

# NIE candidate handbook

For candidates attending the online national investigators' exam (NIE) in 2026.

First published 1 January 2021 Updated 11 November 2024

Written by College of Policing

## How to use this handbook

Use the slide over page contents menu or scroll down to see the different sections in this handbook.

A full PDF version of this handbook can also be found in the [downloadable resources section](#) at the bottom of this page.

## Introduction

This handbook contains the rules, syllabus and candidate information for the national investigators' examinations (NIEs) to be conducted online in 2026. This document supersedes all previously published candidate handbooks.

Candidates must make themselves aware of the 2026 version of the candidate handbook for online examinations. Candidates should direct any enquiries about the examinations to the relevant NIE liaison contact in the first instance and not to the exams team at the College of Policing directly.

Candidates should also ensure that they refer to the online examinations candidate guide for specific information relating to the examination itself and preparing for it.

## Overview

The NIE is phase 2 of the Professionalising Investigations Programme (PIP). Please refer to the [PIP programme policy](#), published by the College of Policing investigative skills team, for further information on the structure of the PIP phase two (PIP2).

The purpose of the NIE is to identify candidates who have sufficient levels of knowledge, understanding and application of relevant law and procedure to perform effectively in the PIP2 and as a trainee investigator.

It is recommended that candidates spend a minimum of 14 weeks completing independent study, using the prescribed syllabus for the examination, which is the Blackstone's Police Investigators' Manual.

## Dates

The dates for the 2026 online NIEs are:

- Wednesday 4 March between 8am and 8pm
- Tuesday 2 June between 8am and 8pm
- Tuesday 8 September between 8am and 8pm
- Tuesday 17 November between 8am and 8pm

There is no facility to offer alternative times or dates for candidates to sit the NIE.

## Eligibility

Admission to the NIE is open to warranted officers, police staff investigators and individuals in other agencies or bodies with an investigative capacity who have been selected as a potential student for the PIP2.

The NIE is a prerequisite of the PIP2. All candidates applying to sit the NIE must be able to demonstrate current investigative competency against the assessment criteria for the PIP level 1. It is the responsibility of the candidate's force or organisation to demonstrate that a candidate has reached this standard. The College reserves the right to reject a candidate if this cannot be evidenced.

## Career breaks

There is provision for officers to take the NIE while on a career break, providing that the terms and conditions of the career break, as agreed by their force crime training manager (or equivalent), allow for this. It is the responsibility of the force or organisation to inform the College of any such requests by the candidate registration closing date, together with confirmation of approval from the force crime training manager (or equivalent).

## Overseas duties

Due to restrictions on firewalls and browsers, as well as the stability of internet connections, the College cannot guarantee that candidates will be able to take the examination outside of the UK. Currently serving officers on deployment in another country, who are supported by their force or organisation to take the examination, should contact their NIE liaison contact. The College cannot provide support to officers who wish to take the examinations abroad while on holiday.

## Suspension

Candidates who are suspended from duty will be required to have force crime training manager (or equivalent) sign-off allowing them to enter the NIE. NIE liaison contacts must ensure that this sign-off has been obtained before the candidate sits the examination.

## Pregnant officers

An officer may, if they so wish, take the NIE if it falls within a period of pregnancy. It may be possible to provide accommodations to assist with an officer's attendance at the NIE while pregnant. Applications should be made as early as practicable (go to the [reasonable adjustments and accommodations section](#) of this handbook). If a force provides a testing centre, additional accommodations may need to be arranged directly with the force.

A copy of the most recent pregnancy-related force or organisation risk assessment may need to be submitted to the NIE liaison contact prior to the candidate sitting the NIE, to allow any appropriate provision of accommodations to be made for pregnant officers. Every effort will then be made to ensure that accommodations are provided and that any hazards identified within the risk assessment are minimised or reduced by adequate control measures.

## Maternity leave

The NIE board and the College of Policing shall not act, or encourage candidates to act, contrary to section 72 of the employment rights act 1996, which specifies that an employee on compulsory maternity leave must not be permitted by their employer to work during the two-week period from the date of childbirth.

However, an officer may, if they so wish, take the NIE if it falls within a period of non-compulsory maternity leave. It may be possible to provide accommodations to assist with an officer's attempt at the NIE while on maternity leave. (Go to the [reasonable adjustments and accommodations](#)

section of this handbook.) If a force provides a testing centre, additional accommodations may need to be arranged directly with the force.

## Paternity leave

An officer may, if they so wish, take the NIE if it falls within a period of paternity leave. It may be possible to provide accommodations to assist with an officer's attempt at the NIE while on paternity leave.

## Applications

Candidates will register for the NIE using the assessment information management system (AIMS), an online system developed to support the administration and delivery of national examinations. AIMS is an intuitive cloud-based system and is designed to work on a variety of mobile devices.

Candidates will be provided with details of how to register, along with a link to access the platform, via their NIE liaison contact, when registration opens. It is a straightforward process and does not take long. Candidates will be asked to enter their personal and biographical details and to confirm which examination they are registering for. Candidates must take care to ensure that their personal details are entered correctly. When accessing feedback reports and results after the examination, candidates will be asked to confirm their name, date of birth, national insurance number and email address. If any of these are entered incorrectly during registration this will cause a delay in getting results.

