



Assessment as a product differentiator

Andrew Way, manager, Light Gauge Steel Construction and Product Assessment from SCI outlines some of the key drivers for increased demand for assessment and certification in the fasteners and fixings market.

New legislation, product standards and design standards are increasing the need for third party verification services. Savvy manufacturers are increasingly using product assessment as a cost effective method of providing specifiers with added independent confidence in their product and as a way to differentiate and access new markets in one of the toughest markets the construction industry has seen.

As SCI Assessed holder Julian Imms, managing director of Blindbolt comments: 'We are winning contracts on the superior performance of our product. Achieving SCI Assessed supports our continued expansion by giving specifiers and clients added independent assurance that they are choosing the right product over and above our competitors.'

Third party assessment and certification such as the one that SCI and others offer can help provide real competitive advantage to manufacturers and added assurance to specifiers keen to ensure they are opting for the best fastener and fixing option for their project.

Increased sophistication and complexity of products

Products and construction systems are growing in complexity and are invariably pre-engineered for optimised performance across a range of criteria which relate to both structural and non-structural requirements.

Clients and specifiers use the performance values and product capability information that manufacturers and suppliers provide on their products and they must have confidence in this information to specify and use their product over another competitor's option.

Additionally tenders often request product certification and growing companies are keenly aware they need to factor in compulsory CE certification in 2013 as part of their continued European business growth strategies.

Eurocodes, standards and regulations

The implementation of the Eurocodes is creating demand as specifiers look for assurance that performance values quoted by manufacturers have been derived correctly and in accordance with the latest relevant standards.

Third party certification is particularly important when design values have been obtained from testing. Historically, obtaining design values from test results has not necessarily followed formal procedures.

Specifiers can be confident that design data covered by SCI

Assessed have been derived using the appropriate procedures as detailed in the latest standards. When published standards do not provide procedures for a particular product and situation SCI uses its technical expertise to develop suitable methods for calculating design values.

Which assessment scheme?

Choosing which assessment scheme to use is often not a straight forward decision. However, of SCI's offerings, the most relevant to fixings and fasteners manufactures are SCI Assessed and CE Marking:

Key features	
SCI Assessed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All sectors of construction. • Ideal for fastener and fixing products. • For products and product assemblies; technical data and design tools. • Flexible scope tailored to client needs. • Technical performance assessment and derivation.
CE Marking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All sectors of construction. • Technical performance. • Worldwide recognition. • Includes factory production assessment. • Collaboration with notified body.

CE marking will become compulsory in all EU member states for all construction products for which there is an applicable Harmonised Standard (hEN). This will apply equally to domestically manufactured products and imports (including imports from outside the EU).

The SCI are currently working with a range of forward thinking companies helping them to gain CE Marking for their steel construction products. The companies include manufacturers and suppliers of; light gauge steel sections, structural fixings, cladding systems, building systems and floor decking.

SCI Assessed is a flexible, wide-ranging and independent verification service awarded to testify that manufacturers' technical data is accurate and that appropriate procedures have been used to derive the data. It can be utilised as a stepping stone for gaining CE Marking or as a means to verify technical data outside the scope of the CE Mark.

About SCI

SCI is a UK leading, independent provider of technical expertise and disseminator of best practice to the steel construction sector. It works in partnership with clients, members and industry peers to help build businesses and provide competitive advantage through the commercial application of its knowledge. It is committed to offering and promoting sustainable and environmentally responsible solutions. www.steel-sci.org

For more about SCI Assessed please visit www.sci-assessed.com