

Personnel Certification in Non-Destructive Testing – Protecting the future

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THE BRITISH INSTITUTE OF
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The PCN Scheme

Personnel Certification in Non-Destructive Testing (PCN) is a scheme for the certification of proficiency of non-destructive testing (NDT) and condition monitoring (CM) operators. Technicians and engineers practising NDT have a very important role in the NDT quality chain in order to maximise the reliability of inspections.

The British Institute of Non-Destructive Testing (BINDT) takes the reputation of the PCN Scheme very seriously and its responsibility to help end-users maintain high levels of safety and reliability is of the utmost importance.

The training and examination processes are required to be performed to very high standards of integrity and quality, exceeding the requirements of international standards such as ISO 9712. Therefore, the approval and audit processes that BINDT has put in place are very robust.

Training

All new Approved Training Organisations (ATOs) and Authorised Qualifying Bodies (AQB) have training prior to being approved. The training covers the operations of the ATO and AQB in detail, including administration processes, marking examinations, integrity and all PCN requirements.

Audits

An ATO or AQB is subjected to very in-depth audits by BINDT. An organisation can expect BINDT to conduct a three- to five-day audit depending on its scope of approval. The audits take place annually unless the ATO or AQB has been through the full cycle of auditing with no major findings, at which point it can then be moved to biennial audits.

Drop-in audits

BINDT has a permanent auditor located in India to conduct drop-in audits. The auditor will arrive unannounced, interview candidates and audit the ATO or AQB processes. AQB's can expect an unannounced visit at least once a month. BINDT will always conduct drop-in audits of other local ATOs and AQB's when it is auditing in the vicinity.

ID cards for examiners and trainers

BINDT is in the process of issuing identification cards to all tutors, invigilators and examiners that are employed by an ATO or AQB. The identification card will display the name and a photograph of the tutor, invigilator or examiner in order for candidates to clearly recognise authorised staff.

Covert operations

BINDT has a pool of 'secret shoppers' that attend ATOs and AQB's, acting as a candidate to conduct covert investigations. Feedback from the investigations is reported to Jennifer Cook, Certification Services Department Office Manager at BINDT, on a daily basis.

The topics investigated are:

1. Enquiry follow-up;
2. Course schedule planning;
3. Teaching processes;
4. Laboratory equipment;
5. Laboratory safety measures;
6. Laboratory ventilation;
7. Facility;
8. Trainer skills and experience;
9. Food provided; and
10. Examination processes.

BINDT has a process for selecting which ATO or AQB to investigate. The process takes into account the following:

- Any complaints or appeals received;
- Any feedback received;
- Any issues raised during drop-in audits; and
- The Corruption Index score of the country concerned.

The results of the covert operations are reported to the Certification Management Committee (CMC) of BINDT. If serious issues or concerns are raised, the report will be tabled at a certification panel meeting for advice and discussion on a potential course of action. The certification panel comprises industry representatives and BINDT senior management.

Online examinations

BINDT believes that the launch of online examinations in 2018 will help to police the PCN Scheme.

The benefits

- All questions have been reviewed and referenced to the syllabus.
- The content is the same on all examination papers.
- Each paper will have the same syllabus coverage.
- Candidates will train to the syllabus, not train to pass the paper.
- Identical papers will have the same questions but they will appear in a different order.
- AQB's will have no prior knowledge of the paper or its content.
- Tightened security.
- Remote invigilation.
- Instant marking: the AQB will not be able to change any grades or marks.

Exceeding ISO 9712

PCN exceeds ISO 9712 in many areas, such as:

- The number of samples;
- The number of categories (for example welds, ultrasonic testing (UT) 3.1, 3.2, 3.8, etc); and
- An 80% distinction grade.

Product technology

PCN has introduced a separate product technology paper.

Before 2021, all PCN candidates will need to complete a basic maths and product technology paper prior to taking a PCN examination.

Engineering safety, integrity and reliability

The purpose of a PCN certificate is to provide assurances of independence, impartiality and conformity to international standards of proficiency in NDT. The PCN Scheme has built a very good reputation over the many years it has operated and it has been adopted in countries all over the world.

In order to protect the quality and robustness of the PCN Scheme, new measures have now been taken and BINDT has significantly 'raised the bar' in terms of how certification bodies must demonstrate compliance with the international standards to which they are accredited.



PCN Certification

Developed by BINDT for industry



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