



Instructors' Newsletter

October 2012 edition

2012-2014 Exam Schedule

		Exam Time	Closing Date for Exam Entries
2012			
Wed	Dec 5 th	19.00hrs	13 th November 2012
2013			
Wed	Jan 30 th	19.00hrs	8 th Jan 2013
Sat	Mar 2 nd	14.00hrs	8 th Feb 2013
Thu	May 2 nd	19.00hrs	10 th April 2013
Mon	July 1 st	19.00hrs	7 th June 2013
Tue	Aug 20 th	19.00hrs	29 th July 2013
Sun	Oct 13 th	Convention	20 th Sept 2013
Fri	Dec 6 th	19.00hrs	14 th Nov 2013
2014			
Thu	Jan 30 th	19.00hrs	8 th Jan 2014
Sat	Mar 1st	14.00hrs	7 th Feb 2014
Fri	May 2 nd	19.00hrs	10 th April 2014
Tue	July 1 st	19.00hrs	9 th June 2014
Wed	Aug 20 th	19.00hrs	29 th July 2014
Sun	Oct 12 th	Convention	19 th Sept 2014
Mon	Dec 8th	19.00hrs	14 th Nov 2014

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 832717.

Air Cadet Organisation

Readers will know the Air Cadet Organisation now administer their own Foundation examinations which mirror ours.

10 Cadets passed their Foundation at RAF Halton earlier this year.



Training and Education Committee

Since the appointment of Steve Hartley, G0FUW, as the Training & Education Committee Chair he has recruited some thirty amateurs to help out with the various projects that need to be progressed. This team has been assigned to six Working Groups, each looking at a specific project. There have been no physical meetings of the Committee as most of the work is being carried out remotely using e-mail and Yahoo Group collaborations. Some of the Working Groups have met using Skype. Progress with each of the projects is reported on below.

The T&E Committee Chair gave a joint presentation at the RSGB Convention with Richard Ferguson, M0RBF, from the RCF's Exam Committee. This proved to be a very popular and lively session with good updates from each of the speakers and some great ideas coming from the trainers and students in the audience. The slideshow and notes from that gathering will be available on the Tutors' website very soon.

Trainers' Guide

An RSGB guide to delivering radio amateur training and assessments is nearing completion. Together with the RCF's Conduct of Examinations Booklet the guide will provide end-to-end coverage of what must be done in terms of registering students, covering the syllabus, arranging and carrying out assessments, booking and conducting exams. It is hoped to have that available before the end of the year.

Train the Trainers

Delivery of the Train the Trainers courses was suspended to allow the new T&E Committee to review the content, support material and delivery of the course. The initial review concluded that whilst the course had been popular, the content had drifted away from its original aims. It was decided that a 'root and branch' review should take place to restate the aims and objectives and to ensure that the revised material would deliver against the objectives. The Working Group for this project comprises a number of experienced radio amateur trainers and training professionals. This review is on-going and it is hoped to have the revised course available by March 2013. If anyone needs specific assistance before then, they should contact the T&E Committee Chair.

Workshops on Writing Items for the Examinations

As has been reported previously, the examination item banks for all three levels of Radio Amateur Examination are in need of more content ('items' are often referred to as 'questions', but as many do not pose a question, they are called 'items'). The RCF is currently coaching a small team of item writers and they are targeting the areas of most need. However, there is a need for more input so the T&E Committee is attempting to work with the RCF to arrange a number of Item Writing Workshops throughout the country. The basic idea is that Trainers can come along and have a go at writing some items, receive feedback and have another go after the workshops. We hope that Clubs will host these events to keep costs down. It is intended to start rolling them out early in the New Year, but the Working Group are at a fairly early stage with this so please be patient.

Promotional Video

If you are not already aware, there is an RSGB promotional video on YouTube. This was made some years ago and, whilst a few references and hairstyles are a bit dated, it is still useful to show absolute beginners what amateur radio is about. The T&E Committee has been looking to update this video but the current feedback is that it has had its day and we should start again. The Working Group is headed by a professional in this media and he is exploring the idea of having a number of short videos tailored for different audiences. This is clearly not a quick fix but we will keep you updated as work progresses.



Training Resources

One of the Working Groups is looking to collate a 'catalogue' of amateur radio training resources including PowerPoint slideshows, YouTube videos, articles, books, construction projects, etc. Once the current resources have been mapped the Group will set out proposals to fill gaps between what is available and what should be available. Any input to what you feel should be available, and any good sources that you currently use would be helpful. Details to the T&E Chair please.

