



CREST. Representing the technical information security industry

Statement to CREST members and stakeholders regarding investigations into the unauthorised posting of exam-related material online

August 2021

Contents

1. Executive Summary.....	3
2. The Investigation Review Panel's Decisions	4
2.1. The panel's conclusions	4
2.2. Requirements for NCC Group	5
2.3. Improvements for CREST	6
3. Initial CREST action.....	8
4. The Independent Investigation and Report.....	9
4.1. The Investigation	9
4.2. The material	10
4.3. NCC Group report	11
4.4. Review of NCC Group training material.....	11
4.5. Examination results	12
4.6. Investigation findings.....	12
5. The CREST Investigation Review Process.....	15
Appendices	17
Appendix 1: General Timeline	17
Appendix 2: The Independent Investigation.....	19

1. Executive Summary

The purpose of this CREST statement is to share with members and stakeholders the findings and outcomes of the processes of investigation and review which began with the anonymous and unauthorised online publication, on GitHub and Dropbox in August 2020, of historical material relating to CREST examinations and implicating one of our members, NCC Group.

Our certifications and examinations processes are among the most rigorous in the industry and have a high degree of integrity. Accordingly, the posting of this material by an anonymous source or sources has been treated with the utmost seriousness by CREST, prompting a major independent investigation and review process lasting 12 months in total.

We appointed an independent investigator, a former Detective Chief Inspector and Senior Investigating Officer in the police, to lead the investigation. A total of 22 people were interviewed confidentially as part of the investigation into events, and their input was invaluable.

After the investigation report was delivered, a CREST Investigation Review Panel, including elected members of the CREST GB Executive, was set up to review the evidence in the report and to construct an action plan. This included deciding the charges that were put to NCC Group and the associated requirements.

The review panel found that, on two occasions between 2012 and 2014, the examination-related activities of some NCC Group employees and candidates breached the CREST Code of Conduct and Non-Disclosure Agreements (NDAs). As their employer, NCC Group was, at the time, vicariously responsible for those individuals.

In Section 2 of this statement, we set out the panel's conclusions and requirements for NCC Group. NCC Group has accepted all six requirements.

The panel also considered improvements for CREST's own examinations processes, and these are also set out in Section 2. We strongly believe these improvements will benefit all members, training providers and professionals holding CREST certifications moving forwards.

In Section 3 we outline the initial actions taken by CREST following the posting of the material.

In Section 4 we include detail from the Report of the Independent Investigator which formed the evidential basis for the panel's work. We have included as much as we can while ensuring that we meet our obligations to protect the identities of those who contributed voluntarily to the investigation. Confidentiality is critical in ensuring all CREST complaints and investigations are handled responsibly and fairly.

In Section 5 we explain the Investigation Review Process undertaken by CREST, including the role of the review panel.

We acknowledge that the whole investigation and review process has taken significantly longer than people would have liked. It has been complex, and we have done everything we can to ensure it has been based on high quality evidence, thorough and fair throughout. We can only thank you for your patience.



Finally, CREST would also like to thank the National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) for its interest in and support throughout the investigation and review processes. The NCSC conducted its own review into events and will be issuing a statement in relation to these matters.

2. The Investigation Review Panel's Decisions

2.1. The panel's conclusions

The panel assessed the findings in the investigation report as being of a serious nature. However, the panel concluded that the findings, based on the evidence in the investigation report, did not breach the threshold for NCC Group's expulsion from CREST.

The panel also observed that some of the CREST policies and procedures had the potential to create ambiguity, leading to confusion and inconsistent application of our rules relating to examinations.

Based on the findings in the investigation report, the CREST Review Panel concluded that:

- On two occasions between 2012 and 2014, the examination-related activities of one or more NCC Group employees and candidates breached the CREST Code of Conduct and NCC Group was, as their employer, vicariously responsible for those individuals at that time.
- On two occasions between 2012 and 2014, the examination-related activities of one or more NCC Group employees and candidates breached Non-Disclosure Agreements and NCC Group was, as their employer, vicariously responsible for those individuals at that time.

These findings formed the basis of the allegations put to NCC Group.

