

Report

The Annual Report of the RSGB Examination Standards Committee

May 2025

This report covers the operation of the Amateur Radio Examinations during the calendar year 2024. The Examinations Standards Committee (ESC) meeting held on 29 March 2025 at the Civil Service Club in London reviewed the reports from the various officers and sub-groups and considered several other matters including the timing and aims of the next major syllabus review. Based on the reports received, it was concluded that as of 31 December 2024, the Amateur Radio Examinations are/were fit for purpose for the issue of UK amateur radio licences.

In 2024 the RSGB Examinations Department (ED) and the Examinations and Syllabus Review Group (ESRG), overseen by the ESC continued their main task of operating the amateur radio examinations process. The total enrolment on all examinations was 34.6% higher than in 2023, which reverses the decline seen over the previous two years. The 2024 number is also 17.8% higher than in 2022, which was believed to be the first 'normal' year following the large swings in candidate numbers during the Covid pandemic years.

The Committee notes that this success owes much to the hard work and enthusiasm of volunteer tutors, exam secretaries and invigilators, and the RSGB Exams Department team.

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1. Introduction

The role of the RSGB Examination Standards Committee 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 2024.

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
Len Paget, GM0ONX, RSGB Board Liaison
Nigel Barker, M0HZR, Examinations Standards Manager
Flt. Lt. Timothy Stanley, G4TXK, Air Cadet Organisation
Steve Thomas, M1ACB, RSGB General Manager, Exam Dept representative
Prof. Hugh Griffiths, G4CNV, University College London, Independent Member
Dr Julian Gannaway, G3YGF, Independent Member
Murray Niman, G6JYB, BAE Systems AI-Labs, Independent Member
Dr. Donard de Cogan, M0KRK, Independent Member

At the 29th March 2025 meeting, Nigel Barker, Flt. Lt. Timothy Stanley, Steve Thomas and Dr Julian Gannaway were absent, and their apologies were noted. Carol Meredith and Bev Hayes-Daniels attended on behalf of the RSGB Exams Department, and Robin Edminson from the ESRG attended for the syllabus discussion.

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 2024 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 2024 was 3005 (2232 for 2023) an increase of 32% compared to the previous year.

We began testing against the V1.6 syllabus for Foundation, Intermediate and Full levels on 1 September 2024. The new syllabus testing for Direct to Full began on 1 October 2024. Paper exams were discontinued during December 2024.

Published timescales for providing papers and results were maintained.

4.2 Exam statistics

Overall, there were a total of 773 more candidates across all exam levels in 2024. 714 more at Foundation, 50 more at Intermediate, 15 more at Full level, but 6 fewer at Direct to Full level when compared to 2023.

In 2024 there were 58 absentees (26 in 2023). 48 for Foundation level (21), 7 (3) for Intermediate level and 3 (2) for Full level. The absentees have been removed from the figures displayed in the table below for 2024, so they are not included in the pass rate calculation, but were included in the numbers for 2023 and 2022.

The pass rate has slightly increased at Foundation, while Intermediate level and Full showed decreased pass rates. The Direct to Full pass rate has almost doubled. A total of 2508 candidates were successful during 2024.

We understand that 63 candidates passed the Air Cadet exam in 2024, with 38 requesting a candidate number from the RSGB for Foundation equivalence. This is a decrease from the numbers in 2023 which were 95 candidates that passed and 78 requesting a candidate number.

The cadet figures are **NOT** included in the statistics below as the RSGB Exams Department only administers the result paperwork.

Level	2024				2023		2022	
	Candidates vs 2023	Candidates vs 2022	Candidates	Pass Rate	Candidates	Pass Rate	Candidates	Pass Rate
Foundation	+44.4%	+31.59%	2166	87.6%	1500	85.5%	1646	85.7%
Intermediate	+10.34	-14.04%	459	87.4%	416	86.8%	534	84.3%
Full	+4.15%	-18.87%	301	63.5%	289	66.1%	371	64.4%
Direct to Full	-22.22%		21	85.7%	27	44.4%		
Total			2947		2232		2551	

Table 1. Numbers of candidates registered for the exams at each level for 2023 compared with previous two years. Note: the numbers for 2024 do not include absentees, including absentees as in previous years would give 3005 candidates.

