



ELECTRICAL REGULATORY AUTHORITIES COUNCIL

SECRETARIAT:

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ELECTRICAL REGULATORY REQUIREMENTS FOR THE TRAINING OF ELECTRICIANS IN AUSTRALIA

The purpose of this document is to provide advice to industry and especially Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) about the regulatory requirements that an apprentice electrician must satisfy before he or she will be issued with an electrical licence.

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- Victoria:
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Ph: 08 8204 9644, Fax: 8204 9697
- Tasmania:
Licensing Office, Office of Electricity Standards & Safety
Ph: 03 6233 7831, Fax: 03 6233 8338
- New South Wales:
Licensing Office, Department of Fair Trading
Ph: 02 9377 9346, Fax: 02 9377 9325
- Queensland:
Licensing Office, Department of Mines & Energy
Ph: 073237 0220, Fax: 07 3237 0229
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Introduction

The licensing of electricians is carried out in a relatively uniform way across all States/-Territories of Australia. This is necessary to permit the movement of licence holders both geographically and from industry sector to sector (e.g. from mining electrical maintenance to electrical contracting in the construction industry) from time to time.

When an apprentice completes his/her training and applies to the local Licensing Authority for an electrician licence, the key issue that has to be considered in each case is whether or not the applicant has attained sufficient knowledge, comprehension and practical skills to be able to work safely and competently in a variety of industry environments, without supervision. This is to ensure the safety of the licence holder, fellow workers and the end users of the work carried out by the licence holder.

This document describes the policy that Licensing Authorities are expected to adopt as of 1 July 2001, for ensuring that persons training as electricians meet national licensing requirements. The document aims to provide important information to both Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) as well as apprentice electricians.

Background

During recent years it has become increasingly difficult, due to greater flexibility within the training system, for Licensing Authorities to assess whether a person meets these basic competency requirements. Previously the objective was met through the application of standardised training (the "common core curriculum"), which was assumed to deliver electricians that met licensing requirements. In Victoria, an external licensing examination was additionally applied, as a check.

In 1996, as a result of the introduction of more flexible, modular training, the Electrical Regulatory Authorities Council (ERAC), of which all Licensing Authorities are members, developed and issued a new policy on competency requirements for the licensing of electricians. This policy has been uniformly applied across Australia, although Victoria continued its external examination.

More recently, as a result of further significant changes in vocational education and training, ERAC signalled the need for a new national policy to be developed. This work was carried out in liaison with electrical industry stakeholders, through the NUELAC forum. NUELAC is the National Uniform Electrical Licensing Advisory Council, with members drawn from regulators, industry associations and training organisations.

The Need for a 2001 Licensing Policy

In May 2000 ERAC released the following statement, which subsequently led to the industry consultation work via the NUELAC forum:

- 1) *ERAC has previously issued a statement of required competencies that all applicants for an A Grade electrician licence must satisfy.*
- 2) *Presently there are proposals for two different training packages to train persons in the necessary on-job and off-job competencies. One has been developed for the "traditional" electrical sector by the National UITAB, the other for the "metals"*

- (heavy engineering) sector by the National MERSITAB. There may be other packages in future.*
- 3) This multiple training package situation is an outcome of the high level of flexibility being offered to industry sectors, so that they can (within limits) optimise their approach to training. Once a package is endorsed by ANTA, training providers (RTOs) can offer the training package to industry. Agreements are then made between RTOs and employers, to use a particular package to deliver both on-job and off-job training for an individual.*
 - 4) As all packages are competency-based, proper structuring and recording of on-job competency development, plus control of progression based on results, are important. There has been concern to date about the integrity of on-job assessments.*
 - 5) The devolution of training design, delivery and assessment to industry has had many positive aspects but has introduced potential problems for electrical Licensing Authorities (ERAC members). The high level of flexibility (including with the proposed progressive assessments associated with each of the packages) makes it difficult for them to know whether or not an apprentice or trainee electrician has achieved the required range and level of skill and knowledge.*
 - 6) It is in industry's and the community's best interests that persons granted an A grade electrician licence do really have the necessary competence, and for this reason ERAC requests industry to put in place a relatively "standard", ERAC approved, training exit assessment as part of the implementation of each training package. This exit assessment is to have the following features:*
 - It is to be in addition to the progressive assessment carried out by the RTO. Its cost is to be seen as part of the cost of the training and it should be funded that same way.*
 - It is to focus on the essential safety competencies using practical problem solving and realistic scenarios that test practical skill and comprehension of electrical theory.*
 - It may be carried out by the RTO, in which case the exit assessment process is to be subject to regular audit by an ERAC approved independent examiner (to be proposed by the RTO). Alternatively the exit assessment may be conducted by an ERAC approved third party (to be proposed by the RTO).*
 - The certification for training completed is to certify the attainment of all ERAC-specified competencies both on-job and off-job, on one certificate. This certificate is also to specifically confirm an acceptable pass (at the level as approved by ERAC) in the exit assessment.*
 - If the person fails to achieve the exit assessment standard required (as agreed by ERAC), the person remains an apprentice or trainee.*
 - 7) If under the new packages an apprentice's or trainee's training has not included such an ERAC approved exit assessment, the person will need to undergo a comprehensive licensing examination comprising both practical skill and knowledge assessment, at their own cost.*

Work by the NUELAC Working Group

The ERAC statement was supported by the various national electrical industry parties of NUELAC and effectively became the work plan for a NUELAC Working Group that was given the responsibility to develop in detail the various components of the ERAC statement listed above.