The Panel also acknowledged that NCC Group had:

- Voluntarily withdrawn its representatives from CREST activities (including examination delivery, Regional Advisory Boards, Executives and Focus Groups).
- Agreed not to put forward any candidates for CREST examinations pending the conclusion of the independent investigation and subsequent CREST Review Process.
- Co-operated with the independent investigation and the review process.



2.2. Requirements for NCC Group

1. NCC Group will revise its processes to ensure, to the best of its ability, that this type of activity does not occur in the future and put in place a means of monitoring the application of such processes. Evidence of these process changes will form part of NCC Group's annual membership renewal audit.
2. NCC Group will provide evidence that it reminds all its CREST examination candidates to read and understand their obligations in relation to the CREST Codes of Conduct and Ethics prior to attending exams. Evidence that this requirement has been built into NCC Group's internal processes will also form part of their annual membership renewal audit.
3. NCC Group will fund CREST International to obtain the services of an independent Assessor to work with the company to review NCC Group's training material to ensure that no CREST-related and implied content is included within said training material.
4. NCC Group will, in accordance with a newly proposed CREST policy to seek a contribution of costs in respect of investigations into Members, contribute half of reasonable costs directly incurred by CREST in respect of this investigation. These funds will support socially responsible activities, for example activities that support a diversity campaign.
5. NCC Group will issue a statement accepting the investigation, its findings and the requirements.
6. NCC Group's Assessors in the UK will remain suspended from CREST activities until requirements 1, 2, 4 and 5 have been fulfilled.

NCC Group has accepted all the above requirements and continues to work with CREST to implement them without delay.

NCC Group has been advised that a failure to comply could be grounds for further action, including potential suspension or removal from CREST membership.



2.3. Improvements for CREST

Complaints Process

CREST's existing Complaints and Resolution Measures were designed for cases in which a third party (generally, from the buying community) makes a complaint to CREST about the service provided by one of our members. As outlined in Section 5 below, the circumstances in this instance were quite different. We are therefore creating additional complaints and resolution processes that will address a wider variety of potential scenarios. There will be a new first step in each to include: "Analysis of applicable (existing) process to ensure it is fit for purpose for the complaint in question and to secure agreement for the process from the respondent".

Non-Disclosure Agreements

The investigation highlighted a level of confusion in terms of what constitutes acceptable training and preparation material under CREST's NDAs and what is unacceptable. While CREST cannot plan for every possible permutation of events that might constitute a breach, we will set out more clearly the tests that might be applied in assessing NDA breaches including:

- Whether an alleged breach has undermined the integrity of our certifications;
- Whether the competency of any CREST qualified individuals is called into question by an alleged breach;
- Whether an alleged breach occurred with intent to undermine the assessment of capability provided by CREST certifications.

We will insert an additional clause in our Non-Disclosure Agreements for companies (potential, renewing, training providers, etc.) that attests to them making best endeavours to ensure their candidates comply with the non-disclosure provisions around sharing, discussing, etc. examination content prior to allowing them to sit a CREST examination.

We will insert an additional clause in Non-Disclosure Agreements for candidates to reiterate their obligation to not share, discuss, etc. exam content and that sanctions may be applied if a candidate is found to have breached the agreement.

Candidate Obligations

The investigation indicated that, while all candidates sign NDAs, there may have been a degree of confusion as to what this obligation covers. CREST will therefore add a Candidate Obligations Reminder to the DocuSign process for candidates in advance of their examinations that strengthens their non-disclosure obligations and reiterates the risk of sanctions if a breach is proved.



Member Declaration

It has become apparent from the investigation that there is scope for CREST to make it clearer to all members what their Member Declaration entails. To this end we will add content into Member Declarations that states that members are agreeing to abide by the provisions of the Non-Disclosure Agreement, Codes of Ethics and Conduct and the Complaints Handling process.

Members

CREST is not a training provider, and it is up to members and approved training providers to develop and run training programmes to prepare their candidates for CREST examinations. However, the investigation has suggested that there is scope for clearer guidance from CREST on what content we deem acceptable for training purposes and what leaves members at risk of being found in breach of the codes and NDAs they have signed. To further clarify the position, we are exploring the following improvements, among others.

