

Examination announcements

February 2017

Advanced Exam dates

A reminder that Advanced examinations are now available at any time and that applications should be received by the RSGB Examination Department one month in advance of the requested date. The lead time for Foundation and Intermediate examinations remains at two weeks (ten working days).

Practical assessments

A reminder that you can find the requirements for Practical Assessments online:

<http://rsgb.org/main/clubs-training/tutor-resources-2/training-guide/training-assessment-guide/09-practical-assessments/>

Candidates should be given a copy or invited to download it so they are aware of what will be assessed and they can use the Log on the back page to record on-air activity during their training.

Remember that Morse assessors do not need a formal Morse qualification; they just need to be judged competent by the Registered Assessor in the same way as for other practical assessments. The strict accuracy of transcription, sending or receiving, has been relaxed to require only that the message is properly understood.

Calculators

There is no set calculator for examinations. The requirement is in clause 3.1 of The Conduct of Amateur Radio Examinations which is available online:

<https://thersgb.org/services/education/downloads/pdf/conduct-of-examination.pdf>
~~3.1 Silent, battery powered, non-programmable calculators are permitted. The invigilators may provide spares but are not required to do so.~~

The Examination Group (EG) has received a number of enquiries regarding the acceptability of specific calculators, often too late to identify and assess the device prior to the examination concerned.

The decision on this rests with the lead invigilator and candidates should be advised to bring their calculator to training and/or practical assessment sessions if they have any concerns so they can avoid rejection on the day of the examination.

To assist invigilators the full guidance provided by the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) is shown in Appendix 1 at the back of this newsletter.

The RSGB Training and Education Committee (TEC) has identified the Casio FX83 as suitable for training and examination at all three levels. The FX85 is functionally similar but has a photovoltaic power cell. Nonetheless candidates should ensure the battery has adequate power.

Challenges and appeals

Candidates and Examination Centres are encouraged to challenge any question believed unfair and to report any matters such as typographical errors or wrongly reproduced symbols, super or subscripts.

The process of 'challenging' a question is via the Irregularities page of the Examination Booklet EX306. That booklet goes in the outer envelope, not the inner one containing the question papers and optical mark sheets. That is deliberate so comments can still be recorded on the EX306 once candidates have been re-admitted to the room.

Alternatively a subsequent email is allowable - this must be done as soon as possible after the examination sitting since after five working days it is likely that the marking and uploading processes will have overtaken the relevance of any comments.

Those comments are sent to the Examination Group within a working day of arrival at HQ and distributed to all EG members. Their replies are collated; any differences of view considered and a draft reply produced for group approval. Obviously that can take a few days. In those circumstances affected results could be delayed. In practice there is seldom a delay and Carol is very good at keeping EG members on their toes.

Occasionally correspondence on a matter has been received from several members of the club. These often differ and may conflict with each other which can only delay any considered response from the Examination Group. It would help greatly if the club could coordinate views from their members.

To avoid parallel correspondence to several club/Exam Centre members the RSGB Exams Department normally only replies to the centre/club Examination Secretary. That may not always be the person who started the correspondence.

It should be noted that the invigilators need not be amateurs and may not be known to HQ other than by name. Under those circumstances the only person HQ can communicate with is the registered Exam Secretary. It is essential therefore that invigilators and tutors advise their Exam Sec that they have challenged a question or other aspect of the examination and that the Exam Sec advises those officers of the subsequent reply.

To complete the communication process the Examination Secretary must advise all concerned in their club including any candidates.

If a candidate contacts HQ about an exam question then the reply is to the candidate. Since that correspondence may involve the candidate's achievements it would be a breach of data protection principles for HQ to include the Exam Centre officers in their reply. If Exam Centre officers wish to know the outcome of a challenge to a question then it is they who should initiate the challenge or otherwise invite the candidate to submit the challenge through the Exam Centre.

If the reply to a challenged question does not satisfy the Exam Centre or candidates then that reply may be appealed. The full details are in The Handling of Irregularities and Appeals, available online:

<https://thersgb.org/services/education/downloads/pdf/irregularities-and-appeals.pdf>

A fee is payable, currently £40, which is returned if the appeal is successful¹.

