

Report

The Annual Report of the RSGB Examination Standards Committee

May 2024

This report covers the operation of the Amateur Radio Examinations during the calendar year 2023. The ESC meeting held on 9 March 2024 at the Civil Service Club in London reviewed the reports from the various officers and sub-groups and considered a number of matters including the changes to the examination syllabus due the release of the new licence by Ofcom. On the basis of the reports received, it is concluded that as of 31 December 2023, the Amateur Radio Examinations are/were fit for purpose for the issue of UK amateur radio licences.

In 2023 the RSGB Examinations Department (ED) and the Examinations and Syllabus Review Group (ESRG), overseen by the Examinations Standards Committee continued their main task of operating the amateur radio examinations process. The total enrolment on all examinations was 14.2% lower than in 2022. This is smaller than the 28% decrease which occurred between 2021 and 2022, but, nevertheless, concerning for the overall health of the hobby as we are comparing the numbers with 2022, which was believed to be a 'normal' year following the large swings in candidate numbers during the Covid years.

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1. Introduction

The role of the RSGB Examination Standards Committee (ESC) is to ensure the examinations system is fit for purpose so that licensed 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 choose to operate, and that they have enough knowledge and understanding to progress to higher levels if they wish. The ESC assesses the quality of the examinations and makes sure that it is uniform across the United Kingdom so that everyone reaches the same level of attainment. The ESC also ensures that Full level is broadly aligned with HAREC so that UK amateurs can continue to benefit from reciprocal licensing arrangements.

The annual reports of the Examination Standards Committee are published on the RSGB website, <http://rsgb.org/main/about-us/committees/examination-standards-committee/>. Other relevant documents are also available on this website, including the terms of reference of the Examination Standards Committee and the agreement between Ofcom and the RSGB.

The data and analysis presented in this report covers the examination period 1 January to 31 December 2023.

2. Membership of ESC

The terms of reference and constitution of the committee are set down in the Schedule of Terms between Ofcom and RSGB. The membership of the Examination Standards Committee at the time of writing this report is as follows:

Prof. Tony Kent, G8PBH, Chairman
Paul Chapman, Ofcom
Andrew Lenton, G8UUG, Chair of the Examinations and Syllabus Review Group
Dave Wilson, M0OBW, Examinations Quality Manager & Board Liaison
Nigel Barker, M0HZR, Examinations Standards Manager
Adrian Owen, Wg Cdr Rtd, M0NAV, Air Cadet Organisation
Steve Thomas, M1ACB, RSGB General Manager, Exam Dept representative
Prof. Hugh Griffiths, G4CNV, University College London
Dr Julian Gannaway, G3YGF
Murray Niman, G6JYB, BAE Systems AI-Labs
Dr. Donard de Cogan, M0KRK

At the 9th March 2024 meeting, Rebekah Haskayne represented Ofcom in place of Paul Chapman who sent his apologies. Similarly, Alan Betts, G0HIQ, represented Andrew Lenton, G8UUG on behalf of the Examinations and Syllabus Review Group. On behalf of the Air Cadet Organisation Wg Cdr, Rtd, Adrian Owen sent his apologies.

3. Assessment of Overall Examination Performance

The committee received reports on the management and performance of the examination processes from the Examinations and Syllabus Review Group (ESRG), the Examination Quality Assurance Manager and Examination Standards Manager (EQAM&ESM), the RSGB Examination Department (ED) and the Air Cadet Organisation (ACO). These reports and any discussions regarding them are summarised in the sections below.

The Examination Standards Committee is satisfied that the Foundation, Intermediate and Full examination syllabuses effective in 2023 were/are suitable for the award of Amateur Radio licences. Further, the examinations are compatible with the CEPT harmonised arrangements set out in Recommendations T/R 61-01 and T/R 61-02. The committee will continue to review the syllabuses and examinations to ensure compatibility with international and national requirements and to respond to developments relevant to the hobby.

4. Review of the Report from RSGB HQ Examination Department (ED)

4.1 The year in retrospect

The total number of exams administered by the RSGB Examinations Department in 2023 decreased by 14.2% compared to the previous year.

Published timescales for providing papers and results were maintained.

4.2 Exam statistics

Overall, there were a total of 346 fewer candidates across all exam levels in 2023. 146 fewer at Foundation, 118 fewer at Intermediate and 82 fewer at Full level when compared to 2022.

