PCN24/PSL49

PCN examination exemptions

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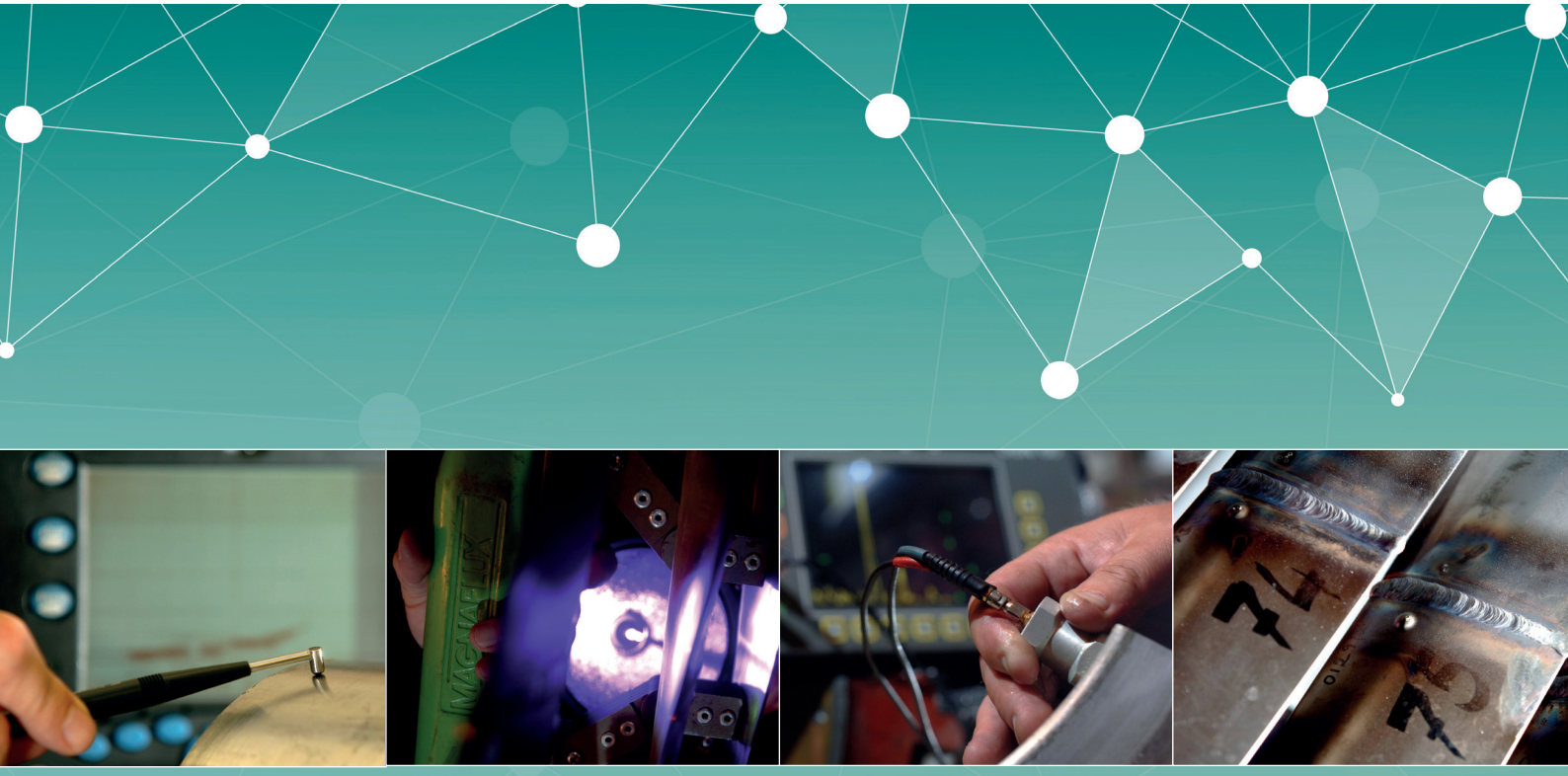
A division of BINDT THE BRITISH INSTITUTE OF NON-DESTRUCTIVE TESTING



1. Introduction

1.1 PCN examinations are conducted in accordance with the requirements of BS EN ISO 9712:2022 and within the scope of BINDT ISO 17024 accreditation issued by the United Kingdom Accreditation Service (UKAS). In accordance with those international standards, BINDT is designated as the Certification Body for the PCN Scheme. Within the scope of responsibilities of those accreditations and as detailed in the international standards, a Certification Body is enabled to make decisions on permitted examination exemptions, providing the integrity and compliance of the scheme is not compromised. Consequently, a systematic and consistent approach to the granting of exemptions is required. This document details the BINDT/PCN general policy on examination exemptions.

2. Definitions

2.1 ***Qualifying certificate:*** a certificate issued by a Recognised Certification Body and which demonstrates compliance with EN ISO 9712 and covers the same product or industry sector and non-destructive testing (NDT) method as the PCN certification sought. In addition, the NDT level shall be relevant in terms of the exemptions applied for.