4.3 Trends

Ignoring the sharp fluctuations during and just after the Covid lockdown period, the number of exams had been on a steady decrease over previous years, but this year has increased for nearly all levels. The historical trends are shown in Figure 1.:

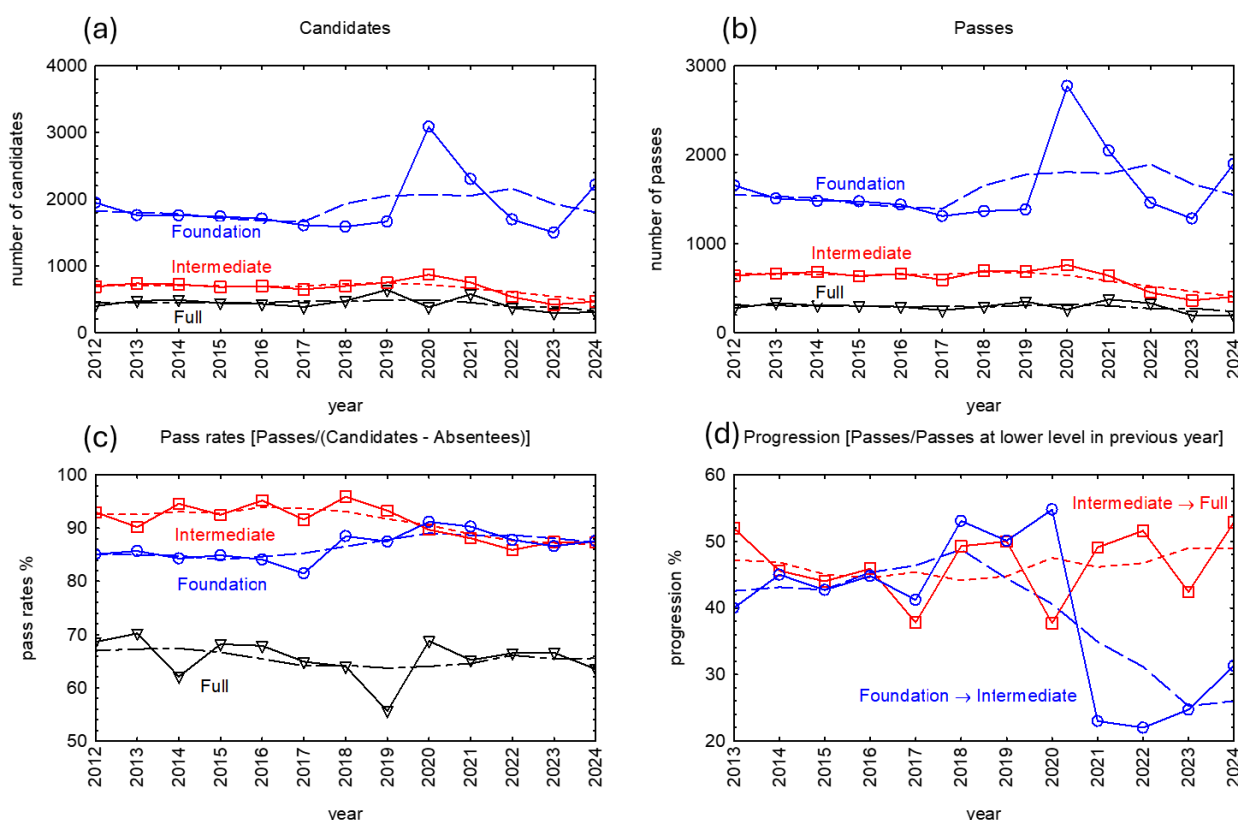


Figure 1. Exam statistics for the years up to and including 2024 (the data presented for 2012 is the average of the 5 years up to and including 2012). The dashed lines show the five-year rolling averages to smooth the Covid-related fluctuations. Note: compared to earlier ESC Annual Reports, the progression for up to and including 2018 has been recalculated to bring it in line with the stated methodology.

Looking at the number of exam candidates, Figure 1(a), 2024 saw an end to the sharp decline in the number of candidates following the peak in 2020. The Foundation numbers in 2024 are about 18% higher than before the implementation of Syllabus 2019, and well above what would be

predicted by extrapolating the trend over the years prior to 2020. The numbers of Intermediate and Full candidates have increased slightly compared to 2023 but still remain below pre-2019 levels. Next year will show if the much-increased numbers at foundation feeds through to the higher levels, and if the licensing changes, which give more privileges at Foundation and Intermediate, have had an impact on progression.

