

Countdown to Syllabus 2019

From 1 September 2019, all three levels of radio amateur exams will take place based on Syllabus 2019 that was published in August 2018. Candidates who sat and failed an exam based on the current syllabus will have until 30 November 2019 to resit that exam.

The Syllabus

The Syllabus 2019 specification, which includes the complete syllabus detail, is available on the Syllabus 2019 web page at rsgb.org/syllabus2019. It is a mine of information. Written in more detail than the current syllabus, the aim is to make it easy for candidates, and tutors, to have a clear idea of what is expected and what material will be the subject of a question number. With some questions, there is little room for doubt as to what will be asked.

Number of questions

The number of questions in each of the Foundation and Intermediate papers remains the same, 26 for the Foundation and 46 for the Intermediate. For the Full licence exam, the number of questions is reduced by 4, from 62 to 58. The pass mark percentages remain the same so that a successful candidate will require 19 marks to pass the Foundation (73%), 28 for the Intermediate (61%) and 35 for the Full (60%).

The question banks

The question banks for Syllabus 2019 are nearly complete. These have been, in part, migrated from the existing question banks with necessary adjustments made to reflect the changes in the syllabus. In addition, of course, new questions have been written, as required.

Practical assessments

There are still practical assessments at Foundation and Intermediate levels, with the only major change being that the Morse code assessment is now an option. Candidates may instead choose to do a practical exercise involving a data QSO in RTTY, PSK and others, but not FT8.



Exam candidates taking online exams. Dr Peter Roberts, M7PCR, Dr Nick Crisp, M7NIK, Mobin Malik, M7MYM, Lavanan Vengadasalam, M7ELV and Sabrina Livadiotti, M7SLJ.

Online or paper

The exams may be taken online or in paper format, as at present. Many exam centres have commented how much they prefer the online exams as these are easier to administer and less stressful for students – there's no optical marking sheet to fill in, and the official exam result is discretely shown to each student as soon as the paper is completed.

In the pipeline are plans to shorten the period from sitting an online exam to candidates being able to obtain their licence. Clubs wanting information about hosting online exams should contact the Examinations Department at RSGB HQ via email to exams@rsgb.org.uk.

Remote invigilation of online exams

One of the additional advantages of the online exam is the possibility of remote invigilation. With remote invigilation, candidates do not need to take the exam at an RSGB-registered exam centre but can take the exam at home. This will be of assistance to candidates with mobility issues or where there is no access to a local examination centre. There will be an additional remote invigilation fee. Further information will be announced in a later edition of *RadCom* as well as being announced on the RSGB website.

Online mock exams

Candidates who are enrolled to sit an online exam at any level may, as part of the 'package', sit two online mock examinations. The online mock examination will have its questions derived from the live question bank, ensuring that the mock is an accurate representation of the actual exam.

The RSGB has taken advice regarding the Disability Discrimination Act for candidates who may find working with a computer difficult and will continue to make provision for such candidates, for example by allowing them to have readers.

The proposal for the content of online mock exams has been approved by Ofcom.

Paper mock exams

The paper mock exams are being completely re-vamped to ensure that the questions are compliant with the new syllabus. Downloadable papers will be available on the website in June.

Also available on the RSGB Members' website will be a schedule of mock questions for the Foundation and Intermediate levels of the exam, with a specimen question for every syllabus item.

A similar schedule for the Full licence exam will be available on the RSGB Members' website in August.

Information provided to candidates in exams

This will remain broadly the same as at present with the important exception that, for the Intermediate exam, there will be a formula sheet provided in addition to the Intermediate Licence Parameters schedule from the licence document. All information provided to candidates will be physical pieces of paper as, particularly in the case of the Full exam, searching through an electronic document isn't easy.

Exam Secrets

The *Exam Secrets* book is being revised to include the new syllabus material on software defined radio and digital matters. It will be published shortly. An abridged version of the SDR/digital material will be made available for Members to download from the RSGB website. This can be used in conjunction with the current version of *Exam Secrets* that covers the existing syllabus.

