



SECTION FIVE  
THE RULES FOR THE  
PRACTICAL TEST

Issued October 2003

## PART II PRACTICAL TEST

### IMPORTANT RULE CHANGE

The Integrated Personal Development System (IPDS) role based structure was implemented with effect from 7 November 2003. This has implications for the future of the statutory examinations, which will be phased out.

The final examination date for the Sub-Officers' practical examinations will be **April/May/June 2004**. After that date there will be NO further practical examinations.

Separate Rules will therefore apply (see paragraph 4) to the transitional arrangements for the Sub-Officers' practical examinations in April/May/June 2004 and where appropriate, will replace existing Rules. Candidates MUST ensure they are aware of the implications of these changes.

Recognition will be given to candidates' examination success of their Part II examination within IPDS.

### INTERPRETATION

The Board reserves to itself the interpretation of its rules.

#### 1. Admission:

Admission to the Part II test is restricted to whole-time employees of fire authorities established under the Fire Services Act 1947 (as amended) in England, Wales, Scotland or Northern Ireland who are engaged or may be required to engage in firefighting. They must be so employed on both the closing date for the receipt of entries by the appropriate local examination board and the date of taking the test. In addition they must have passed Part I of the qualifying examination for promotion to the rank of Sub-Officer.

#### 2. Applications:

Applications to enter for the Part II test must:

- (a) be made on the prescribed form obtainable from the brigade or the secretary of the appropriate local examination board;
- (b) be countersigned by the candidate's Chief Fire Officer/Firemaster; and
- (c) be received by the secretary of the appropriate local examination board not later than 1 February of the year in which the candidate wishes to take the test.

Candidates should note that a closing date is given for the receipt of entry forms by the secretaries of the appropriate local examination boards and that Chief Fire Officers/Firemasters may require candidates to submit their entry forms by an earlier date.

### 3. The Practical Test:

- (a) Unless varied by the FSEB, the Part II Practical Test will be arranged and conducted by local examination boards and will be held in April, May and June each year.
- (b) Candidates will be required to pass the Part II Practical Test in 2004.
- (c) For those candidates for whom 2004 is their last opportunity within the current three year period to pass the examination, failure means their pass in the Part I examination becomes null and void, and that they must re-enter the Part I examination. All other failed candidates will be expected to enter IPDS.
- (d) The test will consist of three sections as detailed in paragraph 5.

### 4. Transitional Arrangements

- (a) Candidates, irrespective of where they are in their 'three-year period', will have ONE final opportunity to undertake their Practical Test in April/May/June 2004.
- (b) Candidates who are absent or on long-term absence may be permitted to have their test re-scheduled by the Senior Examiner, where practical, but **only** within the April/May/June examination period. Candidates **must** contact their Senior Examiner immediately to see if alternative arrangements can be made.
- (c) There will be no right to a re-scheduled test date and this will only be granted where the Senior Examiner can make such resources and a date available.
- (d) There will be no consideration given to extending the Part II examination period beyond these dates.
- (e) The Scheme for Absent Candidates, as outlined in paragraph 13, will therefore NOT apply to the 2004 Practical Tests.
- (f) In case of failure candidates will have the right to appeal in accordance with the Rules outlined in paragraph 15.
- (g) **After June 2004 there will be NO further Practical examinations.**

### 5. The Tests:

#### Section A - The Composite Drill

A practical test of ability to organise and conduct a composite drill, that is to say a drill which achieves simultaneously the objectives of two or more standard drills from the Fire Service Manual - Training, including the ability to give detailed instructions to, and monitor the performance of, two crews undertaking such a drill.

## **Section B - The Fireground Procedure Test**

An exercise in fireground procedure and control.

This is a practical test of a candidate's ability to deal with an operational situation.

## **Section C - The Instructional Technique**

A practical test of ability to assess the operational difficulties associated with a specific risk in the area of the candidate's brigade, produce a plan to deal effectively with the risk, and communicate such assessment and plan in an instructional talk to others.

Each year, the Senior Examiner of the local examination board will specify THREE risks within the candidate's brigade area.

The list of the THREE risks will be published within the candidate's brigade on the 1 January each year prior to the tests.

The risk on which the candidate will be required to give the instructional talk will be selected from these THREE and notified to the candidate immediately before this Section of the practical test.

