



THE ASSOCIATION OF ELECTORAL ADMINISTRATORS

QUALIFICATION

CERTIFICATE IN ELECTORAL ADMINISTRATION

CANDIDATE'S INFORMATION PACK

March 2018

Ref: JWT/Infopack_Cert

CERTIFICATE IN ELECTORAL ADMINISTRATION

SYLLABUS GUIDELINES

Module C1 - Electoral Registration

Aim

To provide an understanding and appreciation of the processes involved in electoral registration.

General

Candidates will be required to demonstrate clear understanding of the legal and administrative frameworks governing the registration of electors and an ability to translate that knowledge into the workplace in terms of undertaking the necessary administrative processes for the proper conduct of electoral registration.

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1. Electoral Registration Officer

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Module C2 - Elections Administration

Aim

To provide an understanding and appreciation of the processes involved in the administration of all types of elections.

General

Candidates will be required to demonstrate clear understanding of the legal and administrative frameworks governing the conduct of elections and an ability to translate that knowledge into the workplace in terms of undertaking the necessary administrative processes for elections leading up to, including and beyond the election itself.

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- 7.7 Postal voting statement
- 7.8 Procedure for missing/incomplete documents
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- 9.5 Hours of poll
- 9.6 Sealing of ballot box
- 9.7 Persons entitled to be present
- 9.8 Attendance by police
- 9.9 Polling procedures
- 9.10 Register to be conclusive
- 9.11 Statutory questions
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12.3 Forwarding, retention and public inspection of election documents

12.4 Candidates' deposits

12.5 Return of election expenses

Revised – March2017

QUALIFICATION

INDICATIVE READING LIST

Title	Author(s)/Publisher	Part
Parker's Law and Conduct of Elections	Price/LexisNexis	C & D
Past Examination Papers and Examiners' Reports	AEA	C & D
Schofield's Election Law	Posner & Footner/ Sweet & Maxwell	C & D
Electoral Registration Guidance Manual	Electoral Commission	C & D
AEA Foundation Course Manual	AEA	C & D
AEA Website	AEA	C & D
Electoral Commission Website	Electoral Commission	C & D
Cabinet Office Website	Cabinet Office	C & D
Guidance to Returning Officers and materials	Electoral Commission	C & D
Electoral Commission Guidance to Candidates	Electoral Commission	C & D
Data Protection Act Guidelines	Information Commissioner	C1

Approved by the Qualifications Board - March 2016

QUALIFICATION FORMAT

Requirements

Candidates must be members of A.E.A. at the time of registration and at all times throughout the qualification process. A candidate may not apply to register for the Diploma unless they hold the Certificate. A candidate applying to register for the Certificate must either:

- a) be able to demonstrate three year's relevant experience in both modules of the Certificate: or
- b) have attended all modules of the Foundation course;

CERTIFICATE IN ELECTORAL ADMINISTRATION

Timetable

This part of the qualification must be completed within two years of the appropriate annual registration date except that this requirement may be extended to allow a resit at the first assessment day following the second anniversary of the above annual registration date.

Registration

Registration must be made by 1st September in each year.

Assignments

A programme of four work-based assignments will be issued to the candidate following the annual registration date. The assignments must be submitted in strict numerical order by 31st December, 31st March, 30th June and 30th September respectively in the year after first registration. All four must be passed. Any assignments which are deemed to be failures may be resubmitted once and must be resubmitted within two months of the notification of failure.

Assessment Days (England and Wales)

Assessment days will be held at two regional centres on the same day in both January and July in each year for each registration cohort. The candidate may choose which assessment day (summer or winter) and which centre to attend. The assessments will comprise of:-

- (a) a written examination of 2 hours consisting of five questions from module C1 of which three must be answered. This session will start at 1030 hours.
- (b) a written examination of 2 hours consisting of five questions from

module C2 of which three must be answered. This session will start at 1330 hours.

If either part of the assessment is failed, the candidate may resit the appropriate part(s) once at the next following assessment day (i.e. for July fails at the January session or for January fails at the July session)

Assessment Days (Scotland)

Assessment days will be held at a national centre in January and July in each year for each registration cohort. The candidate may choose which assessment day (summer or winter) to attend. The assessments will comprise of:-

(a) a written examination of 2 hours consisting of five questions from either module SC1 or module SC2, as appropriate, of which three must be answered. This session will start at 1030 hours.

