

The
Competence Professional Scheme
for
Personnel working in Hazardous Areas

Scheme Rules

All documents are available from the website www.competencepro.com or your training provider

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Record of amendments

Rev.	Date	Section	Amendment
4	July 2008	all	Mandatory units are 3 & 7 and (either) 1 or 13
4	July 2008	all	Steering Group – clarification of terminology

Foreword

What is Competence?

Competence involves much more than technical training, including attitude and behaviour as well as experience and knowledge of the application domain.

IEC 17024 defines competency as:

“Demonstrated ability to apply knowledge and/or skills”

It can also be stated as

“Up to date knowledge plus skill and relevant experience”.

In laymen’s terms this means that candidates should have a good working knowledge of the subject they want to be competent in and this is assessed by an examination. In terms of skills and relevant experience each candidate is required to submit written evidence of the required skills and experience.

The Personnel Competence Certification Scheme

The Certification Service **Competence Professional** Scheme will draw on two documents

- i) **EN ISO 17024**, conformity assessment – general requirements for bodies operating certification of persons
- ii) **Developing and maintaining staff competence**, an HSE guidance document due to be published in 2006. This has two features that will be followed:
 - A competence skill set for the company
 - An individual contribution to that skill set

The scheme is set out as follows:

- The scheme is owned by Sira Certification Service and managed by a steering group populated with experts to represent all technical areas of the scheme
- It is an accredited competence scheme based on BS EN ISO/IEC 17024
- The assessment is carried out by Sira Certification Service
- The criteria for assessment will be transparent and clearly set out in these scheme rules
- The syllabus of each unit will be openly published and available to all.
- To avoid any conflict of interest or commercial pressure the organisations or individuals providing competence training will not be involved in:
 - Setting or marking assessment papers
 - Assessing candidates work and experience records
 - Funding development of the assessment or certification process
 - Providing technical staff to review completed assessment papers
 - Entering into beneficial commercial arrangements with Sira Certification Service



- To keep the scheme as open as possible training organisations can submit candidates for assessment or the candidates can apply on an individual basis.

An industry Steering Group will be formed with a few appointed members representing all aspects of the scheme constituted so that no single interest prevails. A larger number of non voting representatives may take part by correspondence or as non voting participants.

Registration of training bodies

In addition to the registration of individuals' competence, the Scheme describes the processes for assessing and registering organisations that provide training against the Scheme knowledge syllabuses.

This helps ensure that personnel are adequately and consistently prepared for the assessment process. Sira Certification Service maintains a register of recommended training providers.

It should be noted that training providers are not UKAS accredited and are not part of Sira Certification Services' accredited scope.

The assessment and registration will be carried out by Sira Certification Service at Crayford using staff experienced in personnel certification and independent of any training provider.



1 How do I get a Competence Certificate?

Introduction

For many years there has been an increasing call for professionals working in hazardous areas to demonstrate competence to carry out their tasks, especially in areas where there is likelihood that potentially explosive atmospheres may be present. New regulations governing such areas now stipulate a requirement for people concerned in certain safety-related activities to be competent in the field of explosion protection through experience and professional training.

In order to achieve a consistent means for individuals to demonstrate their competence in these activities, a third-party registration Scheme has been put in place by Sira Certification Service (SCS) in conjunction with a number of industry-representative organisations and individuals. The scheme is accredited by the United Kingdom Accreditation Service (UKAS). The activities of all individuals and organisations in support of the Scheme are governed by the Scheme rules and are controlled by SCS.

The **Competence Professional** Scheme is applicable to all grades of professional personnel working in hazardous area environments, from plant operators through to senior management. The scheme provides the means for the formal assessment and registration of the competence of personnel, through assessment of both their knowledge and application and for the registration of organisations providing training.

