

NOTES ON THE WORKSHOP FOR SENIOR EXAMINERS HELD AT THE EO OFFICES, LONDON ON WEDNESDAY 3 OCTOBER 2001

1. ATTENDANCE

As shown on Appendix A.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from:

SDO Nolan	-	Board C
DO T Marsh	-	Board E
ACO R Walsh	-	Board I
SDO E Barclay	-	Board J
DO D Ellis	-	Board H
DO M Blake	-	Board M
ACFO C Palmer	-	Board O
DO J Walker	-	Board Q

3. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Lead Assessor, Mr Harry Wright welcomed the Senior Examiners and their representatives to the meeting. He then introduced Mr Kerr, National Assessor Practical Tests and Mr Ibbotson, the National Assessor for Scotland and the Secretariat.

4. NOTES OF THE 2000 SENIOR EXAMINERS WORKSHOP

The notes were agreed.

5. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE 2000 WORKSHOP

Mr Wright reported on the following item arising from the minutes of the 2000 Workshop:

Item 10 – Section B Operational Scenario Review

It was reported the small working group which had been formed to review the operational scenario exercises that formed part of the Section B Tests for the 2002 examination, had completed their work, the outcome of which had been sent out to Senior Examiners.

6. REPORT OF THE NATIONAL ASSESSOR FOR THE PRACTICAL TESTS (Appendix B attached)

Mr Kerr reported that although the fundamental structure of the tests had not changed over the previous two years, there had been some procedural changes to ensure best practice and to maintain standards. He referred to the future and the likely consequences of the work emanating from the integrated personal development system (IPDS). Mr Kerr then made the following points:

- The need for full notes on the rough mark sheets was both important for the de-brief or where any possible review of the marks in borderline situations. He emphasised the need to ensure that examiners reached their decisions independently before agreeing the overall marks.
- Pre examination training - An attempt will be made during the 2002 tests to quantify the evidence as to what local boards undertake in this area.
- Militaristic drilling – not a requirement of the Board for the tests.
- Appearance and Bearing – this was still assessable but it was acknowledged that there was a growing trend of many brigades moving away from the traditional style of uniform to relaxed dress.
- Value of the de-brief – this was a key element of training for competence as well as the practical tests and it had been disappointing to witness that in many cases this had been minimal.
- Quality photographs and drawings – their value was stressed to ensure that the candidate, crews, role players and examiners have a clear picture of what the scenario requires. It was further important to ensure that additional items/ inappropriate props were not inadvertently introduced.
- Role of the Senior Examiner –the importance for the Senior Examiner or his deputy to be present 'on-site' at all times was stressed. It was felt unfair to both candidates and examiners if the Senior Examiner was not immediately available to deal with issues arising or borderline cases.
- Quality and style of briefing by the Senior Examiner – a clear, friendly, relaxed introduction was recognised as more helpful to the candidate. However, briefings needed to be better co-ordinated to both role players and support staff to remove confusion in the operational scenario.
- Use of aide memoir/notebooks – this was acceptable but it was important that all candidates and examiners were aware when such local/brigade practices were allowed.
- Independent Examiners – it was stressed that the rule of mixed examiners should only be relaxed in **exceptional** circumstances.

Finally, Mr Kerr thanked Senior Examiners for their courtesy and hospitality shown to him during his visits. Mr Wright endorsed these comments.

7. ITEMS OF EQUIPMENT – 2002 TESTS

The equipment list for the items to be used for the Leading Firefighters' Section C Test were circulated. The Chairman confirmed that Senior Examiners should select three items of equipment from the list of eight, which were known to be available within each brigade.

8. PRE-EXAMINATION TRAINING PROVISION

Mr Kerr confirmed that it would be the intention to identify pre-examination training carried out by brigades in the form of a survey issued to Senior Examiners prior to the 2002 tests. Both himself and Mr Wright would be following this up during their visits to local boards.

9. DE-BRIEFING OF CANDIDATES AND NOTIFICATION OF RESULTS

Mr Wright outlined Paper SE1/2001, put forward by local board 'R', requesting the notification of results on the day of the examination. In particular, they felt the requirements of the D32/D33 qualification required timeous feedback to candidates by their assessors. Board 'J' had also indicated their concerns over the continued use of the D32/D33 qualifications for examinations.

Mr Wright explained, however, that the Board did not restrict examiners to the D32/D33 qualification but expected them to hold a **nationally recognised qualification for assessing candidates**. A qualification provided credibility to the assessments being carried out during the practical tests. Whilst feedback is included as part of these units there is no requirement for this to be immediate and the examination is not for the purpose of assessing the competence of the candidate or for the purpose of their training. Therefore, it was not considered necessary or appropriate to expect the debrief to be carried out on the day of the examination. Furthermore, he was aware of the numerous comments already received from Senior Examiners as to the increased time and commitment being expected of examiners and this could only be exasperated by this proposal.

Senior Examiners expressed their support for maintaining the present system. They particularly felt that the issue of the results on the day could become too emotive between examiner and candidate and would increase the time spent at the examination centre by both examiners and candidates on the day of the test. Some local boards pointed out that they relied on the ongoing support of the candidate to act as part of the crew once they had completed their examination and this support may not be so forthcoming once they had received their result.

10. DANGEROUS PRACTICES

Mr Wright outlined Paper SE2/01 that asked Senior Examiners to agree the process following the identification of a dangerous practice occurring during the practical tests.

Although there was concern that by identifying such a dangerous practice to a candidate this could only imply a failure in that part of the test, Senior Examiners acknowledged their health and safety responsibility to deal with this issue.

