

Thames Amateur Radio Group

An Introduction to Beyond Exams

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Introduction

This evening I am going present an introduction to the RSGB initiative Beyond Exams (BE).

I will describe how recent changes to exam syllabi, training & practical assessment provision under Covid Regulations contributed to the introduction of the BE initiative.

I will describe the BE schemes Club and Individual.

Show how the Club Scheme can benefit both a new and perhaps not so recent Licensee.

The recognition and awards you will receive for participating in BE.

Show how TARG could help you to progress in the Club Scheme.

Take questions and engage in short discussions.



Recent Changes in Examinations & Training

Recently changes have been made to all levels of UK Amateur Radio syllabi, examinations, exam delivery and practical assessments (Foundation & Intermediate).

Many of these changes were made in recognition of the increasing role of digital technologies in Amateur Radio. Another factor was the concern of our Regulator OFCOM that the level of qualification for a Full Licence was perhaps no longer fully meeting the broad equivalence to an HNC in Radio Communication Technology and Operation in the current era.

Other changes were also introduced in the pandemic such as the pausing of Practical Assessments for Foundation, scrapping of them for Intermediate candidates and the switch to online remotely invigilated examinations. These were already under consideration but were accelerated to official policy by the Pandemic.

The pandemic also ended at a stroke last March the ability of clubs to deliver physical presence organised training courses for candidates and confined pre & post exam mentoring to remote methods.



Beyond Exams

So, as result of the combination of changes to qualification policy and the pandemic we now have quite an undesirable situation.

Clubs for now have in effect been short circuited out of training provision and candidates deprived of face-to-face essential access to supportive expertise.

A new M7 who has had no interaction with any other Radio Amateurs & has no practical operating experience is now fully qualified to operate within Foundation License Conditions. What could possibly go wrong?????

In recognition of this the RSGB has created a series of short online videos to cover some of the areas Foundation Practical Assessment used to undertake and for several other practical tasks all levels of licence may find useful. At a post pandemic date not yet decided practical assessments for Foundation Candidates will return.

RSGB has also developed and rolled out the Beyond Exams initiative setting activities to be completed for new and perhaps more seasoned Licence holders.

The BE initiative comes in two flavours a club-based scheme where in-house or drawn from a wider pool mentoring can be given to help a candidate complete an activity. Or a more difficult individual scheme where the activities are geared to the more experienced Radio Amateur to be completed more on your own.



Beyond Exams Benefits

The whole point of BE whichever scheme is followed to broaden candidates' knowledge and expertise of Amateur Radio through mentoring and experience. This applies equally to new and not so new license holders. Some current operators may never have tried anything beyond phone or CW modes and this is an opportunity to sample new methods & modes of radio communication in keeping with the adventurous nature of Amateur Radio.

As a candidate works their way through a scheme at key points they are entitled to claim awards which come with certificates and their names will be published in Radcom.

The Awards

Club Scheme	Bronze, Silver, Gold, Platinum & Diamond.
Individual Scheme	Badges are awarded for each section completed.

In the authors view the most valuable benefit is gain of capability, knowledge and confidence that working though the activities will give to a candidate. The BE schemes will greatly assist in producing more capable well-rounded Radio Amateurs to take the hobby forward.

The rest of this presentation is going to focus on the Club Scheme, but I will take questions on the Individual Scheme at the Q&A session if they arise.



Beyond Exams Club Scheme

For new Licence holders we would always recommend completing the Club Scheme first as by design it leads you to interacting with expertise in a club environment which is always supportive and knowledge rich.

Even in the very unlikely event that TARG cannot provide mentoring to a candidate for an activity the scheme is set up to enable a candidate to be placed in contact with a mentor in another club.

TARG is accredited with RSGB as a club scheme mentoring provider and Andy MOIXY is currently the coordinator.

The coordinator keeps the master activity records, forwards them to the BE regional coordinator for Award Claims. They also process internal, incoming external & outgoing external requests for mentor support.

The coordinator will require to see evidence through logs for operating activities or other appropriate evidence for non-operating activities before updating a candidates master record.

So now lets take a look at the activities.