Course units and syllabus

Defined course units cover the range of appropriate competence requirements. These provide the basis for both training and assessment. The competence requirements are detailed in knowledge syllabuses for each unit, which have been created by independent experts in the relevant fields of work. The course units are regularly reviewed and approved by the relevant experts and the Industry Steering Group.

To obtain competence registration a candidate must pass three mandatory units. The candidate can then select a number of optional units in which they want to be assessed.

Individual's initial application

The assessment of the application will be carried out by Sira Certification Service based at the offices of Sira Environmental Ltd in Crayford. Applications will be received via training providers or direct from the individual candidates. It should be noted that the contractual arrangement for certification is with Sira Certification Service, Crayford.

Registration process

The application form will enable the candidate to select the units for which they require assessment and also provide evidence that the candidate has the appropriate experience. The registration process involves assessment by independent experts, not directly employed by a training provider, of candidates' knowledge of, and experience in, a particular field of work thus defining a scope of competence to be shown on the Competence Certificate. In order to maintain registration, individuals must demonstrate on-going retention or improvement of expertise through periodic re-assessments.



Sira Certification Service maintains a list of registered personnel and the scope of their registered competencies.

2 Overall operation of the Scheme

The **Competence Professional** Scheme is operated by Sira Certification Service and is accredited by the United Kingdom Accreditation Service (UKAS) whose assessment ensures that the certification activities are carried out **competently** and meet the requirements of the standard BS EN ISO/IEC 17024 "Conformity assessment – General requirements for bodies operating certification of persons". UKAS is a member of the International Accreditation Forum, conferring global recognition of certificates issued by Sira.

2.1 Confidentiality and Impartiality

Sira Certification Service undertakes to keep confidential and secure all information obtained in the processes of operating the Scheme. This commitment covers all individuals working within the Scheme in so far as is necessary for the operation of the Scheme, including committee members and external bodies or individuals acting on its behalf. Such information shall not be disclosed to an unauthorized party without the written consent of the organisation or individual from whom the information was obtained, except where the law requires such information to be disclosed. In this event the organisation or individual concerned will be informed beforehand what information will be provided. Under the terms of accreditation, any information obtained by UKAS during its assessments of Sira Certification Service will also be treated in confidence by them.

Sira Certification Service operates the Scheme in a manner which is fair and equitable and which does not impede or inhibit access by applicants and candidates, except as provided for by the Scheme criteria.

3 Technical requirements for the Scheme

3.1 How do we keep the Scheme relevant and up to date?

The Industry Steering Group will consist of a number of members chosen to reflect all aspects of the scheme. They will be joined by a representative of Sira Certification Service.

Once established the Steering Group members will determine the future composition of the steering group.

The industry steering group will meet periodically to review the effectiveness of the Scheme and maintain contact with a wider group of interested parties who have expressed an ongoing interest in the scheme development.

At the discretion of the industry steering committee, its composition and membership may be amended from time to time to reflect the changing requirements of the scheme and to maintain a balance of interests.

Technical competence requirements for the various Scheme sub-groups and technical units, eg Area Classification, are determined by technical committees with members drawn from appropriate industries, trade associations and training providers under the guidance of an industry steering group.



The competences of individual technical committee members are evaluated by the core steering group through peer assessment.

3.2 Knowledge syllabus

The actual units are set out in the syllabus, they are designed to be complementary and avoid excessive duplication between each unit. There are three mandatory units covering a broad range of subjects which are deemed to be necessary in order for a candidate to be assessed as competent. A further range of optional units will demonstrate competence in a specific area of expertise.

The Industry Steering Group endorses the knowledge syllabuses, which form the basis for assessments, and to which training providers will work. To assist the Industry Steering Group it may be appropriate to have more detailed discussions with a technical sub group.

Technical competence requirements for the various Scheme sub-groups and technical units, eg Area Classification, are determined by technical committees with members drawn from appropriate industries, trade associations and training providers under the guidance of an industry steering group. The competences of individual technical committee members are evaluated by the steering group through peer assessment.

