

Guidance for Candidates and Sponsors

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Introduction

Any candidate registering to take modules of the IRSE Examination must first be sponsored by a MIRSE or FIRSE member of the Institution, who declares that the candidate is capable of passing the exams in the relevant module(s). This is to avoid wasted time:

- by candidates when they are not yet ready to take the very demanding exams, and
- by the volunteer IRSE examiners marking papers of candidates who are not well prepared.

Pass rates have been less than 50% in some modules in recent years. The IRSE considers that this is unacceptably low.

Preparation

Applications to take the IRSE Examination are only accepted from paid-up members of the Institution. Also some of the support resources for exam candidates are only available to members logged into the IRSE website.

So potential candidates should (if they have not done so already):

- apply to join the IRSE (by 28 February to be sure of meeting that year's exam application deadline)
- on becoming a member, click 'Register' at the top left of the home page of the IRSE website, and then complete the user registration form. Login instructions will follow, giving access to those areas of the IRSE website reserved for members.

Registration Process

Stage 1 – Initial Discussion between Candidate and Sponsor (February/March in the year of the examination)

The candidate identifies a sponsor (who must be MIRSE or FIRSE) and who, wherever possible, knows their capabilities. They discuss the modules to be taken and the candidate's written study plan (which should describe, with target dates, how he or she intends to prepare for the exam). The sponsor says what enhancements to the study plan, evidence of study, and any other requirements that the candidate must deliver before the sponsor is willing to endorse the exam application.

Nothing needs to be submitted to IRSE office at this stage.

Stage 2 – Submission (by candidate) of Sponsorship Declaration Form (SDF) signed by Sponsor (by 30 April)

The candidate asks the sponsor to sign the SDF (Appendix 2 of this document). If the sponsor believes that the candidate is capable of passing the selected module(s), the CANDIDATE sends the signed form to IRSE office (details are on the form).

In cases where the candidate has not done enough to satisfy the sponsor by 30 April, the sponsor may exceptionally defer his/her decision for a further month. In such cases, the CANDIDATE must still submit the SDF to IRSE office by 30 April signed by the sponsor as “decision deferred”. If the sponsor subsequently agrees to fully endorse the SDF, the candidate must then submit the second signed SDF to IRSE office, not later than 31 May. This is to allow enough time before 30 June for the next stages in the process.

The sponsor may decide to apply the “decision deferred” option to only one or some of the modules that the candidate wishes to take, while fully endorsing the other(s).

The fully endorsed SDF will be checked by IRSE office and an email sent to the candidate authorising them to complete an online application to take the module exams applied for. Payment is also required at this time.

An endorsed SDF only applies to the examination in the year that it is signed. It cannot be carried forward to a later year.

Stage 3 – Candidate applies to sit the Examination (by 30 June)

The instructions for candidates (**once they have received the email authorising them to apply**) are as follows:

- 1) Log-in to the **IRSE** website using your username and password.
- 2) On the dropdown list from ‘Membership’ on the main menu select ‘IRSE Exam’ which provides information about the IRSE Examination.
- 3) On the menu on the left-hand side of the page select the item “- Application form”
- 4) Check your address details, before clicking the ‘Continue’ button.
- 5) When the list of exam modules appears, select the modules that you wish to sit, and then click “Continue”.

Please note:

- a) Only four modules can be sat in any one year.*
 - b) The requirement to pass the examination is: to successfully pass the exam papers for Module 1, plus three other modules.*
 - c) There is no time limit on passing the 4 modules required to complete the IRSE examination.*
 - d) You may only apply for the modules fully supported by your sponsor, but you do not have to apply for all of these.*
- 6) Select your preferred examination centre from the drop-down list, and enter your normally used first name.
 - 7) On the booking confirmation screen: check, and if necessary amend your booking details, and then confirm your booking.

Guidance to Sponsors

The purpose of sponsorship is to support the candidate in the exam preparation process so that they are likely to achieve a pass in the modules selected. Should the sponsor believe that an examination pass in a module is unlikely due to lack of study evidence, experience or any other factor(s), then the sponsor will, in reality, be helping the candidate by not agreeing to endorse that module.

Sponsors are encouraged to use the Candidate Readiness Assessment in Appendix 1 in helping them to reach their decision. This does not need to be submitted to IRSE office.