(b) a written examination of 2 hours consisting of five questions from module SC3 of which three must be answered. This session will start at 1330 hours.

If either part of the assessment is failed, the candidate may resit the appropriate part(s) once at the next following assessment day (i.e. for July fails at the January session or for January fails at the July session)

Award of Certificate

Once the candidate has achieved four passes for assignments and passes for both parts of the assessment day, the Certificate in Electoral Administration will be awarded. The successful candidate will be entitled to use the designatory letters AEA (Cert) (or AEA (Cert-Scotland) in Scotland) (or AEA (Cert-N.I.) in Northern Ireland) provided that the candidate remains in membership of the Association.

DIPLOMA IN ELECTORAL ADMINISTRATION

Timetable

This part of the qualification must be completed within two years of the appropriate annual registration date except that this requirement may be extended to allow a resit at the first assessment day following the second anniversary of the above annual registration date.

Registration

Registration must be made by 1st October in each year.

Dissertation

A dissertation on one subject selected from a list of four published by the Examining Board or, alternatively, a different subject approved by the Board upon personal application must be submitted by 30th September following the registration date. An outline of the dissertation must be submitted by the previous 31st January in accordance with the procedures issued by the Qualifications Board. A dissertation outline which does not meet the required standard may be resubmitted once and must be resubmitted within one month of the original notification.

The dissertation must be between 7,000 and 10,000 words and submitted in accordance with the procedures issued by the Qualifications Board. A dissertation which does not meet the required standard may be resubmitted once and must be resubmitted within two months of the original notification. An oral examination linked to the dissertation will take place by 31st January or, in the event of a re-submission, by 1st March. If the oral examination is failed, the candidate may re-sit the examination once. The second examination will take place within three months of the original notification.

Assessment Days

Assessment days will be held at two regional centres on the same day in September of each year for each registration cohort. The candidate must attend the assessment day although he/she may choose which centre to attend. The assessments will comprise of:-

(a) a written examination of 2.5 hours consisting of six questions (three each from modules D1 and D2) of which four must be answered (two from each module). This session will start at 1030 hours.

(b) a written examination of 2 hours consisting of five questions from module D3) of which three must be answered. This session will start at 1400 hours.

If either part of the assessment is failed, the candidate may resit the appropriate part(s) once at the following assessment day to be held at two regional centres in September of the following year.

Award of Diploma

Once the candidate has reached the required standard for his/her dissertation, passed the oral examination and achieved passes for both parts of the assessment day, the Diploma in Electoral Administration will be awarded. The successful candidate will be entitled to use the designatory letters AEA (Dip) provided that the candidate remains in membership of the Association.

Approved by Qualifications Board – 16th January 2003
Revised by Qualifications Board – 16th January 2006
Revised by the Qualifications Board – 29th July 2009
Revised by the Qualifications Board – 20th January 2010
Revised by the Qualifications Board – 18th June 2012

QUALIFICATION - RULES

Format

1. The A.E.A. Qualification will be conducted strictly in accordance with the Qualification Format document. Candidates are deemed to accept the terms of the Format document and these Rules as a condition of applying for registration.

Qualifications and Examining Boards

2. The Qualification will be administered by the Qualifications and Examining Boards in accordance with their terms of reference approved from time to time by the Association.

Applications

3. Applications to register for either part of the Qualification must be made on the appropriate application form and accompanied by the appropriate registration fee. The application form and fee must be received by the Association by the appropriate date. In exceptional circumstances, late applications will be considered provided that:-

- (a) the application is received by no later than 28 days from the registration date;
- (b) a letter outlining the exceptional circumstances is included with the application;
- (c) the prescribed late application fee is enclosed with the application.

4. Within 28 days of notification of registration, the candidate must submit the assessment day application form indicating their choice of date and venue.

Assignment and Assessment Fees

5. On submission of the first assignment, the candidate shall enclose the assignment fees for all four assignments. Marking of the first or subsequent assignments will not commence until such fee has been received.

6. Invoices for assessment fees will be issued in accordance with the following timetable. Candidates for whom an assessment fee has not been received will not be permitted to take part in an assessment day.