Textbooks

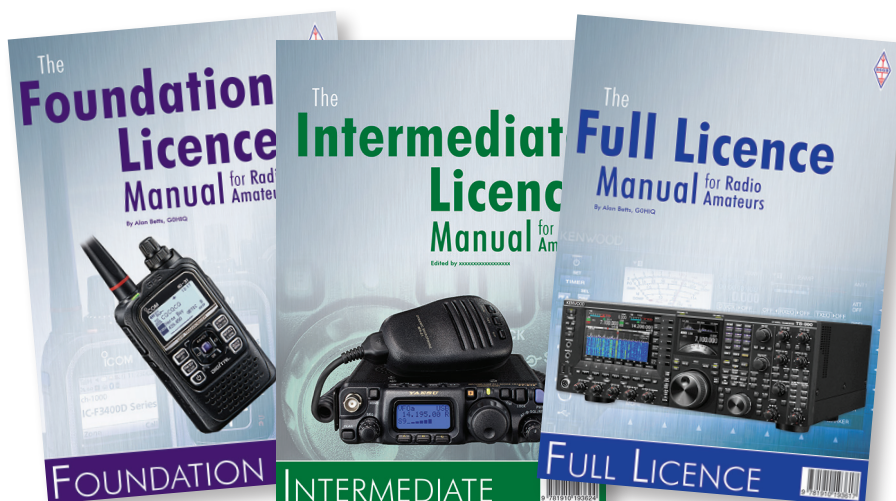
The RSGB textbooks for each of the examination levels are now on sale in the RSGB bookshop. The RSGB online shop clearly marks which books are for exams after 1 September. The RSGB will continue to sell the previous books whilst we are in the overlap period for the current and new syllabus so candidates should take care to ensure that they chose the correct version, particularly if they chose to buy from sources other than the RSGB. The new books for the Syllabus 2019 exams are

- *The Foundation Licence Manual for Radio Amateurs*
- *The Intermediate Licence Manual for Radio Amateurs*
- *The Full Licence Manual for Radio Amateurs*.

The Foundation and Intermediate Manuals are also available in the Kindle eBook format which is available from Amazon. It is important to note that, whilst the textbooks are arguably essential reading for candidates, it is the Syllabus 2019 Specification document that determines what is, and is not, examinable.

The Intermediate exam

The new Intermediate exam is more challenging. Ofcom did not consider that the existing Intermediate was of a sufficient standard to justify the additional licence privileges allowed compared with Foundation. It was also not considered an adequate preparation for candidates wishing to progress to the Full licence. Much has therefore changed in the new Intermediate



The three new Syllabus textbooks available from the RSGB shop, www.rsgb.org/shop.

syllabus, with some of the material being brought down from the former Advanced exam.

Existing Foundation licence holders wishing to sit the new Intermediate exam in September will be doing so without the benefit of the new Foundation syllabus learning as preparation. In order to assist with this, some clubs have prepared a 'bridging pack' for existing Foundation licence holders to study as preparation for the new Intermediate. Thanks to Tony Jones, G7ETW of the Radio Society of Harrow for his selfless work on preparing this material. Links to his work, and those of any other clubs' materials will be published on the public side of the RSGB website.

What's new?

Software Defined Radio (SDR) and Digital are the main new entrants into the syllabus. Very few amateur radio rigs are produced today that do not have an element of SDR contained within their architecture and the way forward is clear. The new syllabus takes the opening strides in ensuring that new licence holders are properly able to appreciate and use the technology at their fingertips and, if they so wish, make their own innovations. This aspect, ie innovation and experimentation, has been one of the main underlying themes of amateur radio since the earliest days of the hobby.

With any new material coming in there is a challenge, as much to the tutor community as well as candidates, if not more. There is new material to learn and other material that is now redundant – at least insofar as teaching is concerned. To assist with this, various ideas were mooted last autumn. Schemes of Work and Lesson Plans were suggested and looked like being a good way forward. Tutors as well as members of the Examinations Standards Committee (ESC)

and the Examinations Group who very kindly joined the Syllabus Implementation Working Group in January this year proposed a better solution, namely, to provide model tutorial slides and notes on the new material and make this available on the public side of the RSGB website.

This material was first presented by Alan Betts, G0HIQ, on 17 March at the Tutors' Day at Jurys Inn, East Midlands airport and again at the Kempton Park rally in April. Over 100 tutors attended these presentations, with the feedback afterwards being overwhelmingly positive.

At its meeting in April 2020, the ESC will review the statistics from the first six months of examinations to ensure that Syllabus 2019 meets its aims of encouraging newcomers to the hobby at Foundation level and progression to Full, and make any adjustments considered necessary.

Aim of the examinations system

The purpose of the examinations system is to ensure that licenced radio amateurs can enjoy their hobby: legally and safely, without causing interference to the public and be good citizens on-air. In addition, that they understand how to get the best out of the hobby at whatever level they chose to operate, and that they have enough information and preparation to progress if they wish. The examinations are subject to quality assessment which is uniform across the United Kingdom to ensure that everyone reaches the same level of attainment.

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