



Audit Feedback Information Report

SER has issued this report to provide information to the SER membership regarding the most common issues that have been found from the audit process to date. It is hoped that those who have yet to be audited will be able to gain some useful insight into the issues that are arising.

60 Approved Certifier audits and 44 Approved Body audits were carried out up to the end of November 2007 and the main issues arising from these audits are summarised in the Appendix to this information report. The most common non-conformances are highlighted and this information report provides further guidance regarding these.

As a result of audits conducted in 2007 some Approved Certifiers have been suspended from the scheme and a significant number will need to be re-audited in the near future.

There were a few occasions where hard copies of calculations, reports and drawings were not available in the project files. In these instances it is the responsibility of the Approved Body to provide a person during the audit that is competent to access these from their computer system for the audit team to see.

From the Approved Certifier audits the following audit criteria have been highlighted with the most non-conformances:

- Item ref. P1E Use of Contractor Designed Details Option
- Item ref. P3B Existing Building Condition Assessment
- Item ref. P3A Ground Investigation Reports
- Item ref. P1A Scope of Certification
- Item ref. P6C Protective Barriers
- Item ref. P1C Project Records

From the Approved Body audits the following audit criteria have been highlighted with the most non-conformances:

- Item ref. AB1B Quality and Checking Procedures
- Item ref. AB2B Management of Risk
- Item ref. AB1D Training
- Item ref. AB2A Protection of Certifiers from Financial Loss (not required for sole practitioners)

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Approved Certifier Audits

Item ref.	Sub classification and audit feedback comments	Common audit non-conformances
<p>P1E</p>	<p>Use of Contractor Designed Details Option:</p> <p>Technical Bulletin No 1 was issued in October 2005, however many of the certifiers audited have failed to fully comply with its requirements. A certificate of design states that the structural design complies with the Building Regulations, not <u>will comply</u>. In order to overcome this requirement where the design calculations etc for contractor designed details will only become available after a building warrant has been granted a procedure has been introduced whereby a) a schedule 1 has to be completed and attached to the design certificate listing any structural items or details which the certificate does not cover in detail, and b) the warrant plans have to include an adequate performance specification for any items or details listed in the schedule 1.</p> <p>It is important to realise that this option is not intended to cover for primary elements of a structure that may be contractor designed, ie timber frames, steel or pre-cast concrete frames. For these situations the Staged Warrant option must be used for certification purposes.</p>	<p>The most common finding has been either a complete lack of a performance specification or an inadequate performance specification on the warrant plans.</p> <p>Examples where warrant plans have completely lacked a performance specification are for items such as steelwork connections or fixings, balustrades, conservatories and timber roof trusses.</p> <p>Performance specifications have commonly been inadequate due to a lack of floor loadings or wind loadings.</p> <p>In some audits it was discovered that some primary elements were incorrectly included in a schedule 1, or that a schedule 1 had not been completed at all when it was appropriate to do so.</p>

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Item ref.	Sub classification and audit feedback comments	Common audit non-conformances
P3B	<p>Existing Building Condition Assessment:</p> <p>Where a project involves alterations and/or conversion to an existing building an adequate existing building condition assessment must be carried out and a written report must be prepared to assess the effects of the proposed works to the strength and stability of the existing building. This report may be carried out by the design team or a suitably qualified and experienced engineer following an industry standard methodology.</p> <p>The level of assessment is to be appropriate to the project and its intended use.</p>	<p>The most common finding has been no evidence in the project files of a written assessment report.</p> <p>All projects in these categories must include a written assessment report, the certifier is to judge whether the level of the assessment has been appropriate for the project.</p> <p>In some audits it was discovered that only the outside of an existing building had been looked at or undue reliance had been placed on photographs or hearsay.</p>

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P3A	<p>Ground Investigation Reports:</p> <p>A ground investigation report must be obtained for all projects involving foundation work with the exception of small domestic extensions or in special circumstances.</p> <p>In those situations where a ground investigation has not been carried out the warrant plans must include a suitably worded statement describing the likely soil type expected to be encountered.</p> <p>The certifier must keep a note in the project file explaining the reasons why a ground investigation was not considered necessary for that particular project.</p>	<p>The most common finding has been the complete absence of a ground investigation report for projects where a ground investigation was appropriate.</p> <p>Other findings have been:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inadequate ground investigations in relation to the size of projects • Inadequate statements on warrant plans when assumptions had been made in place of a ground investigation report • Failure to follow up recommendations made in ground investigation reports eg making suitable enquiry regarding old mine workings

