



Radiation Protection Career Guidance

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Title:

Radiation Protection Career Guidance – Part 3

Status:

Open (Issue 1)

Scope:

This RPCG article provides useful careers guidance for those that have an interest in radiation protection. This article has been written as Ionactive Consulting Ltd believes there is a need for clear guidance and information regarding the world of radiation protection and the opportunities available. The RPCG comes in a number of parts, this being **Part 3**.

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Use:

This article is provided for general use by all those interested in radiation protection. It may also be of use to those currently working with sources of ionising radiation. Ionactive Consulting Ltd accepts no liability for any outcome (including errors or omissions) arising from using the information presented in this article. If you are in any doubt about how this article might apply in your particular circumstances, contact a suitable Radiation Protection Adviser.

Legislation:

Ionising Radiations Regulations 1999 (SI1999/3232)
Radioactive Substances Act 1993

If you have not read **Part 2** of this RPCG article series, please visit our articles pages at www.ionactive.co.uk and download as required.

Whilst this article may be printed **it is designed to be read online** as we provide useful embedded links to other external resources. We will also be directing you to other useful areas of our site, all of which will open in a new window.



4) Radiation Protection Adviser (says who?)

As previously described, legislation and the regulator collectively define what the Radiation Protection Adviser is:

Ionising Radiations Regulations 1999 (IRR99)
Health & Safety Executive (HSE)

The Ionising Radiations Regulations 1999 defines the RPA in Regulation 2, thus:

...radiation protection adviser... an individual who, or a body which, meets such criteria of competence as may from time to time be specified in writing by the Executive....

The actual requirement to consult or appoint a RPA (i.e. the *requirement* for a RPA) is contained in Regulation 13, thus:

.... every radiation employer shall consult such suitable radiation protection advisers as are necessary for the purpose of advising the radiation employer as to the observance of these Regulations and shall, in any event, consult one or more suitable radiation protection advisers with regard to those matters which are set out in Schedule 5.....

There are some exceptions for requiring an appointed RPA which will be clear if you examine the detail of the Regulations (particularly Schedule 1). If you are interested in this particular point then please visit our Technical Compliance Articles section at: <http://www.ionactive.co.uk/articlelist.html?c=2>.

Regulation 13 makes it quite clear that the RPA needs to be *suitable*, and Regulation 2 makes it clear that the RPA can only be *competent* (and therefore practice as a RPA) if they meet the criteria of competence.

It might interest you to know that there are very few safety posts in the UK which demand this level of competence assessment before advice can be given (one other being the Dangerous Goods Safety Adviser - DGSA).



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5) HSE Statement on Radiation Protection Advisers

Regulation 2 of IRR99 provides the HSE with the power and duty to issue a statement on what constitutes the role of the RPA. You may now realise that the RPA is something you evolve into over time, it is not something you can become by passing an exam alone since you are required to provide evidence of your competencies. It is also worth noting that the 'RPA' is the UK equivalent of the 'Qualified Expert' which comes from the Euratom Basic Safety Standards Directive (96/29/Euratom).

Directive 96/29/Euratom is an important piece of European legislation which is the major source of IRR99. You can find links to this Directive and other EU legislation by visiting our site at:
www.ionactive.co.uk/regulationlist.html?c=3.

The HSE statement mentioned above contains the following important elements:

Sufficient evidence, from education, training and/or experience, to demonstrate:

- (i) knowledge and understanding of the basic specified syllabus.*
- (ii) a detailed understanding of IRR99 and its ACOP, also other related non-statutory guidance.*
- (iii) practical radiation protection experience.*

Sound knowledge of general methods which might be typically used to deal with operational problems, including interpreting and applying radiation protection data, and supervising or carrying out practical measurements and control procedures for work involving potential for significant exposure to radiation.

The ability to advise management effectively on the implementation of relevant regulatory requirements and radiation protection practices for work involving potential for significant exposure to radiation.

You may wish to read the full HSE RPA statement which can be found at the following link:

www.hse.gov.uk/radiation/ionising/rpa/statementrpa.htm#_Toc90437590.

Please note that this statement is currently under HSE review and may change (significant changes are not expected).



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Another option for meeting the criteria in the above statement is to have a Level 4 N/SVQ in Radiation Protection, however this route has not been popular (we are aware of only one individual who has become a RPA using this route).

The basic syllabus which forms part of the statement above is quite detailed; some examples of its content include the following:

Basic atomic and nuclear physics
Basic biology
Interaction of radiation with matter
Biological effects of radiation
Detection and measurement methods
Quantities and units

You may wish to read the HSE RPA 'Basic Underpinning Knowledge' which can be found at the following link:
www.hse.gov.uk/radiation/ionising/rpa/statemetrpa.htm#_Toc90437595.

In order to meet the criteria set out in the above statement, the RPA competence needs to be formally recognised.

6) Recognising Competence of the Radiation Protection Adviser

Competence is recognised by being awarded a certificate by assessing bodies approved by the HSE. The three bodies currently available to do this are:

RPA 2000
BNFL RPA Certification Scheme
British Institute of NDT

The most up to date list of assessing bodies can be found at the following link:
www.hse.gov.uk/radiation/ionising/rpa/bodiescert.htm

The other possible route is a N/SVQ in Radiation Protection as mentioned above but this does not appear to have been very popular. The certification process really requires two essential elements:



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Qualifications / Experience to meet basic syllabus

Portfolio of evidence to demonstrate core competence

We will look at the certification process in more detail in a later article.

Ok, so we have come this far. In some ways we have jumped a long way down the road to becoming a RPA - We have shown you a 'goal' if you like. We can now take you back a little and explain the role in greater detail and show you what you need to do to achieve that coveted certification.

If you are currently at school or perhaps studying for your first degree then this might all seem rather tough and longwinded. Its not at all, the route is paved with exciting and rewarding experiences.

Perhaps the biggest reward we can illustrate is our ability to provide advice through our own consultancy. Ionactive Consulting is the result of becoming a RPA and then establishing the experience and credibility profile required and expected of a professional independent adviser.

When you are ready please feel free to access **Part 4** of this RPCG article – available from our website.

You may be interested in the following services and resources which are available from our website at www.ionactive.co.uk.

If you need a formal Radiation Protection Adviser service then please visit this page: www.ionactive.co.uk/adviser_services.html.

If you would like to attend a formal radiation protection training course, e.g. a Radiation Protection Supervisor (RPS) course, then please visit the following page: www.ionactive.co.uk/training_services.html.

An extensive range of radiation protection related links are available from the following page: www.ionactive.co.uk/links.html.