The Working Group consulted widely with industry during its deliberations to ensure the needs of stakeholders were well understood and accommodated wherever possible.

The outcome was in two parts (largely as proposed by the ERAC, although not identical in all respects):

- a) a specified list of 66 “essential capabilities” that each licence applicant would be expected to have attained (i.e. each Training Package needs to cover these, aside from other requirements to satisfy the qualification being sought); and
- b) a quality assurance “capstone assessment” that tests the apprentice towards the end of training, to confirm that he/she has indeed attained the most critical of the “essential capabilities”.

These parts are described in more detail below. They were endorsed on a consensus basis by NUELAC members at its meeting in Melbourne on 13 February 2001. ERAC subsequently approved the proposed final policy for implementation by its members.

ELECTRICAL LICENSING POLICY 2001

The new policy is expected to be implemented by Licensing Authorities in Australia with a target date of 1 July 2001.

Under the policy, RTOs will need to satisfy specified training and assessment requirements for apprentices, if on completion of their training apprentices are able to obtain an electrical licence on application, without the need to undertake a further external licensing examination as required by the Licensing Authority.

Apprentices must achieve a relevant Training Package qualification at Certificate III (or higher) and satisfy the requirements of a “Capstone Assessment”.

In summary, the specified requirements are:

1) Achievement of specified Essential Performance Capabilities

The RTO must deliver the necessary training and assessment services and the apprentice must achieve the 66 specified Essential Performance Capabilities. These are prescribed in the attached document “List of Essential Performance Capability Requirements for Licensed Electricians”.

2) Application of a “Capstone Assessment” to each apprentice.

The RTO is to apply a quality assurance “Capstone Assessment” that tests the apprentice towards the end of training, to confirm that he/she has attained the most critical of the “List of Essential Performance Capability Requirements for Licensed Electricians”.

The format of the assessment is a combination of written and practical assessment covering all the nominated critical items, in a format as specified in the attached document “Capstone Assessment Requirements for Prospective Electricians”.

If the apprentice fails the Capstone Assessment, the RTO will need to review the person’s options in the usual way (remedial training etc). The person will not be permitted to continue indefinitely as an apprentice and the advice of the Licensing Authority should be sought if necessary.

To complete the quality assurance process, the application of the “Capstone Assessment” by RTOs will be audited from time to time in accordance with the audit arrangements set out in the same document.

Implementation of the above policy may vary from jurisdiction to jurisdiction.

In some States (e.g. WA) the requirements are expected to be integrated with the training requirements of the State Training Authority (which is the Department of Training & Employment, in the case of WA).

This integration of regulatory and training requirements will make their application simpler and more efficient, however the success of the ERAC policy is not dependent on that form of implementation.

What RTOs should do

RTOs should contact their local Electrical Licensing Authority to ascertain the local implementation arrangements.

If the integrated approach is being applied in their State/Territory, then the following will take place automatically, as required.

Where the integrated approach is not employed, each RTO is expected to apply to the local Electrical Licensing Authority for “approval” of the RTO’s electrician training scheme, by undertaking to comply with all aspects of the policy as described above, including the detailed requirements contained in the attached supporting documents, and providing detailed information about –

- the business itself (owners etc),
- the training facilities,
- key staff,
- the Training Package to be used including the qualification and competencies to be achieved,
- the form of continuous assessment that will be employed, and
- the RTO quality assurance measures that will be in place in regard to the capstone assessment,

If either the policy requirements are not integrated into overall training as described in the preceding section or an RTO does not achieve the prior approval of the Electrical Licensing Authority, then apprentice electricians (trained by that RTO) applying for a licence will normally be required to undertake a further licensing examination as directed by the Electrical Licensing Authority.

What employers and apprentices should do

Employers of apprentices and apprentices seeking an electrical licence upon successful completion of their vocational education and training should ensure that –

- the Training Package qualification they are undertaking includes coverage of the “List of Essential Performance Capability Requirements for Licensed Electricians”; and
- the RTO has been recognised or “approved” by the local Electrical Licensing Authority to carry out training and assessment for the purposes of electrical licensing

Attachments:

List of Essential Performance Capability Requirements for Licensed Electricians

Capstone Assessment Requirements for Prospective Electricians

(Policy issued 1 March 2001)