



Chair's Introduction Executive Summary

2019 has been a very exciting year for ECS as the Scheme continues to develop to meet the ever-changing needs and expectations of individuals, businesses, government and the wider electrotechnical industry. The key focus has been to ensure that training, qualifications and occupational competence standards evolve to meet these needs and that the UK electrotechnical industry has the skills to operate in a safe and competent manner.

I am pleased to say that the Electrotechnical Certification Scheme (ECS) remains the personnel certification scheme of choice for the UK electrotechnical industry and the number of ECS card holders continues to grow with the figure reaching 175,000 in 2019 compared to 160,000 just 12 months ago.

The increase in card holders is proof of the recognition which the Scheme now receives and that customers and

clients are increasingly requesting that work is undertaken by ECS card holders as a means to provide them with the confidence that certified individuals will undertake electrotechnical work in an effective and safe manner.

Perhaps more importantly it is testament to the fact that the wider industry continues to recognise the benefits of the Scheme and its mission to accredit, record and promote the training, qualifications and occupational competence of individuals in the UK electrotechnical industry.

Newell McGuiness,
Chair of the ECS Steering Committee

Governance continues to play a key part

The importance which the industry places on ECS cards and the need to ensure that card holders are equipped with the necessary skills to carry out work in an effective and safe manner means that governance continued to be a key focus for ECS in 2019.

One of the key challenges which we are faced with is ensuring that we are assessing the right skills in order to certify that individuals are meeting the needs of the industry and that clients and employers can have confidence that if a person is holding a particular card they have the skills which are required to do the job.

To meet this challenge, the ECS Steering Committee, who act as the governance board for the scheme, set the strategic direction and develop and maintain standards for individual certification across a range of disciplines. Under the leadership and direction of the independent

Chair, they also review the operational effectiveness of the Scheme and ensure it continues to be aligned with the partnership agreement with the Construction Skill Certification Scheme (CSCS).

Representatives on the Committee come from a range of organisations which span the entire electrotechnical industry and include electrical contractors and electricians together with representatives from ECA, Electrical Safety First, Institute of Engineering Technology (IET), SELECT and Unite the Union. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is also represented on the Committee in an observer role.

The combined strength of the individuals who form the Committee is testament to the importance which is placed on the ECS and the decisions which are made are directly actioned by the JIB who administer the Scheme in England, Wales and Northern Ireland and by the SJIB in Scotland.



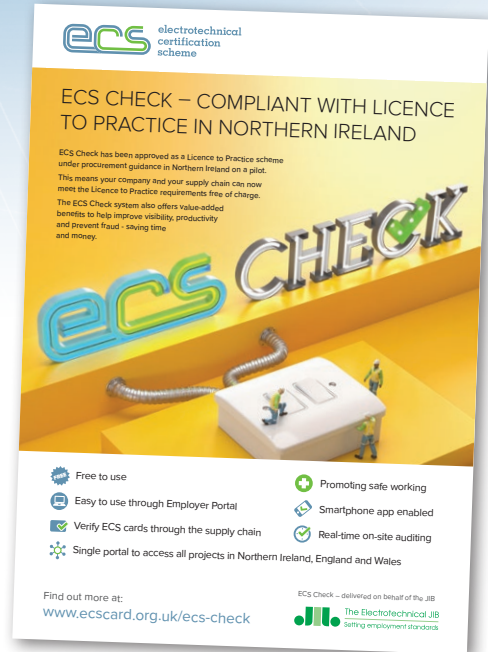
ECS Check continues to gain momentum

For over 50 years the JIB has verified the qualifications of applicants in order to issue them with an ECS card and grading but until recently a system of verification wasn't available for use on site. This has increasingly become a major issue for an industry which recognises the fact that the quality of an electrical installation depends not only on the electrical contractor's company registration but crucially, the person carrying out the work.

The introduction of ECS Check for clients and the supply chain has therefore proved to be a game changer as the online portal now allows main contractors and clients to verify the ECS status of the electrical workforce on site and produce electronic summaries for auditing and reporting.

Clients and main contractors can also use the system to promote apprenticeships and training by setting parameters for the required number of apprentices or trainees on a project and can use it to promote social and best value in procurement.

Following recognition by the Northern Ireland Government that ECS Check meets procurement guidance note 01-16 it is now also operational and approved as a pilot that meets the Licence to Practise (LtP) requirements on government public sector construction contracts in Northern Ireland. As a result electrical contractors can now meet their LtP requirements free of charge.



To find out more about ECS Check visit www.ecscard.org.uk/ecscheck, email ecscheckni@ecscard.org.uk or call **01322 661622**.

2019 sees significant increase in card holders



Investment in both people and IT systems proved to be a major factor in the significant increase in card holders in 2019 with more than **50%** of the industry (**175,000**) covered by ECS compared with **160,000** in 2018.



More than **£500,000** was invested by the JIB in England, Wales and Northern Ireland to update the ECS systems in order to provide a more straightforward and efficient service.

As a direct result, the turnaround times for card production has dropped substantially with cards consistently being processed in five days or less.



This major investment has included establishing the **Employer Portal** for companies to better manage their workforce requirements and the MyECS Portal for individuals. Over **2,000** companies now use the Employer Portal and over **99%** of applications are now processed online – both of which have proved that the investment has been worthwhile.



There have been a number of other key successes for the Scheme in 2019 which include the approval of over **55,000** ECS registrations, the undertaking of **50,000** ECS HSE Assessments and no less than **22,000** people achieving Registered Electrician status.



ECS has also been working hard to improve the service offered by the call centre with **95%** of enquiries now being answered first time and average call waiting times reduced to three minutes.

Work will continue to reduce the call waiting times in 2020 by improving the information available on the website to make information easier to find and provide more clarity on the card application process.