The pass rate has very slightly decreased at Foundation level with both Intermediate and Full showing slightly increased pass rates. A total of 1834 candidates were successful during 2023.

We understand that 95 candidates passed the Air Cadet exam in 2023, with 78 requesting a candidate number from the RSGB for Foundation equivalence. This is an increase from the numbers in 2022 which were 76 candidates that passed and 50 requesting a candidate number.

The cadet figures are NOT included in the statistics below as we only administer the resulting paperwork. The numbers for 2021 and 2022 have been amended to allow fair comparison as cadet figures were previously included in the statistics within these reports. The Foundation chart on pages 3 and the Totals chart on page 4 have also been amended for 2021 and 2022.

Level	2023				2022		2021	
	Candidates vs 2022	Candidates vs 2021	Candidates	Pass Rate	Candidates	Pass Rate	Candidates	Pass Rate
Foundation	-8.86%	-33.74%	1500	85.5%	1646	85.7%	2264	88.6%
Intermediate	-22.10%	-44.53%	416	86.8%	534	84.3%	750	85.0%
Full	-22.10%	-49.65%	289	66.1%	371	64.4%	574	64.9%
Direct to Full			27	44.4%				
Total			2232		2551		3588	

Table 1. Numbers of candidates registered for the exams at each level for 2023 compared with previous two years.

4.3 Trends

Generally, the uptake of exams has dropped again during 2023. This continues the trend of a steady decrease in number of exams over the last three years. There does not appear to be a pattern this year with busier spikes, although the summer does tend to slow down across all levels, the same as previous years.

The historical trends are shown in Figure 1. Looking at the number of exam candidates, 2023 saw a decrease in the number of candidates compared to 2022 at all levels. The Foundation numbers in 2023 are close to what would be predicted by extrapolating the trend over the years prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, but the other two levels are below the historical trend.

