

### Guidance for Candidates and Sponsors

Version: 1.0  
Date: March 2020

#### 1. Introduction

2020 is both the first year in which Module A 'fundamentals of railway control engineering' can be taken and is the last year in which Modules 1 to 7 can be taken. From 2021, only the new modules A to D will be able to be taken, however a pass (or higher) in each of modules 1 to 7 will still be valid.

In 2020 candidates will only be able to Module A as a stand-alone module and will not be able to combine it with taking any of modules 1 to 7.

For logistical reasons, candidates can take a maximum of 4 modules on the exam day.

Exam centres are set up across the world and are run by IRSE volunteers. If you are uncertain whether there will be an exam centre near you, please contact the IRSE office ([exam@irse.org](mailto:exam@irse.org)) or your local IRSE section [[www.irse.org/Get-Involved/Near-You](http://www.irse.org/Get-Involved/Near-You)].

##### 1.1. Module A

Anyone can sit module A of the IRSE Examination. There is no requirement to have a sponsor, although all candidates are encouraged to study with a buddy and/or gain the support from a more experienced colleague.

Module A is a qualification in its own right. Anyone passing module A will gain a 'certificate in railway control engineering fundamentals'.

From 2021 onwards, for anyone who has not passed at least one of the current modules (1 to 7), a pass in module A will be a compulsory requirement before modules B to D can be sat.

Module A is a computer based exam which can only be taken on a computer in an invigilated exam room/hall.

##### 1.2. Modules 1 to 7

Any candidate registering to take modules 1 to 7 of the IRSE examination must first be sponsored by a Member (MIRSE) or Fellow (FIRSE) of the IRSE, who declares that the candidate is capable of passing the exam in the relevant module(s). This is to avoid wasted time by both:

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

Pass rates were less than 50% in some modules before sponsorship was introduced which the IRSE considered unacceptably low. The pass rates have improved since the sponsorship process has been introduced.

For those who have attained a pass, or higher, in modules 1-7 but who do not complete the full IRSE professional exam in 2020, an online calculator [<https://secure60.prositehosting.co.uk/webdocssl/IRSE-Exam/ref-request.aspx>] is available to

calculate how these modules equate to new modules A to D. This allows candidates to evaluate which of the new modules (A to D) they still require to gain the IRSE professional exam.

## 2. Key dates

The key dates for 2020 are listed below, these dates represent hard deadlines.

30 April 2020	Deadline for completed Sponsorship Declaration Forms (SDFs) to be <u>received by IRSE office</u> (exam@irse.org)
31 May 2020	If initial SDF is deferred this is the deadline for a second completed SDFs to be <u>received by IRSE office</u> (exam@irse.org)
30 June 2020	Deadline for all applications and payments to have been <u>received by IRSE office</u>
3 October 2020	Exam day

## 3. Preparation

### 3.1. Module A

Module A can be taken by anyone, whether an IRSE member or non-member. Candidates taking Module A do not require a sponsor or a completed SDF.

Support resources for exam candidates are available on the IRSE website [<https://irse.info/ifcw6>].

A practice exam will be made available to all module A candidates for them to become familiar with the exam software and question types.

### 3.2. Modules 1 to 7

Applications to take modules 1 to 7 are only accepted from paid-up members of the Institution.

Some of the support resources for exam candidates are only available to members logged into the IRSE website through the online portal and can be found at [<https://irse.info/ifcw6>].

Potential candidates should:

- ensure that they are able to log in to the IRSE online portal, those that do not yet have, or have forgotten, their username should contact IRSE office ([exam@irse.org](mailto:exam@irse.org))
- inform IRSE office ([exam@irse.org](mailto:exam@irse.org)) if they have any additional needs for sitting the exam as soon as possible.

## 4. Registration Process

### 4.1. Module A

Applicants for module A should book through the online event system, accessible from the exam area of the IRSE website [<https://irse.info/exam2020>].

