must then be submitted by the candidate to their NIE liaison contact and received by the College's selection and assessment unit no later than seven days after attending the examination.

This will be the only opportunity for candidates to submit reports. Reports that are not countersigned or are not received within the specified time scale will not be forwarded to the NIE reports and disqualifications panel. Reports sent to the selection and assessment unit after results are notified will not be considered.

A copy of the endorsed report should also be sent to the candidate's NIE liaison contact. This is the responsibility of the candidate. The selection and assessment unit will acknowledge registered reports to candidates via the NIE liaison contact.

Reports from NIE candidates who are successful will not be considered further. Only unsuccessful candidates will have their reports considered.

The NIE reports and disqualifications panel cannot change a fail result into a pass. However, the panel may recommend the candidate's force or organisation to not take that examination attempt into account, and to allow the candidate to have an additional attempt at the examination where policy (for example, the number of retakes) would have otherwise prevented this from being an option.

Special considerations

The selection and assessment unit marking panel, in consultation with the NIE debrief panel, will consider applying special considerations to candidates affected by unscheduled incidents. Unscheduled incidents are defined as disruptions that are unforeseen and outside of the candidate's control that can be considered to have a direct and substantial impact on the candidate's result.

Issues relating to the content of the examination questions or the testing environment will be considered separately to special considerations.

The NIE liaison contact can make applications for special considerations on behalf of a candidate or all candidates attending a specific test centre. The NIE liaison contact will be required to provide any corroborating evidence in relation to the application for special consideration. This will be supplemented by evidence provided by the senior invigilator from the test centre and/or other available information. Applications for special consideration should be submitted in accordance with existing timescales for submission of reports (in the seven days following the examination). Applications received after this time will not be considered.

The NIE marking panel also have the discretion to apply the special considerations policy in circumstances in which evidence has been brought to their attention - for example, by a force or organisation - that is likely to have had a direct and substantial impact on one or more candidates' results, but where an NIE liaison contact has not submitted a report on behalf of the candidate(s) concerned. If the NIE marking panel determine, in conjunction with the NIE debrief panel, that awarding special consideration is appropriate in a situation where the force have not directly raised the issue, the NIE liaison contact will be notified and asked to provide further information. If special considerations are deemed appropriate, this would be applied to all candidates affected by that specific issue.

The NIE debrief panel cannot change a fail result into a pass. However, the selection and assessment unit will apply special consideration if it is deemed to be appropriate by awarding an allowance of one additional mark of the total raw marks available within the examination to affected candidates. In some cases, this may make the difference between a pass and a fail for candidates. The selection and assessment unit marking panel will conduct a thorough analysis of the candidates' results to ascertain the impact that the issue is likely to have had before the policy is considered. This will not be applied to candidates who submit reports of unscheduled incidents and will only be applied in very exceptional circumstances that are deemed significant, out of the candidate's control and likely to have had a substantial and prolonged impact on a candidate's performance during the examination. The decision of the NIE marking panel, in conjunction with the NIE debrief panel, is final. Once results have been ratified and released, results will not be reviewed again under any circumstances.

Question queries

On occasion, the selection and assessment unit may receive a query regarding the legal accuracy or fairness of a question included within the examination from a candidate. The examinations are subject to a rigorous design process. All items used within each administration of the NIE examination go through a number of review stages to ensure that they meet the necessary psychometric criteria required to confirm they are fair for inclusion in the exam. To ensure the questions are a fair test of the syllabus, all questions are validated before being used as an actual examination question. Items in the examination are reviewed legally on a number of occasions. This is to ensure that the item is legally accurate and a fair test of candidates' knowledge of the syllabus. This means that before any item is included in an exam, the selection and assessment unit can be confident that it is suitable for use.

During the marking process, the selection and assessment unit review any queries raised by candidates in relation to specific items, as well as any items that have not performed as expected, to ensure that updates to the questions have been made correctly and that the psychometric properties of the question are within the acceptable parameters. The item is also reviewed by the College of Policing's legal services team to provide a post-examination legal review. This is to determine if the item represents a fair test of the syllabus and is answerable from the blackstone's police investigators' manual. If no issues are identified, the item is deemed suitable to include in the marking process. As a result of the rigorous development process and the post-examination

process, it is rare for any items at this stage to be identified as unsuitable for inclusion in the marking process. However, should this arise, steps are taken to ensure that this does not disadvantage any candidates (for example, providing all candidates with a mark for that question). Should this situation occur, all candidates will be informed of the steps taken via their NIE liaison contact.

Remarking examination papers

There is no provision for candidates to contest their result once results have been released, or to request to have their examination paper remarked. The selection and assessment unit adopt a very rigorous and thorough marking process to ensure that all papers are accurately marked and checked. All extenuating circumstances and unscheduled incidents reported in line with the guidelines above will be taken into account when marking. Once the results have been released, these are final. The selection and assessment unit will not remark papers.

NIE reports and disqualifications panel

A NIE reports and disqualification panel consists of a member of the PIP board, a representative from the College of Policing workforce transformation and professional development team, a representative from the College of Policing selection and assessment unit, and a member of the College of Policing legal services team. This panel will formally consider any reports based on extenuating circumstances and unscheduled incidents, as well as reported cases of irregularity or breaches of the rules.

The NIE reports and disqualification 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 NIE 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. NIE disqualification issues will be referred to the NIE reports and disqualifications panel.

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 policing standards manager for investigation against the decision of the NIE reports and disqualification panel, where there are reasonable grounds for believing that either, or both, of the following are true:

- the panel did not act in compliance with its rules
- there is fresh evidence, which was not available at the time of the original report, for further consideration

Appeals must be made by email to the policing standards manager for investigation, care of the College of Policing exams investigator email address examsinvestigator@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 NIE reports and disqualification panel.

The selection and assessment unit will forward the appeal to the policing standards manager for investigation. The policing standards manager for investigation will consider whether there are adequate grounds for appeal and will notify the selection and assessment unit. The candidate and relevant NIE liaison contact will be advised by the selection and assessment unit in writing of the policing standards manager for investigation's decision. The policing standards manager for investigation cannot convert a fail into a pass but can vary or confirm the decision of the NIE reports and disqualification panel.

Syllabus

Information on the sections from the Blackstone's Police Investigators' Manual 2021 can be found in the downloadable pdf of this handbook.

Downloadable resources

A pdf version of this guide is available.

- [NIE candidate handbook \(pdf\) 718.74 KB](#)

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