Looking at the pass rates, Figure 1(c), the five-year rolling averages show that the Foundation pass rate has increased slightly since 2019, the intermediate pass rate has reduced slightly, and the Full pass rate has remained fairly constant. It was expected that the changes to Intermediate in Syllabus 2019 would reduce the pass rate.

The progression rates, Figure 1(d) 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 (see 6.3, below) and some take a lot longer to progress, but the results turn out to be broadly similar whatever method is used to calculate progression. The progression from Foundation to Intermediate appears to be recovering slightly following the sharp drop in 2020/21. The Intermediate to Full progression is increasing slowly and now stands at just over 50%, a figure not seen since before 2013. This could be because the step between Intermediate and Full is reduced since the 2019 syllabus changes.

Recent trends in candidate and pass numbers look very encouraging if they can be continued. The likely reasons for these are the increased accessibility of training and exams through online distance learning courses and online remote invigilation exams. We are grateful to volunteer tutors and invigilators for making this possible.

4.4 Special needs exam provision

Ofcom has requested that the pass rates for candidates requiring special exam provision are formally monitored and reported.

There were 46 special needs exams for 44 candidates during 2024, 34 at Foundation level, 7 at Intermediate and 3 at Full. The special needs breakdown is as follows:

Amanuensis	2
Extra Time	34
Interpreter	0
No Images	4
Large Print	4
Reader	23
Signer	0
Other	27

Of the 46 exam entries, there were 36 pass and 10 fail grades, giving an overall pass rate for special needs exams of 78% compared to 85% for all other exams.

4.5 Direct to Full

There were six fewer Direct to Full candidates in 2024 than in the previous year. However, the number of passes is increased in 2024 due to the significantly increased pass rate, 85.7% in 2024 compared to 44.4% in 2023. This suggests that the exam is now attracting the appropriately qualified candidates.

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

5.1 General

The ESRG released a new syllabus moving from V1.5 to V1.6a, due to the Ofcom licensing changes in February 2024. Owing to the amount of work involved (the ESRG is a small team of volunteers) it had to be done in stages: the new Syllabus V1.6 was put together and released in April, however, the new V1.6 exam was not started until September 2024. This was so that students and Tutors could carry on with the old Syllabus for 3 months and start teaching the new syllabus 3 months before the new exam started. This approach was agreed with Ofcom. Syllabus 1.6b has just been released, to tidy up some details, provide a change sheet and move some topics between syllabus areas to better reflect the new licence. The Direct to Full syllabus 2.0, including the licensing changes, started in October 2024.

The ESRG has lost a few members over the year. Sadly, three members were lost due to delays with setting up RSGB IT accounts and email addresses. The ESRG have adopted using Microsoft Teams for documents, meetings and storage, which makes it essential that members get accounts set up in a timely manner. It turned out the delays were due to a shortage of accounts, which is being addressed.

Last March, the ESRG started the process of setting up an online exam challenges form and database. This is to streamline the processes of making a challenge/query to an exam question, processing the challenge/query and responding to the originator, and improve internal record keeping. The database is expected to improve reporting to the ESC of the number and nature of challenges, the challenge, outcome, the ESRG response, and any appeal to the ESC would all be recorded in one place. Currently we have a front-end form for use by candidates and trainers etc., that directs emails with a reference number and separates formal challenges from informal queries. The rest of the process is still manual, based on a spreadsheet maintained by Robin Edminson of the ESRG. Further work by the RSGB IT Department is still needed to provide the database and automate communication of outcomes. In 2024 the old fully manual system of processing exam question challenges and queries was in use, and a summary of the numbers is tabulated below.

At last-year's ESC meeting it was decided to publish the exam question bank, starting with the Full level technical questions. To prepare for this, bearing in mind the feedback and queries received from Tutors on the mock papers we have already published, the ESRG has been undertaking a review of the entire question bank. One target of this review is to significantly reduce the size of the question bank by reducing it to about 6 questions per syllabus item instead of about 15 as at present (although some syllabus items were found to have as many as 30 questions, while others

only one or two). So far, the ESG has completed reviewing the Full level bank, which has been passed to ESC for checking, and is now working are through the Intermediate and Foundation levels.