Assessment day	Certificate	Diploma
July	by 1st May	
September		by 1st July
January	by 1st November	

Resubmission and Re-sit Fees

7. If a candidate wishes to resubmit an assignment or dissertation or re-sit any part of the assessment day or oral examination, he/she shall notify the Association in writing within 21 days of the date of the letter advising of the original failure. The notification must be accompanied by the appropriate resubmission or re-sit fee.

7a. If a candidate wishes to withdraw a submitted assignment or dissertation before receiving the mark for the document, the appropriate fee shall be payable. The mark for the resubmitted assignment or dissertation will not be released until the fee has been received.

Withdrawals/Failure to Submit or Attend

8. If a candidate chooses to withdraw from the Qualification or fails to submit an assignment or dissertation by the due date or fails to attend an assessment day, all fees paid shall be forfeited except that, in exceptional circumstances and at the absolute discretion of the Association, an appropriate part of the fees may be refunded. Applications to be treated as exceptional circumstances shall be made in writing together with any supporting documentary evidence and shall be made within 28 days of the relevant date. For this purpose, the relevant date will be deemed to be the date on which the Association is notified of the withdrawal or the date by which the assignment or dissertation should have been submitted or the date of the assessment day.

9. A candidate failing to submit an assignment or dissertation or to attend an assessment day or to make application for a resubmission or re-sit in accordance with Rule 7 will be deemed to have failed that part of the Qualification.

Extension of Dates for Submission of Assignments/Dissertations

10. Assignments or dissertations not submitted by the due dates shall be deemed to be failures except that a candidate may apply for an extension of time for submission. Such an application shall be made in writing and must be received by the Association by no later than 21 days before the original date for submission of the document. The application must state the full reasons for the request and shall be accompanied by the prescribed extension fee. The application shall be considered as soon as practicable by two members of the Qualifications Board in consultation. Any extension granted shall be for a period not longer than 21 days after the original date for submission of the document. If the application is not granted, 50% of the fee shall be refunded.

Notification of Results

11. Results for assignments will be notified to candidates within two

months of the date on which the work was received by the Association. Results of assessments or examinations will be notified to candidates within two months of the date of the relevant assessment day.

12. Results for dissertations will be notified in the following manner. If the work obtains the pass mark or higher, the candidate will be notified that it has obtained a provisional pass. Following the oral examination, the Interview Panel will decide whether to confirm the provisional pass and, if so, will fix the grade in accordance with the following Rule. If the provisional pass is not confirmed, the dissertation may be re-submitted in accordance with Rule 7.

13. Candidates will be advised whether their work has achieved a pass or a fail by reference to the following grades:-

Distinction - 75% and above
Credit - 60% to below 75%
Pass - 45% to below 60%
Marginal fail - 40% to below 45%
Fail - below 40%

The actual mark awarded will also be advised.

In cases of marginal fails or fails for assignments or dissertations, the candidate will be advised of deficiencies, errors or technical faults. In cases of resubmitted assignments or dissertations, the highest grade that will be awarded is that of a pass.

Appeals

14. Appeals against fails will only be allowed in extenuating circumstances which meet one of the following criteria:-

(a) in respect of an examination, the candidate was suffering from a medical condition which affected his/her performance on the day;
(b) the candidate was prevented by a medical condition or other emergency situation from attending or completing an assessment day;
(c) in respect of an assignment or dissertation, the candidate was unduly affected by some external circumstance during the period available for resubmission.

15. No appeal against a fail for an assignment or dissertation will be allowed where the candidate has failed to avail himself/herself of the resubmission opportunity.

16. Candidates wishing to appeal must do so in writing within 21 days of the date of the letter notifying the fail. The application must state the full grounds for the appeal and include any supporting documentary evidence. In the case of an appeal on medical grounds, the documentary evidence must include a written statement from a qualified medical practitioner who

has been involved in the treatment of the candidate. The appeal will be dealt with by the Qualifications Board by way of written representations only except that the Board at its sole discretion shall have the right to require the appellant to appear in person before the Board.

17. The application must be accompanied by the appeal fee. This fee will be returned if the appeal is upheld.

18. In cases where the appeal is upheld, the following will apply: -

(a) for an examination, the candidate will be permitted to re-sit the examination at the next assessment day without payment of the re-sit fee;
(b) for an assignment or dissertation, the candidate will be permitted to resubmit the work within two months of the date of the letter notifying the outcome of the appeal without payment of the resubmission fee.