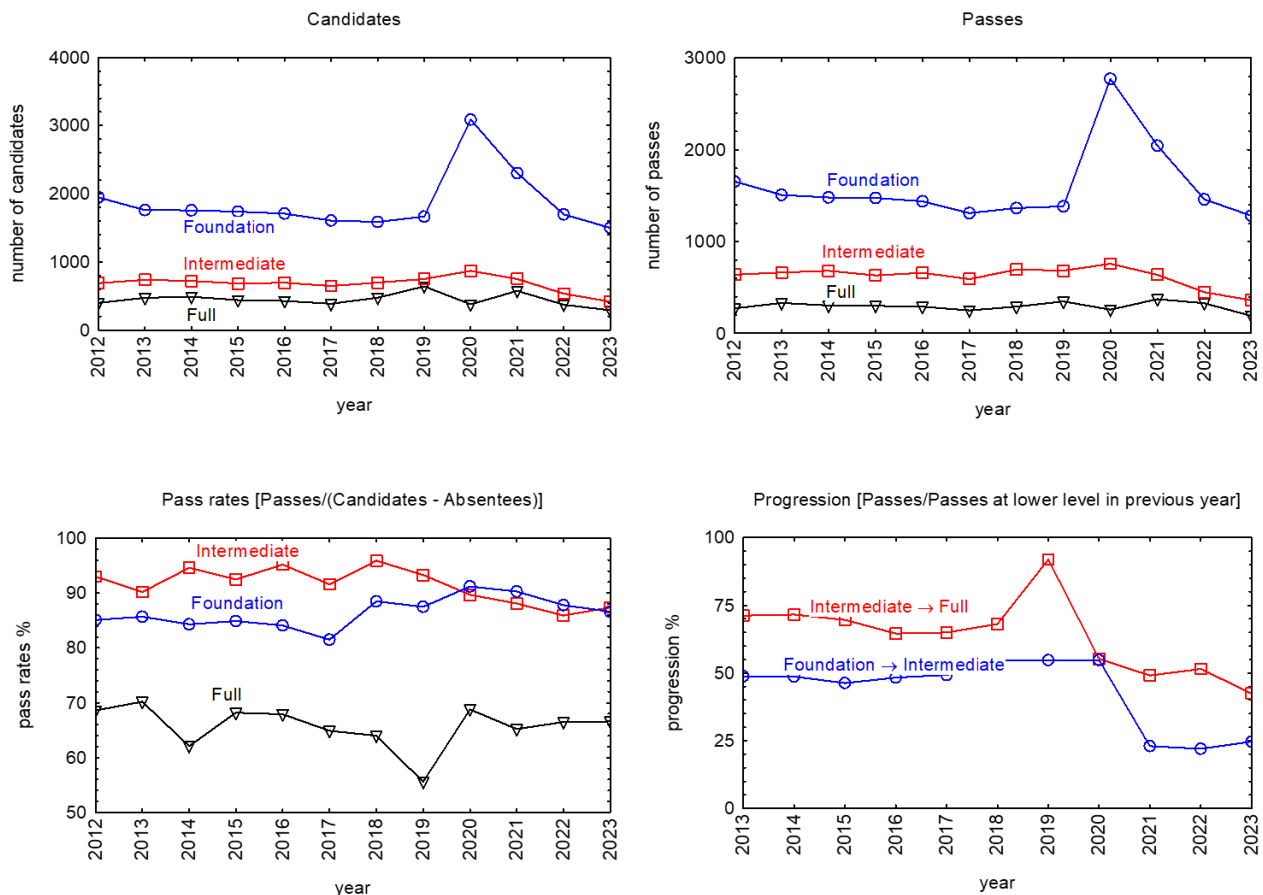


Figure 1. Exam statistics for the years up to and including 2022 (the data presented for 2012 is the average of the 5 years to 2012)

Looking at the pass rates, Figure 1(b), there is little change compared to the previous year. Foundation has dropped slightly but is still above the pre-Syllabus 2019 average. Intermediate has recovered slightly but remains below the pre-Syllabus 2019 average, while the pass rate for Full is in line with the pre-Syllabus 2019 average.

The progression rates are calculated as the ratio of the number of passes at the higher level to the number of passes at the lower level in the previous year. It is understood that some candidates pass both levels in the same year and some take a lot longer to progress, but the results turn out to be similar whatever method is used to calculate progression. Therefore, for reporting trends, we stay with the method used historically. Now that the exceptionally high number of Foundation passes during the Covid years have dropped out of the calculations, progression to Intermediate and to Full have levelled off at about 50% and 25% respectively. This means about 12.5% of candidates who pass Foundation are progressing all the way to Full. Historically (pre-2020) this figure was around 35%.

At its March 2024 meeting ESC considered possible reasons for this large drop in progression. Clearly it is not due to a decrease in pass rates. Possibly, it is due to long experienced club trainers 'retiring' during the Covid pandemic break, like what was reported to have happened in many professions. At the higher levels many candidates require more individual encouragement and support, so the decrease the progression rates may reflect the decrease in numbers of active trainers and clubs offering training. Another possibility is that there are many other technology-based hobby activities to attract people with the interests who would have originally turned to amateur radio, e.g. coding, drones etc., and any radio aspect of these is adequately catered for by the Foundation licence, especially with the licence changes coming in.

4.4 Special needs exam provision

At the previous ESC meeting (in April 2023) Ofcom requested that the pass rates for candidates requiring special exam provision are formally monitored and reported. This is the first ESC Annual Report to include these figures, which will become a regular feature in the future.

There were 22 Candidates with special needs that sat 26 Exams during 2023. The special needs breakdown is as follows:

Amanuensis	0
Extra Time	23
Interpreter	0
No Images	10
Large Print	2
Reader	16
Signer	0
Other	4

Of the 26 exam entries, there were 16 pass and 10 fail grades.

4.5 Direct to Full

The new Direct to Full exam began in January 2023. The uptake for this wasn't as positive as we were hoping, with only 27 making an attempt during the 12-month period. Just under half of those achieved a successful result.

5. Review of the Report from the Examinations and Syllabus Review Group (ESRG) Chair

5.1 General

The Group continued to meet weekly for 90 minutes, except over the Christmas/New Year holidays and the August summer break. Following the Group's summer break in August, Andrew Lenton took over from Donard De Cogan as Chairman of the ESRG in September 2023. A significant fraction of the Group's work in the latter part of 2023 was concerned with updating the syllabus in line with planned changes to amateur radio licencing, which Ofcom had announced to the ESC in its 2023 meeting.

