IBOC procedures to run on-line TSTA exams

This document is an addendum to Section 11 of the IBOC Certification and Examinations Handbook and relates to the development of on-line procedures for TSTA exams.

IBOC recommend that candidates need to be familiar with working in an on-line platform and if they are taking the teaching/supervision exam they are best prepared if they are already experienced in on-line teaching/supervising. We acknowledge the on-line exams will privilege those who are familiar with this and this is a factor for candidates to consider before applying for an on-line exam. On-line exams are not a substitute for on-site exams and candidates will be able to make a choice as to how best showcase their competencies.

Principles

The initial stimulus for considering on-line certification was the impact of Corona virus, the risk to health and the travel bans that have gone on across the world. In order to keep our commitment to candidates and the TA community we have to rethink how to offer a high standard, accessible exam system. The move to on-line has been a global shift with both opportunities and challenges. However, as the period of impact has extended, we are increasingly aware of the wider opportunities arising from the disruption caused by the pandemic. Therefore, the following arrangements might be understood as a first step into creating a sustainable approach to professional certification.

IBOC has to plan for the protection and future of our certification system. We envision this to be a two-fold approach to exams, on-site and on-line. To this end we have developed procedures for on-line exams. We do not see these as a replacement for on-site exams but as complementary and necessary during times of crisis and also with an eye to a more long-term development of accreditation and certification.

The principles, therefore, are:

1. Protection of the certification of transactional analysts across the world.

2. Power, privilege and equity - we are embracing the opportunity to offer the option of on-line examination in support of the wider initiative in the TA community regarding diversity and inclusion. This includes:
• making arrangements that improve the engagement of candidates who might be otherwise disadvantaged in terms of family commitments, financial costs, mobility issues.
• enabling the candidate to be examined in a similarly familiar context to that of the examining board members. In other words, the candidate can choose to be in their own space and the exam board can anticipate that candidates will be more established and therefore more robust in both their preparation and performance.

3. Eco awareness – on-line exams will cut the carbon footprint of transactional analysts, a necessary step in the climate crisis, (for more detailed consideration of this issue see de Graaf & Tigchelaar, The Script, August 2020).

Plan

Following two sets of on-line CTA exams (January 21, March 21) and a set of mock TSTA exams (May 21), IBOC will deliver on-line TSTA exams starting in September 2021. On-site exams will continue to be planned where possible and will continue to be part of how exams are delivered. This will enable IBOC to offer a range of exam possibilities to candidates and examiners, all maintaining the high standard of TA exams. All information re dates, fees and how to apply are on the website.

Procedures

At this stage of development we will ensure that on-line exams will follow the procedures of on-site exams as closely as possible, with appropriate adjustments made for the different forum as outlined below.

Technology

Zoom will be the platform used for on-line exams. This accessible platform enables the Briefing meetings to happen in a virtual Exam Headquarters providing a space for examiners and candidates to meet before and after the examinations and this virtual room will stay open throughout the exams so that candidates and examiners can return to it to seek support, celebrate each other and be in contact with colleagues throughout the day(s) of the exam.

Candidates will be able to link into the virtual exam room and wait in a 'virtual waiting room ' before the examiners invite them in. They must ensure they have a quiet and private space in which they can take the exam. They can make arrangements for their own local support as well as the on-line support of the usual meetings, exam supervisors and buddies. IBOC will offer a short on-line workshop ahead of the exams specifically for candidates to help them prepare for the process of being examined on-line.

Examiners will attend the virtual briefing meetings as well as an extra on-line training (this will be offered in advance of the exam days) which will offer training specifically in on-line examining. They must also ensure they have a quiet and private space from which to examine on-line. The Chair of each board will host the virtual exam through a dedicated Zoom room. Once all examiners have entered the hosting can be shared or delegated between examiners.
Gallery view on Zoom is advised. All must have their camera on to allow participants to see one another clearly. Earphones are preferable as it keeps background noise to a minimum. Muting function can be used whilst listening to promote the best audio experience. If an exam is observed the observer is recommended to introduce themselves to the board and then turn their camera and microphone off (not showing the observers picture but a blank square or use the "Hide non-video participants" option available in Zoom) whilst the exam is in process, just as they would sit out of sight line in an on-site exam and not intrude.
There is no private chat allowed during the exam.

Zoom exams will be secure and candidates will be sent all Zoom links ahead of the exams. One for the Exam Headquarters for the briefing meetings and the others for the relevant Exam room(s). Timings will be clearly planned and communicated by email in advance.
All candidates must make arrangements to record their exams on their own personal device in case of appeal. Examiners are not permitted to record the exam.

