

Ref: RCF exams

16 January 2007

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Dear Bob,

Schedule of Terms between Ofcom and the Radio Communications Foundation, on the conduct of Amateur Radio Examinations

Please find attached an agreed Schedule of Terms dated 16 January 2007, between Ofcom and the Radio Communications Foundation, in connection with the conduct of Amateur radio examinations by the Radio Communications Foundation.

If you agree with the attached Schedule of terms, please sign this letter as indicated below and also the last page of the attached Schedule of Terms and return both to me. I will send you a signed copy when received.

Yours sincerely,

Steve Roper

Signed.....

Date.....18 Jan 2007

Dr Robert Whelan, for
Radio Communications Foundation

Signed.....

Date.....16 JANUARY 2007

Steve Roper, for
Ofcom

16 January 2007

Schedule of Terms between Ofcom and the Radio Communications Foundation, on the conduct of Amateur Radio Examinations

Introduction

A pass in an examination of an agreed standard is required before any radio amateur licence can be issued.

This Schedule sets out the terms under which the Radio Communications Foundation (RCF) agrees to conduct amateur radio examinations and under which Ofcom agrees to recognise a candidate's result in those examinations for the purpose of granting an amateur radio licence.

Background

The RSGB has provided a Foundation level examination service since January 2002. This service was subsequently expanded to include Intermediate level examinations (from January 2003) and Full (Advanced) examinations from January 2004. These services were provided under contract to the Radiocommunications Agency and then Ofcom. Since the contract was terminated on 31 December 2005, the RSGB has provided these services to the amateur radio community on a voluntary basis, recovering costs directly from examination candidates rather than from Ofcom.

The RCF, a registered charity, was set up by the Radio Society of Great Britain (RSGB) for the purpose of supporting amateur radio in the UK. The RCF will assume responsibility for managing the examination system but day to day administrative work will continue to be performed by the RSGB.

Terms of Agreement

Licence and examination structure

Ofcom has a three tier licensing system, Foundation, Intermediate and Full, to which the Foundation, Intermediate and Advanced, Amateur Radio Examinations are aligned.

Syllabus

Under this agreement, control and maintenance of the syllabus will be the responsibility of the RCF and the syllabus will be published on the RCF website. Ofcom and the RCF will agree the standards to be met for each licence class.

Overall Administrative structure

The RCF will appoint a Radio Communications Examination (RCE) Standards Committee responsible for oversight of the management structure and policies of the examinations. An RCE (Examination) Committee, reporting to the Standards Committee, will be responsible for the academic standards and examination performance. The RCF will appoint a Quality Manager to audit the examination process. He/she will report directly to the Chairman of the RCE Standards Committee. Terms of Reference for these committees are shown in the appendices to this Schedule.

RCE Standards Committee

The Standards Committee shall have an independent Chair, appointed by the RCF, and shall comprise representatives from Ofcom, RCF, RSGB, the learned societies (e.g. IET), industry, the examination boards and academic bodies. The Standards Committee shall determine the general policy direction and management structure of the administration of the amateur radio licensing examinations and provide independent verification of the integrity of the examination system. It shall approve the syllabi and confirm the general suitability of the examinations for the award of amateur radio licences. It shall ensure the compatibility of the examinations with the CEPT harmonised arrangements set out in Recommendations T/R 61-01 and T/R61-02 and any other international recommendations applicable to the radio amateur service.

RCE Examination Committee

The Examination Committee shall comprise experts from the examination and academic community, the RSGB, and the amateur radio training scheme. Its role shall be to maintain the examination system, the rules for conduct of examinations and the syllabuses, vet examination questions and determine the adequacy of the Question Banks. It will act as final arbiter of appeals submitted by examination candidates.

RCE Quality Manager

The role of the Quality Manager is to audit the various processes relating to this Schedule to ensure that they are being performed according to the correct procedures and to see that the relevant documentation is drawn up by the appropriate bodies. He will advise on consistency with the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) guidelines, and ensure that there is an up to date quality plan/manual. He/she will report directly to the chair of the Standards Committee.

Accreditation

It is desirable that the RCF seeks accreditation as an awarding body for the amateur radio licence examinations, either directly from the QCA or via a sponsoring examining body recognised by the QCA.

Examination Question Banks

The RCF will hold and maintain the master copy of the current question bank in electronic format as a Microsoft WORD document. The RSGB will hold a secondary master in similar format plus a software copy in a format compatible with the electronic examination paper production system.

The current question banks will remain confidential to the RCF, relevant RSGB staff and the Examination Committee unless it is agreed otherwise. The current question bank is copyright of the RCF. For the avoidance of doubt, copyright in the original question bank transferred from Ofcom to the RSGB/RCF will remain with Ofcom.

Examination Papers

The RCF shall produce examination papers as required by a published examination schedule or on request, as the case may be.

Examination Conduct

The RCF shall publish Rules of Conduct for the examinations and generally in accordance with QCA guidelines and ensure that those standards are adhered to by RSGB administrative staff, examination invigilators and candidates.

The RCF shall maintain a register of examination venues, examination secretaries, invigilators and assessors who will provide examination services and such persons who volunteer to act in that capacity. The RCF shall have the reasonable authority to decline to register or withdraw registration from any person or venue as the circumstances dictate.

The RCF shall ensure that appropriate arrangements be made so that candidates with disability or situations which might inhibit their attendance at a recognised examination centre shall nonetheless be able to take examinations. The RCF shall ensure that disabled candidates shall not be disadvantaged by these arrangements.

