

Joint Committee on Intercollegiate Examinations

18 January 2021

Dear Candidate

Intercollegiate Specialty Examinations – Section 2 Update

No-one needs any reminder of the precarious situation faced by UK and Irish Healthcare services as they battle against the rapid spread of variant coronavirus. Prior to the end of last year, the impact was already such that on 24 December 2020, the JCIE notified candidates of cancellation of the Section 2 examinations in General Surgery and Trauma & Orthopaedic Surgery that were scheduled to take place in early February. The same communication indicated that subsequent examinations were subject to review.

On Friday 15 January, the JCIE Chair and JCIE Head of Operations met with Scotland's Deputy National Clinical Director. The discussion focussed on the status of the coronavirus pandemic, predicted modelling based on current information, and the implications for the staging of Section 2 examinations. The agreement reached at that meeting has since been endorsed by the Presidents of the four surgical Royal Colleges who in turn are in regular contact with all the Chief Medical Officers.

The purpose of this communication is to provide candidates with an immediate update and sadly it is to intimate further Section 2 cancellations. The revised status of Section 2 examinations for the first half of 2021 is now as listed in the following table.

Specialty	Exam Start Date	Status
General Surgery	3 February	Cancelled
Trauma & Orthopaedic Surgery	7 February	Cancelled
Plastic Surgery	1 March	Cancelled
Oral & Maxillofacial Surgery	3 March	Cancelled
Paediatric Surgery	10 March	Cancelled
Neurosurgery	25 March	Scheduled
Otolaryngology	21 April	Scheduled
Trauma & Orthopaedic Surgery	25 April	Scheduled
Vascular Surgery	10 May	Scheduled
Urology	13 May	Scheduled
Cardiothoracic Surgery	19 May	Scheduled
General Surgery	26 May	Scheduled

The JCIE extends its sympathy to all candidates affected by these enforced cancellations but wishes to reassure everyone that **the intention is to organise replacement examinations at the earliest opportunity**. Oral & Maxillofacial Surgery (OMFS) is a particular priority since candidates in this specialty have not had a Section 2 option since March 2020. Planning is already underway and the JCIE hopes to be able to confirm details of an April OMFS Section 2 examination very soon. Details for the other specialties will follow thereafter but the JCIE wishes to reassure everyone that while the Section 2 timetable for the first part of 2021 is likely to extend into July rather than being completed

at the end of May, the net outcome will mean no deficit of Section 2 places prior to the predominant dates of career progression between August and October.

It goes without saying that the examinations scheduled to take place from late March onwards remain subject to review but the JCIE in conjunction with Public Health and the Deputy National Clinical Director is as confident as it can be that late March is a reasonable target for the recommencement of Section 2 examination activity.

The JCIE wishes to reassure Section 1 candidates that they are not impacted by these latest developments. We have secured essential testing status with Pearson VUE and test centres will accommodate Section 1 examinations as per the published calendar.

Once again all of us concerned with surgical training extend our sympathies to all candidates who are impacted by these changes and ongoing uncertainties. Cancellation of examinations is not something that the JCIE would wish but in the current circumstances there is no viable alternative. Rest assured, however, that while the term cancellation has been used, in reality it is postponement. The JCIE will be organising replacement diets and will do everything in its power to deliver these prior to the end of July.

With best wishes

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'J. McGregor', with a long horizontal flourish underneath.

JOHN R MCGREGOR

CHAIR – JOINT COMMITTEE ON INTERCOLLEGIATE EXAMINATIONS