The scheme was agreed and would be included in the Senior and Examiners Handbooks.

11. APPEALS SYSTEM

Mr Wright introduced Paper SE3/2001 that outlined the Appeals Procedure for candidates for both written and practical examinations, as recently agreed by the Board at its July meeting.

However, the proposal had included the request to charge candidates £25 for each appeal, refundable if subsequently upheld, but this was subject to clarification from the DTLR on the legal implications for the Board to charge such a fee.

Mr Wright confirmed that if no such agreement were reached this would need to be referred back to the Board at its next meeting in January. If confirmation was received from DTLR to agreeing the charge, then the scheme could apply to the 2002 tests.

12. DYSLEXIA - ESTABLISHING A POLICY

Mr Stanley presented Paper SE4/2001 that asked for Senior Examiners views on the issue of dyslexia with regard to examinations. He explained that he felt it was important for the Board to establish a policy for candidates with dyslexia for both written and practical examinations.

His research had indicated that for written examinations the provision of 'extra time' was generally allowed. However, the policy was less clear for the practical examinations and indeed how each section of the practical test might affect the candidate.

A number of Senior Examiners were able to offer advice or contacts within their own brigade and Mr Stanley agreed to follow these up.

Whilst the need to make provision for candidates with dyslexia was generally acknowledged, Senior Examiners felt that the issue was wider than just the promotion examinations and it was agreed to write to Her Majesty's Chief Inspector on the matter.

Mr Stanley confirmed that any request from a candidate who identified that they suffered with dyslexia would continue to be dealt with on an individual basis.

13. FIRE SERVICE TRAINING MANUAL - TRAINING
SECTION A TESTS

Mr Wright explained that the publication of the new Fire Service Training now identified drills by their practical learning objectives (plo's). Having reviewed the drills forming part of the current syllabuses he presented various overheads which showed the effects of combining the drills with their plo's.

It was agreed that the composite drills as identified by appendix 'D' (amended), tabled at the meeting, would form part of the 2002 Sub-Officers Section A syllabus.

14. REVIEW OF THE SECTION 'C' TEST REQUIREMENTS

Mr Wright introduced Paper SE6/2001 that asked Senior Examiners to consider reducing the number of selected items for each candidate for the Leading Firefighters' and Sub-Officers' Section C tests from 3 to 1. The item had previously been discussed at the 2000 workshop when it was agreed to review it again in 2001.

It was pointed out that if agreed, the date on which candidates would be advised would need to be put back to coincide with the official closing date for entries.

Although there was some concern on the implications of candidates still visiting premises to aid their study preparation, on balance this was not seen as a problem across all boards. Furthermore, it was not felt unreasonable for candidates to prepare and study for 3 items and overall Senior Examiners gave their clear support to retaining the current procedure.

Mr Stanley confirmed that the current notification dates of 1 December and 1 January still applied.

15. BOARD PUBLICATIONS AND ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

Mr Stanley raised the following issues:

- Concern over the accuracy and neatness of the completion of the candidate OMR mark sheets. In particular, missing examiner numbers, incorrect and poor encodings only led to errors and subsequently delays in releasing the results.
- A number of financial returns remained outstanding and he asked that these be forwarded as soon as possible in order to prepare a summary report for the Board in January.
- Learning outcomes for candidates would be included as part of the Candidates Handbooks. These would be issued in December to coincide with any further amendments to the Leading Firefighter and Sub-Officer written examinations 2002.

- The Senior Examiners Handbook had been extended and a new 6th Edition would be issued shortly together with amended pages to the Examiners Handbook.

He also advised that the Examiners Handbook was also now available on the Board's web site www.fseb.gov.uk.

- Senior Examiners were reminded of the relevance of the examiner video as a training aid, particularly for new examiners.
- The need to submit full and informative reports on completion of the practical tests that followed the best practice guidance given in the Senior Examiners Handbook (paragraph 9).
- He reminded Senior Examiners of the need to keep accurate records of examiners start dates so that their service could be recognised by the Board when achieving 10 examinations (minimum 5 years).

16. 2002 WORKSHOP

The next Senior Examiners Workshop would be held on Wednesday 2 October 2002. In view of the problems experienced with this year's venue, Mr Stanley invited invitations to hold the 2002 workshop.

The Board have subsequently received and accepted local board 'C' invitation to hold the 2002 Workshop at Greater Manchester Fire Service Headquarters.

17. CLOSING REMARKS

Mr Wright thanked Senior Examiners for their participation in ensuring a helpful and constructive Workshop.

1. ATTENDANCE

Mr H E Wright	Lead Assessor
Mr I Kerr	National Assessor, Practical Tests
Mr L I Ibbotson	Observer – Scottish Firemasters
Mr D J Stanley	Secretary
Mrs M A Malone	Senior Administrator

<i>NAME</i>	<i>REPRESENTING BOARD</i>
SDO P Hardbottle	A
SDO A Smith	A
SDO C Bryce	B
DO J Stewart*	C
DO S Fryer	D
ADO M Smart	F
DO P Kilby	G
ADO D Young*	H
DO D Warren*	I
Mr K Sivell*	J
SDO A Dunnet	K
ACO C Bacon	L
ADO M Carmichael*	M
DCFO P Appleby	N
STO P Jones	N
STO M Hawthorn*	O
DO A Wilson	P
DO F Waters*	Q
AFmr A Wyse	R
DO J Jamieson	R
AFmr A MacInnes	S
DO W Currie	T
DCFO G Finn	U

*Representing Senior Examiner