The process facilitator can be called virtually. The Chair will have the contact procedure to call for the process facilitator, who will be able to Zoom-in to that specific exam room if called.

Exam process on-line

Exam Supervisors will recruit examiners who have good internet connection and can examine using a laptop rather than an iPad or smaller mobile device. They will also collect information

about the time zone the examiner is in so this can be considered when planning timings of exams. They will then collate draft boards and boundary check these in advance of the exams with examiners and candidates.

Before the exam

All participants will be joining the exams remotely. Therefore, it is important for everyone to familiarize themselves with the technology and get any support they need ahead of time. Good lighting is essential so people can be seen clearly.

Candidates are recommended to practice mock exams in this format. It is important to be familiar with the Zoom technology of screen share so that images/powerpoints/making a live drawing can occur smoothly during the exam when necessary. This must be practiced in advance so candidates are confident in the process.

Planning to be involved in on-line exams involves planning your own structures for the exam days and managing your own environment. We suggest minimizing other external commitments to allow you to focus on being at the exams as if you were on-site. Candidates can be around to witness and celebrate colleagues and examiners could take breaks with other colleagues in breakout rooms if this can be organised. There will be a celebration at the end of the exams involving everyone (plus candidates 'families and friends are welcome to join). This way we can also maximize the social community aspect of the exams as far as possible.

14 days before the exam meetings

The candidate will prepare:
1. Their examination log, containing:
• PTSTA annual summary reports;
• supervisor's annual summary reports;
• a curriculum vitae setting out their education, training and experience;
• three letters of endorsement (see Sections 11.2.2 and 11.2.4);
• the supervisor's certification for the TSTA examination form;
• evidence showing that they have paid the examination fees;
• the context sheet for the teaching section (if appropriate)

This must be in **one** PDF file.

The exam supervisor will support the candidate to place their file in a specially created personal folder on P-cloud, a Swiss based secure cloud server with sophisticated file encryption. This can be then be accessed by the examiners.

3 days before the exam
The exam supervisor will send a finalized list of exam boards and timings of exams to all parties.
• Candidates, volunteers and examiners will receive the Zoom link for the Headquarters and a Zoom link for each exam they are involved in.
• Examiners will receive all paperwork securely relating to each candidate via a link to P-cloud to access the pdf file with the candidate's information in. Other information relating to the exam will be sent by email, for example scoring sheets. Examiners can print these off or access it on screen. They are charged with keeping all material confidential and asked to destroy it appropriately after the exams.

The Exams

The exams will be held over two or three days, depending on the number of candidates and exams needed. This section will attend to two aspects:
1. General processes and procedures adapted for on-line TSTA exams
2. Exam specific details for each of the three TSTA exam sections

General processes and procedures adapted for on-line exams

Meetings: On the day of the exams candidates and examiners will link into the Zoom Headquarters, opened and hosted by the exam supervisors. There will be a short welcome and opportunity to see everyone involved in the exam days together. The exam supervisors will then lead two briefing meetings, one for the candidates and one for the examiners.

The volunteers briefing will be held separately and details of this will be sent to volunteers ahead of the exams.

Exams: Good breaks will be included through the days so examiners can rest their eyes, move and get some air as they need. Examiner's timezone will also be accounted for.
A guide is that:
Examiners can do a maximum of 3 Theory boards in one day.
Examiners will be asked to do a maximum of 2 Teaching/Supervision boards in one day.

There are two times allocated to each exam:

- the time the Board meet to form and

- the time the exam starts (i.e. the candidate joins).

At the time allocated for the board to meet the examiners will link into the virtual exam room (hosted by the Chair) to meet together 20 mins before the exam starts so that they can form and discuss their initial impressions of the candidate's log, to agree on some questions they wish to ask the candidate, and decide how to best work together. The candidate's paperwork will have been sent to them before the examination. The candidate will also link into the virtual exam room 10 mins before the start time of the exam (so they can be prepared and the board know the candidate has arrived). The candidate will wait in the waiting room to be invited in by the Chair at the exam start time.

Translated exams

It is the candidate's responsibility to ensure their translator is professionally prepared and has all the information needed, timings of meetings and Zoom links.

It is also the candidate's responsibility to ensure the exam supervisors know the name of their translator and to involve them in the meetings before and after the exams. The exam supervisor can brief both the candidates, translators and the examiners on best practice for a translated exam as laid out in the Handbook. The same principles will apply on-line as on-site.

