



**Notes of Guidance and
Frequently Asked Questions on
Sector Scheme 8, 9b & 10 & the
Highway Electrical Industry Scheme for
the Registration of Authorised Persons**

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The Sector Scheme for Highway Electrical Works, the Registration Scheme, NVQ / SVQ's and Competency

Frequently Asked Questions – Part One - General

What is the Sector Scheme for Highway Electrical Works?

The Sector Scheme for Highway Electrical Works (Sector Scheme 8, 9B & 10) is a quality management scheme initiated by the Highways Agency to ensure that persons working on their network are competent when carrying out work to do with the installation and maintenance of Highway Electrical Equipment. This currently includes lighting, traffic signals, illuminated or un-illuminated road traffic signs, cameras, Motorway etc. communications, Variable Message signs, environmental and monitoring equipment and slot cutting. It sets out best practice and places additional requirements to those in the Quality Assurance Standard BS EN ISO 9001:2000. In particular there is a mandatory requirement to register all persons who carry out any work function on site, including managers and competent operatives, with the Highway Electrical Industry Scheme for the Registration of Authorised Persons and for all persons to carry a card confirming their registration.

If we don't work on Highways Agency roads, do we need to consider the Sector Scheme?

Yes and No. There is no mandatory requirement to work to the Sector Scheme if you do not work on Highways Agency roads. However if you wish to align yourself with best practice and you are a quality assured organisation, you can work to the Sector Scheme. What is particularly important for all organisations, irrespective of whether you work on Highways Agency roads or not, are the requirements of the Highway Electrical Industry Scheme for the Registration of Authorised Persons.

I thought the Highway Electrical Industry Scheme for the Registration of Authorised Persons was only to do with the Sector Scheme?

No. The Highway Electrical Industry Scheme for the Registration of Authorised Persons has two routes within it. Route 1 is for those quality assured organisations which are accredited to the Sector Scheme. Route 2 is for all other organisations. The key issue is that by following the Highway Electrical Industry Scheme for the Registration of Authorised Persons, you can show that your employees are competent, to a national standard agreed across the industry and with third party auditing, thereby ensuring a robust system. The Health & Safety Executive have indicated that they would wish to support improvement in standards within the industry and recognise that the way forward is to improve competence across the sector. It is hoped that this scheme will form a

benchmark for what the HSE will consider to be reasonably practicable when carrying out investigations in the future.

Who agreed the system?

The Sector Scheme and the Highway Electrical Industry Scheme for the Registration of Authorised Persons together with other supporting requirements, such as the Training Specification and Assessment criteria, which link into the NVQ / SVQ system, are agreed by the Sector Scheme committee and the Registration Board, together with the Training Group which reports to the Sector Scheme Committee. Representatives from across the industry are on these committees, including APSE, ARTSM, ASLEC, CSS, DfT, HA, the ILE and TAG as well as individual employers from contractors and direct services organisations. Some of these representatives, including those from the ILE, were also involved with the formation of the NVQ/SVQ's. These committees continue to meet as required, as the scheme is a "live" scheme and requires ongoing management and development.

Who administers the scheme?

The scheme is administered on behalf of the Sector Scheme Committee and Registration Board, by ASLEC. This is because ASLEC were already involved in improving the competency of employees and had some systems in place prior to the agreement of the scheme, thereby keeping costs lower.

Do we need to be a member of ASLEC to be in the scheme?

There is no requirement to be a member of ASLEC in order to register to the scheme. However there are a number of private contractors and direct services organisations who belong to ASLEC and who gain benefits as a result of their membership. The technical audits carried out are confidential, strictly controlled and documented, complete with an appeals procedure which is the responsibility of the Registration Board and the Sector Scheme committee as appropriate.

Some of our employees are qualified electricians with City & Guilds qualifications, doesn't this mean they are competent?

Traditional qualifications on their own are not sufficient to show competency. Such qualifications indicate a level of knowledge only, what is called under-pinning knowledge. Competency is the combination of knowledge, skills and experience to do the job required. The NVQ / SVQ system is a considerable improvement, since it requires the demonstration and assessment of the application of knowledge.

So if our employees have gained an appropriate NVQ / SVQ, then they are competent?