Candidates will receive an email confirming their application has been received. Candidates are also advised to take a screenshot of the confirmation page to keep a record that their application was created and submitted, in case they do not receive the confirmation email. Candidates should not register again as this will create duplicate entries in the system.

The relevant force or organisation will then be asked to verify that candidates are eligible to sit the examination and assign them to the correct examination by the registration closing date.

## Registration periods

The candidate registration periods are as follows.

### March examination

- Opens on Thursday 8 January 2026.
- Closes at 6pm on Wednesday 4 February 2026.

## June examination

- Opens on Wednesday 1 April 2026.
- Closes at 6pm on Wednesday 6 May 2026.

## September examination

- Opens on Wednesday 15 July 2026.
- Closes at 6pm on Wednesday 12 August 2026.

## November examination

- Opens on Wednesday 16 September 2026.
- Closes at 6pm on Wednesday 21 October 2026.

Candidates should be aware that the above closing dates are the final dates for registrations to be verified and allocated by forces. Forces and organisations may have earlier closing dates that candidates need to register by. Candidates must check with their NIE liaison contact to confirm the closing date for registration in their force.

Candidates must register within the timeframe specified by the NIE liaison contact. Late candidate registrations will only be considered if exceptional circumstances can be proved as to why it was outside of the candidate's control to register in time. A heavy workload or being unaware of the registration period will not be accepted as exceptional circumstances.

## General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)

Candidates registering for the NIE are requested to provide personal and biographical data on the registration platform (AIMS). In accordance with the Equality Act 2010, it is good practice to know the demographic of people applying for examinations so that policing can build an accurate workforce picture.

Through this platform, we ask for your name so we can effectively manage examination logistics. Your name or any identifiable information will not be shared with any other organisation except your force or organisation, and will not be used for any other purpose. We ask for your help to develop

an understanding of workforce diversity so that we can monitor any potential barriers faced. Providing this information is voluntary.

The information you provide will be held by the College for the purposes outlined above and in accordance with the UK GDPR, the Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA 2018) and our duties under the Equality Act 2010. We will use the information collected from you to report on the demographics of those attending. Your information will be used to form statistics and high-level reports that will not identify you or any other individual.

We will only hold your information in an identifiable form for as long as is necessary and in accordance with our privacy notice. You have certain rights under the UK GDPR regarding your personal data, which include the right to access data held about yourself, to ensure it is accurate, and the right to request that it be deleted or no longer processed. You also have the right to complain about the processing of your information if you are not happy about any aspect of it.

The privacy notice can be found on AIMS. For more information about your rights see [our full privacy notice](#).

You can also contact our data protection officer by emailing [data.protection@college.police.uk](mailto:data.protection@college.police.uk).

## Reasonable adjustments and accommodations

### Reasonable adjustments (disability-related requests)

Candidates who can demonstrate that they have any form of disability, as defined by the Equality Act 2010, may apply for reasonable adjustments. This includes candidates with a neurodivergence, such as dyslexia.

Candidates should inform their NIE liaison contact of their intention to request a reasonable adjustment when registering. The candidate must complete the reasonable adjustment request form, detailing their disability and adjustments requested. The candidate must also provide a report containing a diagnosis of their disability and recommendations for a reasonable adjustment from an appropriate specialist in the area of their disability.

The candidate may wish to discuss options with their local force occupational health department prior to sourcing a specialist. In making their recommendations, it is helpful if the specialist has a

clear understanding of the format of assessment that the candidate will be undertaking.

Please note that registering an intention to submit a request for a reasonable adjustment on AIMS at registration is not a formal request. It is the candidate's responsibility to ensure they provide the necessary documentation and request form to their NIE liaison contact in sufficient time.

## **Accommodations (non-disability-related requests)**

Candidates with conditions that fall outside of the Equality Act 2010 definition of disability – for example, conditions that are short-term and/or do not have a substantial adverse effect on the candidate's day-to-day activities – may be eligible to apply for an accommodation. We aim to provide all candidates with a fair assessment and we support requests for accommodation where these are appropriate. However, in considering whether an accommodation is appropriate, it is important to ensure that the accommodation does not change the standard that the candidate is being measured against, nor that the candidate is provided with an unfair advantage over other candidates.

Candidates who require an accommodation in the examination should contact their NIE liaison contact in the first instance.

Candidates may need to obtain a specialist report, although this may not be necessary in all cases, depending on the nature of the request.

Please note that a candidate whose force or organisation is not aware of their disability, and who wishes to maintain the confidentiality of it, can approach the exams team at the College of Policing directly. Candidates should, however, be aware that confidential requests for reasonable adjustments may diminish the extent to which reasonable adjustments can be made.

## **Offering reasonable adjustments and accommodations**

Forces will consider the recommendations within the report or request, supported by psychologists from the College of Policing. Where a candidate has a disability and this is evidenced by their report, the force will confirm what would constitute a reasonable adjustment for the specified assessment process. Candidates will be advised prior to the examination of any adjustment or accommodation that is being offered. Candidates are required to sign a reasonable adjustment agreement form that gives full details of the adjustment. They must return it to their NIE liaison

contact before the adjustment will be applied to their examination.

Any adjustments or accommodations offered will be applicable to the examination applied for. If a candidate is re-entering the examination and has previously submitted and accepted a reasonable adjustment, they may not need to resubmit the evidence if they are content to receive the same reasonable adjustment as previously.