The ESRG took the decision to begin the work of updating the current syllabus (v1.5) to a new version (v1.6) based on the Ofcom consultation document published in September 2023. The rationale behind this was that, initially, there would be significant changes to make to the licensing section, but it was expected there would only be minimal further changes required after the results of the consultation were published, representations considered and the final licence published. The ESC and ESRG had no advanced knowledge of the details of the licence changes from Ofcom, we received these the same day as the general public.

There were many responses to the consultation from the wider amateur radio community. However, by and large, there were very few differences between the proposals in the consultation document and the final licence that would affect the syllabus. The new licence went live 17:00 23rd February 2024.

The main result of the changes to the licences would be to give the amateur licensees more freedom with fewer restrictions. The RSGB requested from Ofcom that we would continue to examine to the old licence until 1st September 2024 when we will switch to examining the new licence conditions using syllabus v1.6. This was agreed, and gives more time to ready the question bank.

The ESRG has continued with the policy of publishing mock examination papers which are compiled from questions taken from the actual question bank. Inevitably this has led to some community vetting of the examination questions, which is helpful as the Group has been so busy on other tasks during the past couple of years that a full vetting of the question bank has not been possible. However, this has highlighted a possible issue regarding communications between the training community and the ESRG. Often informal challenges to exam questions (we use 'informal' here to mean queries/criticisms that do not affect the outcome for a specific candidate), either actual or mock, are sent by email to individual members of ESRG or raised in social media, or other forums that are not actively monitored for such challenges. This means some challenges are

not officially logged and processed and the outcome not fed back to the person making the challenge. This is not a problem with formal challenges, which are submitted via the RSGB Exams Department. To improve the handling of exam question challenges in future a web form will be set up for submitting ALL challenges formal and informal. Receipt will be logged by the RSGB Exams Department and all steps in the subsequent processing up to and including feedback from the ESG Chair to the person raising the challenge will be recorded on a spreadsheet. Challenges highlighted as ‘formal’ will be given priority in the processing.

To further enhance communications with the community, the Group will publish a more regular summary of ESG activities as well as provide an annual report for the ESC.

5.2 Challenges

There have been four formal challenges, three of these were upheld and two resulted in a change of outcome for candidates from fail to pass. There have been a large number of informal queries relating to questions in the mock exams.

6 Review of the Report from the Examination Quality Assurance Manager (EQAM) & Examinations Standards Manager (ESM)

6.1 Examination Results 2023

Number of candidates – refer to 2023 Examination Department Report

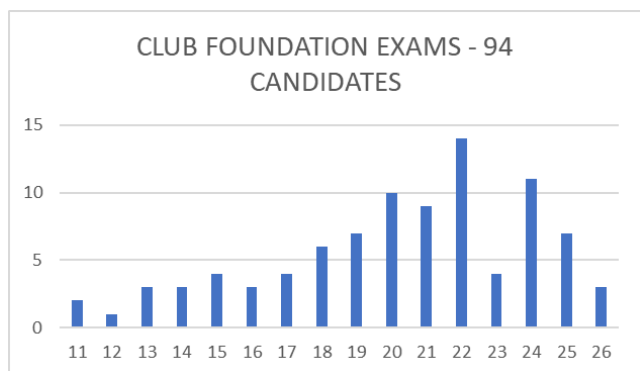
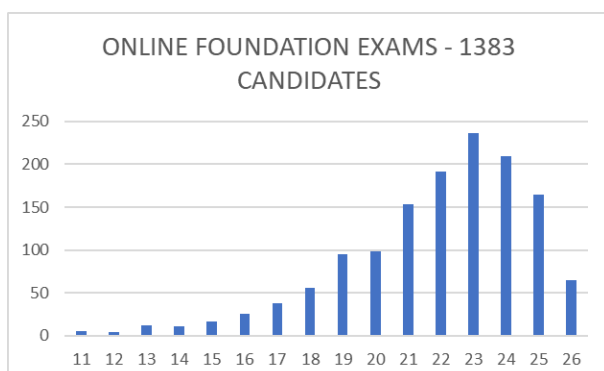
After the not unexpected reduction of candidate numbers in 2021 and 2022 the 2023 exam numbers reduced somewhat, down to a grand total of 2,232 (2,551).

