

## No5: Microgeneration Certification Scheme

*MCS is a well established membership scheme for installers of renewable energy technology such as solar PV, battery storage, heat pumps, small wind turbines etc. We receive regular Member queries about MCS, so this guidance is designed to provide a clear understanding of the issue.*

### **What is MCS?**

MCS is a scheme set up and approved by the UK Government. It provides assurance of the quality and reliability of approved products and installations carried out by MCS Certified Installers for householders having renewable technologies installed.

### **How do I become an MCS Certified Installer?**

Becoming an MCS Certified Installer requires certain criteria to be satisfied. SELECT Members would need to achieve a satisfactory outcome from an independent assessment carried out by a UKAS accredited certification body, i.e. an organisation that holds UKAS accreditation to ISO 17065. Certification bodies that assess installers against MCS standards require to be independent from the installers that they assess and require to have accreditation by UKAS against the requirements of ISO 17065.

### **What are the advantages of being an MCS Certified Installer?**

MCS Certified Installers are able to certify that installations carried out under MCS standards are compliant. In turn, this can enable their customers to access financial incentives such as UK and Scottish Government grants and loans. These are usually managed through organisations such as the Energy Saving Trust and Home Energy Scotland. If consumers are exporting surplus generated electricity, MCS certification may also be required to access the Smart Export Guarantee (SEG).

### **What is the SEG?**

The SEG is a UK Government-backed scheme that requires licenced electricity suppliers to provide tariffs that pay small-scale electricity generators or 'prosumers' for the energy they export to the National Grid.

### **How do householders qualify for the SEG?**

In some instances, the installation must have been certified by an MCS Certified Installer as compliant with MCS standards, for example where solar PV systems have a capacity of up to 50 kW or less. The householder must also have a suitable meter installed to track energy exports, e.g. a registered smart meter.

### **What kind of work requires me to be an MCS Certified Installer ?**

Work undertaken within the scope of MCS include schemes for the installation of solar photovoltaic (PV), electrical energy storage systems (EES), heat pumps and small wind turbines etc. The Energy Saving Trust and Home Energy Scotland have both asked for contractors to be MCS approved if they are installing renewable technology for customers to be eligible to receive the grants and loans which they manage. Ofgem also may require this where solar PV systems have a capacity of up to 50 kW or less for these to be MCS certified.

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### What don't I need it for?

You don't need MCS if you're acting as a sub-contractor to an MCS Certified Installer and are responsible for the electrical installation of solar PV or EESS. However, you will need to be assessed by the MCS Certified Installer as being suitably competent under the scheme requirements. You may also be able to install systems that are not subject to grant or loan funding, e.g. through the Energy Saving Trust or where the customer doesn't plan to have excess energy that would be supplied back to the grid.

### What about work undertaken within the scope of a building warrant?

If a warrant is sought for a new build site, for example where solar PV and EESS are contained, the warrant will encompass the electrical work associated with these systems, which can be certified under Certification of Construction. However, from a verifier's perspective, there are other regulations to consider such as the fire performance of panels and their fixing to the building. You may therefore be asked to demonstrate that the installation and installer are suitably certified, e.g. by providing an MCS certificate or equivalent.

**Note:** If in doubt about the warrantability of any work, contact the relevant local authority verifier for further advice.

### What about submitting a Building Warrant Completion Certificate?

Where a Certificate of Construction has been issued by an Approved Certifier for work undertaken within the scope of a building warrant, and where the use of Certification of Construction has been advised to the verifier prior to the work commencing on site by the responsible person, the verifier should not require additional evidence of competence for the electrical installation relevant to the system installed. Where Certification of Construction has not been used, the verifier will use reasonable enquiry to establish compliance with relevant building regulations and may require evidence that work such as the installation of a solar PV system has been undertaken by an MCS Certified Installer or equivalent.

### How does SELECT help?

To ensure Members and their operatives who undertake renewable technology installations such as solar PV and battery storage are suitably competent, SELECT has partnered with The Energy Training Academy to deliver training courses in solar PV and EESS. This training is recognised by MCS. The Energy Training Academy is based in Dalkeith, Midlothian, and the course is delivered over five days. This can also be split into solar PV only (three days) or EESS only (two days). On completion, successful delegates receive a Level 3 LCL award.

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### Do these courses qualify me as being an MCS Certified Installer ?

No. These courses are only recognised by MCS in relation to the competence of those undertaking installation work and do **NOT** provide the member with MCS certification. This is made clear in the course description and at the time of booking. The training **DOES** provide an acceptable qualification to satisfy the MCS requirements for competency in some instances, as per Appendix A of the MCS standard for solar PV. As outlined previously, becoming an MCS Certified Installer requires certain criteria to be satisfied. SELECT Members would need to achieve a satisfactory outcome from an independent assessment carried out by a UKAS accredited Certification Body, i.e. an organisation that holds current UKAS accreditation to ISO 17065.

### So how can I obtain MCS Certification?

MCS Certification can only be provided by the seven Certification Bodies who hold UKAS accreditation to ISO 17065. SELECT is not currently able to achieve this type of accreditation.

### Why doesn't SELECT provide its own MCS scheme for Members?

There are a number of reasons why SELECT does not have a scheme:

- SELECT's inspection service is not viewed as being independent from the membership that would be assessed. To avoid a conflict of interest, SELECT would have to set up a completely separate and independent organisation to carry out MCS certification assessments.
- This would take a long period of time to organise and would require significant financial investment. The initial set-up and annual operating costs would be considerable – possibly in the hundreds of thousands of pounds every year. This cost would have to be passed on to Members .
- SELECT has considered the idea as being not currently feasible, principally due to the low numbers of Members who are interested in becoming MCS certified.

### Why should I pay to join another organisation who do provide an MCS scheme when I'm already a Member of SELECT?

Members who wanted to join a SELECT MCS scheme would still have to pay an additional fee – the set-up and ongoing operating costs mean it could not be covered by the regular membership subscription fee alone.

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### But if SELECT Members ask for a scheme, shouldn't we get it?

SELECT has conducted regular surveys to establish the demand for an MCS scheme. The results indicate that some 90% of respondents say they want to remain a connecting installer, with no need for MCS. As mentioned above, only a very small number have expressed interest in becoming MCS Certified Installers. At the moment, the demand simply doesn't justify the creation of a standalone SELECT scheme.

### Can you summarise again please?

- There is no guarantee SELECT would be allowed to set up its own MCS scheme
- If it was, Members would have to bear the significant cost of set-up and annual operation
- MCS certification would cost extra and not be included in the annual subscription
- This cost would be the same as Members currently pay with other MCS Certification Bodies elsewhere
- The low take-up among Members does not justify the expense of creating a scheme.

### Where can I find out more?

The following links provide further information about MCS, accreditation and training:

- [About MCS](#)
- [MCS certification](#)
- [The Energy Training Academy](#)
- [SELECT training](#)
- [Home Energy Scotland](#)
- [The Energy Saving Trust](#)