Yes and No. Gaining an appropriate NVQ / SVQ means that you are competent in the scope of work that the NVQ / SVQ covers, at the time of the assessment , providing two critical aspects are followed. Firstly, any underpinning knowledge or training must have been carried out at least to the standard of the nationally agreed Training Specification, which covers training course syllabi, learning outcomes and any testing or assessment of knowledge required. Such training must have been delivered by HEA (acting on behalf of Lantra Awards) Approved Trainers. Secondly, the assessments must have been carried out in accordance with the nationally agreed Assessment Criteria which details precisely what needs to be checked in terms of scope of work. All of this needs to be carried out in accordance with the Awarding Body's quality requirements (e.g. LANTRA for the Highway Electrical Scheme), documented and held within an individual's portfolio. Both the Training Specification and the Assessment Criteria have been produced by the national committees, working within the Sector Scheme / Registration Scheme. You should be aware that the Training Specification covers all the knowledge required to carry out all works on site, and covers more, currently, than the appropriate NVQ / SVQ.

Why is the Training Specification and Assessment Criteria so important?

The NVQ / SVQ is a generic qualification covering street lighting, traffic signs, traffic signals and the installation and maintenance of other equipment such as communications. Obviously there are differences between these areas of work, and even within, say, street lighting, there is a wide scope. For example, if someone is deemed to be competent to install a standard 4m steel column, does that mean that they are automatically competent to install a 15m column on a motorway, or a raising and lowering column or a high mast column – simply because they can install “ a column”? Most people would say that this should not be the case and could foreseeably lead to a serious accident. It is also important that trainers and assessors are working to the same standard and covering the same material. If there is not one standard, then there will be at least two standards, and maybe more. In such a situation, there is the real possibility that an individual could be deemed as competent, when, in fact, they are not. This could lead to the employer and the trainers and assessors being found wanting.

What is the issue regarding the statement that NVQ/SVQ's may show competency “at the time of the assessment”?

Any assessment can only determine an individual's ability at the time of the assessment, i.e. as a “snapshot” in time. It is widely accepted that in order for competency to remain, that updating training and assessment is required, and that repetition is required. We all know that if we do not regularly apply our knowledge, that we get “rusty” – try and remember all of your mathematics or physics from school or college. This is one of the reasons, for example, why the HSE insist on re-training and assessment at pre-defined intervals for registered First Aiders or First Aid appointed persons. This is also the reason why engineering institutions, such as the ILE, have Continuing Professional Development schemes. The Scheme for Registration of Authorised Persons requires that a Technical Audit takes place at no greater intervals than once every two years, thus ensuring in a

reasonably practicable way, that the systems continue to be in place and that the competencies of an individual continue to be satisfactory within the scope of work that they are expected to carry out.

If operatives are to be registered to the Registration Scheme, shouldn't anyone who might carry out work on site also be registered?

Yes. There is no question that a safer working environment is more likely if clients, engineers and managers lead by example. Ideally, anyone who might visit site to investigate, supervise or check works, such as designers, managers, supervisors, engineers, assistants and clerks of work, and anyone who might check equipment on site, such as manufacturers' engineers or representatives, as well as operatives, should be registered to the Scheme for the Registration of Authorised Persons. In fact the requirements of HD46-05 – Quality Management Systems for Designers, as particularised by the ILE, requires lighting designers to be registered to the Highway Electrical Industry Scheme.

Most of my operatives have been carrying out Highway Electrical work for many years. Do they have to re train or can they have Grandfather Rights

“Grandfather Rights” are available to all operatives that have been working in the industry for a minimum of three continuous years up to and including the date specified in Appendix K of the NHSS 8, 9B & 10 document (or in Table 1 of the Handbook for the Highway Electrical Industry Scheme). For anyone missing this window of opportunity then they can still be issued with a registration card but must obtain an NVQ / SVQ within 5 years.

I am a sub contractor. What do I do?

It depends on your specialisation. If you only carry out excavation and reinstatement work then you are exempt as long as you have registered to the NRSWA register. If you carry out any other work such as erecting poles, then you need to register to the Registration Scheme and obtain a competency card. There are two ways in which you can register. Firstly by approaching your main client and asking to be registered under his registration – this would be suitable for labour only sub contractors and one man operations. Secondly, to register directly yourself – this would be more suitable for larger sub contractors but would also apply to smaller one man operations having more than one client.

The Sector Scheme for Highway Electrical Works, the Registration Scheme, NVQ's and Competency

Frequently Asked Questions – Part Two – The Sector Scheme & the Registration Scheme

(If you have started reading here – please read Part One first)

Obviously we want to be a competent organisation, with competent employees, but we are not Quality Assured and don't work on Highways Agency Roads. So, what is the process for us?