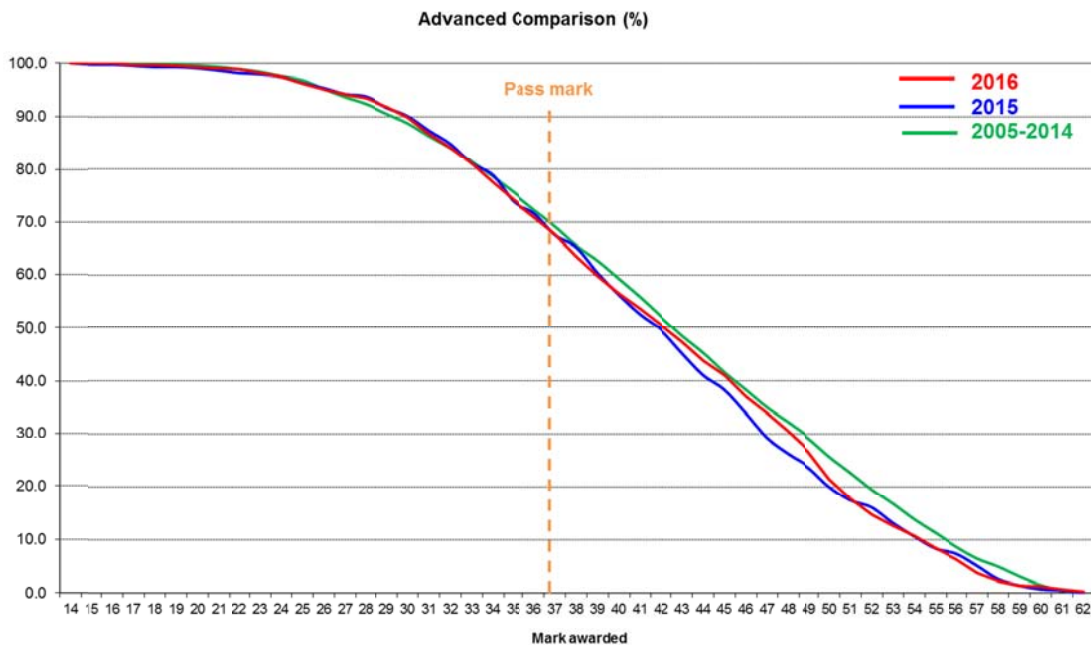
Appeals on examination questions are covered by section 5 of 'Handling'.

¹ Note. Refunds on questions and irregularities are different. A refund on a question hinges on the decision on the question concerned. A refund on an irregularity appeal hinges on whether a procedural error was committed in investigating it, not the outcome of any re-consideration of the irregularity.

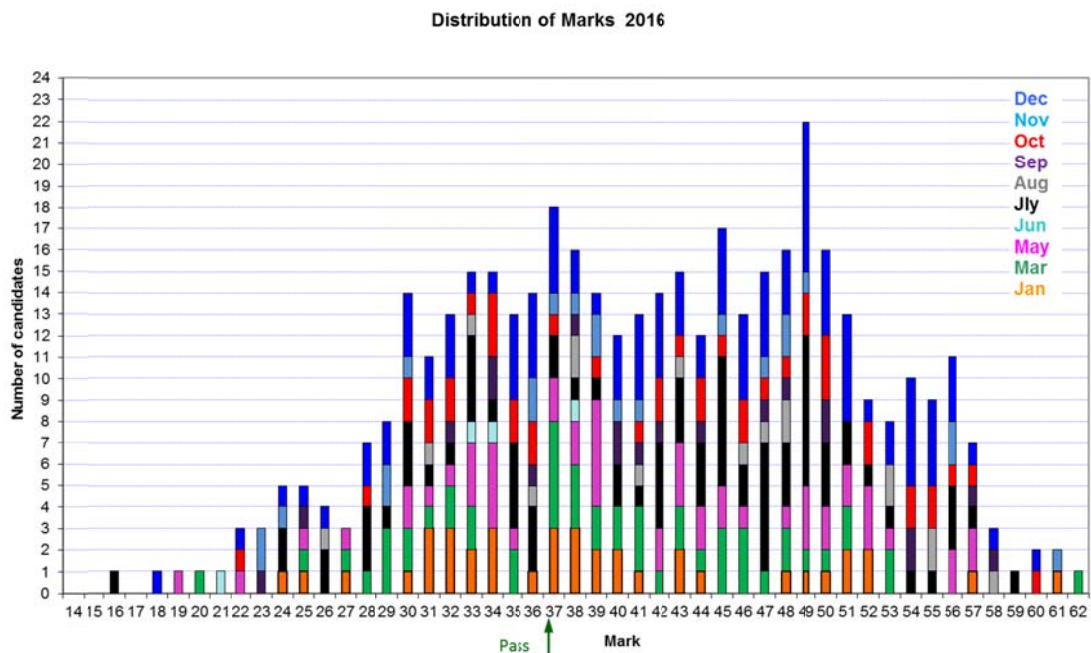
Feedback on examinations in 2016

Some provisional details of Advanced examinations in 2016 are available.