BE Club Scheme Activities

The club scheme consists of 23 activities in total grouped under five themes

Having a Go

Log 50 VHF/UHF unique contacts any mode 30MHz to 3GHz. Log contacts in three of the home nations any band any mode.
Log 50 HF contacts 3 to 30MHz CW or Phone. Log 50 HF 3 to 30MHz digital data contacts.
Log 10 SSTV or FSTV any band. Log 10 Digital Voice contacts any band.
Log a contact through satellite or ISS any band any mode.

Getting Involved

Activate a SOTA summit any band any mode. Log 20 Worked All Britain (WAB) square contacts.
Log 10 contacts in one contest any band any mode. Help set up or tear down a Special Event Station.
Operate or Log Keep at a special event station.

Taking Part

Attend 6 club meetings or webinars. Take part in 6 club nets.
Undertake a regular role in the club e.g. taking the register, making tea, selling raffle tickets or take a committee seat.
Take part in a Raynet Event. Help to organise an activity for the club.

Making

Construct a piece of radio related electrical or mechanical equipment for your shack.
Write an Amateur Radio related piece of software that you can use in your shack or design a simple radio related website

Promoting Amateur Radio

Introduce a person to the hobby who takes up a Foundation License
Attend a rally to promote your Club Scheme Accredited club i.e. TARG
Help to run a training course at your Club Scheme Accredited club. This can be teaching, providing support or invigilating.



BE Club Scheme Awards & Back Dating

On completion of the requisite number of activities awards can be claimed on the following basis.

Bronze

Any 3 of the scheme 23 activities completed.

Silver

Any 5 of the scheme 23 activities completed.

Gold

Any 10 of the scheme 23 activities completed.

Platinum

Any 15 of the scheme 23 activities completed.

Diamond

All 23 of the scheme activities completed.

Candidates are allowed to backdate claims to 01/12/2019 so without even knowing it you could already be eligible for a Beyond Exams Award.



Verification of Award Claims

As mentioned earlier claims will be made to the Club Scheme Coordinator who will verify to their satisfaction that the claim is true.

The scrutiny applied for operational claims will be a simple sample of a presented logbook. You should not expect that every contact will be checked. Or that you will be questioned about them. But a log will be required.

You may recall that keeping a log is no longer a legal obligation but it is highly recommended. Keeping a log of your emissions & contacts is often very helpful if a complaint is made about you to the regulator and it forms the primary evidence of your claim for any award not just BE.

For non operational BE award claims a picture of the kit constructed or a confirmation of presence at an event will suffice. The Coordinator may not even to verify some claims if they have first-hand knowledge of your activity completion.

It was not expected or has there been any evidence to date of deliberate false claims. If a person cheats for a BE award the only person they are cheating is themselves.



Costs of BE Club Scheme

There are no costs to the BE Club Scheme itself.

You should expect to join the club if we help you progress. So, a membership fee, teas / coffee, raffle ticket sundries, merchandise, etc.

Or, if for example a construction event is organised for BE Candidates there will likely be a small charge to cover the club expenses. For example kit materials and catering.



BE Club Scheme and TARG

At TARG we have enough in house expertise to support a candidate all the way through the BE Club Scheme.

On TARG nights we could setup a station on request for a particular operational activity to allow candidates to sample it to take the mentoring away and complete the contacts they need for sign off.

Or we could set up mentoring sessions on CW.

Also on TARG nights we could set up a “modular” construction project spanning a number of nights for example a John M0FLX power supply.

If there is enough demand we could set up a BE weekend event to allow candidates to progress operational activities, competition or construction projects.

And remember every time you attend the Club or partake in a webinar or net you are contributing to your BE attendance-based sign offs.

We are also prepared to provide remote online mentoring for operational type activities.

Finally, we will once clear of Covid regulations be holding special & club camping events which feature many of the BE activities.



BE Club Scheme and TARG

In short TARG will help you not only to progress through the Club Scheme with flying colours we will empower you to be a superb Radio Amateur.

Support us with your membership and participation and we will support you to achieve great things in the hobby.



Useful Information

<https://rsgb.org/main/clubs-training/for-students/foundation/foundation-practicals-video-guides/>

<https://rsgb.org/main/activity/useful-practical-skills-for-new-licensees/>

<https://rsgb.org/main/beyond-exams-building-experience/>

<https://rsgb.org/main/beyond-exams-building-experience/club-scheme/>

<https://rsgb.org/main/beyond-exams-building-experience/rsgb-individual-scheme/>

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Any Questions?