5.2 Challenges and queries

In 2024 there were no formal challenges which could have resulted in the adjustment of a candidate's result. There were 73 informal challenges relating to the published mock exam papers:

Originator	Number of questions queried	Accepted by ESG	Rejected by ESG	Comments
Bath Based Distance Learning	16	15	1	
Essex Ham	6	2	4	
Candidates	6	3	3	Edits to mock papers
Individuals (trainers etc.) (4)	45	10	35	9 changes already implemented before query received

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

6.1 Examination Results 2024

Number of candidates – refer to 2024 Examination Department Report

After the reduction of candidate numbers in 2023, the exam numbers in 2024 increased significantly to a grand total of 3,005 (2232) registrations and 2947 exams taken.

Pass Rate – refer to 2023 Examination Department Report

Overall, the pass rates improved slightly with Foundation improving by some 2.1%, up to 87.6%, Intermediate increasing by 0.6% to 87.4% and Full reducing by 2.6% to 63.5%. Pleasingly the pass rate at D2F improved to 85.7% but the numbers were low – 21.

6.2 Examination breakdown 2024

The charts below show the distributions of the marks achieved by candidates taking the examinations in 2024. Data includes exams taken with remote invigilation and in-person invigilation in clubs:

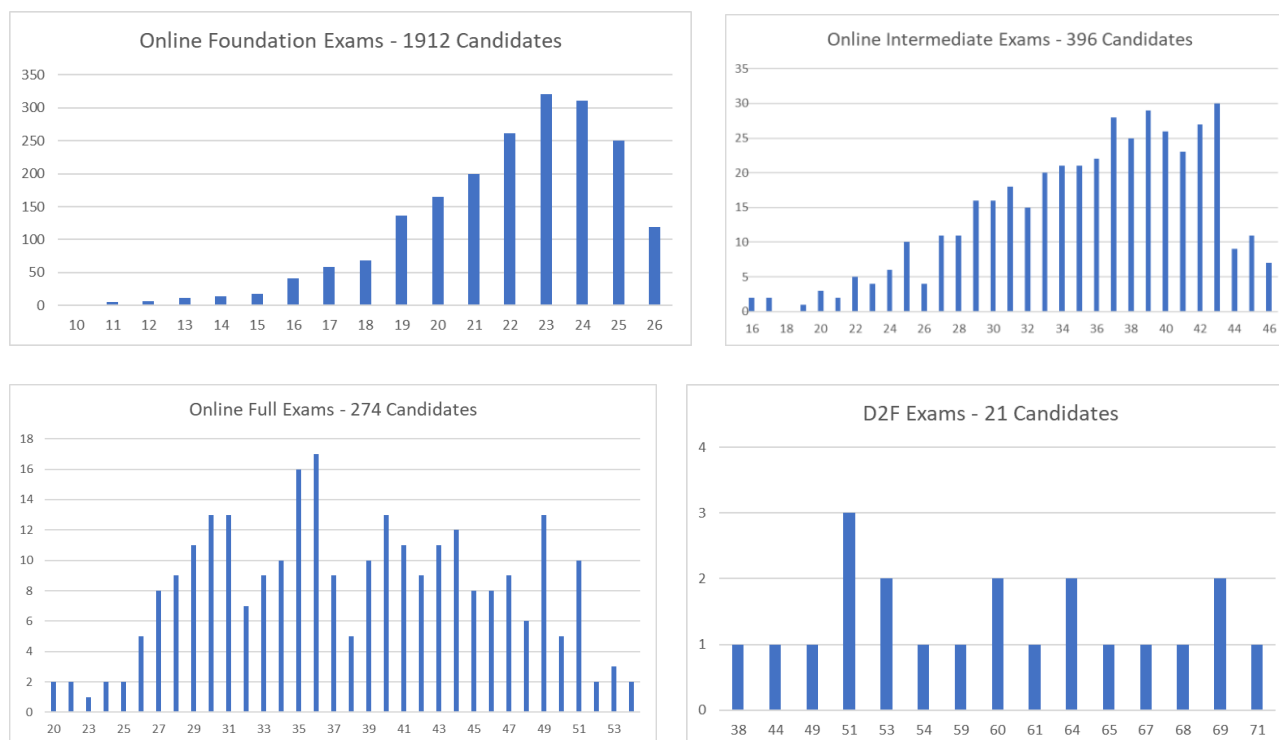


Figure 2 Marks distributions for the three levels (horizontal axis: mark achieved in the exam; vertical axis: number of candidates getting that mark)

