



The Fibreoptic Industry Association

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FIA and BICSI - Clarification of relationship

by
The FIA Council

Introduction to the Fibreoptic Industry Association

The FIA comprises approximately 200 organisations, together with a small number of individuals, that are actively involved in the delivery or receipt of products and/or services within the fibre optic industry. Currently, the majority of those products and services are related to the application of optical fibre within information communication technologies.

The primary objectives of the FIA are to promote high standards of service within the fibreoptic industry and to represent its members at a national and international level by:

- providing specialist information and support services to our membership;
- providing a "shop-window" for our members products and services.

To that end the FIA is heavily committed to the development and dissemination of European and international standards in the industry.

Introduction to BICSI

According to their web-site, BICSI is "a professional association supporting the information transport systems (ITS) industry with information, education and knowledge assessment for individuals and companies. BICSI offers opportunities for continual improvement and enhanced professional stature to more than 24,000 ITS professionals through courses, conferences, publications and professional registration programs."

FIA Position on Personal Qualifications

The FIA welcomes all forms of personal qualifications and encouraging all forms of continuing educational development. The FIA does not restrict the activities of its members in the forms of that training or qualifications that they provide or attain.

The FIA Qualifications Scheme

The FIA Qualification Scheme, launched September 2005, adopts a revolutionary but highly integrated approach to personal qualifications, training course provision and training provider quality assurance within the fibre optics industry. The Qualification Scheme addresses three inter-related areas - learner development, training courses and training provision.

Learner development is addressed by a series of five qualification stages with associated status "Awards" (Level I to Level V) that reflect increasing levels of education and skill levels.

Entry to the lower levels of the scheme requires that they have attained qualifications that fulfil the requirements of the British and European standards. As a result, organisations wishing to have their qualifications added to the FIA Scheme have to fulfil the following requirements:

- a) be recognised by a UK National Awarding Body (City & Guilds – Open College Network – BTEC etc)
- b) have the course syllabus accepted and verified by the FIA Qualification Scheme Directorate.

NOTE: b) ensures that a qualification is not simply allowed access without first being checked for the quality of its information and its knowledge of British and European Standards.

A Review of BICSI Qualifications within the FIA QS

City and Guilds, OCN and *academic* courses that *fully* support British and European Standards have the full support of the FIA, provided that the training provider is able to deliver high quality, professional training courses with regard to fibre optics.

Furthermore, the FIA openly supports any organisation or group that is concerned with improving any aspect of the telecommunications industry, provided that the organisation fully accepts and works under the control of British and European Standards. Therefore, the FIA do recognise the BICSI qualifications as part of the continuing education from one Award Level to another.

However, the FIA do not consider the BICSI Installer or RCDD qualifications as a foundation for the FIA QS Level Awards. The reason for this is that they are not founded on, and do not assess competency in, practices that are required by either national standards or regulations within the geographic areas served by FIA members.

This is most simply explained by reference to the introduction to the current TDM Manual which states, quite rightly, that "at all times, a designer is responsible for knowing the local standards and codes that apply". However, current examinations within the BICSI system contain no assessment of that knowledge.

The FIA Qualification Scheme Directorate look forward to formal changes being made to the Installer and RCDD training curricula and programs in order to *fully* incorporate British and European Standards enabling them to be used as foundations for the FIA QS Level Awards.

Specifically, this would be require syllabi for BICSI courses that incorporate any aspect of optical fibre cabling design, planning and installation practice (and resulting qualifications) to be accepted and verified by the FIA Qualification Scheme Directorate as being:

- fully in line with the BS and EN standards;
- assessed to these standards.

NOTE This is particularly relevant as from 2007 which sees the release of the complete BS EN 50173 series of standards for the design of generic (structured) cabling in office premises, industrial premises, home and data centres. The standards mandate installation in accordance with BS EN 50174 standards, other local standards (BS 6701) and applicable local regulations.

The FIA Council
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