3.3 Guidance

The committee will give guidance on the experience considered appropriate for the various units, guidance notes being available from Sira.

3.4 Training providers

Training can be carried out by any organisation working to the approved training syllabus (see appropriate application form). Training providers apply to Sira Certification Service for assessment and registration to ensure that their courses cover the relevant syllabuses to an adequate standard and that they are conducted by suitably qualified trainers.

There will be no restriction on the type of training provider who can apply to be part of the Scheme. They can be:

- Individual consultants
- Independent companies
- Existing training providers
- Manufacturers

To be a recommended training provider a number of criteria have to be fulfilled. In the first instance this will be:

- A knowledge of the overall Scheme
- Training staff who have proven expertise in the modules they are training
- A peer assessment by members of the SCS Assessment Panel for all training staff.
- An associate's agreement signed by all training staff, concerning impartiality and confidentiality and confirming compliance with the Scheme's requirements for on-going maintenance of competence.



Training providers who meet the requirements for the Scheme are issued a Certificate of Approval by Sira Certification Service and their details are entered on a register maintained by Sira, which is publicly available. Sira Certification Service maintains subsequent surveillance of the capability of registered trainers and will remove providers from the register who fail to meet requirements.

3.5 Training providers assessment panel

The Industry Steering Group comprising industry representatives and chaired by an independent expert will review all requests from persons or companies wishing to become registered training providers.

3.6 Assessment and Experience Board

3.6.1 Knowledge

The Assessment and Experience Board (a sub committee of the industry steering group), chaired by an independent expert will set the criteria for knowledge grading (see section 5) for the various competence levels.

The committee is responsible for the:

- review of syllabuses for all examination units
- ensuring a bank of appropriate assessment questions
- setting assessment papers
- setting marking schemes and appropriate pass marks
- reviewing of assessment results, both from written papers and from practical assessments
- recommending certification decisions
- consistency of assessment process
- validating candidates' work records
- reviewing complaints recorded by certified personnel
- appeals against certification decisions as required by the Sira Certification Service Governing Body

The whole process is transparent so that candidates, users and regulators will have full confidence in the competence assessment process.

3.6.2 Experience

In the context of this Scheme, experience is taken to mean a history of carrying out work and applying knowledge that enables a person to demonstrate competence to carry out the work for which he/she is being assessed.

A technical committee chaired by an independent expert determines the experience requirements for each unit, which may include the type of work, the length of time over which it was undertaken and the degree of supervision needed. Other criteria may also apply which are published as part of the Scheme.



3.6.3 Certification

Whilst the Assessment and Experience Board make recommendations on an individual's competence the decision to register that individual remains entirely the responsibility of Sira Certification Service following review of all the evidence submitted in support of the recommendation.

4 Application for Registration

Candidates must apply to Sira Certification Service, Crayford in the first instance and will be sent details of the Scheme and an application form to complete. Registered training providers will be able to furnish you with the current documentation. Alternatively all the information is on the scheme web site www.competencepro.com. Once candidates have completed their training they will be assessed on their knowledge of a given topic and their experience in the field evaluated.

The Scheme **information pack** includes:

- application form
- guidance notes for applicants
- list of recommended training providers and their scopes
- current fees for assessment and registration
- Regulations for the Holders of Sira Certification Service Certificates

Individuals wishing to be registered should complete and return the application form to Sira, stating the syllabus units in which they would like to be assessed the scope of competence for which they require registration and giving the following details about themselves:

- Their current job description
- Relevant experience and dates
- Training they have received

