# Advantages of an ETA Certification

ETA's industry-based examinations are modeled after international competency standards. Each discipline utilizes its own group of educators and practitioners, plus wide industry reviews, to arrive at standards agreements. In 2003, the process was enlarged to add an all-industry review step in the process (NCEE). The standards clearly articulate the skills and knowledge relevant to the specific segments of the industry. Thus, ETA exams align with the curriculum for each discipline.

All ETA certifications measure competencies of persons, not products or companies. They are non-vendor specific. Thousands of technicians have gained ETA certifications, including over 28,000 fiber optics installers and hundreds or thousands in each basic or specialty segment of electronics.

**Quality Control**: ETA examinations are reviewed for updating each year. They also are under constant review by staff and the specific subject matter experts (SME's) overseeing the individual programs.

**NSSB**, National Skills Standards Board**,** feasibility study concluded the ETA program was among the best industry certifications available.

**Linkage to Jobs**: While most certifications are voluntary, some jobs require the worker to hold a specific certification (2-way communications; fiber; satellite, cell-sites, others). ETA certifications are widely recognized and frequently used in worker job selection, hiring processes and pay scale, or for advancements.

**Recognition**: The C.E.T. (Certified Electronics Technician) program is one of the most widely recognized certification providers in the industry. Other specialty assessments have varying degrees of industry visibility, but all are linked to ETA's long-standing position in the electronics industry. (Check FCC, U.S. Dept of Labor, ONET, CSC, ICAC, NCEE, SIC, DANTES Military COOL sites, Skills USA, and many state education departments.)

**Quality of Assessments**: ETA's panels of experts are second to none. Strong educator input, plus wide review by specific committees of SME's and review by multiple national associations, provides a level of review unprecedented in the electronics industry.

**External Audits**: ETA is a member of ICAC, International Certification Accreditation Council, which audits ETA's programs on a 5-year schedule. ETA's programs are consistent with civil rights, anti-discrimination and fairness standards.

**Reliability and Validity**: ETA's assessments have been subjected to critical scrutiny by educators, practitioners, students and employers. **Consistency** is a hallmark of the program.

**Input Standards**: Task analysis by educators, employers and practitioners is an important part of the process of arriving at industry-based competencies, upon which the certification exams are based. Both internal and external judgments are included in arriving at consensus.

**Accessibility:** ETA exams are available at U.S. Military base education offices; over 900 permanent public and proprietary educational institutions and at many non-permanent locations such as libraries, colleges and penal institutions. *Examinations are routinely given on a demand basis rather than scheduled dates.*

**Portability**: ETA's certifications are personal and travel with the certificant wherever he/she may be employed.

**Feedback**: Because ETA's exams are constantly in a state of review and edit, feedback from educators, students and examinees constantly hones the exam questions and content and is reviewed by SME's.

**Content Experts**: ETA's technical committees, specific for each certification, are composed of SME's who are demographically diverse. ETA's 3-step process for evolving competencies is now used by the all-industry National Coalition for Electronics Education in arriving at curricula and competency standards.

**Cut Scores**: While most exam programs establish the cut score at 75% (as does the U.S. Government's FCC commercial exams programs), the industry establishes the difficulty of ETA exams to match the knowledge and skills requirements of workers, thus the cut scores.

**Review:** All exam pools are input to the Texas A & M hosted Freedom Test (Web-based Knowledge Assessment Tool) program, which is then used by the SME's, who review all questions. In addition, ETA's staff has multiple graphics and proofreading experts handling each of its technical assessments.

**Hands-On**: Several of ETA's assessment programs require, in addition to the knowledge exam, a practical, or hands-on test of special skills needed to perform in the work place. Line sweeping (FDR) and Fiber Optics are an example.

**Interviews and appeals** are a regular part of business at ETA. Students, examinees, instructors and others are always welcomed to call ETA's toll-free phone line to discuss individual exam question wording, practicality or fairness. Where any doubts exist, individual C.E.T.s or other SME's are consulted to affirm the validity of the question.

**Reasonable Fees**: ETA's fee structure is recognized as among the most economical for examinees in the electronics industry, or any other industry.

**Ladder of Progression**: ETA provides a ladder for career advancement. Basic entry levels for Student and Associate Electronics; Journeyman, Senior and Master C.E.T.;

Basic, Journeyman and Master Residential Electronics Systems Integrator (RESI); Master Satellite Installer; Fiber Optics Installer, Technician and Designer, or endorsements for specific disciplines have been designed into the program as the need occurs.

**Course Not Mandatory**: Most certifications are gained at the conclusion of an educational course. There are some programs that include a hands-on component and require skills documentation, such as Fiber Optics and Data Cabling certification programs. (When skills verification is involved, successful completion of an educational course through an ETA-approved school is required.)

However, ETA offers many stand-alone certifications that do not require a formal course of study or other training prerequisite, including RF Line Sweeping (FDR), Telecommunications (TCM), Computer Service Technician (CST) and Certified Alarm-Security Technician (CAST)

**Usefulness by Schools**: ETA programs are widely used by individual states to allow verified credits to students. The entire C.E.T. program is easily implemented, at no cost, in secondary, post secondary and commercial technical schools.

**Privacy:** ETA examination scores are not divulged to employers or co-workers, and if requested, are not given to that examinee's instructor or proctor.

**Grading**: ETA exams are returned to ETA headquarters in Greencastle, Indiana for scoring and processing, and are maintained in a global data base.

**Percentage of Pass/Fails**: ETA exams are industry based and thus, examinees must have the knowledge and skills to pass, or they fail. The percentage of P/Fs is set, not according to mathematical formulae, but by observation and interviews with employers and instructors. If some good workers fail or if some poor students pass and this is verified by actual interviews, the exam difficulty level is reassessed to match the industry segment. ETA offers a free retake policy that allows an examinee (after a 30 day wait period) to re-sit for the exam after obtaining additional knowledge.

**ETA Industry Participation**: In order to maintain the highest and most up-to-date information on assessment programs, ETA officials participate in industry groups such as ICAC, NCEE, NSSB, ITC, NCC, other Voluntary Partnerships and at military educator conferences.

**Study Guides**: ETA provides study text or media suggestions for all of its certifications and also produces its own study guides where appropriate.

**Course Approval**: Where schools need a 3rd party review of their electronics courses, ETA provides experts to serve that need, either via mail, or on-site. Instructor credentials; lab and classroom equipment; course outline, length of course, etc. are approved or disapproved as linking to the certification. This program is not mandatory, but is encouraged and available from ETA and has been used by all levels of education, both public and commercial, as well as military.

**Weighting of Exams Questions**: Weighting is not considered relevant for technical workers since a seemingly insignificant competency may well be as important to

safety or proper service as one that appear to be much more exotic. (e.g.: Oscilloscope operation vs. replacing a fuse.)

**Monitoring Effectiveness of Program**: Since 1965, the program has been proven effective. However, ETA constantly seeks information from employers, schools and individuals verifying the validity and current relevance of the assessment.

**For More information or to Register for an ETA Sponsored Certification Program, contact ETA at:**

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