Pass Rate – refer to 2023 Examination Department Report

Overall the pass rates changed only slightly compared to the previous year with Foundation reducing by a fraction of a percent, down to 85.5%, Intermediate up by 2.5% to 86.8% and Full improving by 1.7% to 66.1%. Rather disappointingly the pass rate at D2F, introduced in March 2023, was 48.1%

6.2 Examination breakdown 2023

The charts below show the distributions of the marks achieved by candidates taking the examinations in 2023:



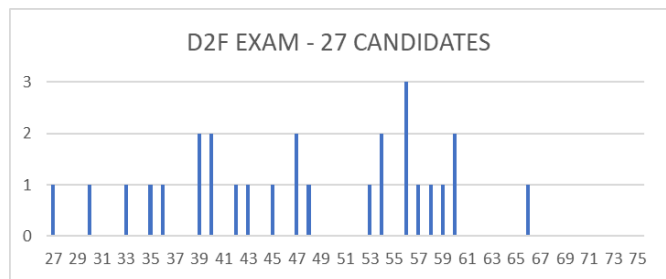
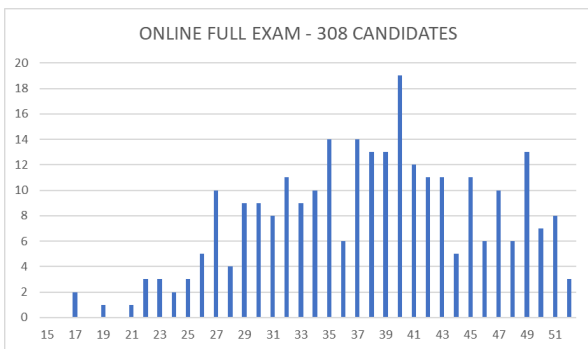
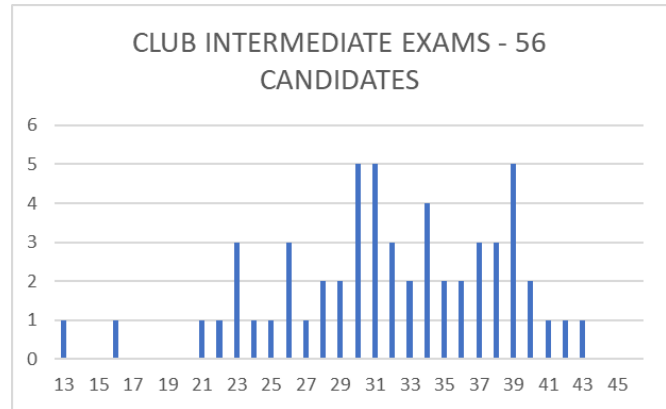
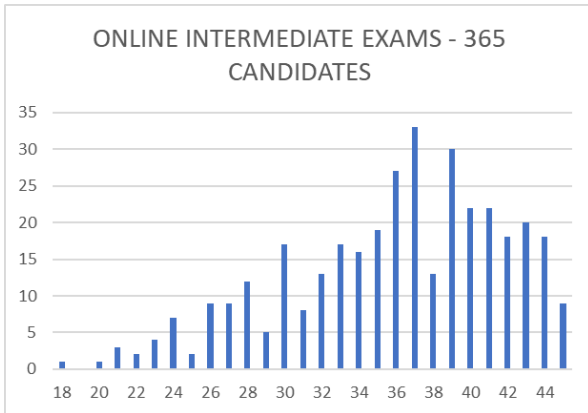


Figure 2. Marks distributions for the three levels (horizontal axis: mark achieved in the exam; vertical axis: number of candidates getting that mark)

The breakdown of candidates by region, Table 2, shows a good spread of candidates across the UK, especially online candidates.

Month	FOUNDATION ONLINE														Grand Total
	REGIONS														
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	
Jan-23	4	3	8	14	19	1	13	19	15	17	6	1			120
Feb-23	4	3	9	14	11	1	3	6	12	31	16	14	7		131
Mar-23	9	5	18	17	11	2	6	4	13	17	7	27	11	2	149
Apr-23	4	10	15	13	13	1	2	1	7	21	9	10	8	1	115
May-23	4	4	13	8	3	4	4	11	16	9	14	4	1		91
Jun-23	6	4	6	10	10	3	3	12	20	4	10	3	3		91
Jul-23	6	4	9	13	14	2	3	3	10	15	4	11	9		103
Aug-23	4	4	9	7	5	1	5	5	15	19	8	6	8		96
Sept-23	5	6	8	16	13	1	4	8	19	25	13	10	3	4	135
Oct-23	8	2	7	21	10	2	4	3	21	10	13	7	9	1	118
Nov-23	8	3	7	18	13	2	6	3	17	20	7	10	9		123
Dec-23	4	7	13	12	9	1	4	5	20	13	9	6	8		111
Grand Total	62	55	122	163	131	13	45	42	170	226	114	142	85	13	1383

