



HALLMARKING AT THE BIRMINGHAM ASSAY OFFICE



SPONSOR'S
MARK

STANDARD
MARK

TRADITIONAL
FINENESS

ASSAY OFFICE
MARK

DATE
LETTER

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HALLMARKING IN THE UK

Introduction

The UK has had laws relating to the compulsory, independent hallmarking of Gold and Silver products for over 700 years. These laws have an impact on anyone selling products into or within the UK. The following is intended as an overview of the situation and the implications for the supplier. The basic starting point is that products made from Gold, Silver, Platinum and as of 23rd July 2009, Palladium, have to be independently hallmarked before being placed on the market and described as such. Palladium hallmarking became compulsory on January 1st 2010.

There may also be VAT and Duty implications for exporters to the UK; information on these points can be obtained from H M Customs and Excise, their contact details are listed at the end of the document.

Implications for Importers into the UK and Exporters to the UK

Before your goods can be offered for sale they have to have been tested and hallmarked at a UK Assay Office. Unless they are exempt because:

- a) **The product weighs less than**
1.00 gram for Gold
7.78 grams for Silver
0.50 grams for Platinum
1.00 gram for Palladium
- b) **The product has already been tested and hallmarked** in a country which is a signatory to the International Convention on Hallmarking **and it bears the Convention "Common Control Mark"**.

The following countries are signatories to the convention: Austria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, Hungary, Ireland, Israel, Latvia, Lithuania, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Slovak Republic, Sweden, Switzerland and the UK.

- c) **The article bears other European national hallmarks which provide an equivalent guarantee to consumers.** The opinion of the British Hallmarking Council is that such marks must contain – Sponsors Makers' marks, Fineness (purity mark) and an Assay Office mark.



Using these criteria, the national marks of Denmark, Finland, Ireland, the Netherlands, Portugal and Switzerland without the Common Control Mark are acceptable in the UK.

Spain has a dual system of Assay Office marking and licensed manufacturers marking. The only Spanish marks which conform to the British Hallmarking Council criteria are marks including the following symbols:-

A1 **V1** **M1**

National hallmarks of countries outside the European Economic Area are not legal in the UK. Articles from these countries must be hallmarked in the UK or Convention hallmarked in one of the convention countries before being offered for sale. Goods which do not meet these criteria must be tested and hallmarked by a UK Assay Office.

Testing & Hallmarking

UK Hallmarks consist of a minimum of three symbols.

Sponsor's mark



Fineness mark



Assay Office mark



The fineness mark indicates that the article has been tested and is of at least the fineness stated.

X-ray Fluorescence instruments are used to analyse the precious metal content of articles submitted for hallmarking. Some products are plated to give an even or uniform surface finish. In order to analyse the material it may be necessary to remove some of the plating to expose the surfaces to be tested.

No negative tolerances are allowed in the UK, and all parts of the article must be of the same fineness.

The following finenesses are permitted in the UK:

Gold: 999, 990, 916, 750, 585, 375
Silver: 999, 958, 925, 800
Platinum: 999, 950, 900, 850
Palladium: 999, 950, 500



How Do I Get My Goods Hallmarked?

Through the importer

Many of the importers and purchasers of goods are registered with an Assay Office and import goods un-hallmarked and then get them hallmarked themselves before they sell them. In many instances exporters to the UK set up a UK sales office or have a UK agent who effectively is the importer of the product, and they often deal with hallmarking issues on behalf of the exporter.

By the exporter

Some companies that export to the UK send goods to be hallmarked before supplying them to their customer. To do this they need to **register** a Sponsor's Mark at an Assay Office. This is a simple administrative process. A Sponsor Mark is a symbol to provide traceability back to the company supplying the goods. The mark consists of the initial letters of the company surrounded by a shield unique to that particular manufacturer, importer or retailer. Several organisations may have the same initials but each will have a distinctive surround.

The Sponsor's Mark can be struck on your goods either prior to hallmarking or by the Assay Office.

Once you are registered your goods can be sent to the Assay Office for testing and marking. On completion the goods can be returned to a UK address. If goods need to be returned to an overseas address, the customer will be required to make the necessary carriage arrangements.

A fee is charged for registration and for making a Sponsor's punch. In addition a charge is made for each item hallmarked.

Registration £60.00 plus VAT – Registrations are valid for 10 years.
Sponsor's punches from £70.00 plus VAT – for up to two initials.

For a price list please email info@theassayoffice.co.uk

Contacts:

H M Customs and Excise

www.hmce.gov.uk

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+44 208 929 0152

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