- To provide guidance to all member companies about the content level and detail of in-company training programmes. This may include the expectation that members maintain professional development programmes for their staff. Training should cover all areas of the syllabuses for CREST certifications and not be directed solely at achieving certifications but also at continually improving staff capabilities and competences for the benefit of clients.
- Releasing some form of mock/practice examinations as a way of levelling the playing field for all members and to help support acceptable training and exam preparation.
- Improvements to the accreditation process and the compliance attestations required of member companies. A possible key test of whether training materials used by members might fall foul of what is acceptable to CREST is whether the training content would allow a candidate to complete one or more CREST examination challenges or questions without understanding the tools and techniques they are using and/or without understanding when it is appropriate to employ these tools and techniques.

Codes of Conduct

The investigation has indicated a need for more clarity and better guidance from CREST in terms of the obligations of members, training providers and candidates in relation to breach material and the possible consequences of breach. We will therefore tighten relevant clauses in member and individual Codes of Conduct in line with the proposals outlined in this section and elsewhere as required.

Whistleblowing

This investigation relied upon those who volunteered information and CREST will strengthen its existing whistleblowing protections whereby individuals can anonymously and securely report their concerns to CREST and, if required, provide information in confidence to any subsequent CREST investigation. We will seek more robust and clearer processes for addressing such complaints with member companies and will look at how to incorporate these into accreditation audits/reviews.



3. Initial CREST action

Throughout the investigation and review processes, we have tried to act promptly, responsibly, fairly, transparently and on a sound legal basis in relation to all matters arising from the events of August 2020.

Our initial assessment of the hundreds of files deposited on GitHub and Dropbox in August 2020 indicated that only 25 files were of concern and appeared to contain content relating to CREST examinations.

As a precautionary measure, in August 2020 CREST suspended its CREST Certified Infrastructure Tester (CCT Inf) and CREST Certified Web Application Tester (CCT App) certifications while the examinations' content was updated.

Entirely refreshed CCT Inf and CCT App exams were reinstated on 10 September and 19 October, respectively.

Mark Turner (NCC Group), the CREST GB Executive Chair in post in August 2020, recused himself from executive activity for the duration of the investigation. All assessors employed by NCC Group were withdrawn from all assessor duties for the duration of the investigation. NCC Group representatives also withdrew from other CREST activities.

Mark Turner has since retired from the CREST GB Executive having served the maximum period of six years in office, the last year of which he was recused. NCC Group assessors in the UK remain suspended pending the fulfilment of certain CREST conditions (see 2.2 above).

On 20 August 2020, five days after the posting of the second batch of material online, we announced the appointment of an independent investigator to conduct an inquiry.

The investigator delivered his report to CREST on 24 December after which the CREST Review Process, including the review panel, was established.

Our priority throughout has been to ensure that we have based our decisions on high quality, independent evidence. Furthermore, we had to ensure that the review panel had the time it needed to rigorously evaluate that evidence and reach conclusions based on the information presented to it.

The anonymous depositing of exam-related material online in August 2020 was an unprecedented event for CREST. It presented a unique set of challenges for us as a membership and accreditation body, not least in managing the complexities, sensitivities and confidences involved in the investigation and subsequent review process.

We understand the sense of frustration felt by some members at the time the entire process has taken, and we have tried, as far as possible given the legalities and sensitivities, to keep members informed throughout.

We appreciate the patience and understanding shown.

4. The Independent Investigation and Report

4.1. The Investigation

As most of you will be aware, the Independent Investigation began on 20 August 2020 and concluded on 24 December. The resulting Report of the Independent Investigator is a thorough, detailed and confidential body of work.

The investigator was Adrian Lennox-Lamb, a former Detective Chief Inspector and Senior Investigating Officer with more than 12 years' experience in workplace investigations. Mr Lennox-Lamb had no previous connections with the cyber security community and he carried out his investigation independently of CREST.

The investigation focused on several key areas of activity including:

- A search for potential witnesses using social media and media coverage.
- Use of a confidential email to encourage people to provide information.
- Reviewing the material posted to ensure a clear understanding of the extent to which the material was incompatible with the CREST Code of Conduct and NDA.
- Engagement with NCC Group about their response to the material.
- Review of NCC Group's current training material.
- Interviewing people who may have relevant information or who may have breached CREST Codes of Conduct or NDAs relating to examination material.
- Engagement with other stakeholders (e.g. the NCSC).
- A review of exam results for discrepancies.

