

Information received from BBKA in December 2020 re on-line module exams

Hi Everyone

Finally, I know you have been wondering what is going to happen with the Module Exams next year. We are currently in the second wave of Covid and another National lockdown. The experts are not able to say when things might improve but the main body of opinion is that this may not be until a vaccine is available. The Exam Board took the hard decision to cancel all exams and assessments in 2019.

Unfortunately we have no way of knowing what the situation will be next March so the Exam Board has been looking at an alternative solution. Even before Covid-19 the board had been considering the use of online facilities to aid with the delivery of exams. For various reasons, not least suitability and cost this was not a priority but events as well as the rapid development of the on-line invigilation as service have opened opportunities for us to consider an invigilation system which will allow candidates to sit the exam in their own home.

The education sector as a whole has had to embrace this technology and it particularly suits our geographically spread cohort. We recognise that we will have candidates who do not have the confidence or computer skills for online exams and we will continue, when possible, to offer the handwritten option albeit at a reduced number of venues.

The Board has investigated a number of companies and found the one to offer a suitable service for our needs is called Inspira. Extensive research and trials by the Board resulted in the decision to offer the Module exams online in the Spring. This decision and the financial support needed has been approved by the Trustees. In order to do this successfully, a number of changes will be needed in this first year. I will summarise the main factors and hopefully answer your most immediate questions

- The exam papers will not change, they will have the same layout and type of questions
- **Only** online module exams will be available in the Spring 2021. We hope to offer some hand written opportunities in the Autumn but this will depend on the Covid situation.
- We will be sending you the list of transferred module exam entries for your Area and asking you to contact your candidates to find out if they wish to take online modules. If they do not feel able to cope online, their entry will be transferred to November 2021.
- Candidates will be allowed to sit a maximum of **2** modules.
- **The closing dates for new entries will be January 31st 2021.** To allow more time for setting up and training.
- **The date for the exams will move to 24th.** Again this is to allow more time for the preparation.
- Candidates and invigilators will receive training on the system and computer access will be checked beforehand.
- Invigilators for the online modules will be arranged centrally. Please let us know if you are interested in being considered.

We will be keeping you up to date on developments.

Regards
Val and Nicky

BBKA Examinations Board

Information Update

Questions from Exam Secretaries

Q: I appreciate you will provide us with training for EXA, do you have any idea when you might start rolling this out?

A: Probably in January or early February

Q: Can I take one module on 24th and one on 25th April?

A: Two days have been allowed for the exams in the first information sheets as a contingency because we won't know the full requirements until after the closing date, 31st January. At this stage our intention is to hold all the module exams in 2 sessions on 24th April. Final confirmation will be made in February.

Q: When do you anticipate us asking those who were due to take exams in 2020 if they wish to go forward with the new online system? Will it be this year?

A: We want all the applications by January 31st 2021, so we will aim to send the lists for checking in December

Q: Very few are able to type as fast as write, so if the former, how much time will be allowed?

A: In Spring the **total length of the Exam will be extended to 1h and 45min**

We would recommend that candidates practice typing answers in preparation (as we also advise candidates to practice hand writing skills)

Q: Will time checks be given?

A: The time remaining is constantly in view on screen.

Q: I notice from looking at Inspera that my Mac does not meet the system requirements.

I will not be alone in this I am sure. Some people do not have inbuilt cameras. Will you be giving advice in plenty of time so that people have the opportunity to make

any necessary changes?

A: As soon as we know who the candidates are we will be able to start the hardware checks. We would aim for this to be in February. Anyone with unsuitable system or hardware will have the opportunity to take the Modules in November as a hand written paper.

Q: How will it work if multiple people are taking an exam in one household?

A: Either 2 computers in different rooms or one exam in each session.

Q: Will there be an Invigilator monitoring screens in real time?

A: Yes. Candidates need to have both camera and microphone enabled so they can be monitored with both video and audio.

Q: Understandably there has been no mention of practical exams at present. Do you have a deadline for making the decision about holding any practical exams next year?

A: As we've seen things can change very quickly so we would prefer not to make any decision until at least April. We think provided 'group' meetings are allowed, COVID-19 secure assessments should be possible.

Q: Can I ask whether it is OK to pass on your news about remote invigilation, on line registration etc to our members via our local newsletter/email list or whether there is to be some sort of official BBKA announcement in the near future?

A: Yes please spread this information. It has been put on the website and there will be an article in the January BBKA News.

Q: The typing ability of some of our candidates would be an issue. Would there be a chance to have a dry run before sending in an application please?

A: Yes, there will be training for candidates and an opportunity to take a practice exam before the day of the real exam. We advise that candidates practice typing their answers on a computer rather than writing them on paper.

Q: What happens if the internet goes down during an exam?

A: After a short term outage ie a few minutes the exam will continue when the signal returns (tested) and an additional amount of time will be added to the exam time to make up for time lost.

Q: Are we correct in thinking that candidates will type their answers or will they write in long hand, scan and return?

A: Answers will be typed.

Q: What if my computer goes down during the exam?

A: We advise that system functionality and the available hardware to the candidate are reliable and tested before the exam. There will be training provided and an opportunity to take a test exam, before the real exam.

Q: Are we expected to draw charts or graphs for the on line Modules?

A: The requirement for drawing graphs or charts for the on line Modules will be removed. There may be an occasional picture or a diagram the candidate may be asked to comment on or identify parts of.

Q: How will dishonesty that may occur during the exam be addressed?

A: As per current procedure. Candidates will be monitored by an invigilator and may face disqualification if cheating is confirmed.

Q: Is the exam format the same as recent past papers?

A: Yes, the format of the on line modules will be the same as the hand written papers.