
Amateur radio guidance

How to become a radio amateur in the UK

GUIDANCE:

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About this document

This document describes how to become a licensed radio amateur in the United Kingdom and Crown Dependencies, including guidance for those returning to the hobby after an absence. It also describes the arrangements for those who hold an overseas amateur radio licence or examination qualification and who wish to operate in the UK or apply for a UK Amateur Radio Licence.

Contents

Section

1. Arrangements for UK radio amateurs	4
2. International and reciprocal arrangements	6
3. Fees	8

Annex

A1. Further information	9
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1. Arrangements for UK radio amateurs

What is amateur radio?

- 1.1 Amateur radio is a hobby that enables participants to experiment with and learn about radio and to communicate with other radio amateurs around the world. By international agreement, amateur radio is exclusively non-commercial. This same agreement also says that each country must ensure that its radio amateurs are operationally and technically competent.

How do I become a radio amateur?

- 1.2 A person who wishes to operate as a radio amateur in the UK or Crown Dependencies (Guernsey, Jersey and the Isle of Man) must hold a Licence issued by Ofcom or qualify under the international arrangements, described below. Ofcom issues three levels of Amateur Radio Licences - Foundation, Intermediate and Full. The licences grant additional privileges (for example greater power, more frequencies or operating farther afield) as the radio amateur progresses. To qualify for each Licence, applicants must pass an examination at the corresponding level, to demonstrate that they have the skills to use amateur radio at that level. The examinations are administered by the Radio Society of Great Britain ('RSGB'), the principal representative body for radio amateurs in the UK.
- 1.3 Each level of examination builds on the last. To sit the Intermediate-level examination, a candidate must first pass the Foundation examination. To sit the Full-level examination, the candidate must first pass the Foundation and Intermediate examinations.
- 1.4 However, there is no requirement for radio amateurs to hold each class of licence as they progress, as long as they pass the examinations. This means that a candidate who passes all three examinations at once (which some candidates do) may apply immediately for a Full Licence; there would be no need to apply for a Foundation and/or Intermediate Licence first.
- 1.5 Arrangements for foreign radio amateurs are described below.

How hard are the examinations?

- 1.6 The Foundation examination is multiple choice and tests the candidate's knowledge of basic technology and the terms and conditions of the UK Amateur Radio Licence. This aims to ensure that anyone using amateur radio knows what is and is not permitted, so reducing the risk of the station causing interference to other users of radio.
- 1.7 The Intermediate examination builds on this. It is in two parts. The first is a practical assessment, which includes basic practical electronics (for example soldering a simple circuit), followed by a multiple-choice paper.

- 1.8 Finally, the Full examination is a demanding multiple-choice test of radio and electronics theory.
- 1.9 When a candidate passes one of the amateur radio examinations, the RSGB issues a Candidate Number, which denotes the level of the exam that the candidate has passed. The successful candidate may then quote that candidate number, when applying for a licence at that level from Ofcom, via the licensing portal¹.
- 1.10 The portal includes instructions on how to register to use it, if an applicant is not already registered.

How do I study for and sit the examinations?

- 1.11 The Radio Society of Great Britain is the principal representative body for radio amateurs in the UK. They administer amateur radio examinations and have published guidance for students². It includes an interactive map to help find where the various courses are given and to locate the nearest examination centre.
- 1.12 These examinations are available online. The RSGB has published information about online exams for candidates³.

I used to be a licensed radio amateur but left the hobby. How do I reapply?

- 1.13 A radio amateur who passed an examination some years ago but surrendered their licence or allowed it to lapse (and who does not therefore now hold any UK amateur radio licence) may reapply for an Amateur Radio Licence at the same level, without the need to take a fresh examination. Returners must submit one application only. This must be for the higher or highest class of licence previously held.
- 1.14 Ofcom must be satisfied that the applicant has passed the examination at the level of the licence being applied for. This can be demonstrated by including a copy of an old exam pass certificate or an old licence with the application form. You need not request a Candidate No from the RSGB. Candidate Nos are used when someone first applies for a licence at a given level, having passed the relevant examination. A radio amateur who held both the Class A and Class B Full licences may apply for only one Amateur Radio (Full) licence today.

¹ <https://ofcom.force.com/licensingcomlogin>

² <http://rsgb.org/main/clubs-training/for-students>

³ https://rsgb.services/public/exams/documents/online_exam_remote_invigilation_candidates_instructions.pdf

2. International and reciprocal arrangements

I hold a foreign amateur radio licence. May I operate in the UK?

- 2.1 The holder of an amateur radio licence issued by some other countries may operate in the UK for up to three months, without the need to obtain a UK licence.