However, please note that candidates will still need to notify their intention to request a reasonable adjustment and submit a request form to the force liaison officer.

## Further information

For details on applying for reasonable adjustments and accommodations, candidates should refer to the [reasonable adjustments and accommodations policy](#).

Candidates and NIE liaison contacts should refer to this document before obtaining a report or making a request for an accommodation or reasonable adjustment.

Further guidance on reasonable adjustment and accommodation requests can also be found on the [Candidate online examination guidance on Knowledge Hub](#) (users are required to log in).

The report must be submitted to the force no later than the [closing date for registrations](#).

- March examination: Wednesday 4 February 2026
- June examination: Wednesday 6 May 2026
- September examination: Wednesday 12 August 2026
- November examination: Wednesday 21 October 2026

Failure to submit in accordance with this closing date could affect our ability to coordinate the request with the candidate's force or organisation in time for the examination.

It is the candidate's responsibility to plan ahead to ensure that the closing date for reasonable adjustment and accommodation applications is met. Applications submitted after the deadline may affect what we can offer.

## Examination structure and syllabus

## Structure

The NIE consists of a single, 80-question multiple-choice examination paper with a duration of two hours.

Questions will test candidates' knowledge and understanding of four areas, which are:

- general principles, police powers and procedures
- serious crime and other offences
- property offences
- sexual offences

The syllabus content being examined is cross-referenced to, and only contained within, the 2026 edition of the Blackstone's Police Investigators' Manual.

Please refer to Appendix A in the [downloadable PDF of this handbook](#) for the 2026 syllabus.

This manual is the only official resource endorsed by the College of Policing and contains the required legal knowledge for trainee investigators. Examination questions are drawn solely from the contents of this manual. Candidates will be examined on the law and procedure only as it appears in the 2026 edition of the manual. Candidates are advised not to rely on previous editions, which may contain out-of-date material. We strongly recommend that all candidates use the 2026 edition of the manual. Practice questions can be found in the [Candidate online examination guidance section on Knowledge Hub](#) (users are required to log in).

The Blackstone's Police Investigators' Q&A and the Blackstone's Police Investigators' mock examination paper contain study questions that have been developed outside of the College of Policing. While these materials are available as study aids, they cannot be presumed to be representative of the style or difficulty level of questions contained in the NIE and are not endorsed by, or affiliated with, the College of Policing in any way.

## Syllabus updates

Usually, no further updates or supplements to the NIE syllabus will be issued during its year-long lifespan. However, in exceptional circumstances, the College of Policing may issue an amended syllabus in advance of the next scheduled annual publication date.

Any changes to legislation or case law following publication of the latest edition will only be included in the examination paper for that year under exceptional circumstances and only if suitable prior notification is given. For example, a major change to a key area of legislation or procedure during the lifespan of the current NIE candidate handbook might render a significant part of the current NIE syllabus content obsolete. In such circumstances, it may be necessary for an update or supplement to the syllabus to be issued, to guide candidates on any additional material that would be examinable.

Any updates or supplements to the syllabus will be made available through the [National investigators' exam webpages](#) and will be distributed to all NIE liaison contacts. We will ensure that any syllabus updates or supplements are distributed well in advance of the examination date, so candidates have sufficient preparation time to familiarise themselves with any additional examinable material. Where possible, any additional study materials would be provided to candidates free of charge.

Please note that syllabus updates will only be made in exceptional circumstances and will not be made for every change to legislation included in the syllabus. Unless we provide notification through the channels outlined above, all of the syllabus will remain examinable regardless of any changes in the law.

For further guidance on this issue, candidates should regularly check the College of Policing website or consult their NIE liaison contact during their preparation period. Candidates should not contact the exams team at the College of Policing directly with queries.

If an area of the syllabus is repealed or changed and not tested on in the examination, there is still an expectation that candidates will ensure they are familiar with the new legislation for their own professional development. Forces and organisations should ensure candidates are familiar with new areas of relevant legislation that are not tested in the examination to avoid any gaps in knowledge.

## Examination development

All multiple-choice questions contained in the examination paper are written by trained question writers who have attended the College of Policing multiple-choice question writing course.

All questions are linked to the syllabus to ensure that all of the examination questions are relevant to the role of a trainee investigator progressing in the PIP2.

The questions are quality assured by the College of Policing's legal services team and by independent legal experts, who check the legal accuracy of all of the questions. All questions go through this quality assurance process to ensure currency and that the examination is legally accurate.

The NIE design process will help to ensure that those candidates who have made sufficient preparation will be identified as being suitable for progression to subsequent stages of the PIP2.

## Questions removed from marking

During the marking stages, 10 questions will be removed from the marking process and not included in the candidate's overall score, meaning that candidates will be scored on 70 questions only. All of the examination questions at the marking stage are evaluated against a set of standard criteria, which are used to show whether questions are of an acceptable standard and are fair for inclusion in such a high-stakes examination. This is to ensure that the questions have performed as expected and have provided candidates with a fair test of the syllabus.

The marking panel, ratified by the debrief panel, will remove 10 questions from the final score. These 10 questions will be those that have performed least well in the exam. The purpose of this is to ensure that the exam is fair and does not unfairly penalise candidates.

Candidates will not be informed of the location of the removed questions within the paper, nor will candidates be provided with their scores for the questions that are removed. These questions cannot be marked or included in anyone's score under any circumstances. There will be no exceptions to this and we are unable to accept appeals regarding this.

