

Scheme for Certification of Design (Building Structures)



Guidance Note 2 Certification of Compliance with the Building Regulations

A client who commissions a project that will be subject to building warrant may choose to engage the services of an Approved Body for the certification of the structural design. They may use the SBSA Certification Register (available at www.sbsa.gov.uk) to find such a body, or to check the registration of a known firm.

Once appointed, the Approved Body will nominate an Approved Certifier, employed by them, for the project. If the appointed Approved Body sub-contracts the certification work to another Approved Body then they should advise the client of this arrangement. The Body should make sure that appropriate levels of professional indemnity insurance are in place to cover their contracted liabilities for the project and should confirm this to the client. The Approved Body should advise their client of the time and cost associated with the certification process prior to accepting an appointment. These costs should be identified separately to any other fees that may arise for other work in connection with the project.

It is imperative that when certifying the compliance of a building, stage or component, the process by which compliance was assessed is recorded in writing and placed on file. The record of the Certifier's assessment process is subject to audit at any stage after submission of the warrant application. It is, therefore, essential that all such records are placed on file without delay. Assessing compliance is not a retrospective activity and must precede the signing of the certificate.

In this context, the design of building structures is assumed to comprise survey and investigation reports, structural calculations (including statements of assumptions), drawings and details (including reinforcement drawings), and the relevant parts of the specification for the works. In the case of alterations to an existing building, survey of the condition of the existing structure and assessment of the effect of the alteration on the stability of the completed building are included. In the case of Conversions Approved Certifiers have the responsibility for assessing whether design proposals satisfy the requirements of Regulation 12.

Certification should include scrutiny of design assumptions, calculation methods, drawings, relevant parts of the specification, and other documents as appropriate. Checking must be undertaken of the adequacy and mutual compatibility of all load-bearing elements. Certifiers must also bear in mind of the requirements of the regulations with regard to the durability of materials and their accessibility for maintenance and replacement.

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The Certifier must take account of procurement practice specific to the project in deciding how to satisfy themselves of compliance with the Building Regulations. For instance, a building structure may include a number of design packages undertaken by different designers. Some of the components may be designed by contractors or subcontractors while others may be undertaken by designers who work for the Approved Body and yet others by specialists in a particular structural form. Irrespective of the source of the design, it is essential that it is independently checked for adequacy and for compliance with the Building Regulations. The Certifier should decide the appropriate level of checking.

The extent of scrutiny of detailed design is to be decided by the Certifier depending upon:

- 1) The scale of the project and degree of exposure of the public to risk.
- 2) The use of unusual or innovative design solutions
- 3) Any fragmentation of the design process.
- 4) The experience and competence of the designer

For the largest buildings and buildings that are structurally more complex or unusual, checking should be more comprehensive and more independent of the designer. The more complex, unusual, or large the structure, the greater is the check level and independence required. For further guidance refer to Technical Bulletin No 2.

Certifiers are responsible for identifying the required level and independence of checking to be undertaken and for the integrity of the checking process. This is a responsibility that cannot be delegated to others. They may delegate some aspects of the design check to other suitably qualified engineers and must do so if they do not themselves possess sufficient knowledge and experience of a particular aspect of the design. They must however retain responsibility for the compatibility of design assumptions (loading for example) made by different designers. Certifiers may establish conformity with the building regulations for any aspect of the design using any of the methods, alone or in combination, which meets the conditions given in section 4.6 of the Scheme.

The Certifier should be aware that it is the building that is being certified for compliance with the structural requirements of the Building Regulations and not just the primary load bearing structure. Other elements of the building in addition to foundations, beams and columns forming the primary load bearing structure must also be considered before signing the certificate.

Except in the circumstances detailed in Technical Bulletin No 2, the Scheme generally does not allow certification without checking by a second person. 'Two pairs of eyes' should be involved in order to give the Certifier adequate assurance of a sound design before the certificate is signed. Sole practitioners will therefore normally need to enter into an agreement with another firm for checking of design if they are the Certifier or should approach an Approved Body for the provision of certification services.

For example, Engineer A can design and certify their own work provided they are a member of the Scheme. However, before signing the certificate, Engineer A must arrange for the design to be independently checked by a suitably qualified and experienced person, Engineer B. It would also be permissible for Engineer B to be commissioned by Engineer A to design the works and for Engineer A to check and certify the design. Alternatively,

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Engineer A may design the work and have it checked and certified by an Approved Body employing Engineer C who is a member of the Scheme.

Certifiers should not request advice from the Verifier (the local authority), nor seek formal views from Scottish Ministers. However, Certifiers may seek advice from the SBSA on the extent to which proposals satisfy the regulations. Where possible, the SBSA will give advice, though a fee may be charged depending on the extent of the work involved. The Certifier is not obliged to present this advice to the Verifier as part of any certification.

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