



# Instructors' Newsletter

## July 2013 edition

### 2013-2014 Advanced Exam Schedule

		Exam Time	Closing Date for Exam Entries
<b>2013</b>			
Tue	20 Aug	19.00	29 July 2013
Sun	13 Oct	10.30 (Convention)	20 Sept 2013
Fri	6 Dec	19.00	14 Nov 2013
<b>2014</b>			
Thurs	30 Jan	19.00	8 Jan 2014
Sat	1 Mar	14.00	7 Feb 2014
Fri	2 May	19.00	10 April 2014
Tues	1 July	19.00hrs	9 June 2014
Wed	20 Aug	19.00	29 July 2014
Sun	12 Oct	10.30 (Convention)	19 Sept 2014
Mon	8 Dec	19.00	14 Nov 2014

Any queries? Please contact Exams Department on 01234 832700 or e-mail [exams@rsgb.org.uk](mailto: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](mailto:exams@rsgb.org.uk) or ring 01234 832717.

### Optical Marking

Optical marking of examinations will commence on 30 July 2013 for Foundation, Intermediate. The Advanced exam on 20th August will be optically marked.

The booklet Conduct of Amateur Radio Examinations has been revised and is being sent out to all examination secretaries. This is an opportunity to check the RSGB Examinations Office have your correct details. The booklet is identified as Second Edition 2013 and is also available on the RCF/new RSGB website.

### Key Points

Candidates will in future have an Examination Paper (question paper), an Optical Mark Sheet, (OMS), and a Reference Data booklet.

The OMS is computer marked and drives the whole automated marking system.



The tick boxes on the Exam Paper have been retained for the convenience of the candidates.

The Optical Mark Sheet contains the candidates 'final' answers that will be used for local marking (at Foundation and Intermediate levels) and optical marking at all levels.

It is acceptable for Candidates to shade their answers on the OMS in pencil and only ink them in when they are satisfied with their answer. Candidates **MUST** show their answer **IN BLACK INK** on the OMS before handing in their work. Once it is inked in it is **NOT** possible to change the answer.

At Foundation and Intermediate level an extra ten minutes has been added to the time allowed for the examination to allow this to be done. The consensus was that there was already adequate time in the Advanced exam.

Pencil marks will **NOT** be accepted and there must be no other marks on the OMS. Shading must be confined inside the printed boxes.

A sample OMS is attached. Trainers are encouraged to use this for any revision question session or mock exams to help prepare candidates for the process in the exam.

At Foundation and Intermediate levels the OMS will be marked locally to provide an indicative mark immediately after the examination. The official result is generated through the optical marking system. Candidates' results will be notified to candidates in writing by the Examinations Department as soon as they have been uploaded to Ofcom.

Any answers on the Examination Paper do not count as answers to the examination questions and will not be marked. Candidates should be advised to take care to mark up the OMS correctly.

Please ensure candidates sign the front page of the Exam Paper and OMS in pen at the very beginning and then place their pen out of the way until required to finally shade in the OMS. Please also advise them to only shade in their answers and make no other marks on the OMS. Such papers are liable to be rejected for manual checking which will delay their marking and results.

## **FAQs**

*Why introduce the new examination system at all?*

The present software is no longer fit for purpose. The new software manages the entire examination system, introduces many other time saving processes and simplifies the administration as well as getting rid of Tally sheets. Optical marking is a critical part of this new system.

*What happens if the candidate does not complete the Optical Mark Sheet?*

The invigilator's role is to ensure that does not happen. A reminder must be given at the 10 minute warning and invigilators should patrol the room to ensure candidates do use the OMS. The correct procedure should be covered in the training course.

*Must the tick boxes on the exam paper be completed?*

Not necessarily, but candidates may find it convenient to do so.

*What if a candidate wants to sit two or three papers on the same day, before the formal marks are confirmed?*

The candidate may sit the higher papers booked providing that the Indicative Marking shows a pass in the lower level examination. If a lower paper is failed then the higher paper will not be optically marked. It will not be recorded as a failure but treated as if it had not been sat. If there is any doubt over the indicative marking, eg a disputed answer, then it is permissible to sit the higher one but recognise that it can only be formally marked once a decision is available regarding the lower paper.

*Does this not waste the fee for the higher paper?*

Yes it does but so did the previous approach where the lower exam was marked locally. That is a risk the candidate takes when



booking successive exams on the same day.

*Does the method of obtaining a licence change?*

No. The candidate may log on the Ofcom web site as usual using their candidate number and seek to claim their licence or may wait until their formal certificate is received in the post.

*How long will I have to wait to know the result?*

The time taken to mark is unchanged and the formal time is 6 days.

*What will happen if the OMS sheets are lost in the post?*

Actually lost mail is a very rare occurrence and misdirected mail usually arrives after a few days. However as in all cases of unexpected events each incident is decided on its merits. Many Exam Centres use Registered Mail, which tracks the envelope and guarantees next day delivery. There is additional cost but this can be passed on to the Candidates.

*Has the syllabus changed?*

No, but the earlier changes held for the new software are now implemented. The Foundation exam will consist of 26 questions with a pass mark of 19 correct answers. Currently it is 18/25.

The other change, held up until the handling of diagrams was improved, is to Intermediate where more questions will involve a two-stage thinking process. For example a question on two resistors in parallel might give their values and the current in one resistor and ask for the current in the other. That will involve first calculating the potential difference across the first resistor and then using that to calculate the current in the other.

*What about on-line examinations?*

The RCF and RSGB are committed to exploring the possibility of on-line examinations in the future. The new system is modular and is compatible with future on-line examinations.

## **Analogue TV**

Transmissions of analogue TV signals have ceased although there will still be a limited number of analogue TVs in use with set-top boxes. Questions relating to analogue TV effects, EMC and ghosting have been removed from all the question banks. Revised syllabuses have been issued to formally implement this change. There are no additions to the syllabus as digital TV is already covered.

## **Questionable Questions**

With a large number of items in the banks, some of which are quite old it is hardly surprising if the odd item has a typographical or formatting error or is not clearly worded. The transfer to the new exam system has also provided an opportunity for a thorough inspection of the data banks and the amendment of poor items. It is possible, however, that extra errors may occur despite considerable care and checking.

If a candidate reports difficulty with any exam item Invigilators MUST note who and the number of the item on the Irregular Report page of the Examination Booklet. Invigilators should note the item number and what is considered wrong (e.g. no correct answer, not in syllabus, missing diagram, etc). It is important that these are reported, however trivial.

After the exam a report can be made to the RCF Examination Committee, ideally by email, to the RSGB exam office, [exams@rsgb.org.uk](mailto:exams@rsgb.org.uk). That also applies to subsequent complaints by candidates who feel a question was wrong having had an opportunity to think about it after the exam. Do encourage that to happen quickly, partly so the question can be identified



from a less than perfect description and partly so any remedial action can be taken before the results are issued and uploaded to Ofcom. Please don't assume it's too late and do nothing.

## Syllabus Areas Needing Examination Items

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

### Foundation

Urgent: 8a5 8a6  
Wanted: 2c1 2c8 3b4

### Intermediate

Urgent: None at present  
Wanted: 3g1 4f1 4i2 5a2 7c1

### Advanced

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

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

£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.

The RSGB Training & Education Committee will shortly be seeking volunteers to attend Item Writing Workshops. Members of the Committee and members of the RCF Examination Committee will be on hand to help new authors generate new items.