If you want your employees to be competent to a nationally agreed standard, and you want your system of competency to be to a nationally agreed standard, which it is hoped will form the benchmark for what the HSE will consider to be reasonably practicable when carrying out investigations in the future, then you need to belong to the Highway Electrical Industry Scheme Scheme for the Registration of Authorised Persons. The first step is to register the organisation.

You can do this simply by speaking to ASLEC, the administrator for the Scheme, on 01273 491145 or email aslec@bowden-house.co.uk to register your interest and they will talk you through the process.

That sounds easy enough, but what are the actual steps required?

All the information is available in downloads from www.highwayelectrical.org.uk/hea, just click on the links to Registration. The key information for this route is in Clause 9 and Appendix 5. The main steps are as follows:

1. You will need to register your interest by contacting ASLEC on 01273 49115 or by email to aslec@bowden-house.co.uk.
2. ASLEC will organise an initial assessment carried out by a Technical Auditor.
3. You will normally need to appoint an Authorising Officer and a Qualified Supervisor (there are certain exemptions for defined “smaller” organisations and client organisations). These positions have certain qualification and experience requirements attached to them in order to ensure that the competency system is robust. You will also need to define the Responsible Manager who must be an employee of the organisation.
4. You will need to pay the annual registration fee The fee is set in accordance with the organisations' financial turnover levels, being lower for lower turnovers.

Once our organisation is registered, what do we have to do next?

Once your Authorising Officer and Qualified Supervisor have been on the relevant familiarisation course, they will know what to do. The main steps are as follows:

1. Each employee that you wish to register, will need a portfolio of evidence, which sets out, amongst other things, records of any training, qualifications and

assessments which are relevant in respect of the scope and level of work that they are expected to carry out. This is used for the issuing of an Authorisation certificate to permit the employee to carry out work on site and be classified as an Authorised Person.

2. Complete the application form for the registration of each employee on-line, print a copy of this off and send it together with a declaration of evidence of qualifications and a copy of their authorisation certificate.
3. On receipt of the applications, and after they have been scrutinised, a minimum of 10% of all applications submitted will be checked to ensure the correct procedures have been followed.
4. Registration cards will then be issued accordingly by JIB / SJIB through ASLEC. There are four types of Registration card – Trainee, Skilled Person, Supervisor and Approved Person.

Does the card state the limits of competency for the employee?

No. The card is confirmation of registration - in effect a "licence to be on site". The legal requirement for ensuring competency rests with the employer, and they must maintain records, such as the employee portfolio as evidence of competency.

I am concerned about the ongoing competency of our employees. What is the system for ensuring this?

The Authorising Officer must, at least, carry out an annual desk top review of the competency of all registered employees. A sample checklist for this is available under the Guidelines section of the HEA web-site. In addition, there is a third party Technical Audit at least every two years. In this way there is evidence that ongoing competency is reviewed and the system can stand up to scrutiny.

How long do the Registration cards last for & how are they renewed?

The cards are valid for a period of three years. They are renewed by an application being made by the employer, together with a declaration / recommendation for renewal and the employee will be required to re-take the health and safety tests.

Will I still need a CSCS card even though I have a Registration Card?

Not if you have a card issued through ASLEC by the JIB / SJIB with the CSCS logo on it. Such cards are affiliated to the CSCS scheme and therefore acceptable on main contractor group sites.

Why is there a Highway Electrical Health & Safety Test as well as a CITB test?

The preferred test is the ECS Highway Electrical version H&S test which includes additional highway electrical H&S questions and in this instance only one test is required. If you elect to take the CITB H&S test, then because there are special and unique risks associated with highway electrical equipment, both in the equipment themselves and in the agreed ways of working, which are not catered for in the CITB test, a separate Highway Electrical Health & Safety Test must be taken.

I act as the client. I want to set a good example. What is the process for me?

You will need to apply for an Approved Persons card. This is available for persons whose employer is a Registered Organisation and/or has a requirement to attend site in a capacity such as a client, consultant etc., unless accompanied by a Registered Authorised Person. In order to achieve this you must:

- Have passed the ECS Highway Electrical version Health & Safety Test or equivalent
- Have evidence to show you are competent for work actually carried out on site contained within your portfolio

I'm not used to taking tests. Is there any help on this?