Study Resources

Both candidates and sponsors should be aware of the range of resources available to support preparation for the exam. Note that some of the documents on the IRSE website can only be viewed if logged in as a member. Those resources in **bold** are considered to be essential for candidates to make use of:

- a) **Information & Guidance for Candidates** (see Membership area of IRSE website)
- b) **IRSE Examination Syllabus** (see Membership area of IRSE website)
- c) **Study Guide for each module** (see Membership area of IRSE website)
- d) **Suggested Reading List for each module** (see Membership area of IRSE website)
- e) **Recent Examination Questions** - i.e. complete copies of previous papers (see Membership area of IRSE website)
- f) **Sample answers for selected past exam questions with examiners' comments** (see Membership area of IRSE website).
- g) Study Groups (see Membership area of IRSE website for a list of known groups and also for a Good Practice Guide for setting up your own group).
- h) Younger Members (YM) Exam Study Days (publicised on IRSE Exam Forum and by email to those on YM distribution list).
- i) **Annual IRSE Exam Review** (attend in person (London) or see presentation slides under "Technical Papers Webcasts" on IRSE website).
- j) IRSE Exam Forum (an independent website for sharing and networking).
- k) Proceedings, conference papers and webcasts etc. (see Knowledge area of IRSE website).
- l) IRSE News (see Knowledge area of IRSE website) – Examiners sometimes choose topical subjects when setting questions.
- m) IET Library at Savoy Place, London, for UK candidates.
- n) Information accessed via internet search engines (but be aware that some websites are more reliable than others in terms of content).
- o) The IRSE member who has agreed to sponsor the candidate's application to take the examination (or others in the profession; e.g. mentor, colleagues, others).

CANDIDATE READINESS ASSESSMENT

Appendix 1

(This is for the use of sponsors. Its use is optional and it should not be sent to IRSE Office)

Tick, date or initial cells on the table to signify your (the sponsor's) assessment of the candidate's preparedness for the exam, and the action required. Use a separate sheet for each module if you wish. Add supplementary notes as required.

Candidate:	Sponsor:
Module(s)	Date:

	PROGRESS			ACTION		
	Achieved	In progress with enough time to achieve	Not started, but enough time to achieve	On course for achievement	More progress or effort needed	Not applicable or not necessary
Credible dated study plan						
Relevant work experience						
General examination experience						
Use of Study Guides						
Use of Suggested Reading List						
Practice in answering past exam questions						
Study of annual examination review						
Participation in exam forum						
Participation in study group						
Personal motivation						
Previous exam attempts						
Other evidence						
Notes (continue on separate sheet if required)						

If you are intending to take modules of the IRSE Exam in 2018, you must first gain endorsement from a sponsor. The instructions for doing so are as follows:

First step (Stages 1 & 2 in the Guidance document)

You must gain endorsement by an IRSE Sponsor (Fellow or Member) who is familiar with your capabilities and experience and considers that you are capable of passing your selected Exam modules. The Sponsor must confirm their endorsement by completing this Sponsorship Declaration Form and initialling your chosen modules – see below (either “fully support” or “decision deferred”). Please check the document (any omissions will invalidate it) before emailing a scanned copy to **exam@irse.org**. Please note this document must be emailed by you and NOT THE SPONSOR.

Second step (Stage 3 in the Guidance document)

If the declaration is acceptable, the IRSE office will write to authorise you to complete the Online Application Form (which includes paying the fees for taking the Exam), which you can find on the members’ area of the IRSE website.

If you complete the Online Application Form without this written authority, your application will be invalid and the exam fees WILL NOT BE REFUNDED.

Declaration – For completion by Sponsor (IRSE Fellow or Member)					
Candidate name:			Candidate membership no:		
The above candidate has discussed with me the module/s he/she intends to sit. Where I have initialled the “fully support” column, I declare that he/she is capable of passing, based on their existing studies and their future study plans. Where I have initialled the “decision deferred” column, I wish to have another month for the candidate to convince me that he/she is capable of passing that module.					
Signature:		Name:		Date:	
Membership No:		Grade:		Email address:	
Module selection – For completion by Applicant and Sponsor (maximum of four)					
<i>(The sponsor should strike out all boxes which do not apply)</i>					
Candidate Selection <i>Candidate to tick</i>	Fully support candidate’s application <i>Sponsor’s initials</i>	Decision deferred until no later than 31 May <i>Sponsor’s initials</i>	Module	Module Description	Fee
			Module 1	Safety of Railway Signalling and Communications	£87.00
			Module 2	Signalling the Layout	£87.00
			Module 3	Signalling Principles	£87.00
			Module 4	Communications Principles	£87.00
			Module 5	Signalling & Control Equipment, Applications Engineering	£87.00
			Module 6	Communications Equipment, Applications Engineering	£87.00
			Module 7	Systems, Management and Engineering	£87.00

Please note these deadlines:

This form (SDF) is to be received by IRSE office by 30th April. If any module is initialled as “decision deferred”, a further SDF is required by 31st May.

Your online application to take the Exam needs to be received by the IRSE office by 30th June. If it is received after this date it will not be accepted and exam fees will not be refundable.