## Subject content

The subject content for each of the examinations has been identified using a nationwide survey of operational investigators, together with strategic input from the PIP board.

This survey produces a blueprint of those areas in the syllabus that are considered to be both important and frequently encountered by investigators.

The established blueprint is reflected in the balance of questions included in each paper. This means that candidates are more likely to be tested on those areas of legislation that have been identified as the most relevant and frequently encountered by investigators. However, it should be noted that candidates may be asked questions that relate to any part of the syllabus. The syllabus is approved by the PIP board and reflects all aspects of the roles nationally. Some areas of the syllabus may therefore be less relevant to different officers, depending on force or organisation and region. However, all areas are examinable, as the examination needs to reflect the role at a national level.

The examination is not aimed at testing pure factual recall of the syllabus, which would be readily available for immediate reference in the workplace. Candidates will not be examined on their ability to simply recall information that is contained solely in the tables in the Blackstone's Police Investigators' Manual. However, where the text directly refers to a paragraph of one of the Codes of Practice to the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984, candidates will be expected to know the relevant provision(s) of that Code.

The appendices of this guide set out the general areas to be tested in the NIE syllabus and are intended primarily as an aid to help candidates in planning their study for the examination. The definitive reference source for examinable material is the 2026 edition of Blackstone's Police Investigators' Manual (and any syllabus updates that are released in exceptional circumstances).

## Candidate support and guidance

Candidates are invited to join the [Candidate online examination guidance group on Knowledge Hub](#) (users and required to log in). This group contains support documents for the exam, including practice questions, exam tips, study timetables, a revision techniques guide and more. These documents are available to aid candidates' revision and exam preparation. For further information, please contact your NIE liaison contact.

## Further guidance

Candidates should also ensure that they have a copy of the online examinations candidate guide and that they follow the instructions in that document prior to the examination. This will help candidates to be fully prepared and limit the chances of experiencing issues on the day. This document is available to download on the [NIE webpages](#) or from your NIE liaison contact. If

candidates experience problems during the exam, refer to our [technical support](#) for further help and guidance.

Any queries about the examination should be directed to NIE liaison contacts. Candidates should not contact the exams team at the College of Policing directly with queries.

- [Further guidance and information about the NIE](#)

## Rules on examination day

Candidates must refer to the online examinations candidate guide, which is available through the College of Policing's [NIE webpages](#) or from NIE liaison officers. This document provides a comprehensive guide for preparing for the examination, accessing the examination on the day and what to expect when taking the examination.

## Testing environment

There is no national requirement for candidates to take the examination at a testing centre or under supervision. Candidates are responsible for ensuring they have a suitable testing environment, as per the guidance in the online examinations candidate guide. The College of Policing cannot accept appeals regarding an unsuitable testing environment so candidates must ensure they take the time to plan appropriately for this. Forces do not need to provide an optional testing centre for their candidates. However, forces should refer to the online examinations force guidance for advice on setting up a suitable centre if they wish to do this.

## Accessing the examination

Prior to sitting the examination, candidates will be required to run a system check to ensure their device meets the technical requirements. (Go to [technical support](#) for full guidance on how to run the system check). It is very important that candidates schedule time to check their device and browser before the exam, to minimise the risk of encountering issues on the day.

Approximately one week before the exam, candidates will be emailed a link to their familiarisation exercise to familiarise themselves with the exam platform. Candidates can only access this exercise once and it will be available until 7pm on the date of the exam.

Candidates are strongly advised to take the time to complete the familiarisation exercise, even if they have taken an examination with the College before, as changes to the platform and/or functionality may have been made.

A few days before the examination, candidates will receive details of the URL that they will use to access the examination platform on the day of the examination, as well as information about how to log in to the examination. If candidates have not had their link the day before the exam, they should contact their NIE liaison contact.

- [Further technical support information.](#)

## Declaration notice

The decision to take the NIE is that of the candidate. All candidates must read and agree to the declaration notice, which will be provided on the online examination platform, before being permitted access to the examination. This is to confirm that candidates agree to abide by all rules of the examinations and are fit and suitably prepared in relation to their knowledge, understanding and application of the law and procedure contained in the syllabus.

Any candidate who declines to agree to the declaration for the NIE will not be eligible to take part and will be unable to access the examination.

## Code of Ethics and conduct

The [Code of Ethics](#) applies to all officers, staff and volunteers across the police service in England and Wales. Candidates will be expected to:

- take personal responsibility for promoting and reinforcing the principles and standards set out in the Code of Ethics
- actively seek to embed the Code of Ethics by ensuring regular reference to it in their day-to-day decision making and professional responsibilities in policing

The highest standards are expected from all police officers and staff (or equivalent) and this is especially important for those in roles where greater autonomy and decision making is expected. It is therefore essential that candidates participate in the NIE with the Code of Ethics fully supporting their actions, contributions and decision making. Candidates who are found to have acted in a

manner that contravenes the Code of Ethics, or any of its principles, may be removed from the PIP2 by their force or organisation.

Any information entrusted to you during your examination, including the questions in the examination paper, has been disclosed to you in the course of your duties as a police officer or police staff member (or equivalent). In accordance with the standards expected of all officers and staff, this information must not be used for personal benefit, nor should it be divulged to other parties, except in the proper course of police duty. The use of artificial intelligence tools, such as ChatGPT, is strictly prohibited.