During the exam

When the board are ready the Chair will invite the candidate to join and remind them to start their recording of the exam (this is the candidate's responsibility to organise a device to record the exam). They will invite everyone to introduce themselves, in the same way as they would in a face-to-face exam.

The Chair's role is particularly important, to ensure the candidate is not disadvantaged and to ensure that the exam is proceeding as it should. On-line conversations are slightly more deliberate and often require more explicit checking that everyone is understanding and following what is being asked or responded to. While everyone has a responsibility to check this out with each other, the Chair needs to take an active role in doing this.

While using technology can present practical challenges, if everyone involved is patient, calm and approaches it with good humour, the technology itself should not add to the stress. It is important to allow time and not interpret problems but look to cooperate to solve them. Hence the process might need slightly longer to allow for on-line adjustments (maximum of 15 minutes can be allowed).

The Chair is also responsible for taking the initiative in ensuring any technical problems are resolved. Technological help will be available but is also a live limiting factor with many dependent variables. In the event of a technological failure, the Chair, in consultation with the process facilitator and exam supervisor will be responsible for deciding whether it is possible to continue. If one examiner loses internet connection and cannot return to the link then the board can decide to proceed with 3 examiners (they must involve the exam supervisor). Where an exam cannot be completed due to technical problems a 'no exam 'will be declared.

At any point during the exam, any party may call the process facilitator. When this happens, the Chair will pause the process and contact the process facilitator. The process facilitator will join via the Zoom link and be admitted by the host.

Once the board is ready to commence scoring, the Chair will remind all present that this is the candidate's last chance to call the process facilitator and will ask if the candidate wishes to do so. After scoring begins, only board members can call the process facilitator.

At the end of the exam, each examiner will complete their Scoring Sheet and the Chair will ask each examiner to call out the scores. If the candidate does not want to witness the scoring then they can switch off their audio and camera and negotiate with the Chair how they will hear their result. After receiving their feedback and pass/defer from the board, candidates can leave the virtual exam space and check back into the virtual Headquarters, where they will be welcomed by exam staff and colleagues.

Debriefing the exam
Examiners then have 20 mins to debrief their experience of the exam and their work together. Each examiner must complete the on-line score sheet, details of which will be sent ahead of the exams as a google link. Any questions can be answered by the exam supervisor.

After the debrief examiners are asked to check back into the virtual Headquarters. This will be an opportunity for general feedback to the exam supervisors and to connect with colleagues.

Back to Headquarters
At the end of the exam day(s), examiners and candidates will be asked to meet in Headquarters to have an overall debriefing and to share their experiences. As in the original briefings candidates and examiners may have separate meetings. They will then join all together for a celebration.

Exam specific details for each of the three TSTA exam sections
This section will outline on-line adaptations for each exam.

A. Theory, Organisation and Ethics section
There are no specific changes to this section of the exam.

B. Teaching section
IBOC's recommendation is that any TSTA candidate will already be familiar with providing teaching via an on-line format in their regular practice.

First we want to offer some general observations about on-line education. Second, we will offer some key considerations for potential exam candidates so that they are well informed about the emphasis in this part of the TSTA exam process.

One of the most important principles to bear in mind is that there is a difference in teaching in-person and on-line which is pedagogical in nature; it is not only a technical shift that is taking place. Therefore, it is a mistake to simply 'lift' an in-person presentation and upload it to the screen. This discounts the educational impact of the differences that occur between the two formats.

In the context of the exam, the traditional approach has been to expect candidates to teach 'live' and this is what we expect of the on-line format. In other words, we are not asking candidates to show the board what they would do or might do, if they were in a room with trainees. We are expecting the candidate to teach live to an on-line group in situ. To be clear, the teaching is not a role playing of a session but a direct educational experience. Some of the implications of this for candidates include:

- Keep in mind the conditions that invite learning and consider how they might be the same or different when working virtually. How might you ensure that the psychological hungers for connection and recognition, structure, and safety are accounted for virtually?
- Contract clearly for how the interaction will take place – for example - invite in-the-moment discussion and discourage people typing questions in the chat room.
- Use engaging visuals. Experiment with building up a model piece by piece using the Build function in Powerpoint or Keynote. Alternatively use a drawing app on another device such as an iPad that can be displayed on the Zoom screen. An example of a user-friendly free app is called Sketches.
- Keep regular visual contact by only showing a few slides at a time and coming back to the whole group to invite discussion and questions.
- Invite connection and conversation by small group exercises using break out rooms.

