

The ECS and you

An in-depth look at the Electrotechnical Certification Scheme (ECS)

By Steve Brawley, CEO of the Joint Industry Board for the Electrical Contracting Industry

The last issue of *Wiring Matters* provided an overview of the Construction Skills Certification Scheme and affiliates such as the Electrotechnical Certification Scheme (ECS), which is specifically for the electrical industry. As legislation and restrictions around construction site access become tighter, the need to own the right competence card for your occupation is paramount.

The ECS was the first craft skills accreditation service in British industry, independently developed and unique in its time. Back in 1993, admission to the scheme was restricted to anyone who could demonstrate competence equivalent to the standards of a National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) at Level 3, whatever their specialism.

Today, the ECS is administered by the Joint Industry Board and the Scottish Joint Industry Board and became affiliated to CSCS when it was first introduced in 1995. The scheme now offers all electrotechnical operatives the opportunity to receive their own card. It also provides cards for those who can demonstrate management skills in the sector, a 'site visitor' designation for non-electrical personnel and the designation 'ECS related discipline' for electrotechnical trades not covered by NVQ/SVQs.

Applicants need to prove they have the required level of health and safety awareness. This may involve having a qualification that provides an exemption, but if not applicants must take a test to demonstrate a basic awareness of H&S issues.

From June 2010, ECS cards issued in England, Northern Ireland and Wales will have a new look, and a new website at www.ecscard.org.uk.

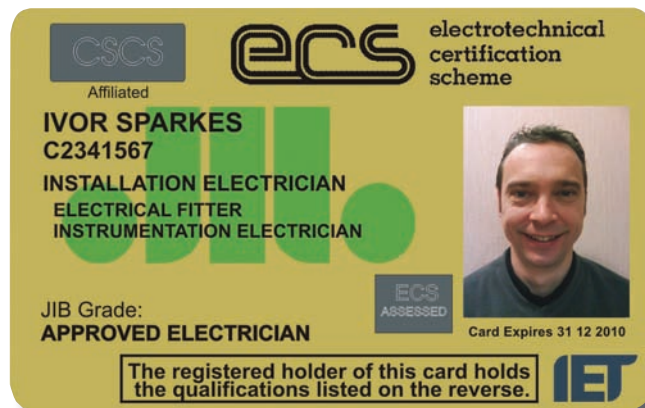
IET links

Following a partnership agreement between the IET and ECS to promote competence and encourage professionalism, existing skilled (gold) and managerial (platinum) card holders can gain a fast track to membership of the Institution. Gold card holders can apply for TMIET membership and platinum card holders can apply for MIET membership.

Also, holders of ECS gold or platinum cards who are members of the IET can have their membership shown by requesting an ECS card with the IET logo printed on the front.

More information

Visit www.ecscard.org.uk, or telephone 0844 847 5098 in England, Northern Ireland and Wales, or 0131 445 9216 in Scotland. An online application form is available at www.theiet.org/ecscard



Overview of card types

Gold card – skilled craft operative	Available for skilled operatives with an NVQ/SVQ level 3 in an electrical discipline.
Apprentices	Apprentices undertaking an Advanced Apprenticeship in any electrical or electronic discipline can obtain an ECS card that has a white background containing 'Apprentice' within a red stripe.
Trainees	All other trainees who are not on an Advanced Apprenticeship scheme can apply for a similar white ECS card depicting 'Trainee' across a red stripe.
Ancillary operatives	If operatives do not meet the technical or vocational standards to qualify for a skilled ECS card (and are not apprentices or trainees), the scheme provides a white card with a brown stripe.
Managers	Platinum cards are available for Site Managers at NVQ/SVQ level 4 and by Contracts Managers at NVQ/SVQ level 5. Managers can hold both a management card and a skilled craft card if they qualify under both criteria.
ECS related discipline	A plain white card carrying the designation 'ECS Related Discipline' has been introduced for a number of specialised electrotechnical occupations that do not currently have industry NVQs.
Site visitor	Any person employed by an electrically-biased organisation, who is not eligible for any other ECS card, but requires regular access to construction sites can apply for a Site Visitor card.
Qualified supervisor	To obtain the Qualified Supervisor endorsement the cardholder must be employed by an organisation certificated to the Electrotechnical Assessment Scheme (EAS) or enrolled on the NICEIC Approved Contractors Scheme and recorded as a Qualified Supervisor within the terms of certification or enrolment.
Data comms	The Data Communication industry now has its own range of disciplines included within the ECS. A full range of cards covering craftsperson, apprentices, managers and trainees is available.
Fire & security	The British Security Industry Association and the British Fire Protection and Security Association have produced a range of disciplines specific to the fire and security industries for inclusion within the ECS, covering craftsperson, manager, apprentice, trainee and site visitor.
Highway electrical	ECS Highway Electrical cards are issued in conjunction with the Association of Signals, Lighting & other Highway Electrical Contractors and are available in three different sectors: public lighting, permanent traffic control equipment and road traffic signs.