

BBKA Basic Certificate in Modern African Beekeeping

There is still great enthusiasm for the BBKA Basic Certificate in Modern African Beekeeping in the countries where it is used.

It is valued as an internationally moderated examination, which sets a standard for beekeepers in sub-Saharan African countries that do not have their own examination systems. The assessment is designed to be of equivalent standard to the BBKA basic but modified to be relevant to African conditions.

BBKA Basic Certificate in Modern African Beekeeping assessments are available as part of projects being carried out in Cameroon, Nigeria and Malawi. In these places they are used as a tool for the development of field trainers in order to structure their training and test whether they have sufficient practical skills to teach beekeeping in the field. In general, training for trainers schemes use the syllabus as a training guide and the assessment as a test of competence for field-based trainers who will be training

people in the villages. The practical and oral nature of the assessment means that local examiners can carry it out in local languages and that it is a real test of competence (rather than just attendance on a course as has occasionally been found to be the case). At present Brian Durk and Pam Gregory carry out assessments plus the people they have trained as assessors and nominated to the BBKA. Brian Durk examined one candidate in Nigeria in 2008 while Pam Gregory oversaw the assessment of four candidates in Malawi in Nov 2007. Long-term sustainability of the system depends on the UK-based assessors being able to train suitable local examiners. Pam Gregory trained two examiners in Malawi in 2007. Pam can now act solely as moderator. The system is not as well developed in Cameroon or Nigeria.

The assessment is not used in all sub-Saharan African countries that Pam has visited as some already have their own systems (although Pam has never seen one of these in practical operation or met

anyone who has passed an exam). Beekeeping training in developing countries is frequently done as part of an agricultural college syllabus, which trains agricultural advisers. Much of this seems rather theoretical and is not often available to ordinary bee farmers. However, the BBKA syllabus and marking schedule were sent recently to a contact in Kenya, where there is a reasonable system of private beekeeping education, as they are looking to develop a national exam system and felt that they would like to see what work had already been done since it may help to guide their own thinking.

This certificate could also be of unique value to European beekeepers who wished to help beekeepers in sub-Saharan Africa or for other people, such as VSO volunteers, to offer them the practical grounding they might need. At present provision for this kind of training seems poor. The barrier to this is that at present the training and assessment for the BBKA assessment is done in the developing country. African bees

are very defensive and require handling in a way that might surprise those used to working with temperate honey bees. It may be possible to offer a modified version of this African exam that covered the essentials while pointing out the limitations of doing the assessment in this country. Pam believes there would be a modest demand for it should it be made available in the UK.

Pam and Brian often get requests for a more advanced training course. It may be possible to do this over the Internet as a correspondence course, but to do it well would require an appropriate syllabus and significant development of training material, which would not otherwise be easily available for participants. The biggest difficulty with overseas candidates for module exams would be how to get a fair invigilation system. Pam thinks it is unlikely that this aspect could be easily developed in the near future.

Pam Gregory

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Congratulations to all these successful beekeepers

*Val Francis,
Exam Board Secretary*