Reports

The Standards Committee will publish an Annual Report covering all aspects of performance of examinations performed under this Schedule including the findings of the Examination Committee. This report will be in the public domain and published on the RCF website.

Examination Fees

The RCF may charge each candidate such an examination fee as is determined appropriate for the proper maintenance of the examination system. Such fees shall be set on an equitable and non-discriminatory basis, irrespective of RSGB or other membership.

The RCF shall give not less than 3 months notice of examination fee changes.

Examination Certificates

Examination documents and information, including those in electronic form, shall be adequately secure from forgery or misrepresentation and generally in accordance with QCA guidelines for certificates.

In accordance with a separate Service Level Agreement between Ofcom and the RSGB, the RCF will submit electronically, radio amateur examination data weekly to Ofcom, to enable Ofcom to issue Amateur radio licences.

Termination

If either Ofcom or the RCF consider that the examination regime should be amended, that party will approach the other with its proposals and the parties will work together to agree acceptable changes. The RCF will be free to cease providing examinations, and Ofcom will be free to cease recognising examinations from the RCF, but it is anticipated that both parties will publicise such a decision on their websites and in any other manner that they consider to be appropriate to ensure that prospective candidates are made aware, with sufficient notice, of the changing circumstances and any alternative arrangements for sitting amateur radio examinations.

Appendix 1 Committee Terms of Reference

RCE Standards Committee

Composition of Committee

- a) Chairman appointed by the RCF
- b) Industry members
- c) Educational members
- d) Two lay members (both licensed radio amateurs)
- e) Ofcom
- f) RSGB

Terms of Reference

1. To ensure that the Radio Communications Examinations are run in accordance with the Schedule agreed between Ofcom and the Radio Communications Foundation.
2. To ensure that examinations are consistent with CEPT T/R 61-02 where practicable.
3. To ensure that the syllabus remains relevant and continues to reflect the requirements of a modern amateur radio service whilst ensuring that the examination continues to cover the internationally agreed Amateur Radio syllabus.
4. To examine on a yearly basis the performance of the examination system.
5. To review on behalf of the Trustees of the Radio Communications Foundation the Quality Manager's report and the RCE - Examination Committee's report on the Conduct of Examinations.
6. To publish a report on the RCF website.

Frequency of meetings

The Standards Committee will meet and report to the RCF annually.

Report.

This report shall contain

- assessment of the overall examination performance;
- syllabus revisions;
- assessment of the Examination Committee report;
- assessment of the Quality Managers report;
- summary of any complaints received by the RCE – Examinations Committee;
- recommendations for changes and for further work.

Appendix 2 Committee Terms of Reference

RCE – Examination Committee

Composition of Committee

- a) Chairman appointed by the RCF (The Chairman will also hold the title Chief Examiner).
- b) Committee members should have educational and a radio engineering background, be experienced in the examination process and hold a Full Amateur Radio Licence.
- c) RSGB HQ Senior Examination Administrator (ex-officio).

Terms of Reference

1. To maintain the examination standards according to the requirements for the granting of an amateur radio licence as set out in the Schedule.
2. To set and to review examination pass marks.
3. To review and vet all RCE questions at Foundation, Intermediate and Advanced level.
4. Taking advice from the RSGB RCE Training Sub Group, ensure that the syllabi for all three Radio Communications examinations; Foundation Intermediate and Advanced are consistent with the requirements laid down by the RCE – Standards Committee.
5. Monitor / Audit the administrative procedures of the RSGB Examination Office, ensuring that staff follow agreed procedures when issuing examination papers and that instructors and Examination Test Centres are properly registered.
6. Investigate and rule on any complaints from candidates on the conduct of the examination and contents of the examination papers. Investigations in the first instance will be conducted by the RSGB HQ Senior Examination Administrator and the RSGB Regional Manager for the geographical area in which the examination was held. The decision of the Examination Committee shall be final.
7. Produce an annual report for the RCF – RCE Standards Committee.

This report shall contain

- assessment of the overall examination performance;
- syllabus revisions;
- summary of any complaints received by the RCE – Examinations Committee;
- recommendations for changes and further work.

Frequency of meetings

The Examination Committee will meet 3 – 4 times per year.

Appendix 3 Terms of Reference

RCE Quality Manager

Appointment

Appointed by the RCF.

Reports to the Chairman of the RCE Standards Committee.

Terms of Reference.

1. To audit the various administrative processes of the RCE and to ensure that they are being performed according to the correct published procedures.
2. To ensure that the relevant documentation is drawn up by the appropriate bodies, advising on consistency with QCA guidelines, and ensuring their inclusion of the current copy of relevant documents as annexes to the RCE quality manual.
3. To conduct inspections of examination venues, of examinations in progress and of invigilators. Such inspections to be unannounced.
4. To investigate any reports of non-compliance with procedures.
5. To prepare an annual report to the RCE Standards Committee.

This report shall contain

- assessment of administrative procedures;
- surveillance report containing the results of inspections;
- summary of any complaints received by the RCE – Examinations Committee;
- recommendations for changes and further work.

Appendix 4 Website information

- Ofcom www.ofcom.org.uk
 - Radio Communications Foundation www.commsfoundation.org.uk
 - RSGB www.rsgb.org.uk
 - ERO for CEPT documents <http://www.ero.dk>
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Signed..... 

Date..... 22/1/07

Dr Robert Whelan, for

Radio Communications Foundation

Signed..... 

Date..... 16 January 2007

Steve Roper, for

Ofcom