



ACS Accreditation Scheme Overview

For full details of the scheme, see the [ACS Accreditation Website](#) or contact us at accreditation@acs.org.au or +61 (0) 2 9299 3666

In Australia's Information and Computation Technology (ICT) sector ACS is the peak professional association and a key participant in industry. The ACS is committed to raising the professional standards of the ICT industry. The accreditation scheme is one means it uses to exercise that commitment.

The ACS is a signatory to the Seoul Accord. The Accord signatories mutually recognise their respective accreditation schemes for undergraduate and postgraduate (master's level) programs for initial professional practice. The Seoul Accord Graduate Attributes have been incorporated within the ACS Core Body of Knowledge and the ACS accreditation criteria. This mapping ensures that a program satisfying the ACS accreditation criteria will satisfy the Seoul Accord requirements and forms the substance of the ACS adherence to the Accord.

The ACS is accredited by the International Professional Practice Partnership (IFIP IP3). ACS accreditation aligns with the Universities Australia / Australian Council of Professions [Joint Statement of Principles for Professional Accreditation](#) (2016) and ISO/IEC 17024.

ACS promotes quality in ICT-related higher education to meet future industry needs. It sets graduate standards, provides support for improvement in higher education and gives recognition to an institution and its programs only after a rigorous evaluation of their capacity to produce graduates who have the knowledge and skills required of an ICT professional. Not all ICT programs achieve ACS accreditation, and many are required to address shortcomings within set time frames to maintain accreditation status. The process is a stimulus for rigour in program design and a filter for those not able to meet the standards.

ACS has accredited over 340 ICT-related programs in over 40 providers in Australia.

Aims of ACS Accreditation

To Universities Australia and Professions Australia "Professional accreditation of university courses of study is intended to ensure that a course of study meets essential criteria in the training and education of its students in the relevant professional discipline, and that graduates from that discipline achieve the professional competencies and learning outcomes necessary for entry into the relevant level of professional practice" (Joint Statement 2016).

With a growing range of ICT-related courses on offer, ACS accreditation provides quality assurance and a marketing edge for bachelors and masters programs. Faculties can be reassured that their program design is robust and meets market needs. Industry can be confident that the qualification is founded on sound curriculum, specialist teaching capability and effective industry linkage. Students can be reassured that their qualification has industry recognition. The ACS website provides recognition of accredited courses.

ACS accreditation aims to:

- serve a public good upholding the interests of the ICT profession, students, graduates, employers, governments, and the higher education sector;
- provide an independent quality process assuring that graduates meet the criteria and standards for entry into professional practice in Australia;
- assist Higher Education providers in the improvement of the quality of their programs; and
- aid student and graduate recognition and mobility within Australia and internationally, and promote ethical competence and conduct.

Governance of ACS Accreditation

The operation of the accreditation scheme is delegated to the *CEO* and is managed by the *Director, Professional Standards and Assessment Services*. Each higher education provider has a *Case Manager* to facilitate accreditation and provide a continuing link with the ACS. *Accreditation Panels* are formed to conduct evaluations of providers and their programs. The *Accreditation Committee* is responsible for reviewing the conclusions of panels and making recommendations to the CEO. The CEO issues a Certificate of Accreditation that identifies which attributes of each program are relied upon to meet each accreditation criterion. The certificate is useful for a provider to test whether its proposed program changes would affect accreditation and to ease the path for the next accreditation cycle.

Accreditation policy is developed within the *Professional Standards Platform* which underlies a range of ACS standards-based activities. The accreditation scheme is the responsibility of the Director, Professional Standards and Assessment Services with advice from the Accreditation Committee and the *Profession Advisory Board*.

Design Principles of the ACS Accreditation Scheme

The Accreditation Scheme embodies these key design principles:

Respect for the autonomy of education providers: The ACS does not prescribe curriculum, but respects the expertise of providers to develop and teach their programs. Accreditation criteria are concerned with program qualities, not curriculum specification.

Transparent and equitable: ACS criteria and processes are explicit so minimising bias in evaluation.

Authentic: Evaluation is based on primary sources - actual assignments and student work, not on ancillary, bespoke material hence significantly reducing information required in an accreditation application.

Aligned with its environment: As ACS criteria align with the Australian Government Regulator's AQF/TEQSA standards; ACS does not duplicate the regulator's evaluation but focusses only on the ICT aspects of programs so significantly reducing information required in an accreditation application.

Supported: The ACS Case Manager has a continuing role in supporting a provider to develop and teach high quality ICT programs.

Parsimonious and accepted: The criteria form the minimum set needed to evaluate core quality of programs.

Efficient and effective: The application of the above principles ensures the costs of accreditation to a provider are minimised and the quality of the evaluation maximised.