A total of 22 people were interviewed confidentially as part of the investigation. They included the authors, or possible authors, of the material that was deposited online and other people with information relevant to the investigation, including some who worked for NCC Group at the time. Their input was invaluable to the investigation.

Interviews were voluntary. Interviewees agreed to be interviewed by video call and were then provided with a note of the interview for amendment and agreement. Interviews were also conducted where a simple note of the conversation was retained by the investigator.

In addition to the people identified as being material to the investigation, the investigator sought to identify others who may also have had information to contribute. This included:

1. Attempting to contact people who had been active on social media in the days following the posting of material online. None responded.
2. Contacting seven people who offered information or their services to assist the investigation. Of these: three were initially assessed by the investigator as having no information of direct relevance to the investigation and so were not formally interviewed; one person did not respond; the remaining three spoke with the investigator after which he concluded that the information shared was not directly relevant to this specific investigation.



3. Setting up a confidential email address, publicised by both CREST and NCC Group, to encourage people to come forward. Five people came forward. Of these, one was interviewed and gave a statement. The other four either gave information that was assessed as not being directly relevant to the investigation or they failed to respond to the investigator's follow-up emails. A sixth person, mentioned by one of those responding to the confidential email address, was also interviewed.

We appreciate that the independent investigation took longer than we initially anticipated. This was, in part, to allow as much time as possible for people to come forward so that the investigator maximised the range of contributions to the investigation.

As part of his work, the investigator also commissioned CREST Assessors with no connection to NCC Group to carry out specific work on the historical material posted and NCC Group training material, which subsequently fed into the investigation. This work also took longer than anticipated, due in part to existing work commitments.

4.2. The material

Out of the hundreds of files posted online in August 2020, some of which were duplicates, Assessors identified only 25 files that were considered problematic and deemed to contain content relating to CREST examinations, and potentially in breach of NDAs and the Code of Conduct.

These files were variously attributed as historical NCC Group training content (two of the documents fell into this category); bore the names of individuals and appeared to be notes written before and after examinations; were unattributed; and were official, publicly available CREST material.

- 11 were assessed as containing exam-related content, including publicly available CREST content.
- 5 were assessed as having content similar to CREST exam content.
- 3 were assessed as having no exam content.
- 5 were assessed as being unclear or inconclusive in terms of whether they contained actual exam content.
- One could not be opened hence the preceding total equalling 24, not 25.

Overall, the material of concern was a mix of notes, some characterised as 'brain dumps' put together post-examination; candidates' revision notes; training material based around content, including syllabuses, that was publicly available from CREST; and generic information relating to penetration testing.

The investigator conducted formal interviews with those individuals identified as the authors or possible authors of the 25 files of concern.

Most respondents said that the files were revision notes and internal NCC Group examination preparation and training content that they believed contained no actual exam content. Some said that the files did or could contain some exam content, having been created after actual exams.



4.3. NCC Group report

On 20 August 2020 CREST notified NCC Group of the appointment of an independent investigator and listed a series of questions relating to the material posted online and NCC Group processes.

NCC Group was asked: to comment on the posted material; to provide a breakdown of their training material and the names of all NCC Group staff who had taken CREST exams; whether NCC Group believed there had been a breach of Codes of Conduct and Ethics; to give an assurance that, if any such breach content was present, it would be removed from NCC Group training systems; provide evidence to substantiate their responses and proposals to prevent any future breaches.

On 24 August 2020 NCC Group submitted a written response with the answers to the questions.

In summary, NCC Group said they were not previously aware of the repositories and that it appeared that only two of the 25 files identified as being of concern originated from the NCC Group, a conclusion drawn from their own analysis of the leaked material.

NCC Group confirmed that no material was removed from its training material as they were unable to identify what was and was not exam content. This currently remains the case pending the implementation of requirement 3, as outlined in Section 2.2 above.

NCC Group shared a series of findings and recommendations from their own internal investigation with the independent investigator. The investigator requested full access to their investigation, but access was denied on the basis that their internal investigation contained confidential material.

Instead, the investigator submitted a list of questions to NCC Group about the conduct of its investigation. NCC Group provided the required responses, and these were fed into the independent investigation.

Additionally, NCC Group said it would cooperate with the independent investigator who could speak with anyone within NCC Group. NCC Group also helped set up a secure file exchange allowing access to any material requested.