## **6. Study Material**

- (a) The practical test will be based on technical or reference material that has been published nine months or more prior to the examination.
- (b) Section Six of the handbook specifies the syllabus for the Practical Test and the bibliography that the FSEB uses in regard to the test.

## **7. Assessment:**

- (a) In order to pass the Practical Test a candidate must obtain a pass mark in each of the three sections.
- (b) To obtain a pass in each section, the candidate must obtain 60 per cent of the available marks.

## **8. Marking Scheme**

- (a) The candidate will be assessed in each section against a number of 'areas'. For each area the examiners will award a mark on the scale 1 – 5, these numbers being used to represent the following levels of performance:
  - 1. Unsatisfactory
  - 2. Marginally below standard
  - 3. Satisfactory standard
  - 4. Marginally above standard
  - 5. Outstanding.

- (b) To pass each section, therefore, the candidate must obtain an average of 3 marks or more in each area, but if an agreed mark of ' 1 ' is awarded in any area of the three sections the candidate automatically fails the section and, consequently, the whole practical test.

## 9. Closing Date for Withdrawals or Other Changes

- (a) The last date for the receipt by the FSEB of notification from the local board secretary for a candidate to withdraw from the practical tests will be **21 days prior to the date of each candidate's test.**
- (b) The same date will apply to the notification to the FSEB of any other necessary changes to a candidate's entry
- (c) Such notification must be made via the candidate's brigade through the secretary of the appropriate local examination board.
- (d) The FSEB will acknowledge the withdrawals.
- (e) Candidates who withdraw from the practical test will not be penalised. However, candidates are required to complete the examination within three years of passing the Part 1 Written Examination. Candidates who fail to complete within this period are subject to rule 3(c).

## 10. Sickness

Any candidate who is either medically or self-certificated sick or who is on 'restricted duties' either through illness or injury, must provide a certificate from their Brigade Medical Examiner confirming they are fit to attend the examination. The certificate **must** be handed in at the time of registration at the examination centre.

## 11. Declaration Notice

You should note that during the briefing by the Senior Examiner, you will be asked to sign your candidate mark sheet which will include a declaration notice confirming that:

'In making the decision to undertake the examination, I acknowledge that I agree to abide by all the rules of the Fire Services Examinations Board; am fit and suitably prepared to tackle the examination; and that I understand that it is unlikely that any factors which should have been apparent to me at the time, can later be used to support a challenge to either the fairness of the examination process or the assessment of my performance.'

If you decline to sign the declaration notice, then you will not be eligible to attempt the examination and you would be expected to leave the examination centre.

If you are aware of any **extenuating circumstances** prior to or on the day of the examination that may affect your performance, you must contact the Senior Examiner immediately on arrival at the examination centre. You will then have the opportunity to discuss these, **in private**, with the Senior Examiner immediately prior to the briefing. It will then be your decision as to whether to sign your candidate mark sheet and attempt the Part II examination or decline to attend and leave the examination centre. In this latter situation you would then be treated as absent from the examination and the rules for Absent candidates then apply (Paragraph 13).

Lack of preparation prior to the examination is not considered to be extenuating circumstances.

Any candidate who attends the examination without disclosing information regarding sickness or any other extenuating circumstances that might affect or unfairly influence their examination performance, will not be eligible to submit either as grounds for consideration of special circumstances or as a basis of an appeal.

If, anything untoward occurs during the examination itself that you consider affected your performance, you **MUST** inform the Senior Examiner **before** leaving the examination centre. Failure to do so will **not** allow you to use the occurrence as basis of any future appeal.

## 12. Deferred Entry through Extenuating Circumstances

The scheme for deferred entry through extenuating circumstances will no longer apply.

## 13. Absenteeism:

- (a) Candidates who have entered for the examination and who are absent will be reported to their Chief Fire Officer/Firemaster.
- (b) These candidates will no longer have the right of appeal for an additional year beyond 2004, but it may be possible to have their test re-scheduled within the existing examination period (see Rules for Transitional Arrangements – paragraph 4).

