

This newsletter is aimed at all personnel registered on the MCERTS Personnel Competency scheme. It is intended to keep you up-to-date with scheme developments, summarise exam results, provide guidance on some technical aspects and help with future examinations. If you have any comments, suggestions or topics you would like to see included in future editions, please let us know. Send your comments to mcerts@sira.co.uk

Certification to date

There are currently 600 personnel registered on the scheme and 291 certificates have been issued since 2002. Certified personnel on the register are made up as follows:

Level 1	127	TE1	145
Level 2	164	TE2	71
TE3	52	TE4	95

There are still a considerable number of personnel on the register who have yet to sit exams.

Recent exam results

Of the examinations carried out between January and March 2005 the average pass rate for the various papers is as follows:

Level 1 narr	94%	TE2 narr	100%
Level 1 m/c	83%	TE2 m/c	80%
Level 2 m/c	60%	TE3 narr	89%
Level 2 oral	73%	TE3 m/c	20%
TE1 narr	54%	TE4 narr	69%
TE1 m/c	73%	TE4 m/c	65%

Exam hints and tips

Level 1

Candidates are often failing to read the questions properly and subsequently give answers that are not relevant to the question asked.

Level 2

In the interviews, the candidates that are unsuccessful tend to understand the practicalities of stack sampling but have a poor understanding of the MCERTS performance standard for organisations and the role of UKAS. Another area of weakness

is in the general principles of measurement uncertainty.

It must be remembered that the Team Leader has responsibility for the measurement project and must have a full understanding of all these elements.

TE1

A surprising number (approximately one third) of candidates have not applied correctly the equation to take account of moisture to determine **volume**. This is a fundamental equation for carrying out isokinetic measurements correctly.

TE2 & TE3

The correct handling of moisture in calculations causes quite a few problems. For example, when calculating moisture concentration from the weight of collected water the total volume of the wet gas must be used – dry gas volume plus moisture. Some candidates are simply calculating the moisture volume relative to the dry gas volume. Another common error is when calculating a mass emission rate candidates will combine a dry gas pollutant concentration with the total volumetric flow rate up the stack (which is wet). You either have to use the wet gas concentration or convert the total flow to a dry basis.

TE4

Candidates should be able to draw simple line diagrams of gas sampling and conditioning systems. It may be the case that in practice much of the system is hidden behind panelling but a basic knowledge of the components and their layout is crucial when faults occur and leaks arise.

Examination dates

The following examination dates are set for 2005:

Level 2

Penrith	Apr 28, July 13, Oct 5.
Chester	July 12, Oct 6, Nov 2
York	Apr 26, Sept 13, Nov 3
Nottingham	May 4, Sept 16, Oct 27
Cardiff	July 6, Sept 28
Bridgewater	June 28, Sept 29
Peterborough	May 3, Oct 26

Written papers

Chester	May 11 & 12 July 13 & 14 Nov 16 & 17
Stroud	May 25 & 26 Nov 23 & 24
Hitchin	April 19 & 20 July 19, 20 & 21 Oct 18, 19 & 20

Provisional dates have been set for 2006 and occasionally, examinations are re-scheduled. Check the STA web-site for an up-to-date calendar of examination dates www.s-t-a.org

Examination board

The MCERTS exam board meets quarterly to review the exam papers sat in the preceding three months. This means that candidates can wait up to three months before receiving their results. The exam board has discussed this issue at length. The only solution to the problem would be for the board to meet more frequently which would increase costs. Therefore, the board will continue to meet quarterly and make clear the exact date when candidates will receive their results. But to help matters, an additional exam board meeting will be added to the 2005 schedule.

Contact details

Sira maintains a list of personnel registered on the scheme. As competency certification is awarded to the individual, not to their employer it is the individual's responsibility to inform Sira of changes in contact details. If changes occur please update Sira by telephoning Debbie Collins on 0208 468 1842 or send an email to debbie.collins@sira.co.uk

Recertification

MCERTS competence certificates are valid for five years. The "rules" for recertification require candidates to sit (and pass) the multiple-choice paper appropriate to their current level, along with the relevant technical endorsement(s). Recertification falls due for some personnel in November 2007. Sira will be shortly issuing a bulletin outlining the exact requirements.

Exam paper time limit

The MCERTS exam board has discussed the time limit for exam papers. This will remain at 50 mins. for all multi-choice and narrative papers.

End of transitional arrangements

The Environment Agency has recently announced that the transitional arrangements for MCERTS accreditation will cease. These arrangements permit organisations to apply for, and obtain, UKAS accreditation whilst in parallel obtaining MCERTS personnel certification. The arrangements currently apply to those organisations that applied to UKAS prior to 31 August 2003.

These arrangements will cease from 1 April 2006. From this date, for accreditation to the MCERTS standard to be granted or maintained, all personnel must have the appropriate certification, together with the relevant technical endorsement(s).