Month	FOUNDATION CLUB														Grand Total
	REGIONS														
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	
Jan-23										1				1	2
Feb-23							2			8			2	4	16
Mar-23				3	5					1	3				12
Apr-23	1			2						1	1		2		7
May-23		1		1			2						1		5
Jun-23		1		1	3						3	1			9
Jul-23			1	1	7		2			1				1	13
Aug-23			1	1	3		2								7
Sept-23			2				1				1				6
Oct-23	1			2			2								3
Nov-23			1	2			2				4	3			12
Dec-23							1	1							2
Grand Total	2	4	3	15	20		10	1	10	6	8	9	6		94

FULL ONLINE															
Month	REGIONS														Grand Total
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	
Jan-23	3	5	6	4	4	4	2	4	13	5	5	6	1	62	
Feb-23	1	1	9	5	4	1	1	1	2	4		3	1	33	
Mar-23	2	4	5	3	6	1		2	3	2	2	1		31	
Apr-23	1	1	3	2	2		3	1	3	2		5	1	24	
May-23			4		3			2		1	4	4		18	
Jun-23	1	2	2	2	2				4		3	1		17	
July-23	1	1		4	3		2	1	1	1	5			20	
Aug-23	1		1	1	1		1	2	1	1	3	1		13	
Sept-23	1	1	2	3	2			1	1		6	1	1	19	
Oct-23	1	1	1	1	1		1	1	3		2	1		12	
Nov-23		1	3	2	2	1			1	3	1	7	1	22	
Dec-23	1	2	3	2	3		1	2		7	6	8	2	37	
Grand Total	12	19	39	29	33	2	14	9	17	42	17	53	18	4	308

FULL CLUB															
Month	REGIONS														Grand Total
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	
Jan-23									1					2	3
Feb-23									2						2
Mar-23	1														1
Apr-23															
May-23															
Jun-23															
July-23															
Aug-23															
Sept-23															
Oct-23											4				
Nov-23															
Dec-23															
Grand Total	1								3					2	6

INTERMEDIATE ONLINE															
Month	REGIONS														Grand Total
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	
Jan-23		1	2	1	2		1		1	1	2	1	1	13	
Feb-23		1	1	2	1	1	2		4	2	2	5	1	22	
Mar-23	3	2	4	1	2	2	1	1	5	9	2	5	3	40	
Apr-23	3	7	4	4	4	4	2	5	6	3	2			40	
May-23	1	5	8	5	4	4	4	2	6	4	4	10	4	57	
Jun-23		2	3	2	1	2		4	3		1	1		19	
Jul-23	1		3	2	4	1		3	3	3	4	2	1	27	
Aug-23	4	2		1	7	1	1	4	4		3	1		28	
Sept-23	2		1	1	5	1		5	4	2	6	4	3	34	
Oct-23			6	2	5	1		2	3		1	1		21	
Nov-23	2		3	4	3	1	1	2	4	2	1	3	1	27	
Dec-23	2		1	4	9			3	5	10	2	1		37	
Grand Total	15	16	39	29	47	3	19	7	44	48	30	41	21	6	365

INTERMEDIATE CLUB															
Month	REGIONS														Grand Total
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	
Jan-23						4								4	
Feb-23															
Mar-23						1		2			6	1		10	
Apr-23						2		2						4	
May-23										1	1	1		3	
Jun-23	4			1										5	
Jul-23				4										4	
Aug-23	1			2						1		3		7	
Sept-23		1								8		1		10	
Oct-23													1	1	
Nov-23						2					2	4		8	
Dec-23															
Grand Total	5	1		12	4	2	2		8	8	5	8	1	56	

Table 2. Candidate numbers by region in 2023

The breakdown of candidates by age and gender, table 3, shows the % female to male candidates in 2023 rose very slightly to 6% compared to 5% in 2022. Of the 1,477 candidates taking the Foundation exam in 2023 only 110 (102) identified as female (7.4%), with 16 (15) out of 412 (3.8%) at Intermediate and only 6 (10) out of 371 (1.9%) at Full, with 1 female candidate taking D2F.

