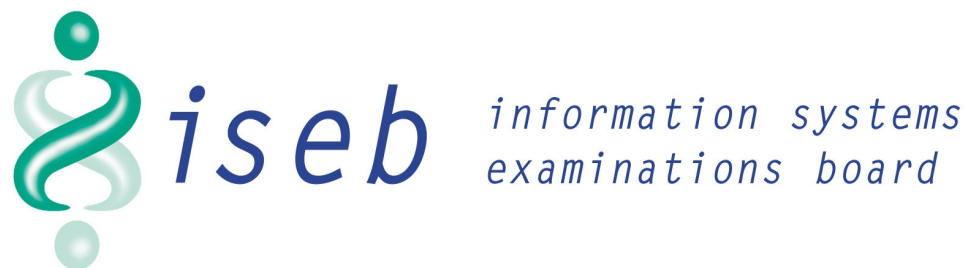




THE BRITISH COMPUTER SOCIETY



INFORMATION SYSTEMS EXAMINATIONS BOARD

Certificate in Freedom of Information

Guidelines for Candidates

March 2009

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FOREWORD

This document provides potential candidates for the Certificate in Freedom of Information with all the basic information they need regarding eligibility and the format of the examination. Further queries should be directed to the Training Provider or the Examinations Officer at ISEB.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

The Information Systems Examinations Board (ISEB) is a division of the British Computer Society. ISEB was created in 1990 from the Systems Analysis Examinations Board (which was set up in 1967). ISEB administers examinations and issues certificates in a variety of subjects in the field of IT.

For all certificates, the emphasis is on providing a professional qualification. To achieve this, ISEB adopts a two-fold approach to quality: accreditation and examination.

Organisations wishing to offer courses leading to certificates have to be accredited by ISEB. There are no restrictions as to the nature of establishments which may apply for accreditation: education and training bodies, public and private, large or small are all eligible. Once accredited, Training Providers are monitored in a variety of ways to ensure standards are maintained.

Examinations enable candidates to demonstrate their individual competence. The precise form of examination varies from certificate to certificate, and may comprise a written examination, course assessment and/or oral examinations.

1.2 The Qualification

The Certificate is aimed at those experienced in Freedom of Information issues, as well as those new to the subject. The Certificate provides a qualification that demonstrates confidence for those with Freedom of Information responsibilities within their organisations. It also provides an effective conversion route for those experienced in similar legislation in other countries needing to update their knowledge of the two UK Acts.

Candidates who pass the Certificate should be able to demonstrate an appreciation of Freedom of Information in its widest context; an understanding of the key differences and interface between the Scottish and the English/Welsh/Northern Irish Acts; an understanding of the interface with Data Protection and Environmental Information issues; an ability to develop procedures for the processing and monitoring of a request for information; an understanding of exemptions to access and the public interest test; an understanding of the enforcement/legal action procedures enshrined in the Acts; an ability to identify information likely to be requested and an understanding of the mechanism for publishing prior to request; and an ability to explain the philosophy of freedom of information and the right of access to public authority information.

1.3 Accredited Training Courses

Accreditation is granted to a Training Provider for one or more course formats, with agreed course timetable(s). A Training Provider will be accredited by ISEB if they have shown the Accreditation Panel that they have the ability to teach the appropriate syllabus material, using competent staff, good materials and an appropriate training environment.

A list of the accredited Training Providers can be obtained from the web site, www.bcs.org.uk/iseb. Training Providers should be contacted for dates of courses.

2 CANDIDATES

2.1 Entry to Accredited Courses

There are no formal requirements for entry to the course. However, it is expected that delegates will be familiar with the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) and the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 (FOISA).

2.2 Format and Duration for the Course

The training may be offered in a variety of formats, but is most commonly available as a 40 hour course run over a minimum period of 5 days to include lectures, workshops, and other teaching and learning methods.

2.3 Eligibility for Examination

Prior to examination, all candidates will be required to follow a recognised course by an accredited Training Provider. Alternatively, if a candidate can demonstrate that at least 70% of the ISEB syllabus, in terms of both topic and weighting, has been covered during other training courses they may apply for exemption from accredited training.

2.4 Format and Duration of the Examination

Assessment will be by a three hour closed book (i.e. no notes or books will be allowed into the examination room) written exam, comprising of three sections:

Section 1: 15 multiple-choice question - answer all questions, 1 mark each
Section 2: 8 short answer questions - answer all questions, 5 marks each
Section 3: 6 essay style questions, at least one specific to the Scotland Act, one or more based on a Case Study - answer 3 questions, 15 marks each

The pass mark for the exam is 50%.

2.5 Candidate Registration

Candidates wishing to take the examination following an ISEB accredited course should submit a registration form for the examination date and venue of their choice. Training Providers may offer venues if sufficient candidates are available. Those candidates applying via an accredited course will obtain and submit their registration form via their Training Provider.

Direct Entry exemption applications must be made directly to the ISEB Examinations Officer. A fee is applicable for considering Direct Entry applications in addition to the examination fee. Current ISEB fee details and Direct Entry registration forms can be obtained from the web site.