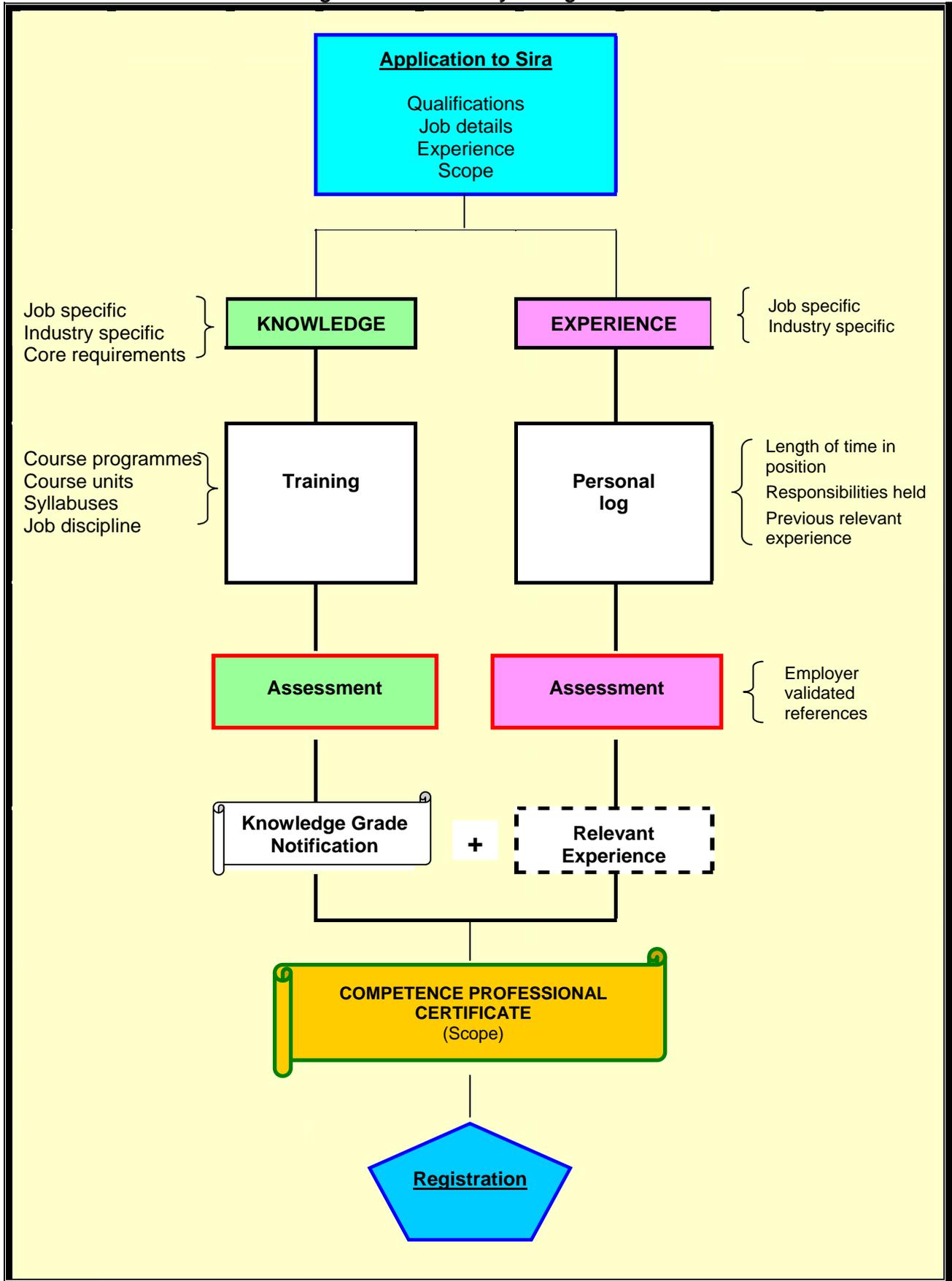
Submitted details should be suitably authenticated by the line manager or member of the Company management team. Sira Certification Service will then advise applicants on the assessment process they will undergo.