The breakdown of candidates by region, Table 2, shows that there continues to be a good spread of candidates across the UK, especially online candidates:

Foundation Online (including clubs)														
Month	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
Jan-24	4	9	27	17	20		11	5	22	24	12	11	11	3
Feb-24	10	4	16	22	17		8	5	28	38	13	16	11	2
Mar-24	9	10	24	16	19	3	7	5	20	44	20	18	7	2
Apr-24	7	9	24	29	24	5	9	7	29	29	13	21	13	1
May-24	1	9	23	12	12		4	3	24	20	14	19	14	1
Jun-24	5	6	21	18	9	2	5	2	16	18	15	14	11	1
July-24	5	3	22	13	11	2	10	5	18	30	13	14	9	1
Aug-24	10	11	20	13	12	4	7	1	27	21	15	29	19	
Sept-24	6	10	15	21	10	2	5	4	17	20	10	12	6	2
Oct-24	6	7	18	15	13	1	5	3	17	41	12	16	10	
Nov-24	3	15	14	18	14	2	1	4	18	31	15	12	8	2
Dec-24	5	2	12	20	11	1	4	3	15	12	5	12	8	2
Grand Total	71	95	236	214	172	22	76	47	251	328	157	194	127	17

Foundation Paper														
Month	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
Jan-24			1	2						8		1		
Feb-24					2									
Mar-24				4	4		2		25	16	2			
Apr-24	1	1		4	5		2		2	2	1			
May-24	2						2		1				2	
Jun-24	1	1			7						1	1		
July-24			1	2			1				3	1		
Aug-24			2	2	1		1				5	2	2	
Sept-24				1			1					1	2	
Oct-24	3				2		1			10				
Nov-24	1	1		1	1		1	1		2		2	2	
Dec-24							1			8		1		
Grand Total	8	3	4	16	22	0	12	1	26	46	12	8	9	

Intermediate Online (including clubs)														
Month	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
Jan-24	1		3	3	6				2	1		4	3	1
Feb-24	1	1	4	3	1		1		8	4	1	2	3	1
Mar-24	4	1	4	6	1				6	8	4	4	1	
Apr-24	4	3	5	3	2	1	1	2	7	10	4	4	2	1
May-24	2	3	5	6	5	1	3	1	8	13	2	4	4	1
Jun-24	5	2	5	3	4	1	4	1	9	5	2	6		
July-24		1		5	2		3	1	2	6	5	4		
Aug-24	4		4	2	9	1	4		4	5	5	7	3	2
Sept-24	1	2	1	3	2				2	2	3	1	2	
Oct-24	2		2	3		1	2	1	4	6	3	6	1	
Nov-24			3	1	1		2		3	4	7	2		
Dec-24	2	1	2	2	1		1		9	4		2	1	
Grand Total	26	14	38	40	34	5	21	6	64	68	36	46	20	8

Intermediate Paper														
Month	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
Jan-24												1		
Feb-24														
Mar-24														
Apr-24											1			
May-24			2								1			
Jun-24			1							4	2			
July-24			1									1		
Aug-24			1				2				1			
Sept-24														
Oct-24				3										
Nov-24					3		2					1		
Dec-24					1						1			
Grand Total	0	0	5	3	4	0	4	0	0	4	6	2	1	0

Full & D2F Online (including clubs)															
Row Labels	Region														Grand Total
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	
Jan-24	5	4	4	5	3		9	1	4	14	2	6	1		58
Feb-24			3	3	2		1	1	4	3	5	1	2		25
Mar-24	1		4	4	1	1	2	2	3	6	1		2		27
Apr-24			1	6	4		2	1	2	7	2	1			26
May-24		1	1	2					2	2		2	1		12
June-24	2		1	1	2		3	1	4	5	2		3	1	25
July-24	2	1	3	3	1		1	4	4	1	1	1	3		25
Aug-24	4		4	4	2		3	1	7	3		3	1		32
Sept-24	1		1	2	1		1	2	1	1	1				11
Oct-24		2	1	1	2		2		3	3		3			17
Nov-24	1	1	1	1	2	1	1			3	1	2			14
Dec-24	1	2	3	3	5		2		3	2	2	1	1		25
Grand Total	16	11	27	35	25	2	26	9	35	54	14	26	9	8	297

