FAQ: Changes to Colour Vision Testing and Entry Requirements for Craft Apprenticeships

1. What are the main changes to colour vision testing for craft apprenticeship entry?

- Colour vision testing and a pass result are no longer mandatory for entry to almost all craft apprenticeships.
- The only exceptions are the Electrical and the Electrical Instrumentation programmes, where the current testing process and entry requirement still apply.
- Instead, all candidates **are recommended to complete a colour vision screening** by an optometrist before registration. This is for awareness, not exclusion.

2. Why is SOLAS making these changes?

- Research evidence shows the current Ishihara test has limitations in sensitivity, specificity, and grading of defect severity.
- International practice shows entry-level colour vision defect (CVD) testing is rare in other European countries.
- SOLAS conducted a review of craft programme entry requirements with a view to adopting best practice and to make the programmes more accessible and inclusive

3. What is the new recommended process for colour vision screening?

- Screening by an optometrist (Ishihara test) is formally **recommended before training**, but not used to prevent entry (except for Electrical or Electrical Instrumentation programmes).
- If a candidate is found to have a colour vision defect, the employer is responsible for any further testing, ideally using the CAD test.
- Employers and trainers are expected to make reasonable adjustments to help people with CVD succeed in their roles and in training.

4. What is the process for the Electrical or Electrical Instrumentation programme?

- The initial process and entry requirement remain unchanged: a successful pass of the Ishihara screening test is required for entry to either of these programmes prior to registration.
- For those who do not pass the initial screening, the appeal process will now use the CAD test.
- A threshold of 4 CAD units ('safe') is recommended for entry to the Electrical or Electrical Instrumentation programme, in line with UK Joint Industry Board (JIB) guidance.

5. What is the CAD test and why is it being introduced?

- The CAD test is a computerised colour vision test that quantifies severity and type of colour vision loss in CAD units.
- It is more accurate than the Ishihara test for grading severity and identifying safe limits for safety-critical tasks.
- The CAD test is already used in UK electrical apprenticeships and other safety-critical industries.

6. What does 'reasonable adjustment' mean for employers and trainers?

- Employers and trainers must consider job and task-specific requirements and make reasonable adjustments to working tasks and practices.
- Adjustments may include assigning certain tasks, substituting others, or modifying workplace practices in consultation with the employee.

7. Is ongoing colour vision testing required?

- Ongoing testing is encouraged after training to spot any changes in colour vision or visual task requirements.
- Annual testing may be advisable for safety-critical roles.

8. Are 'corrective' lenses allowed for colour vision testing?

- No, the prohibition on the use of 'corrective' lenses (such as EnChroma or Chromagen) remains.
- Research shows these lenses do not reliably improve colour discrimination and may shift confusion to other colours.

9. How do these changes align with European best practice?

- The new approach aligns Ireland's system with European countries, where entry-level CVD testing is rare.
- Employers across Europe have the responsibility for testing and these changes align Ireland with European best practice.

10. What evidence supports these changes?

- Practice of other European nations
- Guidance from equality legislation and other bodies.
- Recommendations from previous SOLAS-commissioned reports and international experts.

11. Where can I find more information?

- The full research report by Prof. Roger S. Anderson is available from SOLAS.
- Further guidance will be provided via webinars and updates on the SOLAS website.

12. What happens if a candidate fails the Ishihara test?

- For all programmes excluding Electrical or Electrical Instrumentation, failing the Ishihara test does not prevent entry.
- If a candidate is found to have a colour vision defect, the employer is responsible for any further testing, ideally using the CAD test.
- Employers and trainers are expected to make reasonable adjustments to help people with CVD succeed in their roles and in training.
- For applicants for the Electrical or Electrical Instrumentation programmes, candidates who fail the Ishihara test may appeal using the CAD test. A score of 4 CAD units or less is considered 'safe', and enables registration on these programmes.

13. What are the definitions of mild, moderate, and severe colour vision deficiency in the CAD test?

- Normal (CV 1): < 2.25 CAD units.
- Functionally normal (CV 2): < 2.35 CAD units.
- Safe (CV 3): – 4 CAD units.
- Poor (CV 4): – 12 CAD units.
- Severe (CV 5): > 12 CAD units.

14. Will these changes affect safety and quality standards?

- The changes are designed to maintain safety and quality standards while making apprenticeship entry more accessible and inclusive.
- Safety-critical programmes such as Electrical or Electrical Instrumentation retain stricter requirements, with more accurate testing and clear thresholds.

15. What if I need further clarification?

- Contact SOLAS and the National Apprenticeship Office by email at apprenticeship@nao.ie for further information or clarification.