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Professional Development Alert
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Covid-19's impact on SAICA/ICAN examination dates for 2020 and 2021

We find ourselves in significantly challenging and difficult times: a constantly changing world which is volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous. With these uncertain circumstances we all need to rapidly adapt to change. Many organisations, including ICAN and SAICA find themselves in the position of having to make some very difficult decisions, particularly about the upcoming ICAN professional examinations.

This communication sets out the changes that have been approved by the SAICA Initial Professional Development (IPD) Committee, and endorsed by the ICAN Training and Education Committee (TRECO) in relation to all professional exams (ITC and APC) to be written during 2020 and 2021.

With the June ITC scheduled to take place on 24 and 25 June 2020, candidates who are preparing for this exam need sufficient warning of changes to these dates. It is also important to note that any changes to the June 2020 ITC sitting will have a knock-on effect on the timing of the subsequent exams.

Considerations impacted by different lockdown levels in South Africa:

Given the level of uncertainty prevalent, the fact that South Africa has not yet seen the peak of the Covid-19 pandemic, SAICA has adopted an 18-month view for its exams. SAICA has to date grappled with determining the best possible way forward. When the South African President clarified the different levels of lockdown for the country, SAICA was able to begin objectively evaluating and weighing up options. With the South African President clarifying the different lockdown levels for South Africa (as based on scientific facts), SAICA is now in a position to evaluate the best possible way forward for the ITC and APC. The President has set out five levels that will be applied on a national level as well as on separate levels for each province, district and metro in the country to ensure that government's response to the pandemic can be as precise and targeted as possible. SAICA has now been able to make reasonable predictions on the impact Covid-19 will have on the professional exams.

It is Important to note:

- Namibia and its neighbouring country South Africa have been, and will continue to be, impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic. This unfortunately means that stakeholders may be disappointed and upset about the decisions the Institutes and its mandated Committees have made. We understand this and sympathise with the disruption this may cause to each and every one of you.
- There is no doubt that everyone will have their own diverse views (based on their perspective or vested interest) however, the Committees considered the bigger picture for all exam candidates before coming to any decisions. This included looking at several different alternatives before deciding on our current position going forward.
- Plans may need to change as time passes and the situation evolves. We are, therefore, committed to being agile and adaptable in our approach to the professional exams. Having said that, we have made some assumptions based on what we know to be likely.
- No matter what decision we take, there will be unintended consequences which, unfortunately, we will identify and try to mitigate as these present themselves.

ICAN's TRECO Committee has endorsed SAICA's IPD committee changes to exam dates based on the following:

- Being as fair as possible to all exam candidates.
- Preserving the order of the exams (ITC second sitting, then APC before the 2020 sittings of ITC and so on) so that candidates can complete their qualification journey.
- Preserving the current opportunities for assessment (i.e. a second sitting of the ITC): We feel that it is important that the June 2020 candidates be given an opportunity to sit their exam in 2020. This is because of currency of knowledge as well as the emotional impact this has on students who were expecting to re-write the ITC in two months' time.
- This will also allow us to run an examination with the smallest expected number of candidates so as to test what is practical and feasible in terms of any social distancing measures that may have to be put in place.
- APC candidates will be given an opportunity to gain a few months of further practical experience which will address concerns raised by some training officers about practical experience opportunities lost during the lockdown.
- All universities must at least have a cohort of students who are eligible to write the ITC as their first attempt at the same time. As there is uncertainty when all universities will have a cohort ready to write the ITC as first-timers, it is prudent to delay the January 2021 ITC sitting. It is hard to justify reasons for allowing some candidates to write and not others based on the university that they would have studied at given that, in all likelihood, this is driven by socio-economic factors.
- UNISA supplementary students, who historically may only have had the June sitting as their first attempt, will likely be able to write with other first-time candidates based on the revised dates.

The revised and approved dates are set out as follows:

Exam name	Current exam date as published	New exam date as approved by SAICA's IPD Committee	Proposed exam results release date
ITC June 2020 (2 nd sitting)	24 & 25 June 2020	18 & 19 November 2020	26 February 2021
APC November 2020	18 November 2020	17 February 2021	23 April 2021
ITC January 2021 (1 st sitting)	27 & 28 January 2021	10 & 11 March OR 14 & 15 April 2021 (These dates are provisional - see **NOTE 1** below)	18 June 2021
ITC June 2021 (2 nd sitting)	ITC 23 & 24 June 2021	1 & 2 September 2021	5 November 2021
APC November 2021	APC 17 November 2021	1 December 2021	As per normal Mid-February 2022
ITC January 2022 (1 st sitting)	ITC 26 & 27 January 2022	No change has been discussed as yet and this will be reviewed on a regular basis and may change depending on how circumstances change	Depends when exam is written

****NOTE 1**:** Regarding the provisional dates for ITC January 2021 deferral

Given the extent of the uncertainty around the 2020 academic calendar at universities (exam and supplementary exam dates), further consultations will be done with academics and training officers on the impact of the change in date. Two dates, which are provisional, are provided in order to assist universities with their planning. The final decision on the date will, therefore, not be provided at this stage.

Caution: While the above revised dates have been based on what is known today, it is the Institute's intention to stick to the dates provided unless absolutely necessary. As more clarity is provided or if circumstances change (i.e. levels of lockdown, etc.), the dates provided may be forced to change. The situation will be reviewed regularly, and communication sent as soon as any updates are available.

Conclusion:

We are on this journey together and both ICAN and SAICA will make every effort to ensure that the changes made resulting from by the Covid-19 pandemic cause as little disruption as possible. Every reasonable effort will be made to support candidates during these challenging times. Should you have any comment on the proposed changes kindly communicate this to fenni@ca-nam.com. Your understanding of the unique circumstances that have caused these changes as well as the necessity for the proposed changes is highly appreciated.



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