2.2 ***Recognised Certification Body:*** a body or organisation that is registered under the latest editions of the European Federation for Non-Destructive Testing (EFNDT) Mutual Recognition Agreement (MRA) Schedule 2 or the International Committee for Non-Destructive Testing (ICNDT) MRA Schedule 2 against the requirements of ISO/IEC 17024 to issue certification in compliance with the current editions of EN ISO 9712.

2.3 ***National Aerospace NDT Board:*** a national aerospace NDT board established to control EN 4179 certification within the country concerned. To be acceptable to BINDT/PCN, the board concerned must be a member of the Aerospace National NDT Board Forum (ANDTBF). See document ANDTBF/02.

2.4 ***Other certification schemes:*** certification schemes that fall outside the parameters and remit of Recognised Certification Bodies as detailed in Section 2.2 above. Such schemes may include:

- *ASNT:* central certification issued by the American Society for Nondestructive Testing (ASNT).
- *SNT-TC-1A:* certification issued internally in accordance with an employer's written practice.
- *EN 4179:* certification within the aerospace sector issued internally in accordance with an employer's written practice.
- *Non-affiliated or non-accredited ISO 9712 schemes:* ISO 9712 schemes administered by bodies not accredited to ISO 17024 or that are not signed up to either of the MRAs detailed in Section 2.2 above.

3. Policy on exemptions

3.1 The final decision on any exemptions remains with BINDT/PCN, which retains the right to deny exemptions at its discretion. This applies to exemption applications that fall within or outside the general policies stated in this document.

3.2 All applications will be reviewed without prejudice before a decision is made on the granting or denial of exemptions.

3.3 Candidates shall not attempt to book an examination nor shall the AQB confirm an examination booking until the status of this application is confirmed.

4. Permitted exemptions

4.1 This section details scenarios where exemptions may be granted.

4.2 Tables 1 and 2 detail the scenarios and examination elements under which exemptions are normally granted; however, this is not guaranteed and the final decision on exemptions remains at the discretion of BINDT/PCN. All other scenarios not listed in Tables 1 and 2 will be considered on merit by PCN/BINDT on a case-by-case basis.

5. How to apply for examination exemptions

5.1 All claims for exemptions should be applied for in the first instance using the form in Annex 1. Applications should be forwarded to the PCN Certification Records Office at: **BINDT, Certification Services Department, Midsummer House, Riverside Way, Bedford Road, Northampton NN1 5NX, United Kingdom**, or by email to: pcn.applications@bindt.org

5.2 All applications should include evidence in support of the exemption sought.

5.3 Verification of current certification status, issued by bodies other than PCN, will be taken up with the Certification Body that issued the certificate for which exemptions are claimed. Please note that certification on which the exemptions were issued must be valid at the time of examination.

5.4 Following verification, the application form will be annotated and returned to the applicant, together with a letter confirming the outcome of the application and detailing any exemptions granted for use in support of a standard examination application to any authorised PCN examination centre.

6. Confidentiality and data protection

6.1 BINDT retains and uses the information given on any Annex 1 application form only for the purpose for which it is provided. The applicant's personal details and any other data provided to BINDT will not be provided to a third-party other than the applicant's chosen PCN examination centre, unless express permission is given by the applicant. By submitting an Annex 1 application form, the applicant is agreeing to these conditions.

Table 1. Scenarios where examination exemptions are normally granted for PCN certification at Levels 1 and 2

Scenario	Exemptions considered		
	Examination element	Level 1	Level 2
Holders of a current certificate issued by another Recognised Certification Body (see definitions) and which demonstrates compliance with ISO 9712 and covers the same NDT method as the PCN certification sought. In addition, the NDT level shall be relevant in terms of the exemptions applied for	General paper	✓	✓
	Specific paper	✓	✓
	Practical	X	X
	Written instruction	N/A	X
Holders of a current certificate issued by the employer under the requirements of EN 4179 providing the examination was administered by an Outside Agency approved by the applicable National Aerospace NDT Board (see definitions). The certification covers the same NDT method as the PCN certification sought. In addition, the NDT level shall be relevant in terms of the exemptions applied for	General paper	✓	✓
	Specific paper	X	X
	Practical	X	X
	Written instruction	N/A	X
Holders of certification issued by the employer under the requirements of SNT-TC-1A	General paper	X	X
	Specific paper	X	X
	Practical	X	X
	Written instruction	N/A	X
Holders of ASNT Level 1 or Level 2 ISO 9712 certification centrally issued by ASNT. The certification must cover the same NDT method as the PCN certification sought. In addition, the NDT level shall be relevant in terms of the exemptions applied for	General paper	✓	✓
	Specific paper	X	X
	Practical	X	X
	Written instruction	N/A	X
Holders of ISO 9712 certification issued by other bodies not accredited to ISO 17024 or that are not signed up to either of the MRAs detailed in this document	General paper	X	X
	Specific paper	X	X
	Practical	X	X
	Written instruction	N/A	X

Notes:

1. *This table details scenarios where examination exemptions are normally granted; however, this is not guaranteed and the final decision on exemptions remains at the discretion of BINDT/PCN.*
2. *All other scenarios not listed in this table will be considered on merit by PCN/BINDT on a case-by-case basis.*
3. *UT-PA and UT-TOFD: under current PCN24/GEN requirements, initial candidates for certification in the ultrasonic phased array (UT-PA) and ultrasonic time-of-flight diffraction (UT-TOFD) methods must hold current PCN certification in manual ultrasonic testing (UT) of welds in Category 3.1, 3.2 or both. Consequently, they do not need to attempt a general paper when attempting an initial UT-PA or UT-TOFD PCN examination. This process is managed by the examination centre and an application to BINDT/PCN is not required. Holders of manual UT certification, covering the required product sector(s), that are issued by bodies other than PCN are required to apply for exemptions as per the table above. This application shall be forwarded directly to the chosen examination centre. BINDT/PCN gives consent for the examination centres to manage this process. Where issues arise during the examination centre process, said issues shall be referred to BINDT/PCN for a final decision. Candidates non-exempt under the table above shall attempt the PCN UT general examination element.*

Table 2. Scenarios where examination exemptions are normally granted for PCN certification at Level 3

Scenario	Exemptions considered (by examination part)					
	A	B	C	D	E	F
Holders of a current Level 3 certification issued by another Recognised Certification Body (see definitions) and which demonstrates compliance with ISO 9712 and covers the same NDT method as the PCN certification sought	✓	X	✓	✓	X	X
Holders of current PCN Level 3 certification in another method other than the method under which exemptions are sought	✓	✓	✓	X	X	X
Holders of current PCN Level 2 certification in other method(s) other than the method under which exemptions are sought	X	X	✓*Note 3	X	X	X
Holders of a current Level 3 certificate issued by the employer under the requirements of EN 4179, providing the examination was administered under an Outside Agency approval granted by the applicable National Aerospace NDT Board (see definitions). The certification covers the same NDT method as the PCN certification sought	✓	X	✓	✓	X	X
Holders of Level 3 certification issued by the employer under the requirements of SNT-TC-1A	X	X	X	X	X	X
Holders of ASNT Level 3 certification centrally issued by ASNT. The certification covers the same NDT method as the PCN certification sought	✓	X	✓*Note 3	✓	X	X

Notes:

1. *This table details scenarios where examination exemptions are normally granted; however, this is not guaranteed and the final decision on exemptions remains at the discretion of BINDT/PCN.*
2. *All other scenarios not listed in this table will be considered on merit by PCN/BINDT on a case-by-case basis.*
3. *Level 3 examination Part C requires candidates to attempt 15 questions on each of four NDT methods other than the method in which the Level 3 certification is sought. The Level 3 candidate shall be exempt from the 15 questions for up to four other methods in which equivalent Level 2 or Level 3 knowledge can be proven by the submission of documented evidence.*
4. *All initial Level 3 applicants must hold current Level 2 certification in the same product or industry sector and NDT method as the PCN Level 3 certification sought. Applicants who do not hold current Level 2 certification must complete the practical element of the Level 2 examination as part of the Level 3 examination process. During any future renewal or recertification application, the applicant will be required to provide evidence of continued practical competence or hold the applicable PCN Level 2 certification or complete the Level 2 practical examination element. See PCN24/GEN Section 11 and Annex C for further information.*

ANNEX 1 – APPLICATION FORM FOR EXAMINATION EXEMPTION(S)

Candidates shall not attempt to book an examination nor shall the AQB confirm an examination booking until the status of this application is confirmed.

Personal details	
PCN number (if existing PCN holder):	
Family name/surname:	
Given name(s):	
Full postal address:	
Telephone number:	
Email address:	

1. PCN certification sought

NDT method	Level	NDT technique	Product sector	Industry sector	Scope or category (if applicable)

NDT certification issued by Certification Bodies other than PCN (attach copies of certificates)

NDT method	Level	Certificate number	Expiry date	Issuing Certification Body or agency

2. Examination exemption(s) sought

Applicants should give details of exemptions sought with respect to examination elements or parts

FOR PCN USE			
Registration number:		Exemption(s) granted: ☐ Yes ☐ No	
Details of examination exemptions granted:			
For and on behalf of PCN			
Name (print):		Date:	
Sign:			

7. Change control record

PCN24/PSL49 – Document issue and review status		
Document issue for review	**Changes/amendments**	**Current document status**
Issue 01	New document issued: PCN24/PSL49. Replacing legacy document PSL/49.	1 February 2025.
Issue 02	Clause 3.3 added. Specific paper exemptions information updated in Table 1 for the first scenario. Sentence in red added to the application form.	4 August 2026.
Issue 03	Table 2 amended – EN 4179 accepted for exemption of Part D at Level 3.	November 2026.

The British Institute of Non-Destructive Testing is an accredited Certification Body offering personnel and quality management systems assessment and certification against criteria set out in international and European standards through the PCN Certification Scheme.

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