Full Paper															
Row Labels	Region														Grand Total
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	
Jan-24											2				2
Feb-24															0
Mar-24	5														5
Apr-24															0
May-24															0
June-24															0
July-24			1												1
Aug-24															0
Sept-24			1										1		2
Oct-24															0
Nov-24	1				1					12	2				16
Dec-24					4										4
Grand Total	6	0	2	0	5	0	0	0	0	12	2	2	0	1	30

Table 2. Candidate numbers by region in 2024

The breakdown of candidates by declared age and gender, table 3, shows the % female to male candidates in 2024 was about 6%. Of the 2206 candidates taking the Foundation exam in 2024 only 146 (102) were female (6.6%), with 20 out of 472 (4.2%) at Intermediate and only 16 out of 330 (4.9%) at Full.

In 2024 at Foundation level the 40 – 59 age range accounted for just over 47.2%, (49% in 2023) of candidates taking the examinations. The number of candidates of age up to and including 19 years taking the Foundation examination, 170, rose slightly in 2024 compared with 2023 (133).

At Intermediate and Full levels the 50 – 69 age ranges accounted for 51.2% at Intermediate level and 55.7% at Full level. In the club environment at Intermediate the percentage was 72.7% and at Full level it was 53.3%.

2024 - FOUNDATION - ONLINE EXAMS						
Age	Total	Male		Female		
0-9	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	
10-14	72	3.5%	57	3.0%	15	12.5%
15-19	98	4.8%	85	4.4%	13	10.8%
20-29	170	8.3%	142	7.4%	28	23.3%
30-39	175	8.6%	157	8.2%	18	15.0%
40-49	269	13.2%	255	13.3%	14	11.7%
50-59	391	19.2%	371	19.3%	20	16.7%
60-69	572	28.0%	545	28.4%	27	22.5%
70-79	343	16.8%	332	17.3%	11	9.2%
80+	107	5.2%	106	5.5%	1	0.8%
	14	0.69%	13	0.68%	1	0.8%
	2041		1921	94.12%	120	5.88%

2024 - FOUNDATION - CLUB EXAMS						
Age	Total	Male		Female		
0-9	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	
10-14	24	1.2%	22	1.1%	2	1.7%
15-19	23	1.1%	18	0.9%	5	4.2%
20-29	47	28.5%	40	28.8%	7	26.9%
30-39	19	11.5%	17	12.2%	2	7.7%
40-49	9	5.5%	8	5.8%	1	3.8%
50-59	15	9.1%	12	8.6%	3	11.5%
60-69	33	20.0%	27	19.4%	6	23.1%
70-79	26	15.8%	22	15.6%	4	15.4%
80+	12	7.3%	11	7.9%	1	3.8%
	4	2.42%	2	1.44%	2	7.7%
	165		139	84.24%	26	15.76%

2024 - INTERMEDIATE - ONLINE EXAMS						
Age	Total	Male		Female		
0-9	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	
10-14	7	1.6%	6	1.4%	1	5.9%
15-19	11	2.5%	11	2.6%	0.0%	0.0%
20-29	18	4.1%	17	4.0%	1	5.9%
30-39	24	5.5%	22	5.2%	2	11.8%
40-49	58	13.2%	56	13.3%	2	11.8%
50-59	76	17.3%	72	17.1%	4	23.5%
60-69	137	31.2%	133	31.5%	4	23.5%
70-79	88	20.0%	84	19.9%	4	23.5%
80+	35	8.0%	35	8.3%	0.0%	0.0%
	3	0.68%	3	0.71%	0.0%	0.0%
	439		422	96.13%	17	3.87%

2024 - INTERMEDIATE - CLUB EXAMS						
Age	Total	Male		Female		
0-9	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	
10-14	1	3.0%	1	3.3%	0.0%	0.0%
15-19	1	3.0%	1	3.3%	0.0%	0.0%
20-29	2	6.1%	2	6.7%	0.0%	0.0%
30-39	2	6.1%	2	6.7%	0.0%	0.0%
40-49	5	15.2%	4	13.3%	1	33.3%
50-59	13	39.4%	12	40.0%	1	33.3%
60-69	11	33.3%	10	33.3%	1	33.3%
70-79	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
80+	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
	33		30	90.91%	3	9.09%