Website Revision

As you will no doubt be aware, the whole RSGB website is undergoing a major reworking. One of the big changes will be the ability for Committees to make changes to their own pages; currently everything has to go through a single person in HQ. The Working Group are in the process of mapping across the current content and will be looking to improve access to the resources mentioned above using the new web pages. The Beta version of the new website is due any day now with a plan to have the final version launch early in the New Year. If there are any volunteers that would like to assist in the 'hands-on' crafting of the new material, please contact the T&E Chair, or RSGB Board Alan Messenger, GOTLK.

Younger Candidates

The lower age limit of 14 to hold a licence was removed when the Novice licence was introduced in 1991. Nonetheless tutors should consider whether a prospective candidate will be able to pass the exam in the normal way.

Decimals are introduced in school some time after the concept of fractions and examination questions do assume recognition of $\frac{1}{2}$ as 0.5 and $\frac{1}{4}$ as 0.25. Ofcom (pre-RCF days) had been approached by a parent asking that only integer numbers are used but since the licence schedule uses decimals an understanding of them is required. Similarly whilst appropriate teachers do review exam questions for the use of language and expected reading age it is also assumed candidates will be able to cope with the language used.

A reader, for example, is only granted following a proper professional assessment and would not be approved simply because the candidate was of tender years.

Tutors should be realistic when accepting candidates on courses and entering them for examinations. A local assessment and gentle guidance that more study is advisable is much better than entering them only to get a fail result. That is a waste of money and self-esteem.

A reminder on identifying younger candidates.

Many will have their own passport but those who do not should present their Candidates' Practical Assessment Record (CPAR) and some other official document such as a school ID card, school bus pass etc.

Candidates with Disabilities

Earlier newsletters advised that candidates with Special Needs needed to see their health or educational professional to obtain advice on what arrangements are required to ensure the examination is as available to them as anybody else.

There are now standard letters detailing the procedures, one aimed at clubs and examination centres and the other for the candidate to pass to their GP or school/college. Those letters explain what the practical assessments entail and the format of the examination, making the key point that we do not want a statement of disability but advice on how to best examine the candidate.

Those letters are available from the RSGB Examination Department. Email exams@rsgb.org.uk, tel. 01234 832717.



Revised CRB policy

The RSGB has revised its policy on CRB checks. As trainers are no longer registered with the RSGB, unless they are also Registered Assessors, the policy of CRB checking every trainer has ceased. The Society has taken legal advice on this change and the Board is content that it is a proportionate response to the statutory requirements.

The onus is now on the training provider, usually a Club, to carry out a risk assessment to see if their trainer meets the requirements for CRB checking. If the trainer does require checking and is an RSGB member, the Society will arrange and pay for the check. If the trainer is not an RSGB member the training provider is now responsible for arranging and paying for the check.

To aid this process, a risk assessment 'flow chart' and template will be provided shortly.

The RSGB's Child Protection Policy has been updated to reflect this change.

Assessing Practical Tasks

Each club/exam centre needs at least one Registered Assessor (RA). That role used to be called the Lead Instructor, a legacy from Novice days. The November 2010 newsletter advised the change to Registered Assessor which much better reflects the role carried out for the RCF examinations.

Registered Assessors must be qualified to one level above that for which they assess and be 18 or over. Application for registration is made to the RSGB Examination Department who act on behalf of the RCF. Details at <http://www.rsgb.org/tutors/general/newinstructor.php>

Individual items on the Candidate Practical Assessment Record (Record of Achievement) may be assessed by anybody the RA nominates, but the RA must be satisfied the task has been correctly performed and signs the bottom of the candidates form and Instructors Practical Assessment Record Form (IPARS) to that effect.

The only caveat to that is that the Morse assessor must hold a certificate of some kind at not less than 5wpm. Service, maritime and Post Office qualifications are fine.

On-air activities, including the SWR exercise must be supervised by a Full licensee to comply with the licence. An Intermediate Registered Assessor or an (ordinary) assessor can assess but not supervise.

Construction Projects for Intermediate Assessments

Trainers will be aware of the need for Intermediate candidates to complete a 'radio-related' project. Some suggestions are included in the syllabus item and further explanation is given in the text book. Anecdotal evidence suggests that projects like 'flashing Christmas tree lights' have been used. This seems to be stretching the 'radio-related' requirement a little too far. To help Trainers approve/reject appropriate projects the T&E Committee Chair has asked for Trainers to post reports on successful projects used in the Trainers' Yahoo Group files section. A template is available to help structure the report, which will include costs and sourcing details. There are some already in the files and Trainers are encouraged to add more.

Those that subscribe to the Yahoo Group will have seen a discussion about the Intermediate project, specifically whether it is required to work. The syllabus is silent on this but it will be discussed at the next joint meeting of the RCF Exam Committee and the RSGB T&E Committee. Further guidance will then be published.



Licence Items in the Exam

Candidates are frequently confusing the requirements of the licence with the guidance on ethical behaviour. The most common example is the requirement to “not cause Undue Interference to any wireless telegraphy”. Clause 7(3).

