



## **COURSE ACCREDITATION FAQs – FOR EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS**

Australian Computer Society  
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## GENERAL QUESTIONS

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### **What is ACS course accreditation?**

The ACS course accreditation program is essentially a Quality Assurance framework for tertiary courses in ICT, aimed at ensuring the highest standards of ICT education in Australia.

Accreditation is generally undertaken every five years by a Panel of academics and practitioners. The Panel will make a report and recommendation to the ACS Professional Standards Assessment Committee. [Note a shorter term of accreditation may be recommended in some instances – see Accreditation Document 1 – Section 14].

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### **What is the minimum level of degrees that the ACS accepts for course accreditation?**

The ACS currently undertakes accreditation of ICT degrees at Australian undergraduate (Bachelor -AQF level 7) and postgraduate (Masters -AQF level 9) level.

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### **Our program has been previously accredited by the ACS, when will the next accreditation visit be scheduled?**

A courtesy reminder will be issued to the educational institution in the year before which accreditation is due, so you can make the necessary preparations.

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### **What benchmark/framework will the accreditation be assessed against?**

The ACS conducts course accreditation against a set of criteria via which the university's organisation and resources; program design and content; and quality assurance are analysed.

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### **What if the institution does not currently have a program accredited by the ACS?**

Where a non-self-accrediting institution does not have a program fully accredited by the ACS:

- The institution will only be considered for ACS accreditation once it has the appropriate TEQSA approval(s) for all sites for which the program will be offered.
  - An accreditation visit would normally not be scheduled until students had entered the final semester/ trimester of a program.
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### **Is there a minimum staffing level required by an institution seeking ACS accreditation?**

The ACS would normally only schedule an accreditation visit when the school seeking accreditation of its programs had a minimum of six full-time equivalent ICT academic staff (see Accreditation Document 2: Section 3.1.2).

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### **When is the accreditation documentation due?**

The ACS expects a preliminary version of the accreditation application 12 weeks prior to the scheduled accreditation visit. This allows time for preliminary review of the accreditation application and subsequent update by the institution. Only when the accreditation application is considered of sufficient

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quality will the accreditation visit be confirmed. If the preliminary review does not suggest a successful accreditation visit, the visit will be delayed until the issue(s) are resolved.

[Note: Where a visit is delayed, there is no guarantee that the rescheduled accreditation visit will occur in the same calendar year.]

## ACCREDITATION PROCESS AND FEES

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### **Where can I find a copy of the accreditation guidelines?**

The most recent accreditation documents are available at: <https://www.acs.org.au/cpd-education/acs-accreditation-program.html>

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### **How long is the accreditation process?**

The accreditation visit itself will normally last 1.5 days, however a longer visit will be scheduled for more complex accreditation visits (e.g. numerous degree programs). A report of the visit will be released between eight to twelve (8-12) weeks after the accreditation visit.

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### **What are the fees associated with accreditation?**

Please refer to <https://www.acs.org.au/cpd-education/acs-accreditation-program.html> for a schedule of fees.

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## VISIT SCHEDULE

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### **What will happen during an accreditation visit?**

Accreditation visits will usually comprise of meetings between the Panel and members of the university leadership team, staff, students and external stakeholders. The Panel will also view teaching materials, student work and documentary when formulating its findings and recommendations.

The visit may also include a tour of the facilities, such as laboratories, learning resource centres, workshops and libraries, as well as meeting with key technical support staff.

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### **Can we change the order of events or times in the visit schedule?**

Yes, please let us know if the sample visit schedule will need to change to accommodate the availabilities of the university leadership team, staff, students and/or external stakeholders.

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### **How many people will visit the main campus of our School for the accreditation?**

Generally, the ACS will require at least four people on the Panel. This will consist of a Panel Chair, a Visit Manager, another academic member and an industry representative nominated by the school being accredited.

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## STUDENT AND GRADUATES

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### **How many students and graduates will the Panel wish to speak to?**

Ideally, there should be a at 2-3 students in the final two years for every program for which accreditation is being sought plus 4-5 students who have graduated from the program.

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## TEACHING STAFF

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### **How many teaching staff will the Panel wish to talk to during the accreditation visit?**

Ideally, the teaching staff for all courses that are being accredited should attend. However, if there are a large number of programs, then the number should be limited to a maximum of 15 teaching staff.

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## INDUSTRY REPRESENTATIVES

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### **Who can we nominate as an industry representative?**

The industry representative should be a person who is involved with the school on an advisory panel, whether he/she is a major employer of graduates or the like. The nominee should not be an academic.

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### **Is it important for the industry representative to attend both days of the accreditation visit?**

Yes, it is highly advisable that you nominate an industry representative who is available on the two days. The industry representative will become a full member of the Panel, and would be expected to attend the duration of the visit.

