

Steve Brawley is CEO of the JIB. Further information on the ECS card scheme is available from www.escard.org.uk



STEVE BRAWLEY JOINT INDUSTRY BOARD

What is an electrician? Qualification and assessment procedures that have been developed by the industry provide a clear answer.



THERE IS OFTEN confusion over what an electrician is and what qualifications someone working on electrical systems should have. However, the electrical industry has recognised formal qualifications that provide a clear qualification route for an electrician.

Standards for electrotechnical qualifications have been defined through industry consultation by government agencies for many years. The industry expects all operatives that are working unsupervised in the electrotechnical sector to be qualified to the industry-recognised NVQ level 3 qualification. The Joint Industry Board (JIB) recognises these standards in the Electrotechnical Certification Scheme (ECS). To qualify for the ECS card as an electrician, a relevant industry level 3 qualification (or recognised equivalent for pre-NVQ) is required which includes the necessary underpinning knowledge and competency assessment.

For all new entrants to become recognised as an electrician the Level 3 NVQ Diploma in Installing Electrotechnical systems and equipment (building structures and the environment) is required.

Alternatively, it may be possible to meet the ECS card requirements with the level 3 NVQ in Electrotechnical Services (Electrical Installation – Buildings & Structures) with the necessary underpinning knowledge qualification (or technical certificate) at level 3 and the AM2 assessment.

Individuals who have some previous experience need an interview with an assessor to develop an individual assessment plan without the need to go back to college to train in the classroom. This is in line with the normal industry qualification requirements, and only focuses on the required part of the assessment. The value of this is that the competence the individual has already achieved is credited toward achieving the full industry qualification.

Qualifications such as the standalone 17th Edition of the IET Wiring Regulations, the Certificate in Fundamental Inspection and the Certificate in the Certification of Electrical Installations (inspection, testing and certification of electrical installations) are designed as professional development for qualified electricians, and, as such, are unsuitable for unqualified personnel or new entrants

into the industry. On their own they do not demonstrate the industry-required qualification and competence needed to be recognised as an electrician.

Any reference to Part P of the building regulations is for a company to comply with the legislative requirement (within England and Wales) and is not a general requirement for individually qualified electricians employed within the industry. Short 'Part P' training programmes are only for individuals who have been working within the industry for at least two years and wish to be registered as a Qualified Supervisor for their company. These courses do not qualify individuals as electricians because the training is focused on the requirements of the Building Regulations. Operatives who are already formally qualified to the NVQ Level 3 do not need to re-qualify if they are the proposed Qualified Supervisor for their company, but will need to demonstrate their knowledge of the Building Regulations during their company's Part P assessment visit by the relevant Competent Persons Scheme provider.

The future training requirements of the industry remain much the same as they were when the electrical apprenticeship was first introduced. Electricians still need a good grounding in electrical theory, which will provide the basis of integrating new and emerging technologies into electrical installations. Electricians also continue to need a full working knowledge of the wiring regulations in order to ensure that their work meets the required British Standards and is safe in its operation.

The JIB has supported apprentice training from its inception in 1968 and some 160,000 installation electricians have been trained under JIB Apprentice Training Schemes. This represents a tremendous achievement by the JIB and the electrical industry in terms of the people who were trained, the companies who employed them and UK plc in terms of their real contribution to the economy over the years.

The best way to train new entrants into the electrical industry is through a formal industry apprenticeship, but there are also opportunities for people to prove their competence through site assessment.

The JIB has a long history of accrediting the formal qualifications held by professional electricians through the ECS card. Anyone who holds an ECS can easily demonstrate that he or she has met the requirements to truly be called an electrician. 🇬🇧