2024 - FULL - ONLINE EXAMS						
Age	Total	Male		Female		
0-9	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	
10-14	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	
15-19	5	1.7%	5	1.7%	0.0%	0.0%
20-29	16	5.3%	14	4.9%	2	16.7%
30-39	30	10.0%	30	10.4%	0.0%	0.0%
40-49	62	20.7%	61	21.2%	1	8.3%
50-59	99	33.0%	94	32.6%	5	41.7%
60-69	68	22.7%	64	22.2%	4	33.3%
70-79	19	6.3%	19	6.6%	0.0%	0.0%
80+	1	0.33%	1	0.35%	0.0%	0.0%
	300		288	96.00%	12	4.00%

2024 - FULL - CLUB EXAMS						
Age	Total	Male		Female		
0-9	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	
10-14	2	6.7%	2	7.7%	0.0%	0.0%
15-19	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
20-29	2	6.7%	2	7.7%	0.0%	0.0%
30-39	3	10.0%	2	7.7%	1	25.0%
40-49	4	13.3%	4	15.4%	0.0%	0.0%
50-59	7	23.3%	5	19.2%	2	50.0%
60-69	9	30.0%	9	34.6%	0.0%	0.0%
70-79	1	3.3%	1	3.8%	0.0%	0.0%
80+	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
	30		26	86.67%	4	13.33%

Table 3. Candidate numbers by age and gender in 2023

6.3 Progression

In 2024 a total of 104 new online Foundation candidates (i.e. they took their Foundation examination in 2024) sat and passed the Intermediate examination in 2024. This accounts for approximately 24.4% of candidates taking the Intermediate examination in 2024.

In a similar way, of those 104 a total of 51 new Foundation candidates (i.e. they took their Foundation examination in 2024) sat and passed both the Intermediate and Full examinations in 2024. This represents some 17.2% of all Full level candidates taking the examination in 2024.

A total of 25 Intermediate candidates who took their Intermediate exam in 2024 went on to take the Full examination in 2024.

6.4 Challenges, Appeals & Inspections 2024

Challenges & Appeals

No challenges were received in respect of the way examinations were run i.e. 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 i.e. the internet connection returned, and invigilators were able to resume the examination. As per previous year 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 (see 5.2) 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 2024 a team of 24 (19) remote invigilators invigilated approximately 110 (125) examination sessions per month. As per previous years at least 5 recordings per week are reviewed.

6.5 Face to face Club Examinations

Face to face exams in a traditional club environment remained relatively low in 2024 (2023) with the majority being paper based. A total of 76 (54) unique clubs ran 161 (98) exam sessions in 2024. Of those 161 sessions 115 (78) were paper exams and 46 (20) online. The breakdown of those exam sessions was as follows:

Foundation – 167 (94) candidates sat a paper exam whilst 81 (60) took the exam online.

Intermediate – 30 (56) candidates sat a paper exam and 30 (20) took the exam online.

Full – 30 (6) candidates sat a paper exam whilst 4 (5) took the exam online.

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

7.1 General

This is Flight Lieutenant Timothy Stanley's first year overseeing the Amateur Foundation Courses for the Air Cadets. He took over from Squadron Leader Owen, in the early part of the year. Flt. Lt. Stanley holds a Full amateur radio license, callsign G4TXK. He was an RSGB Foundation licence instructor assessor for a few years, and has run a few courses for various units within the RAFAC North region, and as such trained several instructors/ assessors to allow more courses to be run.

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. Flt. Lt. Stanley is assured that the RAFAC will continue to offer the Foundation Course in the future.

In 2024 the RAFAC had very little direct interaction with the Army Cadet Force (ACF), and the Sea Cadet Corps (SCC). However, they both have access to the RAFAC training materials.

7.2 2024 Statistics

- 7 courses completed.
- 74 cadets enrolled on the courses, down 25% from 2023.
- 65 passed with sadly 6 fails.
- 87.84% pass rate achieved.
- 3 lost places mainly owing to illness.

Overall, the average pass mark was 85.04%.