4.4. Review of NCC Group training material

The investigator requested a review of all current, as of late 2020, NCC Group training material. The review was undertaken by a CREST Assessor.

The CREST Assessor worked remotely with NCC Group to compare the training material presented against CREST examinations, current and former, to determine if there was any overlap that had the capability to breach the NDA.

The Assessor's review is an assessment of the training material at the time of the review only.



The Assessor's review identified several areas where NCC Group training materials were highly targeted at or closely aligned towards CREST examinations. These included:

- Mock examinations containing questions in a similar format to the CREST CRT examination;
- Training material containing 'tips' which may disclose the content of examination questions and enable a candidate to target their exam preparation;
- Targeted training material which selected portions of the CCT App syllabus and overlapped with examination subjects.

Most of the content identified was not capable of breaching the CREST NDA. The Assessor said that some questions in the mock CRT exam question paper could be inferred as possible answers, even though the questions were not identical to the CRT examination.

It was noted that much of the training material was influenced by the publicly available CREST syllabus, meaning there would be an obvious level of overlap between the company's training material and CREST's examinations. It was also noted that it is arguable that any training content, including that based on the publicly available CREST syllabus, would be beneficial to some extent to candidates taking the examination.

4.5. Examination results

The investigator compared examination results for the top five companies, in terms of candidate numbers, in two blocks, 2010 to 2014 and 2015 to 2020. The data was provided by CREST's examinations team.

The analysis shows a significant increase in NCC Group's pass rate between the two periods. This was also the case for the other four companies in the comparison.

The performance of NCC Group relative to the other companies in the group had not changed: NCC Group was the third best performing company in the group in terms of pass rate in 2010 to 2014 and it remained third in 2015 to 2020. Indeed, the performance gap between the fourth and fifth placed companies and third-placed NCC Group in 2010-14, had narrowed by 2015-2020, indicating a decline NCC Group's pass rate relative to those two competitors.

The investigator concluded that the examination results supplied for these periods provided no evidence of anomaly that could indicate that NCC Group candidates had systematically gained an advantage when taking CREST exams.

4.6. Investigation findings

The delivery of the Report of the Independent Investigator (on 24 December 2020) marked the end of the investigation phase, allowing the report to serve as the evidential basis for all subsequent activity.

The investigator concluded that there was no doubt that the two incidents in which material was posted online in August 2020 were specifically targeted at CREST and NCC Group with the prime objective of highlighting alleged inappropriate behaviour around CREST examinations.



The person (or persons) who posted the material was never identified. GitHub and Dropbox are public repositories that are widely used and it would require a very high level of authority to identify users, normally only granted in cases of serious crime. This investigation did not match those criteria.

The investigator found that the content of the 25 files identified as being of concern was a combination of historical NCC Group training material and various candidates' pre and post-exam notes. Within the material, two files are NCC Group mock practical and theory papers that were used as training material. This was also established through NCC Group's own analysis.

One file (CRT Practical Mock Exam) was still being used in NCC Group's training material at the time of the Assessor's review of training content last year. Most of the material posted online dated to between 2012 and 2014, with a few files dated 2015.

The investigator was reliant upon the CREST Assessors' evaluation of the 25 files of concern as being material capable of breaching CREST's Code of Conduct and NDAs. This material was categorised by NCC Group at the time as material that was not the same as exam content and therefore acceptable to use. Some interviewed by the investigator as authors of the material posted online did not regard their documents as in breach while some agreed that the material they produced was, or might be, in breach.

The investigator concluded that the existence of the 25 files was evidence that content assessed as being in breach of CREST NDAs and its Code of Conduct was available and was being copied and used by candidates within NCC Group for CREST examinations, although he said it was unclear to what extent.

While the investigator was unable to say whether all the material of concern was widely available to NCC candidates, he concluded that the two mock exam papers were likely to be widely available. There was evidence, from some of those interviewed, that candidates did discuss exam content between themselves.

The investigator was also unable to say whether the material posted online was collected by one person whilst at NCC or was a collation of material by a number of people.

The investigator noted that nobody came forward and provided other material that might have been in the public domain, and he said that this suggested that the material posted may have been the extent of exam-related content available. There were no further leaks of material after the Dropbox deposit on 15 August 2020.

