



# October 2010

## **Moratorium in 2011**

The moratoria held in 2010 were considered both very useful and successful and will continue into 2011 on the same basis, the first two weeks in February and August. The dates are Monday 31 January till Friday 11 February and Monday 1<sup>st</sup> August to Friday 12<sup>th</sup> August. During those dates the examination department will effectively be closed.

Requests for examination papers for any date in February should be received please by Friday 14<sup>th</sup> January. Requests received between then and Friday 11<sup>th</sup> February will be filed in order of receipt and processed in time for examinations from Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> March.

Consideration had been given to moving the February moratorium forward into January but that would also mean the lead time to give 10 clear working days notice would encroach into the Christmas closed period and result in a much longer lead time for some examinations. The moratoria times are flexible within reason, remembering that processing and marking of Advanced examinations is similarly halted and comments are welcome so we can consider arranging the least disruptive dates.

## **Advanced Exam dates in 2011**

Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> February 2011 at 19.00

Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> April 2011 at 19.00

Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> June 2011 at 19.00

Friday 5<sup>th</sup> August 2011 at 19.00

October 2011 on Sunday of RSGB Convention weekend

Monday 5<sup>th</sup> December 2011 at 19.00

The start time has been moved back half an hour to 19.00 following majority preference for that time.

Any queries please contact Exams Department on 01234 832700 or e-mail [rce.dept@rsgb.org.uk](mailto:rce.dept@rsgb.org.uk)

## **Examination Fee rise from 1 January 2010**

The RSGB RCE Department advises that the fees from the three examinations will each rise by £5.00 from 1 January 2011. Foundation will be £27.50, Intermediate £32.50 and Advanced £37.50. Please ensure the correct fees are included with the REP and CATCE forms. We are aware that some instructors may have already collected fees for courses and examinations after 1 January 2011, in these cases there is no need to collect additional

funding from candidates in this instance. However, for the future please be aware that collecting course and examination fees two months prior to the course/examination taking place is not good practice, in general candidates should not be asked to pay for courses or examinations until at least 28 days before the commencement of the course.

## **A Pilot Study of the Assessment of Practical Skills at Foundation and Intermediate levels**

By the time you read this newsletter the pilot of the revised assessment of practical skills will be under way. There is no change to the actual requirements but they are more carefully defined and marked so tutors, assessors and candidates can be confident they are being assessed to the same standards irrespective of where or when the assessment is being carried out.

Participation in the pilot is optional but you are earnestly asked to take part if you are one of those selected.

It is a pilot study, so please do not assume the pilot will be exactly as the final outcome. Its purpose is to trial the proposals and feedback is invited. Only then is it possible to provide a scheme that works and is fair to candidates and assessors.

## **Change of Title**

As recognition of the importance given to establishing common standards of practical assessment it has been agreed jointly by the EC and the ARDC that the person who signs off the candidates' Record of Achievement forms should be registered and named the Registered Assessor, replacing the title of Lead Instructor. The primary purpose of registration is as a record of who may issue and sign off the Record of Achievement forms and the ability to track back to that person particularly when a student moves courses or is examined elsewhere such as the RSGB Convention.

There is NO CHANGE of procedure, role, eligibility or qualification; and, until stocks are exhausted, no change of paperwork either. All that will then happen is the wording change on the forms. Note: form changes resulting from the pilot of the assessment of practical skills are entirely separate and irrelevant in this context.

It is not necessary for the registered assessor to be the leader/organiser of any particular course; that and the use of local titles is an administrative matter for the club concerned. It remains perfectly acceptable for any member of the training team to initial individual line items on the Record of Achievement but the Registered Assessor must be content the tasks have been properly and satisfactorily completed when signing at the bottom.

## **Train the Trainers**

These events are demand led. If you would like to hold a TtT session in your area or at your club please contact Brian Reay G8OSN at [g8osn@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:g8osn@yahoo.co.uk). A calendar of events and available dates is at [www.g8osn.org.uk](http://www.g8osn.org.uk). It will be helpful if you also contact your regional representative who can help with venues and alerting other clubs in the area.

## **Reminder of a Change to Foundation Syllabus in July 2011**

A question on operating etiquette and dealing with abuse will be added to syllabus section 8 and the paper will comprise 26 questions with a pass mark of 19. This change will be implemented from 1 July 2011. The new Specification (the syllabus and supporting material) is available on the RCF RCE web site and linked from the RSGB Tutors pages.