Applicants will be asked to declare any additional needs for them sitting the exam.

Applicants will be required to pay the full exam fee (£105) online when booking the exam.

The opportunity to book to take module A closes on 30 June 2020.

## **4.2. Modules 1 to 7**

### **4.2.1. Stage 1 – Initial Discussion between Candidate and Sponsor**

The candidate must identify a sponsor to endorse their application. Sponsors must be MIRSE or FIRSE and, wherever possible, should know the candidate's capabilities. The candidate may know their sponsor through work or through other means such as attending IRSE local events and/or study groups.

If the candidate is struggling to identify a sponsor, then they can contact the IRSE office ([exam@irse.org](mailto:exam@irse.org)) asking for assistance in finding a sponsor. Candidates are advised to do this as soon as possible in their preparation.

The candidate and sponsor should discuss the modules to be taken and the candidate's written study plan (which should describe, with target dates, how they intend to prepare for the exam). The sponsor may recommend enhancements to the study plan, evidence of study, or 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.

### **4.2.2. Stage 2 – Submission (by candidate) of Sponsorship Declaration Form (SDF) signed by Sponsor**

Once stage 1 is complete, and the sponsor is comfortable that the candidate is able to pass the proposed modules, the candidate should complete the SDF and ask the sponsor to sign it (Appendix 2 of this document). Once the form is signed the candidate should send it to IRSE office (details are on the form). The SDF must be submitted by 30 April 2020.

In cases where the candidate has not done enough to satisfy the sponsor by 30 April, the sponsor may exceptionally defer their 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. This must be submitted to IRSE office ([exam@irse.org](mailto:exam@irse.org)) by 31 May 2020.

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.

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

### 4.2.3. Stage 3 – Candidate books to sit the examination (by 30 June)

Candidates will receive authority to book modules 1-7 from the IRSE office by email. Instructions on how to book to take the exam will be included within this authorisation email.

Applicants will be required to pay the full fee (£105 per module) online.

#### **Please note:**

- Only four modules can be sat in any one year
- The requirement to pass the examination are outlined in section 1
- There is no time limit on passing the modules required to complete the IRSE examination
- You may only book to take the modules that have been fully supported by your sponsor, but you do not have to book to take all of these.

## 5. 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, or higher, 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.

## 6. 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 through the IRSE online portal.

In addition to this document the resources in **bold** are considered to be essential for candidates to make use of:

- IRSE Examination Syllabuses**
- Study Guide for each module**
- Suggested Reading List for each module**
- Recent Examination Questions** - i.e. complete copies of previous papers
- Sample answers for selected past exam questions with examiners' comments**
- Study Groups (publicised on the IRSE website)
- Younger Members (YM) Exam Study Days (publicised on IRSE website, IRSE Exam Forum and by email to those on YM distribution list)
- Annual IRSE Exam Review** (available as a webcast on the IRSE website and on the IRSE Vimeo channel [www.vimeo.com/irse](http://www.vimeo.com/irse))
- IRSE Exam Forum (<https://irseexam.co.uk> an independent website for sharing and networking)
- Proceedings, conference papers and webcasts etc. (available in the Publications & Resources area of the IRSE website) – examiners sometimes choose topical subjects when setting questions

- k) IRSE Knowledge Data Base, a fully searchable database of technical knowledge (available in the Publications & Resources area of the IRSE website and via <https://irse.info/knowledge>)
- l) IRSE News (available in the Publications & Resources area of the IRSE website) – examiners sometimes choose topical subjects when setting questions
- m) IET Library at Savoy Place, London, for UK based candidates (go to ‘Library’ within the Publications & Resources area of the IRSE website)
- 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 and others in the profession (e.g. mentor, colleagues, others)
- p) IRSE and other engineering institutions local, national and international events including technical papers, visits and seminars. IRSE events are publicised on the IRSE website and can be found via <https://irse.info/events>.