The College regards the improper disclosure of such information as a serious breach of confidentiality and will ensure that any reported instances are fully investigated under the police complaints procedure.

## Rule breaches in exams

### Attempting to gain an unfair advantage

The design of the examination and mechanisms that have been introduced into the delivery of the examination mean that attempts to gain an unfair advantage (for example, cheat) are likely to be ineffective.

Candidates must not gain, or attempt to gain, any unfair advantage during the examination. All officers are expected to act with integrity and in line with the principles and standards of behaviour set out in the Code of Ethics. Acts of gaining/creating an unfair advantage include but are not limited to:

- taking the exam on behalf of someone else
- assisting someone else to complete their exam or to answer any questions in their exam
- accepting assistance before or during the exam from someone to complete your exam/answer any questions during the exam
- using, or attempting to use, artificial intelligence applications during the exam will be deemed as attempting to gain assistance from another person
- attempting to pause, restart or stop the exam timer once you have started your exam, unless specifically advised by the College of Policing to do so due to a technical issue

Any candidate who is suspected of cheating will be fully reviewed and referred to the reports and disqualification panel. They could have their examination result removed and be banned from entering the examination in future for a period of two years or more. Candidates suspected of cheating will also be referred to their force's professional standards unit and a letter will be written to their chief officer.

The exam must be completed in one sitting. Candidates may take a comfort break during the exam, but this is not counted as a valid reason to pause the timer and must be taken while the exam clock continues to count down, unless an agreed reasonable adjustment that allows scheduled breaks to be taken during the exam is in place. Candidates must not attempt to pause, restart or stop the exam or timer once they begin.

Any attempts to pause the timer are logged on the system and will be recorded as unusual activity, which will be reviewed after the examination and reported to the reports and disqualification panel, if applicable. Attempting to pause the clock is a breach of examination rules and could mean the result is removed.

If candidates have an exceptional reason to close the browser, candidates must report this to the College of Policing via their force contact officer after the exam and within three days of the exam date.

## Disclosing content of examination questions

Copying questions in any form, including copying and pasting, taking photos, using software to search, or any similar method is strictly prohibited and will be considered a breach of the rules. Go to [disqualification procedure](#) for more information.

The questions remain the intellectual property of the College of Policing and we reserve the right to reuse questions. If people keep and share copies of questions, this affects the future integrity of examinations.

Candidates can take the examination within a 12-hour window on the examination day. If the examination content is shared before a candidate has chance to take the examination, this could lead to them having an unfair advantage and affect the integrity of the examination in any form. It is therefore paramount that you do not discuss examination content with anyone after the examination, including comments on social media, as this is likely to provide others with an unfair

advantage.

The following are therefore deemed as rule breaches in the exam (this list is not exhaustive):

- copying a question, or any part of a question, for use by self or someone else
- sharing questions, or any part of a question, including topic areas with someone else via any format
- adding a question, or any part of a question, to an artificial intelligence application or search functionality
- discussing questions or topic areas in the exam with someone else, including via social media
- taking a screenshot of a question, or any part of a question, for any reason

Any attempt to rule breach will be reviewed by the results and disqualification panel.

Discussing the content of questions in any form, including on social media platforms, is strictly prohibited and presents a huge personal risk for that candidate and their future career. Any candidate who is suspected of disclosing the content of the examination in any way will be reviewed, will have their examination result removed and be banned from entering the examination in future for a period of two or more years.

Candidates suspected of keeping or sharing the content of the examination will also be referred to their force's professional standards unit and their chief constable, or equivalent.

## Non-attendance

## Withdrawals and absence

As dates for registration are close to the examination dates, candidates should fully consider if they intend to sit the NIE before registering. Candidates who wish to withdraw from the examination after registering will need to inform their NIE liaison contact immediately, specifying their reason for withdrawing.

It is not possible to substitute a withdrawn candidate with another unregistered candidate.

Candidates who withdraw from an examination will not automatically be re-entered into the next examination and will need to re-apply at the next available opportunity. Forces will be charged for all candidates registered for the examination two weeks before the examination date.

Candidates wishing to sit the NIE at a later date must re-register for the examination and must follow the registration procedure for that exam. Once a candidate has withdrawn from the examination, they cannot be re-entered. Forces will be charged for all absent candidates, including those who withdraw within two weeks of the exam date.

## Sickness

A candidate who is either medically or self-certificated unfit for work, or is on limited duties through illness or injury, must provide a certificate from their force medical examiner (FME) (or equivalent) confirming their fitness to sit the examination, even if sitting it at home. Candidates must submit the FME's certificate of fitness at the time of registration to their NIE liaison contact.

A candidate who is either medically or self-certificated unfit for work or on limited duties, and who is not in possession of an FME (or equivalent) certificate of fitness, is not permitted to take the NIE. It is the responsibility of the force to ensure that any candidates who are medically or self-certificated unfit for work, or on limited duties, have been deemed fit to sit the exam by a suitable medical professional.

If a candidate has an illness or injury that has only become apparent to them on the day of the examination, they should refer to the declaration notice in this handbook. It will then be their decision as to whether they attempt the examination. If a candidate becomes unwell during the examination, it will be their decision as to whether they continue with the examination. The College cannot offer alternative dates to take the exam for a candidate who is unwell on the day.