To enable the candidate to be able to maximise the on-line format we propose some slight revisions to the guidance. We see these as ensuring the integrity and quality of what would have been expected in an in-person examination.

The brief for the main teaching session of the exam will be: **show how you facilitate a learning experience in 30 minutes.** The board would want to see all aspects of this - teaching something interactively, inviting the group to do something with it to make it relevant for them, picking up on responses and answering questions.

The Zoom function of "Hide non-video participants" means that the on-line teaching will involve just the audience and the candidate (trainer/educator) on the screen. This makes it close to the usual experience of being in an on-line educational event.

The candidate is still expected to be demonstrating their teaching philosophy and meet the current marking criteria for the TSTA exam. There is a difference here from the current guidance, which emphasises a 20 minute didactic presentation to 'an audience' followed by 10 minutes questions. To work this way within 30 mins could invite an inappropriate online experience, with the group being quite passive for the 20 mins teach. Interaction often works best to keep the engagement virtually and for examiners to be able to evaluate these aspects.

The TA101 element of the examination will be managed by an on-line application called pickerwheel (an example of a provisional option can be found here: https://pickerwheel.com/) which has been adapted to include all the TA101 topics and will be operated by the chair of the board at the appropriate time in the exam.

Audience

There are some differences to how the audience will be involved in the on-line exam compared to the on-site exams in order to protect the integrity of the on-line exam room.

The volunteers/audience will be supported by an appointed exam supervisor and will gather in a breakout room off the Exam HQ. When the chair of the board calls for them, they can transfer to the Exam Zoom room. There may be a short wait in the waiting room. They will be admitted to the exam room by the chair when the candidate is ready to begin the teaching and be greeted by the candidate. At the end of the 30 minute teach they will be transferred back to the waiting room. Here they must be prepared for a wait whilst the board and candidate dialogue. The chair will send a message to waiting room giving 5 minutes notice of when they will be recalled. When the candidates is ready to start the 101 teach the chair will admit the audience for the next teach. At the end of the teach the audience will be asked to leave the exam and return to the exam HQ to speak with the exam supervisor for a short debriefing.

Schedule for the Teaching Exam on-line

1. Candidate + examiners dialogue – 10 mins (15 mins translated)
2. Chair calls for audience. Arrange screen - Hide non-video participants
3. Enter Volunteers to be welcomed by candidate
    •Teach 30 mins (45 mins for translated exam)
4. Volunteers leave and dialogue resumes. Scoring and any recommendations
5. Movement break
6. Chair - 101 topic chosen (Pickerwheel). Candidate has 2 min preparation. Chair calls for audience. Arrange screen - Hide non-video participants
    •Enter volunteers to be welcomed by candidate
    •101 teach - 5+5 mins (15 mins = 7.5 + 7.5 for translated exam)
7. Volunteers leave and dialogue resumes
8. Scoring (pass/defer). Candidates returns to HQ
9. Debriefing for board

C. Supervision section

IBOC's recommendation is that any TSTA candidate will already be familiar with providing supervision via an on-line format in their regular practice.

The Zoom function of "Hide non-video participants" means that the on-line supervision will involve just the supervisee and the candidate (supervisor) on the screen. This makes it close to the usual experience of being in one-to-one supervision on-line.

Schedule for the Supervision Exam on-line

1. Candidate + examiners dialogue
2. Chair calls for first supervisee. Arrange screen - Hide non-video participants
3. Trainee supervisee - 20 mins (35 mins for translated exam)
4. Supervisee leaves and dialogue resumes. Scoring and recommendations
5. Movement break
6. Chair calls for next supervisee. Arrange screen - Hide non-video participants
7. PTSTA supervisee - 20 mins (35 mins for translated exam)
8. Supervisee leaves and dialogue resumes.
9. Scoring and pass/defer. Candidate returns to HQ
10. Debriefing for board

Celebrations and certifications

The time at the end of exams is an important moment of ritual, thanks and celebration. Everyone involved can join together to appreciate the collective work and celebrate the candidates. We will not be able to give out certificates, these will be posted to candidates along with their yellow TSTA/TTA/STA ribbon. IBOC hopes that candidates can return to their local communities where they can wear their ribbon and show their certificate for a second celebration with TA colleagues. We welcome candidates who have passed on-line to wear their ribbons with pride at the next conference or workshop they are at, even if it is virtual. To pass a TSTA is to train for a long time. We hope candidates will celebrate for a long time too.

Continued professional development (CPD) certificates will be emailed to examiners with thanks for their involvement.

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