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Item ref.	Sub classification and audit feedback comments	Common audit non-conformances
P1A	<p>Scope of Certification:</p> <p>Standards 1.1 and 1.2 for Structure in the new 2005 Building Regulations apply to all aspects of the structure, not merely the primary load-bearing elements. It is important that the certifier correctly identifies the scope of the building structure that needs to be certified and covered by the design certificate(s) and carries out a comprehensive assessment of the design.</p> <p>Schedule 2 may be used to assist in defining the scope of the certification of a building project, or the certifier may produce his/her own check-list (refer also to Appendix A of Guidance Note 3).</p>	<p>The most common finding has been a lack of understanding of the need to identify the full scope of a building structure for certification purposes.</p> <p>This has led to the omission of parts of a building structure from being covered by the design certificate. Items that have been commonly omitted are conservatories, ramps, decks, glass frames, mezzanine floors, suspended floors, timber floors and roofs, balustrades, glazing and staircases.</p> <p>When there are contractor designed details which are included in a schedule 1, these items have sometimes been incorrectly omitted from the schedule 2. It is important that schedule 2 covers all structural items including those in any schedule 1.</p>

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Item ref.	Sub classification and audit feedback comments	Common audit non-conformances
P6C	<p>Protective Barriers:</p> <p>Auditors will check that the certifier has made adequate enquiry regarding the ability of any pedestrian or vehicle barriers within the scope of the building warrant application to withstand the appropriate design loads.</p> <p>This includes stair balustrades and handrails for domestic projects which are frequently the responsibility of the Architect to detail. The designer should carry out a structural design and provide structural details on the warrant plans for all protective barriers.</p> <p>If a protective barrier is to be a contractor designed detail it should be included in a schedule 1 accompanying a certificate of design. In this situation a performance specification should be included on the warrant plans.</p>	<p>The most common finding has been the complete absence of design calculations, structural details and specifications of balustrades and handrails for domestic projects.</p> <p>Other findings have been the absence, for non domestic projects, of either:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • design calculations • structural details • a performance specification <p>In a few cases there was a complete absence of all three bullet points for non domestic projects.</p>

Note: A Guidance Note on the certification of Protective Barriers is currently being prepared.

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Item ref.	Sub classification and audit feedback comments	Common audit non-conformances
P1C	<p>Project Records:</p> <p>Certifiers are required to keep a proper record of all certificates issued and how certification decisions were arrived at.</p> <p>Careful checking is a fundamental part of the SER Scheme and the certifier must ensure that design documents are checked, countersigned and dated by the checker.</p> <p>As well as keeping a record copy of all Certificates and all Schedules 1 & 2 in the project file the certifier must also record certificate details in the SER certificate logbook.</p>	<p>The most common finding has been the lack of evidence that calculations have been checked.</p> <p>Other findings have been:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor presentation of project records ie lack of calculations in the project file • Inadequate recording of warrant drawings in the project file • Incomplete calculations <p>When a conversion project includes alteration work then both types of certificate must be raised to accompany a warrant application.</p>

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Approved Body Audit

Item ref.	Sub classification and audit feedback comments	Common audit non-conformances
AB1B	<p>Quality and Checking Procedures:</p> <p>Approved Bodies will have been required to describe the checking arrangements that they have in place when making their application. Guidance on these matters is provided in Technical Bulletin No. 2.</p> <p>Approved Bodies are required to ensure that certifiers are following the firm's QA system for checking and that this is recorded in the project file.</p>	<p>The most common finding has been that no clear evidence exists that a formal checking plan had been followed. The certification plan should include a check-list for ensuring that checking is documented. The certifier must ensure that all calculations and design records are checked, countersigned and dated.</p>