## Mathematical Requirements

At Foundation level the students are required to convert between milli, kilo and Mega (3a.1). Calculations (3b.1 and 3b.3) do not require the use of multiple or sub-multiple units but simple fractions or simple decimal point notation (eg  $\frac{1}{2}$   $\frac{1}{4}$ , 0.5) may be encountered. We are aware that the youngest candidates may not have encountered decimals in their school studies, but the schedule to the licence does use decimal points and it is necessary that those gaining a licence can understand their meaning.

Candidates need to understand the opposing effects of voltage and resistance changes in determining the change of current in a circuit, only then do the various equations make sense. They are ways of describing the relationship from different viewpoints; transposing the equations is simply the mathematical way of moving from one viewpoint to another.

At Intermediate level understanding of or conversion between prefixes ranging from pico to Giga may be encountered (3a.1). Index notation may be used including the concept of negative exponents, eg micro is  $10^{-6}$ . Calculations will normally include the prefixes milli and kilo. Values may be presented as 0.5V or 500mV for example. At Advanced level the full range of prefixes and index notation is used.

A formula sheet is supplied in the Advanced exam. Candidates are expected to understand each formula and be able to transpose to make any quantity the subject of it. This includes formulae containing squares and square roots. Candidates are also expected to be able to add fractions as will be encountered for different resistors in parallel, possibly in a mix of ohms, kilohms and megohms.

A simple statement of the maths required is at page 10 of CEPT ECC T/R 61-02 (HAREC)  
<http://www.erodocdb.dk/Docs/doc98/official/pdf/TR6102.PDF>

Discussion between ARDC and EC revealed that Scientific notation has never been covered in the RSGB Intermediate text book. Steve Hartley, G0FUW, is drafting a suitable change for inclusion in future print runs. The update will be included on the book's 'Extras' web page.

## Special Needs of Candidates with Disabilities

A reminder that all requests for readers or other special needs must be approved by the RCE Department at Bedford before the examination takes place. Advice from the candidates' medical or educational professional will be required so we can make or allow the club to make the appropriate provision. It is not acceptable for the club to ask for a reader, for example, simply because they or the candidate thinks that is what is needed. Appropriate professional advice is required so we can be sure the candidate is receiving a fair examination appropriate to his or her needs.

Clubs are also reminded that this may require a separate room and an additional invigilator. It is also standard examination practice that the reader is not a specialist in the subject being examined and must not be a relative or peer of the candidate.

## Readers

It is very difficult being a reader. Not only might you see a candidate making an error and be unable to intervene but simply being impartial is not that easy.

Looking up information on tables is a tricky area. It is not appropriate or acceptable to look something up requested by the candidate, you are then using your own skills to achieve that and an error on your part will impact on the candidate's results. As a reader your role is simply to read passages identified by the candidate.

Suppose the question is whether the status of the 7MHz band is primary or secondary. The candidate should ask the reader to read down the frequency column, saying stop when the reader reaches the 7MHz row. The reader should then be asked to read across, giving the title of the column and the contents of the relevant cell. This might sound laborious but a moments thought will show this is what we all do and it is the ability to do that correctly that is being tested. This does take time and the rules do provide for that. As noted above it is necessary to have professional advice that a reader is the right solution and this must be done via HQ. It is quite likely that unauthorised assistance will result in the paper being invalidated.

### **Rules of Conduct**

The Conduct of Radio Communication Examinations booklet is being reprinted and the opportunity taken to bring it up to date with the changes in the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) regulations. The key changes are the need for exam premises to be registered and additional guidance for readers.

The Appeals Guide has been similarly updated.

### **Optical Marking Trial**

Some Advanced Invigilators will recall a trial of an optical mark sheet. Out of 3338 questions only one was wrongly marked where the candidate had crossed out rather than rubbed out a changed answer making it much blacker than the new chosen answer. A solution to this problem has been found by looking at the density of all the boxes and clear white space. Dubious marking is thrown out for manual check as might be expected. Overall the error rate was 0.03% which was considered better than manual marking.

It is also worth reporting that another candidate simply ticked the boxes making the paper unmarkable, it was duly rejected for manual attention.