Note 1: *In signing the application form, applicants are agreeing to abide by the conditions of certification as laid down in the "Regulations for the Holders of Sira Certification Service Certificates" and to comply with the relevant provisions of the Scheme as outlined in these Scheme Rules.*

Note 2: Applicants are strongly advised to undergo training at a registered training provider, although this is not a mandatory requirement of the Scheme. Candidates may present themselves for assessment having received on-the-job training and/or having taught themselves, but they are most likely to be fully prepared for the assessment if they have attended registered training courses.



Figure 1: The Pathway to Registration



Note: If, for instance a candidate takes all three mandatory units and two optional units and achieves different pass marks, this would be shown as follows:

Unit Number	Unit Description	% Mark (not given to candidate)	Pass Grade
Unit 1	ATEX 100a Introduction Guidance and Application	46%	Grade C
Unit 3	Properties of flammable materials and ignition sources	80%	Grade A
Unit 7	Overview of all protection methods, apparatus grouping and temperature classification	86%	Grade A

Optional Units

Unit Number	Unit Description	% Mark (not given to candidate)	Pass Grade
Unit 8	Increased Safety Exe protection concept, installation and inspection	70%	Grade A
Unit 9	Flameproof Eexd/Exd protection concept, installation and inspection	41%	Grade D

Note: A B and C grades are passes, D grades are a fail.

Knowledge Grade Notifications are valid for 12 months after date of issue and cannot be used for obtaining a Certificate of Competence after that date. A candidate must pass all mandatory units to achieve registration.

5.2 Failed assessments

Where candidates fail to attain the grade required for a given competence level, they have the option to re-sit the failed papers at a time and place agreed between the candidate and Sira Certification Service, at an additional cost. Alternatively they may opt to settle for a lower competence level as appropriate to the grade achieved.

In the example the candidate has to sit Units 1 and 22 again to achieve the competence grading of a Practitioner or Expert. These units can be taken on separate occasions.



5.3 Assessment locations

Sira Certification Service will organise assessments to take written papers in three ways:

- 1) At published locations where candidates can apply to take assessments.
- 2) Alternatively, assessments may be conducted at the premises of registered training providers at the end of courses, but will be invigilated by an appropriate person appointed by Sira Certification Service. Such a person will have signed an associate's agreement and may be a member of the provider's staff or other person who will have demonstrated, to the satisfaction of Sira Certification Service, sufficient independence from the training process to avoid conflicts of interest.
- 3) At a location deemed appropriate to both parties, i.e. your own company.

Where a candidate has a disability or special needs which do not prohibit his/her certification under the Scheme, Sira Certification Service will ensure that these circumstances are taken into account in the provision of assessment facilities. Candidates should provide details of such special needs at the time of application; Sira Certification Service will treat all such information in the strictest confidence.

6 Experience

In the context of the scheme, experience is taken to mean a history of carrying out work and applying knowledge that subsequently enables a person to demonstrate competence to carry out the work for which he/she is being assessed.

The Assessment and Experience Board (Reference 3.6) carry out assessment of the scope of candidates' work experience. Due consideration is given to qualifications, job currently held, length of time in this position, responsibilities held, training received and previous relevant experience.

At this point in time there is no mandatory format for sending in the experience records. Records should be clear, succinct and easy for Sira Certification Service to understand. It is suggested that candidates use the format attached to the application form.

At the conclusion of the process the applicant will be advised of any further action that must be taken before either entering for an assessment or being granted certification.

6.1 Experience logbooks

A traditional CV showing where you have worked, for how long and in what type of business is useful background information and can be sent in but does not on its own demonstrate the experience you have.

You should draw up a list as follows

- Task undertaken (A note of the activities currently carried out relevant to the competence being sought and noting the training undertaken)
- Procedures / standards worked to



- Skills required, state what training you have had
- Supervision required, Two degrees of supervision are recognised by the Scheme note which one is applicable

- :
- 1) Constant - direct daily contact with supervisor of higher competence level;
 - 2) Occasional - direct contact with supervisor of higher competence level at least monthly.

