



Instructors' Newsletter

October 2013 edition

2013-2015 Advanced Exam schedule

		Exam Time	Closing Date for Exam Entries
2013			
Fri	6 Dec	19.00hrs	14 Nov 2013
2014			
Thur	30 Jan	19.00hrs	8 Jan 2014
Sat	1 Mar	14.00hrs	7 Feb 2014
Fri	2 May	19.00hrs	10 April 2014
Tues	1 July	19.00hrs	9 June 2014
Wed	20 Aug	19.00hrs	29 July 2014
Sun	12 Oct	10.00 (Convention)	19 Sept 2014
Mon	8 Dec	19.00hrs	14 Nov 2014
2015			
Thur	29 Jan	19.00hrs	7 Jan 2015
Sat	7 Mar	14.00hrs	13 Feb 2015
Fri	1 May	19.00hrs	11 April 2015
Tues	30 June	19.00hrs	9 June 2015
Wed	19 Aug	19.00hrs	29 July 2015
Sun	11 Oct	10.00 (Convention)	18 Sept 2015
Mon	7 Dec	19.00hrs	16 Nov 2015

Any queries? Please contact Exams Department on 01234 832700 or e-mail exams@rsgb.org.uk

Please also remember the lead time for Foundation and Intermediate examinations. It is 2 weeks (10 clear working days).

The aim is to get papers delivered in time for a non-delivery to be queried and resolved. If your papers have not arrived 7 days before the exam please email exams@rsgb.org.uk or ring 01234 832 717.



Optical marking

Optical marking commenced on 30 July 2013 and for a whole new computer system it went remarkably well! Tutors, invigilators and club exam officers are warmly thanked for their co-operation in a relatively complex change.

The Conduct of Examinations booklet has been amended to incorporate optical marking and is identified as Second Edition 2013. It is critical that Trainers and Invigilators understand the revised rules in order that candidates are well prepared and that proper procedures are followed. The updated booklet is available on the RCF/RCE/Exams website at <http://www.commsfoundation.org/rce/exams/conduct.html>

Reminders

Some clubs have been locally marking using the answers on the examination paper. This is NOT correct. The OMS is the only indication of the candidate's answers. Answers selected on the question paper are not relevant and will NOT be used for official results.

It has been noted that the continued provision of tick boxes on the examination paper could lead candidates, and Invigilators, to believe that these must be used. These tick boxes will therefore be removed in the future.

One candidate has already been advised of a pass by the Invigilator, who had marked the exam paper answers, but due to a different answer being selected on the OMS the formal result was a fail. As there is no way of knowing whether the difference was a change of mind, or a transcription error, the OMS results stands.

Two candidates had changed their inked-in answers; that is also automatically a wrong answer; as noted in the rules, once the answer is inked-in, it cannot be changed.

One exam centre chose to put the ticks and crosses on the OMS. The paper was rejected by the optical marking system and required manual marking. This resulted in a delay uploading the results to Ofcom.

Recording an answer on the examination paper is optional; it serves only as a reminder of the chosen answer. Similarly pencilled shading on the OMS is a reminder and should be re-checked by the candidate before they ink it in. Any other pencil shading on that line must be erased to ensure that there is only one answer selected.

Not all candidates had signed their papers. Signing the examination paper and the OMS must be done at the outset as part of the candidate identity check.

Results will be uploaded to Ofcom six days after receipt of completed examination papers at Bedford. This will allow candidates time to appeal, and/or time for the Examination Committee to consider any reports of irregular conduct.

Once the packet has been opened candidates must not remove written material from the exam room for security reasons.

Ending the examination

It is important that exam papers and OMS are sealed in the inner envelope before candidates are called back in to receive their indicative results. Any evidence that this procedure was not followed will be queried and that will introduce a delay in uploading results until a satisfactory explanation has been received. It is possible that the examination could be invalidated.



A summary bullet point list on the end of exam procedure is below. It does not replace the rules in the Conduct booklet.

- Collect all examination papers and place in the inner brown return envelope. You must not refer to them for local marking.
- Collect all the OM Sheets and place them face down ready for indicative marking.
- Candidates leave the room.
- Using the OMS, Answer Sheet and Feedback sheet record the mark for each question on the Feedback Sheet for each candidate.
- Show the total mark and indicative result (Pass/Fail) on the Feedback Sheet.
- Recheck those results within 2 marks of the Pass/Fail Boundary.
- Place the OM sheets and Answer Sheets in the inner brown envelope and seal, with the signed sealing slip over the flap.
Do NOT place anything else in the brown envelope.
- Re-admit candidates and give out indicative results (individually if necessary).
- Record any queries and complaints on the Irregularity page of the Examination Booklet.
- Remind candidates that results letters will be sent out 6 days after receipt at HQ and will provide the candidate number required for obtaining call signs on Ofcom's website. This information will not be provided over the phone by the RSGB Exams Office.
- Place the RAS, Examination Booklet and inner brown envelope in the outer plastic envelope, seal and post within 24 hours.

For Advanced exams both the examination papers and OM sheets are sealed in front of the remaining candidates before they leave the room. There is no local marking..

Sitting more than one examination on a single occasion

The facility exists for candidates to sit more than one of the examinations on one occasion, as long as the practical assessment(s) for those examinations have been completed.

