

Could/should we arrange for independent checking of measurement reports from ACMS?

When an area measurement secretary measures a course in his own area he normally certifies it without reference to any checking of his calculation or report content by a third party. After all an ACMS is already being trusted to check the work of other measurers before issuing certificates so surely ACMS can be trusted to check his own work?

However, a fresh pair of eyes looking at an ACMS report could be very helpful in finding glaring calculation errors, or spotting lack of clarity in the report, especially whether the report will be sufficiently clear to a new race director in several years time who was not present during the measurement and remove any ambiguity in how to layout the course correctly.

Calculation errors etc

A few of my own measurement reports since I became an ACMS in 1996 have been for other areas so they have been seen and certified by the appropriate ACMS. A few of my reports have gone to the AIMS secretary for certification. The only query I can remember being raised was over the use of a short 200m temporary calibration course. Nevertheless I would find it reassuring if more of my reports were looked at by another pair of eyes. I don't make many calculation errors these days since I once I get my spreadsheet set up correctly it deals with everything. But when the spreadsheet combines many different measurement segments, I find it does need careful checking that the pieces have been correctly added. I usually now make an independent summation of counts straight from my field notebook in order to check the overall distance, and to check for copying errors.

Clarity and completeness of a report

I hope my reports are clear. This year I did a half marathon report complete an addendum with photos, descriptions and offsets of mile locations suitable for handing to the race director's contractor who was putting out signs. At the race director's request I even had to produce this section of the report in a proprietary MS word document file format, instead of the universally readable pdf format, since the race director was going to edit my file to contain additional instructions about other matters for the contractor.

The contractor made a complete mess of the job and there were many many complaints from runners. When the race director asked me what was wrong, I was able to find enough photos and videos on the web to show that the contractor had placed many signs not in the positions shown in the photos in my documentation. I did find it surprising that this eminent Run Britain race director did not himself have checks in place on his contractor's work and it was left to me to scour the internet for evidence of what the contractor had done.

Afterwards I reflected that it would have been useful to me to have an independent experienced pair have eyes look over my report and check for clarity and completeness

The completeness issue is probably the one issue that does come up most frequently when I do certifications. Just this week I had a report from an experienced measurer, with nice pictures of the start/finish line painted on a road, but no sketch with offset measurements. When I queried the point we discovered that he had accidentally not included with the report files the sketch map which was a separate file. I can remember in the past even querying similar such points with very highly qualified measurers.

Number of Measurements made by ACMS

How much work would be involved if every ACMS report had to be checked? I added up the number of courses measured by our present ACMS over the last 5 years:

Year	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014 to 26 nov
Midland ACMS	5	2	1	2	2
North ACMS	7	15	23	15	21
Scotland (Nearly all are by Scottish ACMS)	18	16	16	20	?
South ACMS in South	3	4	5	9	9
By South for other areas - certified by ACMS in other areas	1	3	1	0	0
Wales ACMS		3	4	7	20
NI	?	27	17*	27*	?
TOTAL	34	70	67	80	52

*The NI measurements include some parkruns which we no longer certify.

So to check every ACMS report would require about 80 or 90 checks to be carried out per year. This could be done by sharing the work out between the present and former ACMS, and since generally the report of an ACMS should be of a good standard, it should not be too onerous to check these for mistakes and omissions.

Conclusion

The CMWP is asked to consider the following possible options:

1. No change to present practice of an ACMS certifying his own work without independent checking.
2. Make arrangements for a limited trial of checking, or of optional checking, and report back next year.
3. Introduce the requirement for independent checking for all ACMS reports.

Addendum

Sometimes as an ACMS I have been asked to make a last minute measurement shortly before a race. Obviously it has been convenient for both the Race Director and myself that I have been able to issue the certificate course accuracy without any delay which would be introduced by an additional stage of checking. However, in these circumstances of urgency the ACMS could issue a certificate immediately as at present making it clear that the checking would proceed and could result in the need for modifications to the report or indeed the actual course if something was discovered during the check. A race director could obviously avoid this risk by arranging the measurement 6 months before the race as is recommended.

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