## Results

The NIE debrief panel will review the delivery of the NIE prior to the results being issued. The panel consists of:

- the technical skills team training manager
- a member of the Police Federation for England and Wales
- a member of the College of Policing legal services team
- a service member nominated by the recruitment, retention and wellbeing of investigators board
- an occupational psychologist from the College of Policing

Before we issue results, the NIE debrief panel will:

- consider the impact of any unscheduled events that occurred during the administration of the NIE
- consider any cases warranting special considerations
- ratify the results prior to their release

The NIE debrief panel will not consider any reports of extenuating circumstances.

To progress within the PIP2, candidates will be required to demonstrate a standard of performance that indicates that they have a sufficient level of knowledge and understanding of the syllabus. As always, the NIE debrief panel will compare the results of this year's exam with previous years to ensure that the delivery of the exams has been fair.

## Pass mark

The pass mark is 55.7% (39 correct answers out of 70). Candidates scoring 85.7% and above in the examination will be awarded an exceptional grade in the exam.

The NIE debrief panel reserves the right to alter the pass mark in exceptional circumstances if they see a significant deviation in the success rate for exams, whether higher or lower, and/or have evidence to show that a change in the pass mark would result in a fairer outcome.

## Feedback reports

NIE liaison officers will be able to access a full list of results via AIMS within three weeks of the examination date.

All results and feedback reports will be available to candidates within three weeks following the examination. The College will notify the NIE liaison officer of the date of the results release, and candidates will be sent a link to access their own feedback report via AIMS. Candidates will be required to verify their date of birth, national insurance number and email address to access their result. Any errors in inputting these at registration will result in a delay in accessing feedback.

The candidate feedback report can be used by the candidate to identify any strengths and developmental needs in the areas that have been examined and assessed. The report includes a summary of candidates' final grading and total percentage score obtained in the examination. Candidates are not issued with certificates following the examination.

The feedback report also acts as proof of the candidate's result and must be retained by candidates for future reference. We are unable to reissue feedback reports.

Candidates can expect to receive their results by:

- Wednesday 25 March 2026 for the March examination
- Tuesday 23 June 2026 for the June examination
- Tuesday 29 September 2026 for the September examination
- Tuesday 8 December 2026 for the November examination

## Resitting the NIE

Unsuccessful candidates will have an opportunity, subject to force or organisation policy, to resit the examination on the next examination date.

If a candidate fails the NIE a second time, a development meeting must take place between the force or organisation and the candidate to identify any issues. Consideration must be made by both parties as to whether the process is the right pathway for that individual at that time.

Candidates can be withdrawn or entered for a further NIE. The use of a development plan needs to be formally agreed and written down, so that if the candidate fails the NIE a third time, a further meeting can take place to discuss the development and pathway for that individual.

After two fails, it is suggested that a candidate is given the opportunity to withdraw from the process voluntarily, unless the force or organisation believes that there has been sufficient evidence of development to enter the candidate a third time. At this point, the risk involved in continuing to support and develop the individual – if the individual is already posted into an investigative role – sits firmly with the force or organisation and the chief constable.

After three fails, both the individual and the force or organisation should strongly consider whether this career pathway is the right choice at that time for that individual. The option to withdraw the individual from the process should be given serious consideration. This is likely to affect a very small number of people and any decision needs to consider all information and the individual's circumstances.

Candidates who wish to retake the NIE must register for the next exam in the usual way using the online registration platform. It is the candidate's responsibility to ensure that they register for the next examination before the registration deadline.

- [Refer to the PIP2 investigator process flowchart for an overview of the process](#)

## Validity

A pass in the NIE is valid for three years (less one day) from the date of taking the examination. It is anticipated that most students will be able to complete the full PIP2 within six to 12 months of passing the NIE. Completion of the programme is confirmed when the individual is signed off as a PIP2 accredited investigator.

Although most students should be able to complete the programme within six to 12 months of passing the NIE, an NIE pass is valid for three years (less one day) to cover absences during this time.

Extensions to the validity period will be considered for officers who have taken leave that is covered by the Employment Rights Act 1996, such as maternity leave, paternity leave, maternity-related sickness leave, maternity support, adoption leave, shared parental leave and a career break for the purposes of care. Extensions to validity will also be considered for officers who have experienced periods of sickness that have led to long-term absences and/or have had a long-term, substantial adverse impact on an individual's day-to-day activities under the Equality Act 2010.

Extensions to validity will not be considered in cases of lack of opportunities or a delay in beginning a course within the validity period in any circumstances. These are accounted for with the three-year period allowed.

All applications for extension to validity should be made via your NIE liaison contact, who should send it to the exams team at the College of Policing on your behalf. Applications must include full details of the absences from work, including specific dates, and must be confirmed and endorsed by a line manager and/or your human resources department.

Extensions to validity will be considered by an occupational psychologist from the exams team, in conjunction with the policing standards manager for investigation, and will be communicated to candidates and their force or organisation. All extensions to validity must be granted by the College and not by forces or organisations directly.

# Unscheduled incidents

## Appeals of unscheduled incidents

Unscheduled incidents are defined as disruptions that are unforeseen and outside of the candidate's control, and that can be considered to have a direct and substantial impact on the candidate's result.

The College will not, under any circumstances, accept appeals of unscheduled incidents relating to any of the following.