An occasion is a period no longer than 2 consecutive days

Procedure

1. The candidate must specify in advance which combination of exams they wish to take on that occasion - Foundation and Intermediate only, Intermediate and Advanced only or all three.
2. The Foundation and Intermediate papers will be indicatively marked after each exam and an indicative pass will normally be required before the candidate is allowed to sit the next level. However, if indicative marking suggests that a candidate has failed by a single mark and/or, in the judgement of the invigilator, a challenge may be forthcoming that might affect the result, a candidate may be allowed to site the subsequent paper(s). If this occurs, the higher paper(s) will not be marked unless the lower paper is adjudged to have been passed.
3. All the papers will be sent to HQ for Optical Marking as normal. If a lower paper that has been indicatively marked as a pass is subsequently found to be a fail, then the higher paper(s) will not be marked.



- 4. There will be no refund of fees if the full set of papers specified by the candidate in 1 above cannot be taken on the specified days(s) for any reason.
- 5. The total fees charged will be discounted by 25 percent as below.

Exam Combinations	Full fees	Discounted Fee
Foundation and Intermediate	£60	£45
Intermediate and Advanced	£70	£52
All three	£97.50	£73

Direct Entry to the Advanced Exam

Many students and Trainers have asked why 'competent' candidates cannot go straight to the Advanced examination. This is because the Advanced exam does not cover all of the requirements of the internationally recognised syllabus for the Harmonised Amateur Radio Certificate (HAREC). The HAREC requirements are covered within the three level UK syllabus, hence the need to sit all three exams.

It is possible to develop a single exam that covers all three syllabuses but that would require agreement from Ofcom, a significant amount of development work to ensure appropriate syllabus coverage and a software upgrade for the Examination Management System. That would consume resources that we simply do not have at this time.

Thus far, demand for multiple exams has been low. If the demand for a fast track increases as a result of the fee changes above the RCF and the RSGB will of course review this position.

Syllabus areas needing Examination items

The number of items required is coming down and thanks are due for your sterling efforts.

Foundation

Urgent: 8a5 8a6

Wanted: 2c1 2c8

Intermediate

Urgent: none at present

Wanted: 3g1 4f1 4i2 5a2 7c1

Advanced

Urgent: 2b1 2f1 2g1 2h1 2i1 2j1 4k1 7b1 7c1 7e1 7f1 9e1
10b2

Wanted: 2c1 3k1 4h1 4i1 4q1 7a1 7a2 7b5 7d1 8a1
9a1 9a2 9a4 9b1 9c1 9f1 10a1 10c1



Where items are shown as urgent then up to three items per syllabus topic will be acceptable from any one author. Otherwise two will be sufficient to allow a range of authors and styles. Please do not simply change a distractor to make a different item; items on the same topic should seek to examine a different aspect of it.

All authors are warmly thanked for their inputs; it is very much appreciated.

Do please read the guidance notes first.

A £20 RSGB book token is offered for 10 accepted items in requested areas. It is appreciated that not everybody wants payment but the club would benefit from a small stock of books to give to those candidates less able to afford their own.

Accepted items become RSGB/RCF copyright and must not be used for local tutoring please.

Paying for exams online

At the moment, credit card payment needs to be done on a form sent direct to RSGB HQ. This is required to maintain credit card security, but is seen to be cumbersome.

A facility has therefore been set up to allow candidates, and Exam Secretaries, to pay for exams via the internet. The system will be going live soon; it may already be live by the time you read this. Once it goes live, the credit card form will be discontinued.

How will it work? Candidates will still need to arrange an Exam Centre to sit the exam before paying for it; this is not an electronic exam booking service. However, exams will be available from the RSGB Shop website with payment by credit or debit card. Purchasers will be able to select which exam they require. A reference number will be provided which the Exam Secretary will need to process the Request for Exam Papers. Exam Secretaries will be able to make 'multiple' purchases if they wish to pay for a whole sitting on-line.

Candidates and Exam Secretaries may still pay by cheque or postal order; there is no compulsion to use the on-line system.

Train the Trainers

It had been planned to have the revised Train the Trainers courses available by now but this has not been possible. The review of the old course has been completed but new material has not yet been produced. An announcement will be made on the Tutors' Yahoo Group when things have progressed.

Training guidance

Whilst many of us have been delivering training and assessments for some time and know the ropes, we do have a steady stream of new Trainers joining. It was recognised a while back that there was no formal guidance on the end-to-end training process, from recognising a requirement for training, to organising a course, registering as an assessor, assessing candidates and preparing them for the examination.

The RSGB Training and Education Committee has therefore produced a set of guides for each step of that process. By the time you read this Newsletter they should be available via the 'Guidance for Trainers' page of the RSGB at www.rsgb.org/trainerguide

Student of the Year Award

The RSGB Board have approved a new award to recognise outstanding achievement in amateur radio training.

Each year the winner will be presented with the RSGB Wessex Centenary Trophy at the RSGB Convention starting in October 2014. The trophy will be held for one year. The winner will also receive a copy of the RSGB Radiocommunications Handbook.



Further details will be published in 2014 but in essence, Trainers and RSGB Affiliated Clubs will be asked to nominate their 'star pupil' from the period 1 August 2013 to 31 July 2014 using a specific nomination form. Nominations will be judged against a set of criteria that recognise a range of characteristics and will not simply be 'who scored top marks'.

This award has been sponsored by the Wessex Contest Group ARS, M0WCB.

Search for young amateurs

The RSGB Training and Education Committee is trying to make a promotional video aimed at young people, defined broadly as those in full time education, but mainly those in their teens/early 20s. The video working group is keen to establish a 'focus group' of young folk who can contribute ideas and discuss what looks good/bad from their perspective.

We are not necessarily looking for young folk to feature in the video, but suitable volunteers for that would not be dismissed.

If you know of someone who fits the bill, please ask them to contact Steve Hartley, G0FUW, via tec.chair@rsgb.org.uk.