The graph immediately below is a cumulative frequency graph with the mark achieved along the X-axis (horizontal) and the percentage of candidates getting at least that score on the Y-axis (vertical). You can see that in 2016 everybody got at least 15 marks out of 62 and almost 70% passed. The results for 2015 are shown in blue and the average for 2005 to 2014 in green.



The spread of marks is shown below, this time with the actual number of candidates attaining each mark. With relatively few candidates it is too rough to compare one year with another but it does show that there are quite a number of candidates entering the exam well before they are ready.



A fuller report will be made when the details are available.



Reading examination questions

There are standard conventions in setting examination questions which candidates should be familiar with. A key one is don't add any assumptions or 'what ifs' to the question; answer only what is asked. It is also necessary to read carefully. One technique, if the question is on paper, is to underline all the significant words. It does change the way you read it so you are less likely to overlook a piece of information.

For example if a question says 'A good transceiver is being used to...' then the word 'good' is significant. You are being told it is working as intended. Any problem posed by the question is not due to the transceiver. If you are told that it is 'old' then it is most likely out of calibration. At the very least you can regard it as potentially suspect.

Similarly if you are invited to compare two items, say a multi-meter and an oscilloscope but are not given any other information, then their age and state of calibration are not relevant to the question asked, you must make your choice only on the nature of their operation. To assume one is newer than the other could affect your choice and you must resist any temptation to include such thoughts. If one was indeed much newer the question would have said so.

Syllabus areas needing examination items

The number of items required continues to fall thanks to your sterling efforts. Some items are still short and submission of draft items to exams@rsgb.org.uk is very much appreciated. There is a £20 RSGB book token for ten accepted items. If you don't want this personally, the club may like a small stock of training books for those unable to afford their own. Do please read the guidance notes first:

<https://thersgb.org/services/education/downloads/pdf/guidance-notes-on-writing-examination-questions.pdf>

Foundation

One more each in 2c6 8a5 8a6 8d1 9a6 9b1 please.

Intermediate

One in 10b1 please.

Advanced

Wanted: 2a1 2b1 2c1 2d1 2f1 2g1 2h1 2i1 2j1 3e2 3e3 3e5 3g1 3g2 3g3 3h2 3j3
3k1 3l1 3m1 3p1 3p2 3p3 4d1 4e1 4f1 4f3 4h1 4h2 4h4 4h5 4h6 4i1 4j1
4j2 4j3 4l1 4p1 4q1 4r1 5c1 5c2 5d2 5d3 7a1 7a2 7a3 7a5 7b1 7b3 7b4
7b5 7c1 7d1 7e1 7f1 8a1 8b1 8d1 8e1 9a1 9a2 9a3 9a4 9b1 9c1 9d1
9e1 9f1 10a1 10c1 10d1 10e1.

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

Appendix 1.

Joint Council for Qualifications requirements for calculators.

Taken from Instructions for Conducting Examinations 2016-2017.

<http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/ice---instructions-for-conducting-examinations/instructions-for-conducting-examinations-2016-2017>

3. Using calculators

Candidates may use a calculator in an examination unless prohibited by the awarding body's specification. Where the use of a calculator is allowed, candidates are responsible for making sure that their calculators meet the awarding bodies' regulations.

The instructions set out in this section apply to all examinations unless stated otherwise in an awarding body's specification.

Candidates must be told these regulations beforehand and be familiar with the Information for candidates documents.

Calculators must be:

- o of a size suitable for use on the desk;
- o either battery or solar powered;
- o free of lids, cases and covers which have printed instructions or formulas.

Calculators must not:

- be designed or adapted to offer any of these facilities: -
 - o language translators;
 - o symbolic algebra manipulation;
 - o symbolic differentiation or integration;
 - o communication with other machines or the internet;

The candidate is responsible for the following:

- o the calculator's power supply;
- o the calculator's working condition;
- o clearing anything stored in the calculator.

- be borrowed from another candidate during an examination for any reason;*
- have retrievable information stored in them - this includes:
 - o databanks;
 - o dictionaries;
 - o mathematical formulas;
 - o text.

Advice:* An invigilator may give a candidate a replacement calculator.

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Note:

The RSGB as the Awarding Body state in The Conduct of Amateur Radio Examinations:

“3.1 Silent, battery powered, non-programmable calculators are permitted. The Invigilators may provide spares but are not required to do so.”

The purpose of the requirement is to avoid candidates gaining an unfair advantage by using calculators programmed or pre-programmed with information, formulae or shortcuts that are not available to other candidates.