

Taking meteorology into your job

There is hardly any outdoor activity that isn't affected by the weather. In sports it may be a simple question of whether we can play or not; on the other hand weather may pose a serious risk of injury or death in sports such as gliding, parachute jumping, off-shore sailing, caving and others. Someone has to give informed weather advice in advance and possibly during activities, someone with experience and education in meteorology. Many businesses and services will employ staff who specialise in providing meteorological advice, from local authorities concerned about icing roads or flood defences, rail, road and air traffic controllers, water and electricity companies, oil-rig service companies and more. In a nutshell, meteorology is increasingly part of the package of information that clients, customers, users and the public at large expect from organisations. A few businesses may have a full-time meteorologist on their books but most are likely to have staff for whom meteorology is simply part of their job. I guess I am one such person, part of my job being to provide a sound meteorology course but I have other non-meteorological responsibilities too. How do you know you're getting a decent course from me?

First you can compare what I say with what you find in books by reputable authors and publishers; to a lesser extent by what is said in research papers, for these tend to focus on fine technical detail and that isn't the thrust of our course. Basically, you can compare this course with a wide range of accepted knowledge. In addition, and I think that this is important though the University doesn't seem to agree, the content of this course can be seen by the public at large, including other professionals in the business, and comments returned to me. Over the past I have had nothing but encouraging feedback from this source. Finally, my professional credentials include being a Fellow of the Royal Meteorological Society, a 'qualification' given only after scrutiny. This piece isn't really about my background but is about recognition of professional competence for you in a future career that may involve providing meteorological advice.

In many technical subjects professional competence is flagged and maintained by a so called 'chartered' status. We've all heard of chartered accountants (CA). I am a 'chartered physicist' (CPhys), a qualification maintained by the Institute of Physics. Anyone working as a traditional Engineer in this country and many others is likely to be a 'chartered engineer' (CEng), a qualification maintained by one of the specialist engineering institutions on behalf of the Engineering Council. Industrial and university chemists are likely to be 'Chartered Chemists' (CChem) awarded by the Royal Society of Chemistry, and so on. In meteorology CMet status is the highest accreditation, awarded by the Royal Meteorological Society to professional meteorologists, almost certainly full-time meteorologists. As of 2014, the Royal Meteorological Society has started the 'Registered Meteorologist' (RMet) scheme partly in recognition that meteorology is an important component in professional life in many spheres, but not necessarily a full-time commitment. The two paragraphs above gave some examples.

If you would like in the future to be considered a Registered Meteorologist and have the letters RMet after your name then there are a number of criteria to fulfil – hoops to jump through if you will. RMet status will undoubtedly increase your employability. I've used the

word ‘qualification’ above but some people reserve the word qualification for University degrees and similar and call registered or chartered status an ‘accreditation’. Accreditation isn’t handed out on a plate just for the asking. Accreditation is based on knowledge, experience and continued practice. The details of obtaining RMet status are given on the web page <http://www.rmets.org/our-activities/professional-accreditation/registered-meteorologist-rmet-0> . I’ll summarise some of the key aspects of it.

- *Scientific background* RMet status implies knowledge of Physics, Maths and Chemistry at least to university entrance level. Obviously university course passes in these subjects generally exceed this requirement. With the increasing popularity of interdisciplinary studies then this level of knowledge may be provided by qualifications other than passes in these core areas. Also work experience, for example in risk assessment or that needed for the other parts of your job, may provide the knowledge so it’s not all about formal ‘qualifications’.
- *Knowledge of meteorological science and background* The meteorological component of our course hasn’t yet been put to the test of RMet assessment but looking at the list of subjects expected under this head almost all of them are introduced in our course. Certainly the course is an excellent basis to build future experience on.
- *Experience and judgement* Accreditation isn’t primarily about passing exams. It’s about having gained experience. For example, working well with colleagues and delivering information to a tight deadline is usually part of a job that includes delivering meteorological advice. A willingness to keep in touch with the weather ‘out-of-hours’ is also a sign of commitment. A minimum of 3 years experience is expected before RMet can be earned.
- *Communications skills* These include being able to communicate clearly in English and write technically competent reports.
- *Professional conduct* Under this heading is the requirement to abide by a professional code of conduct and maintain a professional development diary.

The full requirements of the RMet cover 4 pages of fairly small type but most of the ‘requirements’ are what anyone would be doing in a meteorologically related job in any case so are not additional burdens. The burden is to articulate them in the application! The main purpose of the exercise is to be able to say with the 4 letters ‘RMet’ “I am employable and worth my salary”.

If in the future you decide to apply for RMet status, then having passed our meteorology course will be a useful formal qualification to flag. By then, though, your knowledge of the area of meteorology you bring to your work will be greater than the introduction covered by our lectures.

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