Countries applying CEPT Recommendation T/R 61-01

- 2.2 A radio amateur who holds a qualifying licence (equivalent to the UK Amateur Radio (Full) Licence), issued by a country that operates CEPT Recommendation T/R 61-01⁴, may operate in the UK for up to three months. The Recommendation lists participating countries and the licences that qualify. Not all participating countries are members of CEPT.

Countries not applying CEPT Recommendation T/R 61-01

- 2.3 A radio amateur may hold a licence (equivalent to the UK Amateur Radio (Full) Licence) issued by another country that does not operate under CEPT Recommendation T/R 61-01 but with which the UK has a bilateral reciprocal agreement for temporary operation in each other's country. In these cases, the radio amateur who is visiting the UK may operate for up to three months without the need to obtain a UK amateur radio licence.

I passed an overseas amateur radio exam. How do I get a UK licence?

- 2.4 Some overseas radio amateurs may qualify for a UK licence. For further details on operating in the UK under these arrangements, please see §2.33 of our Guidance for amateur radio licensees⁵.

Countries applying CEPT Recommendation T/R 61-02

- 2.5 The holder of a valid HAREC, issued under the arrangements contained in CEPT Recommendation T/R 61-02⁶, may apply for a UK Amateur Radio (Full) Licence. We have yet to automate this process and the application must therefore be submitted on a paper application form⁷, accompanied by a copy of the overseas HAREC. A fee is payable though this is payable once only. The licence is a normal UK Amateur Radio (Full) Licence and is valid indefinitely.

⁴ <https://docdb.cept.org/document/925>

⁵ https://www.ofcom.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0026/82637/amateur_radio_licence_guidance_for_licensees.pdf

⁶ <https://docdb.cept.org/document/926>

⁷ https://www.ofcom.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0019/47233/of346.pdf

Countries not applying CEPT Recommendation T/R 61-02

- 2.6 A radio amateur may hold a licence issued by a country that does not operate under CEPT Recommendation T/R 61-02 but with which the UK has a bilateral reciprocal agreement for issuing Full-level licences. In these cases, we may issue an Amateur Radio (Full) (Temporary Reciprocal) Licence to qualifying radio amateurs. The application process is manual and applicants must submit a completed application form⁸, accompanied by a copy of their amateur radio licence. The application form includes a list of countries with which the UK has such agreements.
- 2.7 The Amateur Radio (Full) (Temporary Reciprocal) Licence is valid for six months but it may be renewed for a further six-month period. A fee is payable when the licence is first issued and upon each subsequent renewal.
- 2.8 We issue UK Amateur Radio Licences regardless of the nationality of the applicant.

I passed my UK amateur radio full examination/I hold a UK Amateur Radio (Full) Licence - how do I get an amateur radio licence overseas?

- 2.9 Each country has its own licensing arrangements and the holder of a UK Amateur Radio Licence must ask the licensing authority there about the arrangements for obtaining a licence. Some countries have agreed to recognise each other's examinations, as we describe above.
- 2.10 A person who has passed the UK Full examination may be able to get a licence in another country, if that country applies CEPT Recommendation T/R 61-02. To get the overseas licence a UK HAREC is needed. These are available from Ofcom, to holders of the Amateur Radio (Full) Licence or to those who can otherwise demonstrate that they have passed a UK Full-level examination.
- 2.11 If we have a bilateral reciprocal agreement with the country, the holder of a UK Amateur Radio (Full) Licence may be able to obtain a licence from the other country. The UK radio amateur must consult the licensing authorities in the other country on the arrangements for obtaining a licence there.
- 2.12 We have published further information on this, starting at §2.20 of our Guidance⁹.

⁸ https://www.ofcom.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0019/47233/of346.pdf

⁹ https://www.ofcom.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0026/82637/amateur_radio_licence_guidance_for_licensees.pdf

3. Fees

What fees does Ofcom charge for the Amateur Radio Licence?

- 3.1 If an applicant obtains an Amateur Radio Licence from our portal¹⁰, it is issued free of charge. The portal includes guidance on how to register, if an applicant has not already done so.
- 3.2 If an applicant submits a paper application form, we charge a single (not annual) fee of £20, to offset some of the costs involved.
- 3.3 However, the fee for an Amateur Radio (Full) (Temporary Reciprocal) Licence is £20, payable when the licence is first issued and again, on each subsequent renewal.

¹⁰ <https://ofcom.force.com/licensingcomlogin>

A1. Further information

Further information on amateur radio licensing

A1.1 For further information about amateur radio licensing, please contact us at:

Spectrum Licensing

PO Box 1285

Warrington

WA1 9GL

E-mail: spectrum.licensing@ofcom.org.uk

Website: www.ofcom.org.uk/manage-your-licence

Tel: 020 7981 3131 or 0300 123 1000