The tests take the form of multiple choice and the question bank is available as a download from the Registration Scheme part of the HEA web site. It is perfectly understandable that you might need some refresher training to prepare for this and a course has been prepared precisely for this purpose. Please contact ASLEC on 01273 49115 or by email to aslec@bowden-house.co.uk.

I want to specify the Sector Scheme / Highway Electrical Industry Registration Scheme in my contract – is there any wording available?

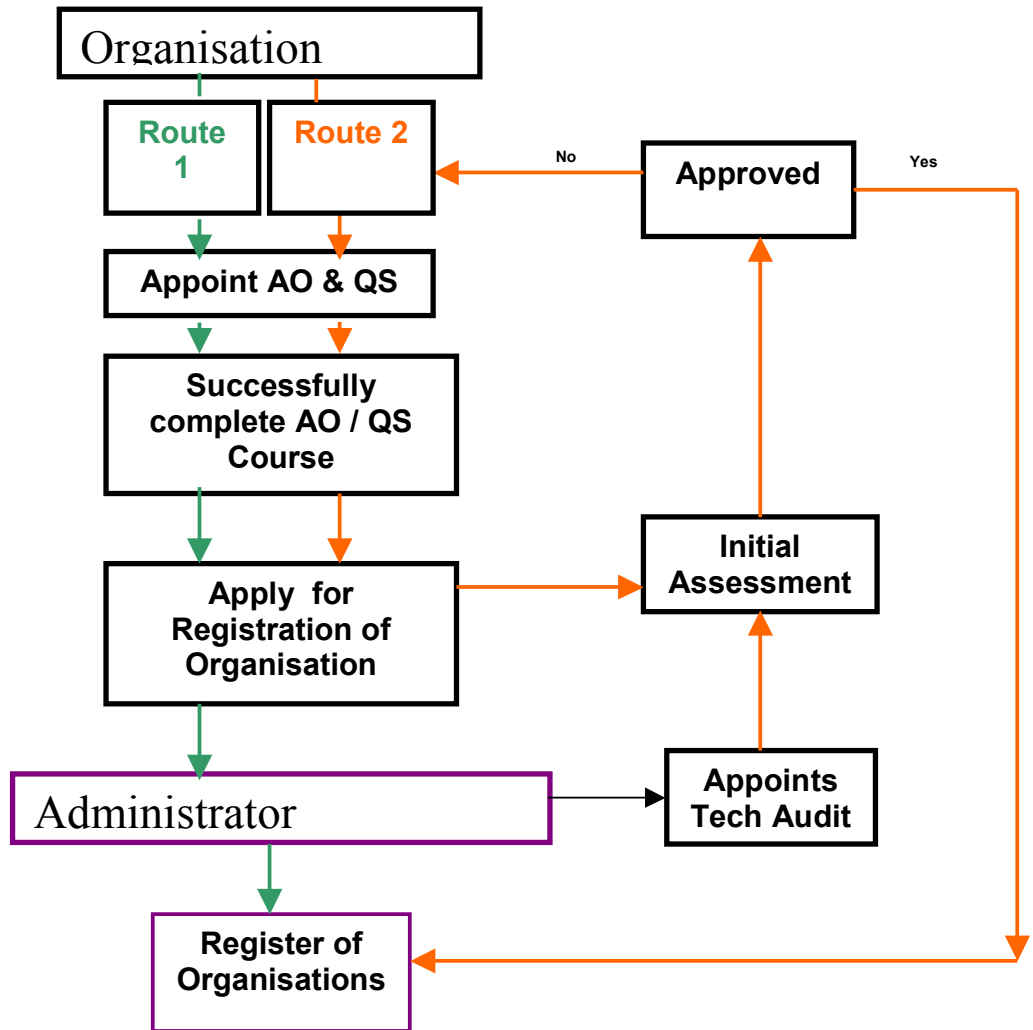
Yes. Simply go to the Guidelines section of the HEA web site at www.highwayelectrical.org.uk/hea and download the sample Contract clause which you can use in whole or in part.

As the client, can I ask that manufacturer's representatives who have cause to visit site be registered as well?

There is no requirement for manufacturer's representatives to be registered providing they are accompanied by a Registered Authorised Person in each and every instance. However you may wish to ensure the competency system is complete by requesting that they register under the Scheme for the Registration of Authorised Persons. Obviously, depending on the work they carry out, they will need evidence of other training and competency. HEMSA has established a "Site Safety Certificate" as part of this process.

