



The International Marine Contractors Association

Represents offshore marine and underwater engineering companies

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Competence Assessment of Experienced Surface Supplied Divers

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1 Introduction

Over a number of years, IMCA has developed arrangements for the assessment of surface supplied divers with broad diving experience but lacking acceptable IMCA-recognised qualifications.

Three organisations (*Diving Diseases Research Centre, Interdive and National Hyperbaric Centre*) are currently approved by IMCA to carry out this type of assessment and individuals who successfully complete the assessment programme receive a numbered certificate bearing their photograph. These certificates are issued by the organisation undertaking the assessment but are accepted by IMCA and included in the list of IMCA-recognised diving certificates as *IMCA surface supplied diver*.

The competence assessment of divers is not to be considered as an alternative to formal initial training and qualification of divers. Such an assessment is only appropriate to divers who have many years experience, but who are from countries where there is no, or was no, recognised national diving qualification scheme.

Although IMCA sees a role for itself, on behalf of its members, in the assessment of experienced but un-qualified divers, it does not propose to become involved in the approval of basic diver training. IMCA believes that this type of approval should remain with government bodies and approved agencies (e.g. ACDE). IMCA will continue, where possible, to recognise only diver training certificates issued through that route (as listed in the *IMCA International Code of Practice for Offshore Diving (IMCA D 014)*).

The Diving Division Management Committee has agreed that the following criteria need to be met by both the individuals seeking assessment and the organisations carrying out the assessment.

2 Individuals for Assessment

- ◆ Divers can only be put forward for assessment by a company that is (or in the process of applying to become) a contractor member of IMCA's diving division. Individual applications are not accepted.
- ◆ Divers must have been employed by the company putting them forward for assessment for at least the previous 6 months
- ◆ The assessment is only open to nationals of a country that does not have a diver certification scheme recognised by IMCA.
- ◆ Divers to be assessed must provide written proof of their nationality (such as passport, identity card etc.)
- ◆ At the assessment, divers must provide evidence of personal identity with an official photographic document such as a passport, identity card etc.
- ◆ Competence assessment of divers will cover surface supplied divers only.
- ◆ As a minimum, a diver should have worked at least 4 years offshore as a diver, with at least 150 offshore dives, including:
 - at least 25 dives with a maximum depth below 30 msw
 - at least 10 dives involving surface O₂ decompression
 - at least 10 in-water decompressions with an open water stop
- ◆ Divers should have the bulk of their experience documented by logbooks or similar. It is the responsibility of the company carrying out the assessment to check and confirm this experience by means of these records.

If an individual diver cannot meet any of these requirements (for example if surface O₂ decompression is not used in that area) then the assessing body should ask IMCA to consider whether that diver can be assessed. This will normally require the diver to be able to demonstrate that he has significantly more experience than listed above. It may also result in a certificate being issued with restrictions on it.

3 The Assessment Protocol

The assessment protocol for use by organisations approved by IMCA will be based on the following criteria:

- ◆ Evidence of diving experience based on the above minimum requirements
- ◆ A pre-assessment procedure, based on documented evidence
- ◆ A formal assessment procedure covering both theoretical and practical aspects
- ◆ Equipment to be used during assessment must comply with the guidelines given in this document
- ◆ Competence skills will be assessed as per the guidelines given in this document (based on the IDSA surface supplied grade 2 competencies)
- ◆ Assessments are carried out by IMCA approved assessors
- ◆ Records are kept of the assessment of the diver and a copy of the documentation required by IMCA is forwarded to them after the assessment

4 Pre-Assessment Procedure

In order to maintain transparency, the assessing organisation needs to carry out a pre-assessment procedure (normally based on documentary evidence) and provide the following information to IMCA.

- ◆ The number of divers, the client, the location where the proposed assessment is to be conducted and when it is intended to carry it out.
- ◆ Details of the assessors to be used setting out their qualifications and experience (for example a CV and list of certificates held) and the precise areas in which they are to be involved in the assessment.
- ◆ A statement from the IMCA member company putting forward each diver confirming:
 - the diver's name
 - that they are nationals of the country stated
 - that they have the minimum experience required
 - that they have been employed for at least the last six months
 - that suitable facilities and equipment for the assessment will be made available to the assessing body.
- ◆ A formal statement from the body proposing to carry out the assessment confirming that they have validated the various points in the employer's statement and that they are satisfied that all IMCA requirements have been met. This should contain a signed statement that they have seen copies of passports, log books or other documents necessary to satisfy them about these matters. Note: IMCA may request copies of some or all of these back up documents.
- ◆ Language to be used during the assessment.
- ◆ If there are to be any variations from the IMCA requirements in terms of diver experience, equipment used, competences to be assessed etc then these must be identified and permission obtained from IMCA that these are acceptable.

5 Equipment to be Used during Assessments

IMCA requires that certain minimum levels of equipment are used during the assessment and that each diver's competence is assessed in using each of the items of equipment.

All equipment used must comply fully with the requirements of documents IMCA D 018 – *Code of Practice on the initial & periodic examination, testing & certification of diving plant & equipment* – and IMCA D 023 – *Diving Equipment Systems Inspection Guidance Note (DESIGN) for Surface Orientated Systems (Air)*. The company carrying out the assessment must verify this before starting the assessment.

