

Assessing the

situation

APPROVED

By Chris Long at 12:44 pm, Jan 10, 2007

Blueflame Associates takes a candid look at ACS re-assessment for gas operatives

A gas operative looking at their old ACS certificates and CORGI identity card notices the expiry dates for their domestic ACS assessments is fast approaching. Five years have gone by all too quickly and it is time to consider undertaking ACS assessments again. Many installers may have read about the merits of the new reduced criteria 'ACS Re-Assessment' process. It should save them considerable time 'off the job' and hopefully be a little bit cheaper this time round.

On contacting their local Gas Training and ACS Assessment Centre, an installer asks if he can book to do his Core Gas Safety and Appliances via the new re-assessment route. The easy solution for the person answering the phone would be to say yes and make the booking. However, there are some important pre-requisites to clarify and important differences to discuss before the booking

should be made. The following questions may be asked in order to make an informed recommendation.

Do you need CCN 1 and appliances together?

If the answer is yes then re-assessment may be the right option because the time to complete the assessments will be reduced. But if there are still two years left on the appliance's certificate, for example, undertaking the full re-assessment package would mean those two years would be lost.

Many people spread their assessments out to ease the financial burden and also the time taken off work while attending courses. They may have current ACoP or equivalent qualifications and chose to undertake, for example, CCN 1 in 2001, domestic appliances in 2002, followed by additional appliances, and maybe LPG

changeover in 2004. This was seen as good planning, but is not accounted for if undertaking re-assessment.

Are you undertaking assessments that you already hold, or do you wish to add to your assessment portfolio?

If the later is the case then additional assessments must be taken as an initial rather than re-assessment. The option to mix and match the types of assessments can be facilitated by the assessment centre. However some additional certification fees may be levied by the Certification Body.

The principle behind ACS re-assessment is that you are only assessed on criteria that have changed since the original assessment was undertaken. For example, questions covering Gas Safety Legislation were asked during initial assessment five

years ago during which it was shown that the candidate had an understanding of the Regulations once, and this should not be questioned again. However, if for example the criteria for tightness testing has changed, it will be assessed.

Are your assessments current or only recently expired?

Candidates must undertake re-assessments within 12 months of the original certificate's expiry date. Failure to do so will mean the need for initial assessment again.

Re-assessment is continually updated to identify Standards and Regulations that have changed over a five-year period and therefore someone with a certificate that has expired two years ago may not be assessed to all the relevant criteria.

Have you been working regularly on gas installations, and kept abreast of changes to Regulations and Standards within the industry over the past five years?

The answer to this question will not only identify the candidate's training needs, but also whether re-assessment is a recommended option. If the candidate answers yes to this question, then re-assessment should be 'a walk in the park' – refresher training may not even be required, further reducing the time 'off the job'.

Re-assessment has been designed to re-assess experienced practicing Gas Operatives. It is worth remembering many CORGI Registered Gas Operatives are proud to also be multi-disciplined in the plumbing, heating and even electrical installation and testing so with all the changes taking place may benefit from additional training. We are only human and can not be expected to remember everything we are legislated to deal with nowadays

However, even for the most up-to-date and experienced gas operative nerves may be an issue.

Many operatives have undergone an assessment and, due to extreme nerves (many gas operative would prefer a trip to

the dentist than undertake an ACS assessment), have missed a simple task or check – for example, checking the flame supervision device (FSD) on the multifunctional valve and the friendly assessor has said those dreaded words "have you forgotten something" whereby we look around in sheer panic, look at the boiler in desperation, swear under our breath and test the FSD. On initial assessment this is quite acceptable practice, however, on re-assessment it is not. To clarify the differences the two assessment criteria are shown.

The assessment marking criteria that an assessor follows for initial practical assessments are as follows:

Attempt 1

All tasks addressed (this can either be core safety or an individual appliance assessment).
100% correct = Pass
Anything else = Referred at this stage

Attempt 2

At this stage only practical performance criteria failed in Attempt 1 are retaken. For example, if undertaking CCN 1, repeating the test on the multi-functional valve including the FSD)
100% correct = Pass
Anything else = Referred at this stage

Attempt 3

Following an unsuccessful 2nd attempt a partial re-take assessment is completed re-taking a full task containing the performance criteria referred at Attempt 2.
100% correct = Pass
Anything else = Referred at this stage

Attempt 4

At this stage only practical performance criteria failed in Attempt 3 are re-taken.
100% correct = Pass
Anything else = Referred at this stage

Installers have up to four attempts to complete any of the assessments undertaken. However, when undertaking re-assessments, assumptions have been made regarding the candidate's competence and experience and, as

such, the assessment regime is less forgiving, and is as follows.

Attempt 1

All tasks addressed (this must be core elements and any appliance elements)
100% correct = Pass (no minor mistakes)
Anything else = Referred at this stage

Attempt 2

Following an unsuccessful first attempt the candidate is offered further training or a partial re-take assessment, re-taking a full task containing the performance criteria or full appliance assessment referred at Attempt 2.
100% correct = Pass
Anything else = Failed both core and appliance assessments

Note: the assessor may use their discretion to ask the candidate to repeat minor parts of the practical task or ask oral questions to clarify understanding.

As illustrated the assessment marking regime for re-assessment is indeed more stringent than that applied to initial assessment candidates. However, if the candidate has been honest when they were asked the initial questions after their first phone call this should not be a problem.

The gas operative wishing to undertake the ACS assessment process for the second time should, therefore, consider the best route for themselves. Remember the choice of initial or re-assessment lies with the gas operative.

The advice of your local training and assessment provider should be sought. Discuss with them the need for refresher training and whether to do initial assessment or re-assessment. Overall be honest when you are asked questions, the centre is trying to recommend the best route for you. If you aren't it could take you longer and cost you more if you have to go back and repeat an assessment because you were referred or even failed.