

ISSO Instructor Certification Program Policy:

1. Applicants must be at least 18 years of age and must have side saddle riding experience.
2. The exam includes a written exam and an oral/practical teaching exam with at least 2 certified instructors serving as examiners on a judging panel. A testing day is composed of:
 - the written test,
 - a discussion with the examiners to determine the applicant's background and experience,
 - a demonstration of saddle fitting
 - the applicant giving an actual lesson to an individual or group.
 - the examiners meet with the applicant individually/privately after the test to give the outcome and comments. Comments should be as helpful as possible, be framed in the positive (i.e., how to improve or what they'd like to have seen – rather than what candidate did NOT do.)
3. Instructors are placed in a level indicating their certified ability to teach:

Level I: New instructor.

Requirements:

- Must pass written exam (80% or higher).
- Demonstrate basic understanding of saddle fitting,
 - On a horse the organizers' provide, have the candidate explain which of 3-4 saddles correctly fits that horse. Have candidate explain why it does or does not fit and what they'd try to "make it usable", or would they flatly refuse to use that saddle with that horse
- Give a first-timer aside lesson to someone who already rides astride, demonstrating:
 - Establishing student's experience and goals for the lesson
 - Candidate checks saddle fit for horse & rider
 - Explanation of correct positioning of the student to be square and level on the saddle
 - Explain safety grip to student
 - Explain to the student the basic differences between riding each gait astride and aside
 - Provide the student with strategies to make SS work for her/him at these gaits
 - Instructor to explain (when appropriate) how right and left lead canters differ and make an informed decision as to whether that rider should be asked to canter left at the first lesson.

Level II: Instructors with prior side-saddle experience, teaching at an intermediate level

Requirements:

- Must pass written exam (80% or higher).
- Be able to demonstrate all of Level I,
- Lessons include more advanced instructions which may include lateral movements, collection, tempo changes, patterns, cavaletti work, single cross rails or jumps, etc. Include in the lesson methods for each to improve/advance in their given discipline and/or add challenges, giving instruction on how-to's aside, whys generally i.e., why s/he would include this exercise in a training routine. We need to HEAR what's going through the instructor's mind. For example – why set up cavaletti for this one, why introduce a shoulder fore to this one, why encourage a student to vary stride length within a gait, why set up this type of jump-gymnastic for this horse/rider?
- Must give a group lesson teaching 3-4 intermediate students or 2 students of differing riding abilities

Level III: Master Instructor - Most experienced side-saddle instructors with knowledge of multiple disciplines and breeds. These instructors should be able to adapt their teaching skills to differing breeds, saddle types, and advanced goals of the rider.

Requirements:

- Must pass written exam (80% or higher).
- Must give a lesson to an advanced student on a horse capable of the advanced movements or cues. Be able to assist student to accomplish aside what they can normally achieve astride (or more!)
- Lesson should not just focus on riding in the side saddle and be able address any problems or issues found with horse or rider attempting more advanced work. Demonstrate ability to help rider explore going beyond their current comfort level in their given discipline while riding aside. Examples may include using the side saddle while accomplishing specific riding goals such as completing reining or western riding patterns, full jump courses, dressage tests, etc.
- Must teach a group lesson with 3-4 riders with different levels of ability.
- Examiners would need to be the equivalent of Level II Instructors with considerable experience, preferably with knowledge of more than one seat/discipline/breed.

4. Written exam using essay questions to truly understand the depth of knowledge of the student.
5. In the future when the program is well established, ISSO may allow video-taped lessons and saddle fitting that could be submitted via DVD or other video format, etc. with proctored written exams and video-conferencing, web ex, Envision protocol, etc. to complete the certification. This will allow for certifications to take place where the applicant may not otherwise be able to travel.

6. Every five years, Instructors shall be required to provide documentation for continuing education e.g., seminars, proof of taking aside lessons themselves, achieving first aid certification or documentation of clinics taught could suffice with satisfactory student reviews every 5 years. Student Reviews of the clinic must be sent directly from the student – direct source – to prevent tampering. Alternatively, they may retest for a higher level.
7. All current ISSO Judge/Instructors must recertify under the new program within the next 4 years, by no later than the end of 2011. Continuing education may not take the place of certification under the new program.
8. For those hoping to take the Instructor's exam but who don't feel ready to do so, ISSO may encourage them to attend ISSO Instructors seminars/workshops to prepare. Prospective candidates may be eligible for a discounted cost for their Instructors' application if the seminars/workshops fell within 2 years of the testing.
9. ISSO shall include educational columns in Aside World to assist future applicants with the basic knowledge required to become a Certified Instructor.
10. ISSO shall plan to offer at least one Seminar and Instructor Certification with the annual meeting in addition to testing at other locations as possible during the year.
11. Certified Instructors shall be held to ISSO Certified Instructor's Code of Conduct.