## 14. Notification of Results:

- (a) Candidates must **not** attempt to contact the FSEB to try to find out their results.
- (b) Candidates who attend, will be notified in writing of their results in the practical test by the FSEB. Marks obtained will not be disclosed, but those who fail the test will be informed of the section(s) in which they have failed and the "Area of Particular Weakness" to help the candidate remedy the particular weakness.
- (c) The FSEB will provide each Chief Fire Officer/Firemaster with a list of examination results for the candidates from their brigade.
- (d) Following the publication of results no correspondence will be entered into concerning the results.

## 15. Appeals Procedure

- (a) Any candidate who wishes to appeal against their result in the practical examination must register their appeal in writing to the FSEB **within 28 days** from the date on their result letter.
- (b) Appeals should be addressed to the Secretary of the FSEB and must state the grounds for the appeal. Candidates are required to give reasoned arguments and not rely upon their expectations of passing the examination.
- (c) The FSEB will acknowledge the candidate's appeal.
- (d) The Senior Examiner of the candidate's local examination board will be asked to consider the candidate's submission and provide a report for consideration by the appeals panel.
- (e) The appeals panel will consist of the Secretary of the FSEB, the Lead Assessor and the National Assessor for the Practical Tests. **The decision of the appeals panel is final.**
- (f) The appeal may be upheld or denied or a decision to re-test and the Secretary will write and inform the candidate of the result. The Chief Officer of the candidate's brigade will also be advised of the result.
- (g) Where an appeal is upheld and the outcome is that the candidate has now 'passed' the examination, that candidate will receive special dispensation to enter the next level of examination if the closing date for entries has now passed.
- (h) The FSEB will not enter into any further correspondence once the decision of the appeal has been notified.

## 16. Dangerous Practice

When it is discovered that a candidate applies, demonstrates or fails to recognise a 'dangerous practice' ie an action or procedure that, if applied in the real world, would have resulted in the lives of firefighters' and/or the general public being placed at serious and unacceptable risk, the Board have agreed a procedure for confirming and then advising both the candidate and where appropriate, their Chief Officer of the 'dangerous practice', with a recommendation that the candidate receives counselling, guidance and appropriate training.

The counselling being provided does not imply a failure result in the examination.

## 17. Certification

Candidates who pass the practical test will be awarded a certificate from the FSEB indicating that they have passed the qualifying examination for promotion to the rank of Sub-Officer.

## 18. Dyslexia

Candidates who believe they have a form of dyslexia are required to inform the FSEB in the first instance who will give guidance on procedure. The candidate will then be required to provide an assessment report, no more than 2 years old, as to the nature and extent of their dyslexia. This report must be completed by an educational psychologist who is accredited by the British Psychological Society and **MUST** be submitted to the FSEB **as soon as possible and by no later than the closing date for entries**. Consideration will then be given as to what, if any, allowances ought reasonably be made during any part of the examination procedure. Candidates will be advised in good time, prior to the examination, of any adjustments to be made.

## 19. Disabilities

Candidates who believe they have a form of disability are required to inform the FSEB in the first instance who will give guidance on procedure. The candidates will then be required to provide an assessment report, no more than 2 years old, as to the nature and extent of their disability. This report must be completed by a specialist in their form of disability and **MUST** be submitted to the FSEB **as soon as possible and by no later than the closing date for entries**. Consideration will then be given as to what, if any, allowances ought reasonably be made during any part of the examination procedure. Candidates will be advised in good time, prior to the examination, of any adjustments to be made.

## 20. Disqualification

Any candidates found to be in breach of the Rules will be liable to disqualification by the Board from the examination.

## 21. Ombudsman

An independent Ombudsman will adjudicate on identified issues and concerns arising from the examinations or through the appeals process. Candidates therefore have the right of appeal to the Ombudsman against any decision of the Board, where there are reasonable grounds for believing that:

- The Board did not act in compliance with its rules; or
- There is fresh evidence for further consideration of a decision of the Board.

Letters must be clearly marked 'Ombudsman for the FSEB, Layden House, 76 – 86 Turnmill Street, London, EC1M 5LG'.

## 22. Suspension

Candidates who are suspended from duty will be required to provide written authority from their appropriate Chief Fire Officer/Firemaster allowing them to attend either part of the examination under whatever circumstances the Chief Fire Officer/Firemaster considers to be appropriate. This written authority must be handed in at the time of registration at the examination site; prior notification must have been received by the Board.