7.3 Inspections & Irregularities

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

7.4 Operating

As reported previously, there are very few squadrons that have 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 more realistic. To ensure the cadets have vital 'On Air practise' without the propagation battle, it has been the ideal tool to ensure quality in the operators. Over the last year the RAFAC have run several HF exercises on Channel D to try and stimulate some interest in HF. The on-air exercise Ex Blue Ham continues to be run, to get the cadets talking to radio amateurs on the 5MHz band. Channel D has not yet been utilised by the Army Cadets, however, the Sea Cadets have shown a keen interest and hope to join us on many National Level Exercises in the future.

8. Review of the Report from the Army Cadet Force (ACF)

8.1 General

A first report was received, via Ofcom, from the Army Cadet Force. The RSGB does not issue candidate numbers to ACF candidates for Foundation equivalence, ACF candidates apply directly to Ofcom.

8.2 Licensing report

The Army Cadets have been working to include the foundation license in their progressive communication syllabus. Radio communications have a long history (over 100 years of HF National Radio Net) within the ACF, and the ACF is pleased that it is now possible for cadets to pass their star awards and complete a Foundation amateur radio licence course as part of those awards. This has been a four-year project, and the syllabus will become live on January 1st, 2026, subject to passing the safety and training review committees. Cadets will start learning about

military communications at 12 years old and, by 16, will have the levels of skill required for a Foundation licence.

8.3 Lessons

The course requires fifty-seven lessons to complete. The syllabus has a military theme, aligning in part with the Combat Signaller course delivered within the regular army. Particular attention is placed on motivating young people towards STEM, and teaching methods are predominantly practical.

8.4 Numbers

23 Army cadets participated in the trials, all of whom were contacted six months after receiving their licence. Four had used Echolink repeaters, one had a handheld radio and accessed a local repeater, and one used her callsign on HF as part of a cadet activity. Additionally, one cadet has his own amateur station.

At the time of writing, 17 cadets are booked on the final trial course, and four instructors have an upskill training course planned. It is expected that 60-80 licenses to be issued this year.

9. Conclusions

All the reports that were presented at the March 2025 meeting and summarised in Sections 4 – 8, above, were discussed and accepted by the Examinations Standards Committee. Overall, the ESC believes standards were maintained in 2024, and the amateur radio examinations were deemed to be fit for purpose.

The Foundation candidate numbers in 2024 have improved considerably and exceed predictions based on extrapolating the pre-Covid pandemic trend, which was showing a steady small decrease year on year. Intermediate and Full candidate numbers appear to have stabilised after being on a falling trend since 2020/21 but are still a bit lower than pre-pandemic.

Owing to the efforts of RSGB Tutors and Exam Secretaries, RAFAC and ACF Trainers, RSGB Remote Invigilators, the RSGB Examinations Department and the Examinations and Syllabus Review Group, 1983 candidates demonstrated that they had achieved the standard for a Foundation licence in 2024 (including cadets). The number of candidates attaining the standards for a Full licence in 2024 was 215 (including D2F).

10. Other Matters Considered at the March 2025 ESC Meeting

Although not directly relevant to the performance of the examinations system in 2024, other matters were considered by the Examinations Standards Committee in its 2025 meeting:

1. **Publishing the question bank:** at the previous ESC meeting, 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. At the March 2025 meeting it was agreed to publish all the Full level

questions including those on licensing. The ESRG has completed question vetting and the bank is now with ESC for checking.

2. **Paper exams:** Routine availability of paper exams ended in December 2024. So far there have been only a handful of non-specific requests for paper exams considered by EQAM/ESC Chair. EX500 needs updating in line with the change to online exams. This will include a revised process for candidates to submit formal exam challenges, to ensure that all the necessary details can be retrieved.
3. **Tutor Review Group:** A Tutor Review Group will be set up to review and provide feedback on exam documentation in advance of publication.
4. **Exams administration system:** Currently the exams are administered using the bespoke EMAS system, which needs to be run on old hardware. This is recognised as a possible point of weakness, and a new system should be sought as soon as possible.
5. **Schedule of Terms:** The revised Schedule of Terms between the RSGB and Ofcom, with the modified clause about exam bank confidentiality, was presented to Ofcom for official signature.
6. **Syllabus:** There was an extended discussion of the need for, timing of and possible extent of any future syllabus review.