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Item ref.	Sub classification and audit feedback comments	Common audit non-conformances
AB2B	<p>Management of Risk:</p> <p>Auditors will check that certification appointments are being made on the basis of a realistic assessment of risk and that suitable contractual terms and conditions have been introduced to manage the risk.</p> <p>The scope of certification covers all structural elements and includes elements that would not normally be within the scope of a consultants design appointment and also includes components that will have been designed by specialist sub contractors.</p> <p>Guidance on management risk has been recently provided in Guidance Note 6 and auditors will wish to review how this guidance is being applied.</p>	<p>The most common finding has been the lack of a formal letter of appointment, particularly for small domestic projects.</p>

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Item ref.	Sub classification and audit feedback comments	Common audit non-conformances
AB1D	<p>Training:</p> <p>Approved Bodies will have been required to make a statement regarding their investment in training when making their application.</p> <p>Approved Bodies are expected to support the CPD of their employed certifiers by providing time and financial support to attend training courses etc.</p> <p>Auditors will be looking for documented evidence that certifiers have attended relevant training courses etc. and that a structured annual CPD programme has been planned by the Approved Body and that it has been reviewed on a regular basis. SER has recently issued Guidance Note 7 Continuing Professional Development which outlines the requirements of SER with respect to CPD.</p>	<p>The most common finding has been the lack of a structured CPD training programme and the lack of a regular review of individual certifier's training requirements.</p> <p>Other findings have been:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Absence of keeping training records up to date. • Inadequate training provision Workload demands are cited as the reason for lack of time for adequate CPD activity.

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Item ref.	Sub classification and audit feedback comments	Common audit non-conformances
AB2A	<p>Protection of Certifiers from Financial Loss (not required for sole practitioners)</p> <p>Approved Bodies must ensure that certifiers employed by them are protected against financial loss from claims arising out of design certification. Certifiers are not required, under the scheme rules, to carry personal PI Insurance for certification work.</p> <p>SER has recently issued Guidance Note 6 Responsibilities and Liabilities. The purpose of this is to provide further guidance to Approved Bodies on how to meet the requirements of this audit criterion.</p>	<p>The common finding has been the lack of any formal consideration regarding how certifiers are protected by the Approved Body against financial loss from claims arising out of certification work.</p>

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APPENDIX

Summary of audit non-conformances to November 2007

The figures below are the result of 60 Approved Certifier audits and 44 Approved Body audits. N/C = Non-Conformance

Certifier N/C's	Description of Approved Certifier Audit Criteria	No. of N/C's	% Finding rate
AC1A	Understanding of Scope of the Certification Process	3	5.00
AC1B	Operating within the limits of declared competence	1	1.67
P1A	Scope of Certification	23	38.33
P1B	Certification Plan	14	23.33
P1C	Project Records	19	31.67
P1D	Programming of Work	12	20.00
P1E	Use of Contractor Designed Details Option	28	46.67
P2A	Loading Assessment	9	15.00
P2B	Overall Stability	17	11.67
P2C	Disproportionate Collapse	15	25.00
P2D	Conversions	2	3.33
P3A	Ground Investigation Reports	24	40.00
P3B	Existing Building Condition Assessment	25	41.67
P4A	Mineral Consolidation	9	15.00
P4B	Sub-Structure (excluding Piling)	11	18.33
P4C	Piling	3	5.00
P4D	Earth Retaining Structures	4	6.67
P4E	Ground Improvement	0	0
P4F	Superstructure	18	30.00
P5A	Cladding System (including glazing)	10	16.67
P5B	Fixings and Supports	7	11.67
P5C	Movement Joints (building envelope)	6	10.00
P6A	Ties and Connections	12	20.00
P6B	Internal (non-load bearing) Partitions	3	5.00
P6C	Protective Barriers	23	38.33
P7A	Structural Materials (specification)	12	20.00
P7B	Structural Components (specification)	5	8.33
P7C	Structural Fixings (specification)	8	13.33
P8A	Elements of Structure-fire protection	10	16.67
P8B	Single Storey Steel Portal Framed Buildings in fire boundary condition	2	3.33

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Body N/C's	Description of Approved Body Audit Criteria	No. of N/C's	% Finding Rate
AB1A	Appointment of Certification coordinator	5	11.36
AB1B	Quality and Checking Procedures	12	27.27
AB1C	Access to Information	3	6.82
AB1D	Training	9	20.45
AB1E	Insurance	0	0
AB2A	Protection of Certifiers from Financial Loss (not required for sole practitioners)	7	15.91
AB2B	Management of Risk	12	27.27

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