All registration forms should be completed and returned together with the appropriate fees to the ISEB Examinations Officer at least three weeks before the examination date. It is also possible to make payments via credit card by contacting the ISEB Examinations Officer directly.

Please note that places for successful Direct Entry candidates are limited and the bookings work on a 'first come first serve basis'. The preferred date and venue should be noted at the top of the form, although this will be subject to availability.

2.6 Course Attendance

If a training course is taken prior to the exam, attendance must be the ISEB standard of at least 70% for eligibility to take the final Practitioner exam.

2.7 General Arrangements for the Examination

ISEB arranges for invigilators to attend the examination centres to invigilate the exams. ISEB provides secure delivery of the examination papers and answer booklets to and from the examination venues.

The examination papers and answer booklets are confidential to, and remain the property of ISEB. All examination papers and answer booklets are to be retained within the examination room(s), and returned to ISEB and all copies are to be accounted for by the invigilator.

2.8 Examination Dates

ISEB will arrange four public examinations per year. Details may be obtained from ISEB and are also normally published on the web site. Please contact ISEB for confirmation of venue locations on your chosen date.

2.9 Notification of Examinations Results

The ISEB Examinations Officer will establish a timetable for the marking process. Results and the final mark will be communicated to individuals. Training Providers will also receive a copy of the results of their candidates.

2.10 Issue of Certificates

Certificates will be sent directly to candidates at the address stated on the registration form. Certificates will not be issued until the relevant examination fees have been paid.

Certificates will be sent to successful Direct Entry candidates either at the time of the notification of the examination results or within eight weeks of the examination date.

2.11 Candidate Feedback

Brief diagnostic feedback will be available on request to candidates who were unsuccessful on taking the written examination for the certificate. No feedback is available for candidates who passed the examination.

Candidates should request feedback within one calendar month of the date of the release of the relevant examination result.

2.12 Copyright of exam papers

All papers remain the copyright of ISEB. Copying them is not permitted and all prints of the paper must be returned to ISEB after the examination has taken place.

2.13 Sample Papers

ISEB has sample papers available on request for both candidates and Training Providers. Check the ISEB web pages for charges and availability. If not accessible on the web then please contact ISEB directly.

2.14 Appeals

Should a candidate wish to lodge a complaint about the examination itself or their result, they should first consult the ISEB Appeals procedure, then:

- Provide a written request (including candidate number, full title of examination and date taken) giving reasons for the appeal to the ISEB Examinations Manager not later than 4 weeks after the release of examination results.
- Enclose documentary evidence where appropriate (e.g. medical report).
- Enclose the correct fee. This will be refunded in the event that the appeal is upheld.

The decision of ISEB is final. The ISEB Appeals Procedure is published at www.iseb.org.uk under the policies section.

2.15 Examination Fees

Fees will normally be collected from Training Providers for candidates taking an accredited training course and entering for the first time. In all other cases individual candidates will be responsible for the payment of the fee.

A schedule of current fees may be obtained from the ISEB web site www.bcs.org.uk/iseb.

2.16 Special Needs

ISEB endeavours to accommodate the needs of candidates with a particular examination requirement, according to individual circumstances, ensuring such candidates are not disadvantaged or advantaged in relation to other candidates and that certificates accurately reflect candidate attainment. Candidates requiring special arrangements please contact ISEB a minimum of four weeks before the examination date to ensure that arrangements can be made. For detailed information, please refer to the document 'ISEB Reasonable Adjustments Policy', available on the web site or from the ISEB office. All special needs candidates will be required to complete the 'Reasonable Adjustments Form' and return it to ISEB.

2.17 Complaints

Any complaints regarding ISEB operational matters should be addressed to the ISEB Examinations Manager.

Any complaints regarding ISEB accreditation matters should be addressed to the ISEB Accreditations Manager.

2.18 Candidate Conduct

If ISEB has sufficient evidence to demonstrate that a particular candidate's behaviour is adversely affecting any remaining candidates during an examination, ISEB reserve the right to disqualify them and withhold their result. The candidate may then reapply and re-sit the examination at ISEB's discretion. A further examination fee will be applicable.

2.19 Examination Statistics

ISEB will issue examination statistics showing the overall pass rate (updated each financial year). This information will be placed on the ISEB web site.

3. CONTACT DETAILS FOR ISEB

Examination queries should be directed to the Freedom of Information Examinations Officer Theresa Gordon at theresa.gordon@hq.bcs.org.uk.

Accreditation queries should be directed to Stephanie Venn, Accreditation Manager at stephanie.venn@hq.bcs.org.uk

Any other queries can be directed to Rachael Kavanagh Examinations Manager at Rachael.kavanagh@hq.bcs.org.uk

The postal address is: ISEB
1st Floor, Block D
North Star House
North Star Avenue
Swindon
Wiltshire
SN2 1FA

Detailed syllabus information, and information on accredited Training Providers, exam dates and pass rates can be found on the ISEB web site www.bcs.org.uk/iseb This also contains information about other ISEB qualifications.