19. The decision of the Association on all matters relating to appeals is final and will be notified in writing to the appellant. No further correspondence on an appeal will be entered into after the Association's notification letter has been sent.

Responsibility for Preparation

20. Candidates are responsible for their own arrangements for registration and compliance with these Rules. The Association can take no responsibility for any failure to comply.

21. Candidates are responsible for preparing for the Qualification under their own arrangements and for undertaking such preparation and study which is required. Candidates should ensure that any courses which they attend in preparation for the Qualification are suitable for their personal requirements. In this connection, it should be noted that no courses other than those directly provided by the Association and in its own name are accredited in any way.

Assignment/Dissertation Requirements

22. Guidance notes for the preparation of assignments and dissertations will be provided to all candidates. Failure to comply with the requirements specified in the guidance notes will be treated as grounds for awarding a fail.

Administrative Procedures/Timetable

23. For each cycle of the Qualification, a detailed administrative framework and timetable will be supplied to each candidate by no later than one month after the closing date for registration. It is the responsibility of the candidate to ensure that they receive and comply with the procedures and timetable set out in the framework.

Marking Procedures

24. Each assignment and dissertation will be marked individually by two examiners using the marking schemes currently in use and approved by the Examining Board. If the two marks awarded are within 10 marks of each other, the average of the two marks will be used to determine whether the script is awarded a pass or a fail. If the difference in the two marks is greater than 10, the script will be referred to a third examiner. Once the third mark has been obtained, the average of the closest two marks will be used to determine whether the script is awarded a pass or a fail. To obtain a pass, the average mark must not be less than 45.

25. Each examination question will be marked by one examiner using the marking schemes currently in use and approved by the Examining Board in relation to each individual question. Any papers which fall in the band from 38 to 48 marks will be referred to a second examiner. Once the second mark has been obtained, the average of the two marks will be used to determine whether the script is awarded a pass or a fail. To obtain a pass, the average mark must not be less than 45.

Relationships and Interests

26. Any candidate who works or has worked with or has any personal relationship with an examiner must declare that fact in writing to the Association as soon as he/she becomes aware of the fact. No candidate should attempt to use their working or other relationship with an examiner, officer or employee of the Association to advance their prospects in the Qualification or to seek an unfair advantage over other candidates.

Cheating and Plagiarism

27. Allegations of cheating or plagiarism by a candidate will be dealt with by the Qualifications Board in accordance with procedures approved by the Board. A candidate found guilty of a charge of cheating or plagiarism may be subject to such penalty as the Board may determine on the evidence including expulsion from the Qualification with or without a recommendation that the candidate be not permitted to register again for the Qualification within a stated time or sine die. A candidate expelled from the Qualification shall forfeit all fees paid. In addition, the matter shall be reported to the Council for consideration as to whether the Association's disciplinary procedures shall be invoked.

Failure to comply

28. A candidate who fails to comply with these Rules may be charged with misconduct and in such cases shall be dealt with by the Qualifications Board in accordance with procedures approved by the Board. A candidate found guilty of a charge of misconduct may be subject to such penalty as

the Board may determine on the evidence. In the case of expulsion from the Qualification, the same provisions as in the previous Rule shall apply.

Approved by the Qualifications Board – 18th January 2005

Revised by the Qualifications Board – 29th July 2009

Revised by the Qualifications Board – 15th January 2013

Revised by the Qualifications Board – 16th March 2017

ASSIGNMENTS

Candidates are required to complete four work-based assignments which have to be submitted on a quarterly basis by no later than 31 December, 31 March, 30 June and 30 September.

By way of example and indication of the sort of topics which are covered by the assignments, set out below are the topics for the last five years.

2017 Programme

1. Electoral Registration Officers are required to notify a person that their postal ballot paper has been rejected. Describe the process and highlight the advantages and disadvantages of this notification from the administrators' and electors' perspective. How could this process be improved?
2. Discuss the requirements to maintain the integrity of the ballot papers of UK Parliamentary General Election from production to after the statutory date for destruction. Include ways in which this process could be improved.
3. What matters should an Electoral Registration Officer consider in determining applications to register at a second address? How could the current situation be improved?
4. What is the purpose of tendered ballot papers? Under what circumstances are they used? Would you recommend retaining them or abolishing them? Suggest an alternative system.