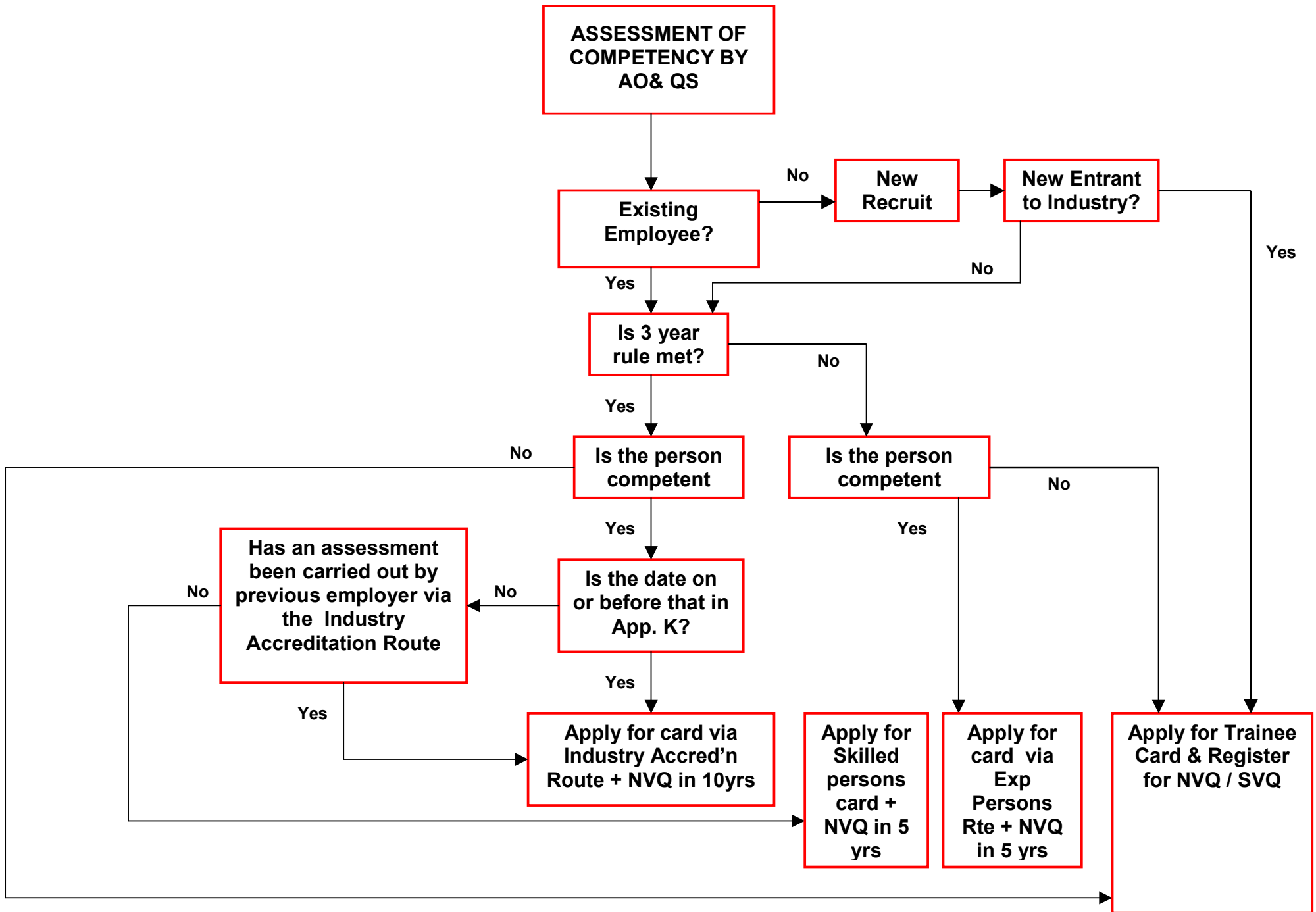
We are Quality Assured to BS EN ISO 9001:2000 and work on Highways Agency Roads – what do we have to do to be approved for the Sector Scheme?

Your QA system will have to be reviewed and modified to ensure it meets the requirements of the details of the Sector Scheme. This can be downloaded from www.highwayelectrical.org.uk/hea or from the UKAS web-site www.ukas.com. In addition you will need to meet the requirements of the Highway Electrical Industry Scheme Scheme for the Registration of Authorised Persons – which is covered in the rest of these frequently asked questions.