- Who were you working for when the task was carried out
- The date the task was completed

A personal logbook (used as a record of competencies and activities carried out) can assist in the assessment of some staff. Access may also be necessary to those records when following up events.

Validation of log books

It is a requirement of the Scheme that all records of experience shall be signed by a person deemed to be competent to assess the performance of the individual, and shall be a confirmation of the satisfactory performance of the individual in carrying out the recorded work.

The signature shall also be accompanied by a clear indication of the status/position competence of the signatory within the company management structure.

The person authorising the work record is also signing to say that in their experience the work was carried out to a competent standard.

The person authorising the work should ensure that the records state the degree of supervision in the tasks listed is correct

The person should also make a statement to the effect that this was an honest assessment.

6.2 Competence Level

Appendix sets out the competence levels that a candidate can achieve. If the work records meet the required standard the knowledge grade can be commuted to competence levels as follows:

Grade A	Expert : carries out tasks involving exercise of engineering judgement within broad parameters and general principles
Grade B	Practitioner : carries out tasks involving engineering judgement within a field defined by detailed written specifications
Grade C	Supervised Practitioner
Grade D	Does not commute to a competence level



Mandatory Units

The following units are Mandatory and must be achieved in order to gain a Competence Certificate. Modules 3 and 7 must be taken with a choice of either 1 or 13.

Unit Number	Unit Description
3	Properties of flammable materials and ignition sources
7	Overview of all protection methods, apparatus grouping and temperature classification

1	ATEX 100a Introduction Guidance and Application
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13	A basic understanding of ATEX 137 & DSEAR (Dangerous Substances & Explosive Atmosphere Regulations)
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6.3 Assessment process

A technical committee chaired by an independent expert determines the experience requirements for each unit, which may include the type of work, the length of time over which it was undertaken and the degree of supervision needed.

The Certification Manager, in conjunction with the Technical Manager, will assess the submitted records against the requirements of the personnel competence standard at the competence level applied for. Where the records provide clear evidence that the candidate has acquired adequate experience in a particular discipline, he/she will be informed that a Certificate of Competence for a given level in that discipline can be awarded on achievement of the required number of marks in the Knowledge Assessment for that level. This will be dependent on the 'breadth' of experience (i.e. that their experience covers the majority of topics covered under training) and also the 'depth' (i.e. that they haven't just done one small job, under supervision, and hope to be deemed competent on the strength of it).

Where there is doubt about the adequacy of an individual's records, the applicant will be asked to supply any necessary supplementary information and the records may be submitted to the Assessment Board for adjudication.

In the event of inadequate records being presented or where the evidence is marginal or there is doubt as to its authenticity the candidate may well be contacted by telephone or asked to come for a personnel interview.

Individuals should maintain a comprehensive record of their on-going training and experience in a personal logbook which should be endorsed by their line manager. An appropriate format is available from Sira.

Assessment of an individual's work records will normally be carried out in the absence of the candidate at Sira Certification Service premises in Crayford. Maintenance of information in the form of a logbook



should be seen not as a burden, but as a means to help manage experience record effectively and efficiently.

6.4 Insufficient experience

Candidates who are new to a job may apply for registration and sit the assessments leading to the Knowledge Grade Notification whilst they are accumulating relevant work experience. This should be recorded in a personal log.

Where the assessors are in doubt as to any aspect of the work records submitted, Sira Certification Service reserves the right to undertake a peer interview with the candidate at a time and place mutually agreed. This may involve an additional cost.

7 Certification

7.1 Issue of certificate

A candidate who has a relevant Knowledge Grade Notification and can also demonstrate sufficient appropriate experience and expertise will be awarded a **Certificate of Competence** appropriate to the competence level demonstrated.

Whilst Sira Certification Service draws on the recommendations made by the Assessment and Experience Board, the certification decisions are made entirely on the responsibility of Sira Certification Service following an independent review by the Certification Manager of all the evidence supplied in support of the recommendations.