As part of his work, the independent investigator gathered a considerable amount of information, much of it given voluntarily by individuals in confidence. The investigator undertook to respect that confidentiality throughout his investigation and in writing his report and its appendices.

CREST respects that undertaking. In addition, our existing Complaints and Resolution Measures commit us to maintaining confidentiality throughout our complaints and investigative processes. This is to protect individuals, members and anyone providing information relevant to this or any other investigation. Confidentiality provides protection for contributors to all CREST investigations and so supports the conduct of fair investigations.

While we realise that some may find this disappointing, the publication of the Report of the Independent Investigator in full would breach our documented process and remove these important protections for the individuals who assisted in



this investigation. Likewise, any future CREST investigations could be compromised by a perceived lack of protection for individuals with relevant information, including whistleblowers.

However, although we are committed to respecting the confidential nature of the investigation, it is important that, in the interests of transparency and fairness, we share the following central findings from the investigator's report:

- That, on the balance of probabilities based on the examination of the available evidence, information about CREST examinations (pre and post-exam material) and internal NCC Group training material for the preparation of CREST examinations was being exchanged by some NCC Group candidates between 2012 and 2014.
- That it is more likely than not that on two occasions in 2012 and 2013 an NCC Group employee discussed the content of CREST examinations. There is no evidence that this person's actions were routine or systematic or that they continued after 2013.
- That another person is likely to have breached their NDA in 2012 by speaking about the content of a CREST examination.
- That a person is likely to have breached their NDA by producing notes on a CREST examination taken in 2013.

In the interests of clarity and fairness, the investigation also concluded that:

- While the independent investigation found historical evidence that some NCC Group staff and candidates are more likely than not, between 2012 and 2014, to have breached the CREST Code of Conduct and their NDAs, there was no evidence that NCC Group knew about, condoned, or otherwise sanctioned, such activity at a senior management or corporate level.
- Analysis of the exam results did not show any anomaly that could indicate that NCC Group candidates systematically gained an advantage when taking CREST exams.
- There is no evidence that any of the activities investigated occurred within NCC Group after 2014 to date.

In his report, the investigator noted that following the posting of the material online last August, there was some social media commentary about CREST and NCC Group with specific allegations being made about CREST and NCC Group operating too closely. There was also comment that any investigation would effectively be a 'whitewash'.

The investigator reported that he and CREST went to considerable lengths to encourage people to come forward and provide information to the investigation (see 4.1 above). This was mirrored by NCC Group which also encouraged employees and former employees with any information to come forward. Five contacts came forward via the confidential email address.

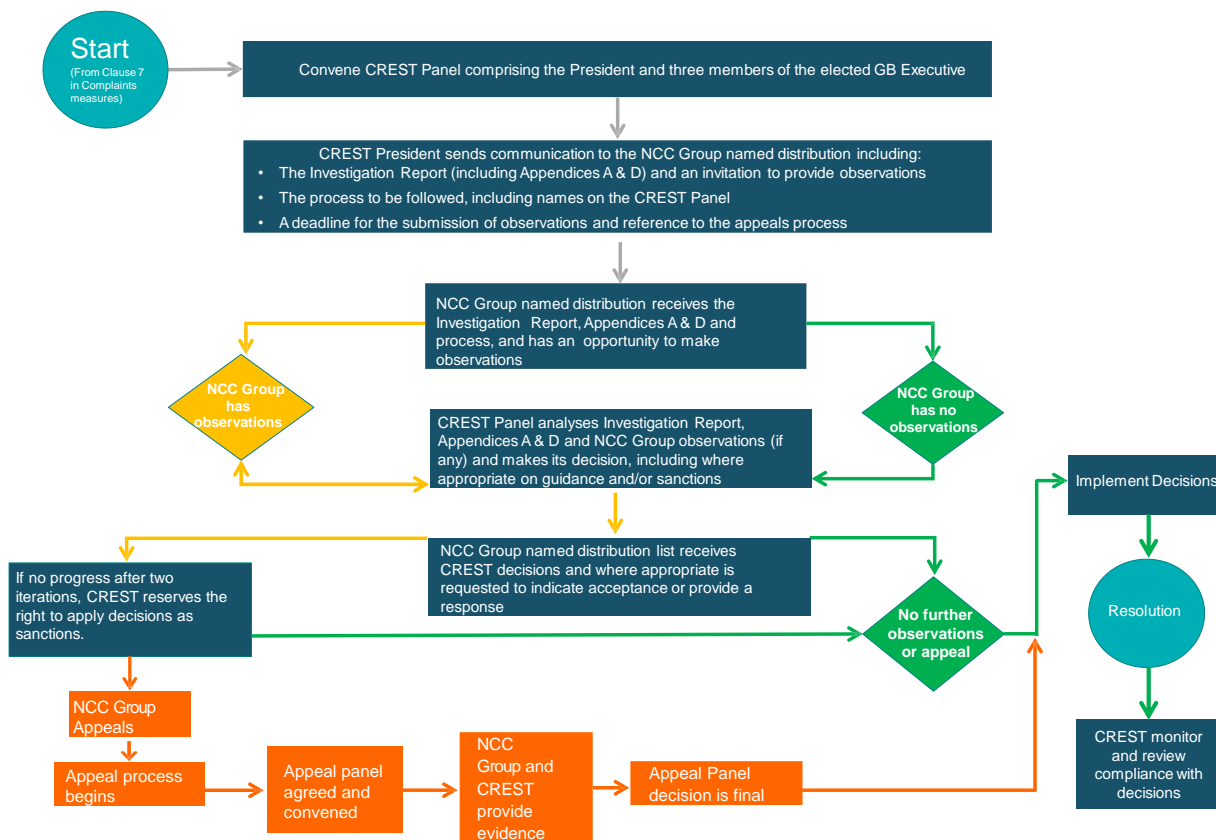
The investigator also tried to contact people who were vocal on social media at the time but without a response.