This will allow the industry representative to gain an understanding of the entire aspect of accreditation in order to make an informed report and recommendation together with the rest of the Panel.

However, the ACS does understand that this may be difficult to meet. If there are problems with arranging an appropriate industry representative, please contact [accreditation@acs.org.au](mailto:accreditation@acs.org.au).

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## **PARTNER OR OFF-SHORE CAMPUS**

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### **We have a number of programs that are being offered at our partner campus/institute. How do we ensure that these programs are also accredited?**

The ACS will conduct separate accreditation visits to the partner campus. For campuses located overseas, the educational institution will bear all travel and accommodation expenses.

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### **How many people will be visiting our partner/off-shore campus for accreditation?**

Generally, at least two people will attend the separate accreditation visit – the Panel Chair who conducted the visit to the main campus and the Visit Manager.

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### **Why is it necessary for the Panel to visit our partner/off-shore campus?**

As part of the accreditation process, it is necessary for the Accreditation Committee to be assured that the campus offers educational experiences, facilities and standards comparable to those on the main campus of the Institution and that quality assurance mechanisms are in place to ensure the Institution maintains control of the educational program. The Committee is also interested to learn about the structure and operation of the partnership campuses of the Institution.

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### **Our School is at the end of the accreditation cycle and we would like to have our partner campus included in the accreditation. Can we request for an accreditation visit to take place?**

Unfortunately, at this late in the accreditation cycle, ACS is unable to conduct a visit to a partner campus without new full-accreditation submission. Our suggestion is to have the accreditation of the School as soon as possible where a visit to the partner campus will form part of the accreditation process.

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## **DISTANCE EDUCATION COURSES**

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### **We offer a number of distance education courses. How will they be assessed?**

The ACS will consider the extent of access to electronic resources, student services and academic support to ensure the satisfactory delivery and assessment of the distance education course.

Note: It would be helpful to have one or more distance education students available (eg Skype / teleconference) for the panel to interview during the student session of the accreditation visit.

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## OVERSEAS ACCREDITATION

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**We are a private overseas educational institution, not affiliated with any Australian institutions, and are interested in having our courses accredited by the ACS. Is this possible?**

This will depend on the circumstances. All expressions of interest will be given proper consideration by the Accreditation Committee to ensure that it does not create a conflict of interest. Given the competitive nature of the education industry, the institution may advise the relevant (ICT) Society in the overseas country of the accreditation request.

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**How many people will form the Panel for the accreditation of an overseas educational institution?**

Generally, the ACS will require at least three people on the Panel. This will consist of a Panel Chair, a Visit Manager and another academic member.

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## NEW OR AMENDED COURSES

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**Our current accreditation period ends next year. We are planning to start a new course this year. Do we apply for a provisional accreditation for this new course?**

Yes, you may submit a desk audit stating the request in a cover letter and providing specification of the new degree (as in Forms 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 - ACS Accreditation Submission Forms). There should also be a pre-requisite chart for the program and some indication of which subjects are “advanced” and which are “capstone” subjects.

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**What is a desk audit?**

A desk audit is a process of review or consideration of a request made by an institution without a physical accreditation visit taking place. This is often to consider a new degree program being introduced during an accreditation period.

If you are planning to apply for a desk audit, please contact [accreditation@acs.org.au](mailto:accreditation@acs.org.au).

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**How do I submit a desk audit?**

Please email your desk audit application to [accreditation@acs.org.au](mailto:accreditation@acs.org.au). Please include a cover letter explaining the request / purpose of the desk audit.

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**Is there a fee for a desk audit process?**

Yes, a small fee is applicable. For further information on our schedule of fees, please refer to <https://www.acs.org.au/cpd-education/acs-accreditation-program.html>.

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**Can we provide a desk audit (for a provisional accreditation) for a university/institute that has never undergone a full course accreditation previously?**

Unfortunately, no. A desk audit can only be granted to an educational institution (and school) that currently has a program accredited.

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## JOINT ACCREDITATION BOARD

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### **How is a Joint Accreditation Board visit conducted?**

A Joint Accreditation Board visit occurs when the institution, usually the Engineering School of the university, offers engineering courses and seeks consideration by the ACS for accreditation. This currently applies when the program is a Bachelor of Engineering in Software Engineering.

The Panel of the Joint Accreditation Board will consist of representatives from both the ACS and Engineers Australia.

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### **How do we ensure that our courses are recognised by the ACS as part of a Joint Accreditation Board visit?**

The School is required to address Joint Accreditation Board requirements as well as the ACS requirements set out in the guidelines (<https://www.acs.org.au/cpd-education/acs-accreditation-program.html>).

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