2016 Programme

1. Who is eligible to be registered as an overseas elector? What are the requirements to be registered as an overseas elector and what restrictions apply to those so registered? How could the process be improved, both from an administrator's and elector's perspective?
2. With the requirement for local authorities to conduct a review of polling places and polling districts every five years, outline the process that must be adopted and identify the key elements that must be taken into account in conducting such a review. Suggest changes which would improve the transparency and impartiality of the process.
3. The verification and counting of ballot papers at combined polls is a complex and lengthy process, which has often created difficulties for many returning officers. Consider the whole process from the receipt of ballot boxes up to the point of declaration of results. Identify the potential challenges and suggest how the process could be conducted in order to achieve timely and accurate results.

4. It is generally recognised as good practice to offer prospective candidates an informal check of their nomination papers before they formally submit them. Identify what a valid nomination should contain. Outline the potential issues and solutions that an informal check might throw up, and identify the risks that might be introduced to the process by offering such informal checks.

2015 Programme

1. Electors who cannot be successfully verified through the digital service must provide further evidence to enable them to be registered. Identify the legal processes to continue the elector's request to be registered. What improvements or changes could be made to the current process to benefit both administrators and applicants?

2. Outline the process by which an elector may apply to appoint an emergency proxy at a UK Parliamentary General election. Explain the impact of this process on administrators and electors. Suggest ways in which the current system could be improved.

3. Provide a brief overview of the following registration activities required for the Electoral Registration Officer to discharge his/her legal responsibilities.

- applications to register
- declarations
- reviews

Comment on the challenges associated with these activities and recommend the changes you would make to improve the process from the perspective of administrators and electors.

4. Postal voting is now a major part of the election process and, as a consequence, many Returning Officers outsource not just the printing but also the despatch of postal ballot packs. Identify the risks this can present and identify what measures can be put in place to ensure that the process is carried out both efficiently and as required by law.

2014 Programme

1. Outline the nomination requirements that apply to the following types of election:

- UK Parliamentary
- Principal Area
- Parish/Community Council
- European Parliamentary

Consider the merits of and issues with each different set of requirements for each respective election type.

2. Declarations of local connection were introduced to allow persons without a permanent residence to apply to be registered to vote. Describe the current system, consider how effective the system has been and suggest ways in which the system could be improved and expanded.

3. "The democratic electoral process might be considered by some to be overly bureaucratic and outdated in regard to its administration." Comment on the above statement with regard to the appointment, roles and requirements surrounding polling, postal vote and counting agents and observers. Consider the statutory requirements and comment on their present day suitability or otherwise, suggesting any changes which might improve the process without detrimental effect on the security and secrecy of the poll.

4. Under the Representation of the People Regulations 2001, Electoral Registration Officers must, by 31 January each year, send notification to every person who has an absent vote and whose signature is more than five years old to provide a fresh signature. Examine the process from both an administrator and elector perspective and highlight the advantages and disadvantages of carrying out this review. How could this process be made simpler and more secure?

2013 Programme

1. Detail who may or may not be an election agent, the appointment processes and their roles and responsibilities. Suggest ways in which electoral administrators can assist election agents in undertaking their duties and responsibilities.

2. Evaluate the different data sets that can be used for local data matching under Individual Electoral Registration.

3. Discuss the merits of conducting electoral registration reviews. Consider if there are any detrimental effects in doing so for any of the stakeholders and whether there is a more effective and efficient process of achieving the same outcome.

4. Training is an integral part of delivering efficient and effective electoral services. In developing a comprehensive training plan for both electoral registration and elections, what key elements should be included in the plan and what delivery methods should be employed.

March 2017

QUALIFICATION - FEES FOR CERTIFICATE

Registration	£661
Assignments (each)	£139
Re-submissions	£139
Examinations (each paper)	£184
Re-sits (each paper)	£184
Extension/Late application	£62
Appeal	£104
Feedback on assignments	£35/£87

Basic fee **£1585**

All fees are subject to vat.

March 2017