It is recognised that certain locations may have reasons why a part of the assessment is not carried out. An example might be in areas of very warm water where hot water suits are never used for surface supplied diving. In such circumstances the company carrying out the assessment **MUST** inform IMCA before carrying out the assessment and obtain IMCA's agreement to the item being omitted. In such cases an endorsement **MUST** be included on the **FRONT** of the certificate the wording of the endorsement agreed by IMCA.

- ◆ High pressure breathing air compressor with necessary filtration package
- ◆ Low pressure breathing air compressor with receiver(s) and filtration
- ◆ Air purity testing equipment or certified confirmation of compressor purity
- ◆ Surface supplied dive panel for at least one working diver plus standby
- ◆ Hard wire diver communication system
- ◆ Bandmask equipment, such as KMB 18 or similar
- ◆ Helmet equipment such as KMB17 or similar
- ◆ Two compartment chamber (fully outfitted)
- ◆ Launch and recovery system using winches and guide wires
- ◆ Diving basket outfitted to offshore standard
- ◆ Wet bell outfitted for two divers
- ◆ Hot water machine and hot water diving suits
- ◆ Variable buoyancy dry diving suits

6 The Assessors

At least two assessors must be involved and there should be two assessors for every 12 divers being assessed. The assessors need to meet the following minimum criteria.

- ◆ Should work mainly or exclusively for the assessing organisation. Alternatively if a regularly working offshore supervisor is used he should not be based in, or regularly work in, the geographical area in which the assessment is being carried out. He should have worked previously for the assessing organisation.
- ◆ Should not work regularly or have worked recently for the company providing the divers for assessment
- ◆ Must have a detailed technical knowledge of the parts of the assessment that they are to carry out
- ◆ Should work regularly for the assessing organisation.
- ◆ Should have previous experience of assessing personnel in a training (or similar) situation.

At least one of the assessors must also meet the following:

- ◆ Hold an IMCA/AODC Air Diving Supervisor certificate
- ◆ Have a number of years offshore experience both as a diver and as a supervisor

7 The Assessment

The assessment should be based upon the IDSA standards – modules A (Preparatory), C (standard surface supply) and D (deep surface supply).

IMCA do not require that the assessments meet all of the depth and/or time requirements of the IDSA standards as long as the various competences are assessed. IMCA does however require that the assessment meets certain minimum standards:

- ◆ Must take at least 6 full days with any refresher training, classroom lectures or similar in addition to this.
- ◆ Must be carried out in open water. Diving in a tank, pond etc is not acceptable.
- ◆ Each practical competency must be assessed on at least two separate occasions. If this is an in-water competence then this will require two separate dives.
- ◆ It is acceptable to combine more than one test of competency during the same dive however the specific competency can only be tested once during each dive.
- ◆ Theoretical competences must be tested by means of written test. Oral examination is not suitable.
- ◆ Two separate dives to a depth in excess of 30 metres using a wet bell must be undertaken. The diver must leave the wet bell for a sufficiently long time at this depth as to require decompression.

- ◆ Carry out a full surface decompression procedure using oxygen on at least two dives. This may take place after a dive not normally requiring decompression.
- ◆ Carry out at least one dive to a depth in excess of 40 metres with a time at this depth of at least ten minutes.

8 The Certificate

It is important that employers and clients are able to recognise the IMCA approved certificate and not confuse it with any other certificates. It is also important that it tells an employer all that they need to know about the competence assessments carried out. The certificate – wording and format – MUST be agreed by IMCA. As a minimum the certificate must comply with the following.

- ◆ All information on the certificate shall be on one side. No relevant information, exclusions, comments etc should be on the reverse side.
- ◆ All wording must be in large enough type to be easily read.
- ◆ Must carry a passport size photograph of the diver plus his full name.
- ◆ Must bear the name of the company carrying out the assessment, the location it was carried out, the date it was issued and a unique reference number.
- ◆ Must clearly state the language used by the diver during the assessment
- ◆ Must clearly state if any of the required tasks, depths or pieces of equipment were not used (such as hot water suits not used etc)
- ◆ Must clearly state any restrictions (such as limitations to geographic areas, depths etc)
- ◆ The certificate should have the following wording

IMCA Surface Supplied Diver.

Certificate of Competence Assessment performed in accordance with IMCA information note D .../..

9 Post-Assessment Procedure

To assist IMCA to control this scheme and to provide a means for employers to verify the authenticity of any particular certificate, the body carrying out the assessment is required to follow a specified procedure after the assessments are completed.

- ◆ Detailed written results of each stage of the assessment must be kept. These should be available at the assessing company's base for IMCA to consult (if necessary) for at least 3 years after the assessment is completed.
- ◆ Using the original list of names of candidates provided to IMCA, identify (within 30 days of the assessment completion) whether each diver passed the assessment or not. If not then a short explanation should be given.
- ◆ For those passing the assessment, the certificate issued must be copied and a good, legible copy sent to IMCA for filing within 30 days of the assessment completion.
- ◆ A brief report should be sent to IMCA describing what was done, any problems encountered, any points that IMCA may want to note etc.