Companies can now sign up to the Employer Portal, by completing a short application at www.ecscard.org.uk/content/ECS-Employer-Portal

New guidance paves the way for the future

As the technology in our industry evolves so too does the need to engage with industry stakeholders to ensure the Scheme continues to be relevant to them and to raise the standards for training and minimum qualifications. It is this need which led the JIB and SJIB, through the ECS Steering Committee, to work with a number of organisations to develop new standards and pathways in 2019.

Although ECS is a personnel certification scheme, standards are set by the industry which require an ongoing dialogue between trade associations, industry representative institutions, training providers, awarding bodies, contractors and employee representatives.

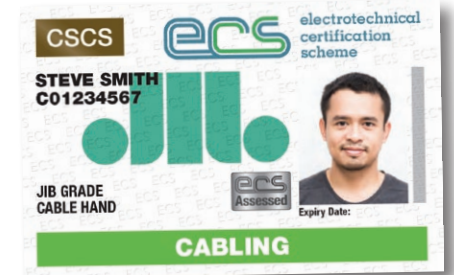
It also requires a process to be completed to show that each industry sector has undertaken a satisfactory process of co-ordination and dialogue to develop the proposed standards. The proposed standards must also comply with the requirements of the Construction Leadership Councils and Construction Skills Certification Scheme (CSCS) and be capable of UK-wide application.

In practice, these standards are normally the recognised apprenticeship standards or equivalent framework and will include the specific knowledge, experience and assessment details for the sector but it is the job of the ECS Steering Committee to ensure that they meet the requirements of the industry.

The introduction of new guidance helped to explain the process for inclusion of new or additional qualification routes for specific occupational disciplines within ECS. It also provides clarity on the fact that once a standard has been agreed by industry, the ECS Steering Committee will consider requests for recognition and produce ECS cards in line with those requirements."

As a result of this work a number of new standards, occupations and qualifications were incorporated into ECS in 2019 which included:

- A new suite of cards for Cabling and Jointing
- CITB Health and Safety Awareness course for Electrical Labourers
- New cards for Building Controls Associate and the Apprenticeship route



- Work with the Defence Awarding Organisation for ex-military personnel
- The Electrotechnical Site Safety Awareness Course (TESSA) in Scotland
- A Cable Network Installer apprenticeship
- IOSH Safety, Health and Environment for Construction Site Managers

Work will continue in 2020 with a number of other sectors including fire, security, data and lighting.

Are you who you say you are?

Online fraud continues to be big news and research from the Experian 2019 Global Identity and Fraud Report shows that the one thing which matters most to consumers is the need to trust and have confidence in the people they are doing business with online.

In much the same way, the electrotechnical industry must be able to trust and have confidence in ECS which is why we remain committed to ensuring the Scheme is protected from those who seek to undermine it.

The introduction of programme links into the card application process is one step which we have taken to combat fraud and eradicate those who try to pass themselves off as qualified when they are not.



ECS has always undertaken manual checks with awarding bodies (such as City & Guilds, EAL or LCL Awards) to ensure that documents submitted in support of an ECS card application are genuine. The introduction of the new programme links will however speed up the process significantly as

it automatically flags discrepancies on the certificate information and as a result the ECS application is subject to further investigation. Those who are found to have submitted fraudulent documentation will have their account suspended and will, where appropriate, be reported to the authorities.

Fortunately, recorded instances of fraud are incredibly low, representing less than 0.1% of applications in 2019 but we will continue to be vigilant in combating fraud. The JIB and the SJIB will continue to support a collaborative approach to criminal prosecution for those found to have been involved in the production and/or supply of fraudulent materials.

WHAT'S NEW FOR 2020

Continuing Professional Development (CPD) will continue to be high on the agenda in 2020 following the introduction of ECS Registered Electrician status for gold card holders. The JIB is developing a CPD system which will be launched in 2020 to encourage and recognise those who are continually learning and developing in their trade. Further announcements will be made in due course.

Work is also ongoing with specialist sectors which include datacomms, related disciplines, fire and security about ways in which standards are achieved and new assessments will be incorporated for these occupations. Watch out for more information as these are released throughout 2020.

The JIB has also been involved in a number of working groups as part of the Hackitt Review into the competence of installers following the disaster at Grenfell Tower. New regulations are expected to be introduced in 2020 and as a result further updates to the Scheme assessment will be required.



Campaign for Regulation in Scotland

The SJIB and SELECT are campaigning to regulate the industry in Scotland by introducing Protection of Title. We are awaiting a date from the Scottish Government to follow up on their promise contained in their "2020 Programme for Government", to issue a consultation on regulating the profession of electrician. We are also pushing to move forward, with Jamie Halcro Johnson a Conservative MSP, a Member's Bill to introduce Protection of Title.



We have continued our political lobbying efforts and a total of 42 MSPs from all parties are now committed to supporting our campaign.

Conclusion

The JIB is pleased that ECS is leading the way with digital verification through smart technology solutions, raising standards and creating a safer built environment. This is being recognised by clients, main contractors and other stakeholders to verify competence through ECS Check, ensuring relevant qualifications and experience have been achieved in a modern build environment. ECS Registered Electrician status also demonstrates significant commitment to raising standards, further developing CPD



and soon-to-be introduced online systems for wider industry benefit. We will continue to work with industry to raise these standards further.

Jay Parmar,
JIB Chief Executive

It is becoming increasingly apparent that clients in the construction sector are more aware of and interested in the qualifications that an individual holds when they come onto a construction site. Developments around ECS in terms of CPD and on-line checking of qualifications are vital to meet the demands of the 21st Century marketplace. The SJIB is committed to these changes and is already working to meet the aspiration of the workforce, employers and clients.



Alan Wilson,
SJIB Director