A CD player or similar device that does not use any form of RF communication is not covered by that requirement. Nonetheless ethical behaviour dictates it should be included. Where there is potential for confusion the fact that it is a question on the terms of the licence should be clear and a list which includes non-RF devices is a wrong answer.

This is also a good opportunity to advise against making assumptions. If “A personal CD player” was an option offered then candidates must guard against thought processes like ‘if it had a radio receiver it would be covered’. As always answer exactly the question asked, don’t add ‘what ifs’!

Call for Examination Questions

The examination items at all three levels have now been transferred to the new software and we can now advise where there are shortages.

A new template is available on the RCF Exams web site at <http://www.commsfoundation.org/rce/exams/>

Scroll down to Question Banks where the links to the questions needed, the template and a writers guide. The guide is due for revision but the key point is that we want your ideas!

There is a £20 book token for a batch of 10 accepted items in areas where there is a stated need. To ensure a variety of items and styles we will only accept three items from any one author for any one syllabus section.

If there is a drawing with the question it is preferred that it is in Scalable Vector Graphics (*.svg) format but do submit your ideas even if they are hand drawn or in another format; we can always redraw it.

Items are wanted in syllabus areas:

Foundation

Urgent: 2c1, 8a5, 8a6
Wanted: 3b4

Intermediate

Urgent:
Wanted: 3g1, 4f1, 4i2, 5a2

Advanced

Urgent: 2b1 2c1 2d1 2e1 2f1 2g1 2h1 2i1 2j1 3k1 4k1 4l1 4q1 7a1
7b1 7c1 7d1 7e1 7f1 9e1 10b2
Wanted: 2a1 3n2 4h1 7a2 7b5 8a1 8d1 9a1 9a2 9a4 9b1 9c1 9f1
10a1 10c1

ANNEX

Mathematics in Amateur Radio Examinations

By the age of 11 years candidates have come to the end of Key Stage 2:

This means:

- Being able to count on and back in 10's or 100's from any two or three digit number.
- Can recognise negative integers when counting back
- Be able to multiply and divide any integer by 10 or 100 then extend to 1000. Round integers to nearest 10, 100 and eventually 1000. Divide decimals by 10 or 100

Fractions, percentages and ratio

- understand unit fractions [for example, one-third or one-eighth] then fractions that are several parts of one whole [for example, two-thirds or five-eighths], locate them on a number line and use them to find fractions of shapes and quantities
- understand simple equivalent fractions and simplify fractions by cancelling common factors; compare and order simple fractions by converting them to fractions with a common denominator, explaining their methods and reasoning
- recognise the equivalence between the decimal and fraction forms of one half, quarters, tenths and hundredths; understand that 'percentage' means the 'number of parts per 100' and that it can be used for comparisons; find percentages of whole number quantities, using a calculator where appropriate
- recognise approximate proportions of a whole and use simple fractions and percentages to describe them, explaining their methods and reasoning
- solve simple problems involving ratio and direct proportion

Decimals

- understand and use decimal notation for tenths and hundredths in context [for example, order amounts of money, round a sum of money to the nearest £, convert a length such as 1.36 metres to centimetres and vice versa]; locate on a number line, and order, a set of numbers or measurements; then recognise thousandths (only in metric measurements)
- round a number with one or two decimal places to the nearest integer or tenth; convert between centimetres and millimetres or metres, then between millimetres and metres, and metres and kilometres, explaining methods and reasoning.

ANNEX

Calculations

Pupils should be taught to:

Number operations and the relationships between them

develop further their understanding of the four number operations and the relationships between them including inverses; use the related vocabulary; choose suitable number operations to solve a given problem, and recognise similar problems to which they apply

- find remainders after division, then express a quotient as a fraction or decimal; round up or down after division, depending on the context
- understand the use of brackets to determine the order of operations; understand why the commutative, associative and distributive laws apply to addition and multiplication and how they can be used to do mental and written calculations more efficiently

Solving numerical problems

- Pupils should be taught to: choose, use and combine any of the four number operations to solve word problems involving numbers in 'real life', money or measures of length, mass, capacity or time, then perimeter and area
- choose and use an appropriate way to calculate and explain their methods and reasoning
- estimate answers by approximating and checking that their results are reasonable by thinking about the context of the problem, and where necessary checking accuracy [for example, by using the inverse operation, by repeating the calculation in a different order]
- recognise, represent and interpret simple number relationships, constructing and using formulae in words then symbols [for example, $c = 15n$ is the cost, in pence, of n articles at 15p each]
- read and plot coordinates in the first quadrant, then in all four quadrants [for example, plot the vertices of a rectangle, or a graph of the multiples of 3.