Nonetheless, the investigator managed to interview 22 people as part of his investigation. CREST is extremely grateful to all those who came forward, in confidence, to assist with the independent inquiry.

CREST is indebted to the independent investigator for producing a detailed and impartial body of work.

5. The CREST Investigation Review Process

The CREST Investigation Review Process began after we received the Report of the Independent Investigator on 24 December 2020. The process, in diagrammatic form below, was designed to allow us to properly assess and act upon the information and findings contained in the investigation report.



The Review Process was adapted from our existing Complaints and Resolution Measures which, while the principles were fit for purpose and remained applicable (e.g. a commitment to confidentiality and fairness), were not specifically designed to deal with the situation created by the anonymous, online depositing of the exam-related material.

The Complaints and Resolution Measures were designed to allow the CREST President to investigate and adjudicate complaints against member companies brought by third party organisations using their services. For instance, in situations where a buyer felt they had received a substandard service from a member company in breach CREST's Codes of Ethics and Conduct.



Under our existing measures, the elected CREST GB Executive is excluded from the investigation and adjudication processes, except when a member company is to be removed from CREST, an individual's CREST qualification is to be revoked, or CREST becomes directly involved in legal action.

When the exam-related material was anonymously posted online in August 2020 members raised concerns with CREST. The CREST GB Executive took responsibility for initiating a full investigation on behalf of members which meant that we became the de facto complainant. As such we could not investigate our own complaint which is why the Executive appointed an independent investigator to carry out this work.

The review process, and accompanying legal procedure, was set up in conjunction with our solicitors. A core component of the process involved the establishment of a CREST Review Panel.

The panel comprised three, elected members of the CREST GB Executive and CREST President Ian Glover. It was vital, given the unprecedented and complex nature of the investigation, that responsibility for assessing the report findings and deciding actions rested with a wider group of people than the CREST President.

The panel was large enough, and sufficiently independent, to ensure a robust, fair and legally-sound mechanism for digesting and evaluating the evidence presented in the report while also being small enough to satisfy our obligations of confidentiality. NCC Group agreed to the process we set up.

Panel members were given access to the investigation information under strict Non-Disclosure Agreements allowing them to properly evaluate the evidence presented in the report so that they could decide on a course of action that culminated in the allegations that were put to NCC Group and the requirements (see Sections 2.1 and 2.2).

The allegations and requirements were tested by our solicitors to ensure alignment with our policies and procedures; to make sure they were commensurate with the findings in the investigation report; and that they were compatible with relevant legislation and case law.

NCC Group accepted the allegations and all six requirements imposed by the Panel. These are outlined in Section 2 of this Statement.