Standards Embodied in the ACS Accreditation Scheme

ACS accreditation criteria draw from a range of national and international standards including:

- the international [Seoul Accord](#)
- the [Australian Qualification Framework](#) (AQF)
- the [Australian Higher Education Standards Framework](#) (HESF)
- the [ACS Core Body of Knowledge](#) (CBoK) The ACS CBoK sets graduate knowledge requirements. This includes professional skills, breadth of ICT knowledge as well as depth in an ICT technical area. Accreditation requires an authentic mapping of CBoK skills against the subjects that develop and assess those skills. This should be a key dimension of program design and review.
- the [ACS Code of Ethics](#)
- the EU e-competence framework (e-CF) or [Skills Framework for the Information Age](#) (SFIA)
- The e-CF and SFIA frameworks are used in ACS accreditation as a means of ensuring that courses prepare graduates for real job roles and skills.
- Bodies of Knowledge from the wide range of ICT disciplines

ACS Accreditation Criteria

Before ACS accredits its programs, an institution must first be accredited by TEQSA (Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency) as ACS does not duplicate that assessment. Accordingly, ACS criteria examines only ICT-specific aspects of the provider and its programs.

Criteria related to the **provider** include:

Strategy regarding ICT education
ICT leadership and staffing
ICT external engagement and linkages, especially with the ICT Industry Advisory Board
ICT educational resources.

Criteria related to each **program** include:

Program design
ICT professional role & related SFIA skills
ICT knowledge: professional, core and in-depth knowledge areas
Advanced ICT knowledge: complex computing
Integrated & applied ICT knowledge & skills
Preparation for ICT professional practice

For more information see the *Accreditation Manual Volume 2: Criteria* on the [ACS Accreditation website](#).

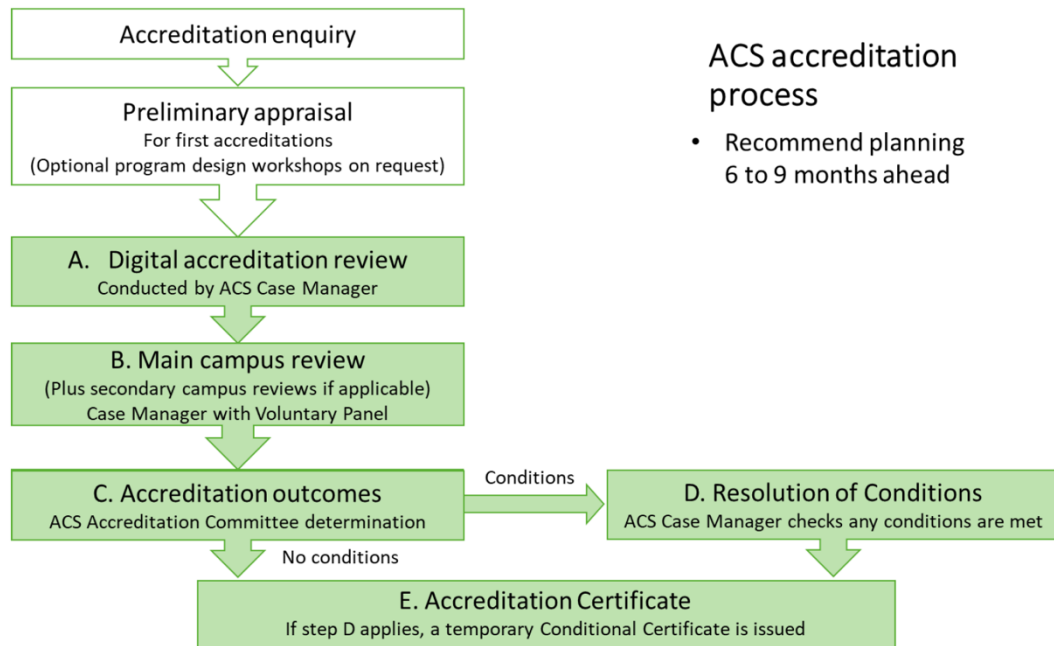
Specialist Accreditation

To meet the growing need for recognised expertise in rapidly evolving fields of ICT, the ACS has developed specialist accreditations. Programs which attain specialist accreditation meet all the requirements for normal professional accreditation, but with more stringent requirements in those accreditation criteria addressing the specialist field (e.g. professional roles, bodies of knowledge, etc).

The two fields identified by the ACS are *Cyber Security* and *Data Science*. For more information see the *Accreditation Manual Volume 2: Criteria* on the [ACS Accreditation website](#).

The ACS Accreditation Process

The accreditation process is detailed in the *Accreditation Manual Volume 1: Process* on the [ACS Accreditation website](#). In brief, the evaluation of an application starts with a digital review then proceeds to a campus review by an accreditation panel. Outcomes are determined by the ACS Accreditation Committee. Conditions of accreditation may be imposed, and corrective actions may be required by a set date.



The ACS offers accreditation support services to help providers, particularly new providers, to design, plan and prepare for accreditation and to self-assess for readiness to proceed. The ACS also offers program design workshops on request.

For further information, please contact us at accreditation@acs.org.au or +61 (0) 2 9299 3666

All Accreditation Scheme documents can be found on the Accreditation Website: <https://www.acs.org.au/cpd-education/acs-accreditation-program.html>

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