Certificates are awarded by Sira Certification Service to successful candidates, on a personal basis and define the scope of competence that the individual has achieved in compliance with the criteria of the relevant standard. The certificate is valid for three years, after which individuals must apply for re-assessment should they wish to maintain their certification.

Individuals can only be entered on the Register of Competent Professionals by gaining a certificate. The Register will show the scope of certification.

7.2 Ongoing surveillance after registration

Sira Certification Service will be taking a proactive approach to surveillance. Following initial registration, personnel will be re-issued with the Certification Service” **Regulations for the Holders of Sira Certificates**” as applied to this Scheme. It is a condition of registration that registered personnel abide by these regulations.

Registered personnel are required to keep up the level of competence for which they have been registered and will be subject to on-going surveillance and re-assessment to ensure this. In support of this, individuals must be able to demonstrate that they operate competently and are strongly recommended to maintain an authenticated personal record of their work activities. These records must be made available for scrutiny whenever requested by Sira Certification Service. As a matter of routine, records will be sent to Sira on a six monthly basis.



7.3 Ex register of personnel

Sira Certification Service will maintain an up to date Register of Competent Personnel. This information will not be made public as it would contravene the Data Protection Act, but we will confirm specific details, if required, to an appropriate company or authority.

7.4 Changes to registered scope

Registered personnel can apply to Sira Certification Service at any time to extend the scope of their registration to include additional competence. The same procedures will apply as for initial assessment and registration and, when successful, their certificate will be renewed showing the extended scope and their registration details will be up-dated.

Registered personnel can also inform Sira Certification Service if, for any reason, they wish to reduce the scope of their registration. Under the Scheme Rules, registered personnel have a professional obligation to inform Sira Certification Service if, for any reason, they fall below the level of competence for which they are registered. Such occasions would include not working within their registered scope for a period of two years or more.

The registration does not lapse if you change employer but Sira Certification Service should be advised of any changes.

7.5 Performance Feedback and Surveillance

Registered personnel are subject to ongoing random surveillance of their work through contact with their employer. Employers have a duty of care to ensure the on-going competence of their employees and will be requested to inform Certification service where registered personnel are found to have acted contrary to the requirements of registration.

Sira Certification Service may also receive adverse reports or complaints concerning an individual's work performance and competence from other sources. Sira Certification Service will make appropriate investigations and if necessary suspend, withdraw or cancel certificates. Sira Certification Service reserves the right to carry out an observation of the individual at work if deemed necessary. A certificate holder may re-apply for registration and has the right of appeal against a Sira Certification Service decision.

Sira Certification Service will confirm that use of certificates issued under the Scheme complies with all their requirements as the Certification Body.

7.6 Reassessment of personnel

There will be a reassessment of an individual's registration every three years. The re-assessment will comprise a review of the person's experience and training and the taking of written assessments appropriate to their scope of competence and recorded experience.

7.7 Suspension or withdrawal of certificates

Registration may be suspended or withdrawn where the holder is deemed to be in gross breach of the Sira Certification Service Regulations applicable to the holders of Sira Certification Service certificates.



Where registered personnel have not maintained an approved level of experience for two years, they shall be deemed to have forfeited their registration and a note to that effect will be appended to the Personnel Register. Registration can be regained following appropriate re-assessment.

7.8 Complaints and Appeals

Individuals and organisations have the right to complain about any aspect of the Scheme assessment process or to lodge an appeal against any certification decision. Such complaints should be made initially in writing to the Sira Certification Service Certification Manager who will attempt to resolve the matter. Failing an agreed resolution the matter will be referred to the chairman of the steering group. Full details of the Complaints and Appeals procedure are available from Sira.

7.9 Identity cards

Registered personnel can opt to be issued with ID cards for an additional fee. These show the individual's name, photograph and registration number plus a summary of the EX Competence level and technical scope for which they are registered.