CREST has also determined the actions it needs to take for improvement. These are also outlined in Section 2.



Appendices

Appendix 1: General Timeline

11 August, 2020 - CREST announces that it is aware of content posted on GitHub.

12 August - CREST announces that the CREST Assessors' panel has conducted an initial review of the material.

17 August - CREST announces that a second batch of material was posted online on 15 August. CREST announces the suspension of the CREST Certified Infrastructure Tester (CCT Inf) and CREST Certified Web Application Tester (CCT App) certifications while the examination content is updated.

20 August - CREST announces the appointment of an Independent Investigator to examine the circumstances relating to posting of the material. The CREST (GB) Executive Chair at that time, Mark Turner (NCC group), recuses himself for the duration of the investigation. All NCC Group assessors step away from any activities related to CREST examinations and all NCC Group representatives withdraw from other CREST activities (Advisory Boards, Focus Groups, etc.). CREST also announces that it has appointed legal counsel to advise CREST and to oversee any necessary dialogue with NCC Group, the investigator or any other third parties involved to further ensure independence of the investigation.

3 September - CREST announces that the independent investigator has set up a confidential email address to hear in confidence from anyone who may have relevant information. CREST also announces that it will be working with the NCSC to support its investigation into the leaked material.

10 September - CREST recommenced delivery of the CCT Inf with updated exam content. Candidates taking CCT Inf exams from September 2020 sat totally different exams to the ones that candidates would have sat prior to lockdown in March. CREST reminds members about the independent investigator's confidential email address.

19 October - CREST recommenced delivery of the CCT App with updated exam content. Candidates taking CCT App exams from October 2020 sat totally different exams to the ones that candidates would have sat prior to lockdown in March.

21 October - CREST updates members that the investigation is ongoing and thanks everyone for their patience. CREST issues another reminder for anyone with information to contact the Investigator's confidential email address.

22 December - CREST updates members that the independent investigation is close to completion. Once completed CREST will begin the process of digesting the report and considering its responses and any actions arising.

24 December - CREST Receives the Report of the Independent Investigator.

January to February, 2021 - CREST takes detailed legal advice on adapting its existing Complaints and Resolution Measures to create a robust and fair Investigation Review Process for evaluating the information and findings in the investigation report. The Review Panel is established and meetings scheduled.



18 February 2021 - CREST updates members that it is assessing the Report of the Independent Investigator and observations on the investigation report made by NCC Group.

February to May - The CREST Review Panel assesses the findings in the investigation report against CREST Codes of Conduct and Ethics and against Non-Disclosure Agreements and in line with legal advice.

10 May – We update members on the review process and role of the Panel. Members are informed that while the Report of the Independent Investigator is confidential and cannot be made public, CREST will issue a detailed statement at the conclusion of the process.

May to August - The CREST Review Panel works through the detailed review process and shares its observations, allegations and requirements with NCC Group.



Appendix 2: The Independent Investigation

CREST appointed independent investigator Adrian Lennox-Lamb on 20 August 2020, just over a week after the initial material was posted, on or around 11 August, and five days after a second batch of documents was posted on 15 August.

Mr Lennox-Lamb is a former Detective Chief Inspector and Senior Investigating Officer in the police, with experience of major crime investigation and anti-corruption. He has more than 12 years' experience of workplace investigations in the public, private and third sectors and has no previous connections within the cyber security community.

CREST additionally appointed legal counsel to advise and to oversee any necessary dialogue with NCC Group, the investigator or any other third parties involved to further ensure the independence and integrity of the investigation.

Investigation methodology and scope

CREST appointed an independent investigator to ensure a thorough and impartial process of evidence gathering.

The investigator received information from 22 people. In addition to interviews, the investigation referenced supporting documentation, relevant legislation, national guidelines and procedures and/or relevant policies.

As part of his inquiries, the investigator setup a confidential email address, which was publicised by CREST and by NCC Group, to encourage people to come forward with information. The investigator was particularly keen to hear from those who took to social media, mostly anonymously, in the immediate aftermath of the publication of the material in August 2020. Five people contacted the Investigator by email.

All those interviewed by the investigator were informed of the investigation process, its boundaries and the need for confidentiality. Interviewees were required to sign off their statements.

The interviews were given in confidence and the independent Investigator agreed to respect those confidences in preparing his final report for CREST.