In 2023 the 40 – 59 age range accounted for just over 49% (51% in 2022) of candidates taking the examinations. The number of youngsters taking the examinations, 133, rose slightly in 2023 compared with 2022 (114).

2023 - ONLINE EXAMS						
Age	Total		Male		Female	
0-9	3	0.1%	3	0.2%		0.0%
10-14	44	2.1%	35	1.8%	9	7.8%
15-19	73	3.5%	68	3.5%	5	4.3%
	120	5.8%	106	5.5%	14	12.1%
20-29	202	9.8%	182	9.4%	20	17.2%
30-39	275	13.4%	251	12.9%	24	20.7%
40-49	397	19.3%	389	20.0%	8	6.9%
50-59	627	30.5%	595	30.6%	32	27.6%
60-69	346	16.8%	328	16.9%	18	15.5%
70-79	87	4.2%	87	4.5%		0.0%
80+	5	0.24%	5	0.26%		0.0%
	2059		1943	94.37%	116	5.63%

2023 - CLUB EXAMS						
Age	Total		Male		Female	
0-9		0.0%	0	0.0%		0.0%
10-14	11	7.1%	8	5.8%	3	16.7%
15-19	2	1.3%	1	0.7%	1	5.6%
	13	8.3%	9	6.5%	4	22.2%
20-29	11	7.1%	7	5.0%	5	27.8%
30-39	10	6.4%	9	6.5%	1	5.6%
40-49	22	14.1%	22	15.8%		0.0%
50-59	49	31.4%	43	30.9%	6	33.3%
60-69	30	19.2%	28	20.1%	2	11.1%
70-79	17	10.9%	17	12.2%		0.0%
80+	4	2.56%	4	2.88%		0.0%
	156		139	89.10%	18	11.54%

Table 3. Candidate numbers by age and gender in 2023

6.3 Progression

In 2023 a total of 110 (110) new Foundation candidates (i.e. they took their Foundation examination in 2023) sat and passed the Intermediate examination in 2023. This represents approximately 26.1% of candidates taking the Intermediate examination in 2023.

In a similar way, of those 110 a total of 39 (65) new Foundation candidates (i.e. they took their Foundation examination in 2023) sat and passed both the Intermediate and Full examinations in 2023. This represents some 12.4% of all Full level candidates taking the examination in 2023

A total of 19 (43) Intermediate candidates who took their Intermediate exam in 2023 went on to take the Full examination in 2023.

6.4 Challenges, Appeals & Inspections 2023

Challenges & Appeals

No challenges were received in respect of the manner in which examinations were run ie using remote invigilation –candidates continue to praise the RSGB for the way they'd made examinations much more accessible. A very small number of candidates had technical issues such as the temporary loss of an internet connection. The vast majority of those were resolved at the time ie the internet connection returned and invigilators were able to resume the examination. As per 2022 if the internet connection didn't re-connect in a timely manner, candidates were offered a free re-sit at a time to suit them.

A small number of "informal" challenges were received in respect of examination questions, with no appeals as to the outcome of those challenges.

Inspections

As part of the remote invigilation process all online examinations are recorded in case of challenges etc with recordings being deleted after 5 working days. In 2023 a team of 19 remote invigilators invigilated approximately 125 examination sessions per month. As per previous years at least 5 recordings per week are reviewed.

A face to face inspection was carried out which because of discrepancies resulted in the exam being voided.

6.5 Face to face Club Examinations

Face to face exams in a traditional club environment remained low in 2023 with the majority being paper based. A total of 54 (51) unique clubs ran 98 (89) exam sessions in 2023. Of those 98 sessions 78 (68) were paper exams and 20 (21) online The breakdown of those exam sessions was as follows:-

Foundation - 94 (100) candidates sat a paper exam whilst 60 (23) took the exam online.

Intermediate - 56 (41) candidates sat a paper exam whilst 20 (13) took the exam online.

Full - 6 (23) candidates sat a paper exam whilst 5 (5) took the exam online.