- A force-provided testing environment. Any appeals of unscheduled incidents relating to a force-provided testing environment should be discussed directly with the force.
- A candidate-provided testing environment. Candidates should follow the online examinations candidate guide to ensure they have a suitable testing environment for the exam.
- Local connection issues, such as not having a strong enough connection to load the exam or experiencing connection issues during the exam that are outside of the national exam platform. Candidates must follow the guidance sent before the exam to ensure that their connection is strong and to limit their chances of experiencing issues. Guidance is also provided for candidates to follow during the exam if any issues do occur.
- Device issues. Candidates are provided with extensive information before the exam regarding suitable devices and must check that their device meets the criteria before taking the exam. Candidates should speak to their force if they do not have a suitable device.
- Lack of preparation and/or a heavy workload prior to attendance.
- Sickness through illness or injury before or during the exam, including family members. It is the candidate's choice if they choose to agree to the declaration and take the exam.
- Issues known to the candidate at the time of taking the exam.
- Incidences where the candidate has not followed guidance and/or not contacted the College in the first instance if issues have occurred during their exam causing further preventable issues.
- Reasonable adjustments. Candidates are provided with extensive information before the exam regarding their reasonable adjustment (if requested), including an agreement form which details the reasonable adjustment. Candidates can check their reasonable adjustment on their familiarisation exercise so they are comfortable with how this will work in practice. It is the candidate's decision if they choose to sign their reasonable adjustment agreement form and take

the exam without understanding how their adjustment will be applied in practice. Candidates are also instructed to ensure they adjustment they are expecting has been applied before beginning their exam.

Queries relating to the content of the examination questions will be considered separately and not accepted as an appeal (go to the [section on question queries](#)).

## Submitting an appeal

Any candidate who wishes to report an unscheduled incident must do so in the form of a written report or email. It is the candidate's responsibility to provide all the supporting evidence at the time of writing and to make it clear in their email that they wish to report an unscheduled incident.

The report does not need to be countersigned by the candidate's line manager or above. The report must be submitted by the candidate, copying in their NIE liaison contact and received by the College's exams team no later than three days after attending the examination. Reports must be sent to [examsinvestigator@college.police.uk](mailto:examsinvestigator@college.police.uk)

The deadline for appeals for each exam is:

- Saturday 7 March 2026 by 8pm for the March examination
- Friday 5 June 2026 by 8pm for the June examination
- Friday 11 September 2026 by 8pm for the September examination
- Friday 20 November 2026 by 8pm for the November examination

This will be the only opportunity for candidates to submit reports. Reports that are not received within the specified time scale will not be considered further under any circumstances.

The exams team will acknowledge receipt of reports to candidates via their force examinations officer. Any reports submitted that relate to one of the factors outlined in the [section on appeals of unscheduled incidents](#) will be rejected and not considered further.

All reports accepted will be considered by the marking panel for special considerations (go to the [section on special considerations](#)).

Reports from candidates who are unsuccessful candidates will be sent to the NIE reports and disqualifications panel. Please be aware that the panel cannot change a fail result into a pass or

add additional marks under any circumstances, so the result will not be changed. However, the panel may recommend the candidate's force or organisation to not take that examination attempt into account, and to allow the candidate to have an additional attempt at the examination where local policy (for example, the number of retakes) would have otherwise prevented this from being an option. The panel can also make recommendations for the delivery of the exam to the College and/or force.

Reports from candidates who are successful will not be considered further by the panel.

## Special considerations

The marking panel, in consultation with the NIE debrief panel, will consider applying special considerations to any candidate who submits an appeal of unscheduled incidents that is accepted by the College. Special considerations will not be applied automatically for each appeal and will only be applied in exceptional circumstances where the marking panel and debrief panel are in agreement that it is warranted and fair to do so.

The College of Policing will not apply special considerations under any circumstances for incidents relating to any of the points listed in the [section on appeals of unscheduled incidents](#).

Applications for special consideration should be submitted in accordance with existing timescales for submission of reports, as detailed in the [section on submitting an appeal](#). Applications received after this time will not be considered.

The NIE marking panel also have the discretion to apply the special considerations policy in circumstances in which evidence has been brought to their attention – for example, by a force or candidate – that is likely to have had a direct and substantial impact on one or more candidates' results, but where a report has not been submitted. If the NIE marking panel determine, in conjunction with the NIE debrief panel, that awarding special considerations is appropriate, the candidate will be notified via the NIE liaison contact. If special considerations are deemed appropriate, this would be applied to all candidates affected by that specific issue and not to just those who appealed.

The NIE debrief panel cannot change a fail result into a pass. However, the marking panel will apply special consideration if it is deemed to be appropriate by awarding an allowance of one additional mark of the total raw marks available within the examination to affected candidates. In

some cases, this may make the difference between a pass and a fail for candidates. The marking panel will conduct a thorough analysis of the candidates' results to ascertain the impact that the issue is likely to have had before the policy is considered. This will only be applied in very exceptional circumstances that are deemed significant, out of the candidate's control and likely to have had a substantial and prolonged impact on a candidate's performance during the examination.

The decision of the NIE marking panel, in conjunction with the NIE debrief panel, is final. Once results have been ratified and released, results will not be reviewed again under any circumstances.