**CANDIDATE READINESS ASSESSMENT**  
**(Optional form for sponsors – not to be submitted 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	Not started, but enough time to	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)						

To apply to sit one or more of modules 1 to 7 of the IRSE Exam in 2020, you must first gain endorsement by an IRSE Sponsor (a Fellow or Member of the IRSE) who is familiar with your capabilities and experience and considers that you are capable of passing your selected Exam modules. Please note the deadlines detailed in the 2020 Guidance for Candidates and Sponsors document.

The Sponsor must confirm their endorsement by completing sections B and C of this form.

You, as the exam Candidate, are responsible for completing sections A and D of this form, for asking your Sponsor to sign it and then for sending the fully completed, signed form to **exam@irse.org**. Please note this document must be emailed by you, the Candidate (not your sponsor).

If this SDF is acceptable, the IRSE office will email to authorise you to book to sit the exam (which includes paying the fees for all modules). You will not be able to book to sit the exam without this authority.

**Section A for the Exam Candidate:** Please give us your personal details so that we can keep in touch with you during the exam process. It is the candidate's responsibility to be able to receive emails from IRSE.

<b>Candidate name:</b>	<b>Candidate membership no:</b>
------------------------	---------------------------------

**Candidate email for exam correspondence:**

**Section B for the Sponsor:** Please read and sign the declaration below.

The Sponsor is also asked to check section 5 of the Guidance for Candidates and Sponsors document.

The above candidate has discussed with me the module(s) they intend to sit.

Where I have initialled the 'fully support' column in section C, I declare that they are capable of passing, based on their existing studies and their future study plans.

Where I have initialled the 'decision deferred' column in section C, I wish to have additional time for the candidate to convince me that they are capable of passing that module, noting the deadlines in section 2 of the Guidance for Candidates and Sponsors document.

<b>Name:</b>	<b>Membership No:</b>	<b>Grade:</b> MIRSE/FIRSE
--------------	-----------------------	------------------------------

<b>Signature:</b>	<b>Date:</b>
-------------------	--------------

**Email address:**

**Section C for the Candidate and Sponsor:** Please complete details for each exam module. Please note that a maximum of four modules can be sat in any one year.

Module	Module Description	Fee	Candidate module selection?	Fully support application	Decision deferred
			<i>Candidate to complete</i>	<i>Sponsor's initials in one column only</i>	
Module 1	Safety of Railway Signalling and Communications	£105	Yes / No		
Module 2	Signalling the Layout	£105	Yes / No		
Module 3	Signalling Principles	£105	Yes / No		
Module 4	Communications Principles	£105	Yes / No		
Module 5	Signalling & Control Equipment, Applications Engineering	£105	Yes / No		
Module 6	Communications Equipment, Applications Engineering	£105	Yes / No		
Module 7	Systems, Management and Engineering	£105	Yes / No		

**Section D for the Candidate:** Please complete the additional questions below, then read and sign the declaration.

<p><b>Additional requirements needed to sit the exam?</b>                  (Please contact <a href="mailto:exam@irse.org">exam@irse.org</a> with details of your requirements)</p>	<p>Yes / No</p>
<p><b>Where are you intending to sit the exam?</b>                  (Our exam centres are listed on the right, please indicate at which centre you intend to sit the exam. If you have any queries please contact IRSE office at <a href="mailto:exam@irse.org">exam@irse.org</a>)</p>	<p>Bangalore, India                  Birmingham, UK                  Vancouver, Canada                  Delhi, India                  Dublin, Ireland                  Glasgow, UK                  Hong Kong                  London, UK                  Melbourne, Australia                  Perth, Australia                  Secunderabad, India                  Singapore                  Johannesburg, South Africa                  Swindon, UK                  Sydney, Australia                  York, UK</p>
<p>I confirm that it is my intention to sit the modules listed overleaf and that the details on this form are correct.</p>	
<p><b>Signature:</b></p>	<p><b>Date:</b></p>
<p><b>Name:</b></p>	<p><b>Membership No:</b></p>