7. Review of the Report from the Royal Air Force Air Cadets (RAFAC)

7.1 General

1. This is Wg Cdr Adrian Owen's second year overseeing the Amateur Foundation Courses for the Air Cadets. He was hoping for a bumper year with increased statistics on last year's however, sadly, a few issues arose that caused disruption. Firstly, the RAFAC lost the excellent training facility they had at RAF Leuchars, this caused the cancellation of 3 planned courses throughout 2023. Another blow all involved with the RAFAC was the very sad news of the passing of Sqn Ldr Malcolm Wood (G7VRT), he was the Radio Officer for London and the South East region, he was a most enthusiastic Radio Amateur that executed many Foundation courses at RAF Halton.
2. The Royal Air Force Air Cadets is continuing to push forward with the Radio and Cyber Progressive Training Syllabus. The Silver Communicator Level continues with the various modules including, Advanced Radio Operator and the Amateur Foundation Course however, all radio training is currently under review. Wg Cdr Owen is assured that the RAFAC will continue to offer the Foundation Course in the future.
3. In 2023 the RAFAC had more dealings with the Army Cadet Force, they held a course in April that saw 19 Cadets pass and become Foundation Operators. There are also now close ties with the Sea Cadet Corps (SCC), they have access to the RAFAC training materials. Sadly, they have yet to run a Foundation Course however, they plan to at some point this year.

7.2 2023 Statistics

- 9 courses completed.
- 100 cadets enrolled on the courses, down 22% from 2022.
- 91 passed with sadly 5 fails.
- 94% pass rate achieved.
- 4 lost places mainly owing to illness.

Overall, the average pass mark was 84.07%.

7.3 Inspections & Irregularities

Six of the courses had Random Practical Assessment Sheets inspected with no Irregularities reported.

7.4 Operating

As reported previously, the RAFAC have very few squadrons that hold HF capability, transporting cadets to those that do has been implemented in the past and will continue. The Voice Over IP Interface called Channel D has continued to be very popular, an ideal solution to the shortage of HF hardware. Channel D has dedicated HF channels with noise and fading making the experience quite realistic. To ensure the cadets have vital 'On Air practise' without the propagation battle, it has been the ideal tool to ensure quality in our operators. Channel D has not yet been utilised by

the Army Cadets however, the Sea Cadets have shown a keen interest and hope to join the Air Cadets on many National Level Exercises in the future.

8. Conclusions

All the reports that were presented at the March 2024 meeting and summarised in Sections 4 – 7, above, were discussed and accepted by the Examinations Standards Committee. Overall standards were maintained in 2023, and the amateur radio examinations were deemed to be fit for purpose.

It looks like Foundation candidate numbers in 2023 have settled back to the pre-Covid pandemic trend, which is a steady small decrease year on year. Intermediate and Full candidate numbers have been on a falling trend since 2020/21. It has been difficult to decouple the effects of the introduction of a new Syllabus in 2019 and the lasting effects of the Covid pandemic on club-based training provision. The issue is with the number of candidates and not the pass rates.

Owing to the efforts of RSGB Tutors, RAFAC Trainers, RSGB Remote Invigilators, the RSGB Examinations Department and the Examinations and Syllabus Review Group, 1283 candidates demonstrated that they had achieved the standard for a Foundation licence in 2023. The number of candidates successfully progressing all the way to meet the standards for a Full licence in 2023 was 191. The new Direct to Full examination had 27 candidates of who 12 passed.

9. Other Matters Considered at the April 2023 ESC Meeting

Although not directly relevant to the performance of the examinations system in 2023, other matters were considered by the Examinations Standards Committee in its 2024 meeting:

- 1. Licence changes:** Ofcom gave a summary of the licence changes that had come into effect in February 2024 and an update on the remaining changes for the future (phases 2 and 3). A short discussion of Syllabus v1.6 followed including which areas of licensing could reasonably be left out of the syllabus/examination.
- 2. Publishing the question bank:** It was agreed that the Full level question bank should be published, except the licensing section, as soon as it was practicable to do so. The impact of this would be monitored and, if deemed successful, might lead to publication of other levels in future. Full was chosen to publish first as it has the lowest pass rate. It was recognised that this could result in community vetting of the question bank, which would be welcomed, but could lead to an increased workload for ESRG.
- 3. Formal complaint:** A formal complaint to ESC about exam standards and processes was discussed. The Chair will write to the originator with the ESC's response.
- 4. Paper exams:** An announcement will be made concerning the date when paper exams will no longer be routinely available. After that date a request for a paper exam to be created due to special needs should be made to RSGB Exams Department. In more complicated cases, this will be considered by EQAM/ESC Chair.