## Question queries

On occasion, the exams team may receive a query regarding the legal accuracy or fairness of a question included in the examination from a candidate. The examinations are subject to a rigorous design process. All items used in each administration of the NIE go through several review stages to ensure that they meet the necessary psychometric criteria required to confirm they are fair for inclusion in the exam.

Items in the examination are reviewed legally on a number of occasions. This is to ensure that the item is legally accurate and a fair test of candidates' knowledge of the syllabus. This means that before any item is included in an exam, the College of Policing can be confident that it is suitable for use.

During the marking process, the marking panel reviews any queries raised by candidates in relation to specific questions, as well as any questions that have not performed as expected. This is to ensure that the questions are wholly correct and fair for inclusion within the exam. Any questions deemed to be unfair for inclusion in any way will be removed from the marking procedure for all candidates. Queries must be submitted to the College's exams team no later than three days after attending the examination. Please note that queries received after this date will not be considered. The item will also be reviewed by the College's legal services team to provide a post-examination legal review if needed.

## Remarking examination papers

There is no provision for candidates to contest their result once results have been released, or to request to have their examination paper remarked. The occupational psychology unit adopts a very

rigorous and thorough marking process to ensure that all papers are accurately marked and checked. All extenuating circumstances and unscheduled incidents reported in line with the guidelines above will be taken into account when marking. Once the results have been released, these are final. The College's exams team will not remark exams.

There is no provision to add additional marks for candidates who score just below the pass mark. The pass mark for the exam is a standard agreed with the reports and disqualification panel and ratified by the NIE debrief panel after each exam. This will therefore not be lowered for individual candidates in any circumstances.

## **NIE reports and disqualifications panel**

The NIE reports and disqualification panel will formally consider any reports based on extenuating circumstances and unscheduled incidents, as well as reported cases of irregularity or breaches of the rules. The panel consists of:

- a member of the recruitment, retention and wellbeing of investigators board
- a representative from the College of Policing workforce transformation and professional development team
- an occupational psychologist from the College of Policing
- a member of the College of Policing legal services team

The NIE reports and disqualification panel will consider any reports after the results have been notified. Once a decision has been reached, the College of Policing, on behalf of the chair of the panel, will notify the candidate of the decision.

The panel cannot change a fail result into a pass or add additional marks under any circumstances. Once the scoring has taken place and has been signed off by the debrief panel, the results will stand. Any adjustments made to the scoring will render the results invalid and the marking team will not endorse an adjusted result.

Unsuccessful candidates who have previously submitted reports have claimed that an event or series of events has contributed to their result because they were unable to perform to their best. However, in behavioural terms, it is not possible to make assumptions about what candidates would and would not have done had those circumstances not arisen. Different circumstances have different effects on people, and it is not appropriate to attempt to predict what that effect may or

may not have been.

Other examining bodies, such as universities, are usually willing to consider both marginal fail results and the possibility of converting such results to a pass. However, they have the benefit of other evidence to consider –such as coursework and portfolios – that may support a conversion to a pass for a candidate who has achieved a lower-than-expected result.

Due to other evidence not being available, it is not possible to reconsider the marks awarded at the NIE against any other information. Rigorous marking procedures are used following the examination. Therefore, marginal fail results will not be reassessed or awarded a pass mark under any circumstances. There is no right of appeal regarding a remark.

## Disqualification procedure

Any candidate found to be in breach of the rules will be liable to disqualification.

If a candidate's behaviour reduces the reliability of their examination scores, their result may be nullified by the marker, notwithstanding any disqualification decision. NIE disqualification issues will be referred to the NIE reports and disqualifications panel.

In cases of rule breaches, irregularity and misbehaviour, the panel can:

- fail the candidate
- disqualify the candidate from the current attempt and bar them from further attempts for a period of two or more years
- refer the candidate to their chief officer and their relevant professional standards department

## Right of appeal

Candidates have the right of appeal to the policing standards manager for investigation against the decision of the NIE reports and disqualification panel, where there are reasonable grounds for believing that either, or both, of the following are true.

- The panel did not act in compliance with its rules.
- There is fresh evidence, which was not available at the time of the original report, for further consideration.

The above reasons must be clearly detailed in the appeal before it will be considered further. There is no right of appeal in circumstances outside of this, for example disagreement with the panel's decision.

Appeals must be made by email to the policing standards manager for investigation, care of the College of Policing exams investigator email address: [examsinvestigator@college.police.uk](mailto:examsinvestigator@college.police.uk).

Appeals must be countersigned by the candidate's line manager or above. The countersigned appeal must then be submitted by the candidate and received by the exams team, within 21 days of the date of the letter in which the candidate is notified of the decision of the NIE reports and disqualification panel.

The exams team will forward the appeal to the policing standards manager for investigation. The policing standards manager for investigation will consider whether there are adequate grounds for appeal and will notify the exams team.

The candidate and relevant NIE liaison contact will be advised by the exams team in writing of the policing standards manager for investigation's decision. The policing standards manager for investigation cannot convert a fail into a pass but can vary or confirm the decision of the NIE reports and disqualification panel.

## Syllabus

Information on the sections from the Blackstone's Police Investigators' Manual 2026 can be found in the [downloadable pdf of this handbook](#).

## Downloadable resources

A pdf version of this guide is available.

- [NIE candidate handbook 2026 \(pdf\) 570.73 KB](#)

## Tags

Leadership development