Registered Organisation Flow Chart

Note: Preparation of Employee Portfolios ideally needs to be completed prior to Registration of Organisation



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Frequently Asked Questions – Part Three – Details of Types of Registration

(If you have started reading here – please read Part One first)

How many types of Registration are there?

There are four types of registration card:

1. Trainee

This is coloured white (previously green) and is available for operatives who have not yet been designated as an Authorised Person by their employer.

These employees must:

- Be employed by a Registered Organisation
- Have attended a health & safety awareness course
- Have passed the ECS Highway Electrical version Health & Safety Test or equivalent
- Be undergoing training in line with the Training Specification and have registered with an approved assessment centre for the appropriate NVQ / SVQ

2. Skilled Persons

This is coloured either gold (previously platinum) for electricians or white (previously yellow) for all other skilled persons. There are four ways in which skilled persons may achieve registration:

2.1 The ILE Route – the employee must:

- Be employed by a Registered Organisation
- Have gained Level 1,2 or 3 of the ILE training scheme as appropriate to the level of tasks being carried out
- Have passed the ECS Highway Electrical version Health & Safety Test or equivalent

(Note: The ILE training scheme route is now closed)

2.2 The Training Specification Route – the employee must:

- Be employed by a Registered Organisation
- Have achieved NVQ / SVQ Level 2 / 3 as appropriate to the level of tasks being carried out
- Have had the required underpinning knowledge delivered in accordance with the Training Specification by HEA Approved Trainers

- Have passed the ECS Highway Electrical version Health & Safety Test or equivalent

2.3 The Industry Accreditation Route – this route is only available until the dates specified in Appendix K of the NHSS 8, 9B & 10 document or Table 1 of the Handbook for the Highway Electrical Industry Scheme. The employee must:

- Be employed by a Registered Organisation
- Be currently working within the Highway Electrical Industry
- Have evidence of continuous working therein for the immediate past three years & have an employer's declaration accordingly
- Have evidence of recognised training and experience assessed by the employer's Authorising Officer to the appropriate level defined in the Training Specification
- Have passed the ECS Highway Electrical version Health & Safety Test or equivalent
- Have passed the required site based skills test specified in the Training Specification appropriate to the scope and level of the work being carried out
- Achieve the appropriate NVQ / SVQ level 2/3 within a maximum period of 10 years

2.4 The Experienced Worker Route – the employee must:

- Be currently working within the Highway Electrical Industry
- Have evidence of continuous working therein (or an allied electrotechnical sector) for a period deemed as appropriate by the employer (this would be unlikely to be less than twelve months) & have an employer's declaration accordingly
- Have passed the ECS Highway Electrical version Health & Safety Test or equivalent
- Have passed the required site based skills test specified in the Training Specification appropriate to the scope and level of the work being carried out
- Achieve the appropriate NVQ / SVQ level 2/3 within a maximum period of 5 years

3. Supervisor

This is coloured white (previously red) and is available for persons whose employer is accredited to the Sector Scheme. These employees must:

- Be assessed as competent in the appropriate areas
- Have passed the ECS Highway Electrical version Health & Safety Test or equivalent

4. Approved Person

This is coloured white (previously red) and is available for persons who are not Authorised Persons but whose employer is a Registered Organisation and/or has a requirement to attend site in a capacity such as a client, consultant etc., unless accompanied by a Registered Authorised Person.

These employees must:

- Have passed the ECS Highway Electrical version Health & Safety Test or equivalent
- Be assessed as competent in the appropriate areas

How long do the Registration cards last for?

The cards are valid for a period of three years.

How are the Registration Cards renewed?

An application must be made by the employer, together with a declaration / recommendation for renewal and the employee will be required to re-take the health and safety and skills tests.

Why is there a Highway Electrical Health & Safety Test as well as a CITB test?

The preferred test is the ECS Highway Electrical version H&S test which includes additional highway electrical H&S questions and in this instance only one test is required. If you elect to take the CITB H&S test, then because there are special and unique risks associated with highway electrical equipment, both in the equipment themselves and in the agreed ways of working, which are not catered for in the CITB test, a separate Highway Electrical Health & Safety Test must be taken.

For further information – go to www.highwayelectrical.org.uk/hea