

Australasian Hydrographic Surveyors Certification Panel

AHSCP GUIDELINES FOR HYDROGRAPHIC SURVEYING CERTIFICATION

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1. INTERIM MANAGEMENT OF THE AHSCP

The Geospatial Council of Australia entered into liquidation on 21st August 2025.

All skills migration assessments and certification applications that were lodged up until this date, will be processed.

Accordingly, the AHSCP Secretariat is not able to accept new certification applications at this time.

However, the intention is that the AHSCP will continue – the AHSCP Secretariat works directly for the Hydrographer of Australia, and continues to operate. From March 2023 the AHSCP had operated under the joint umbrella of GCA and Survey+Spatial New Zealand. The AHSCP has been continuously operating since 1994, and together with the Hydrographer, is working with the Administrators and industry stakeholders on a suitable pathway moving forwards.

Please direct any queries regarding AHSCP Hydrographic Surveyor Certification to the AHSCP Secretariat at ahs.cp@defence.gov.au.

2. RETENTION OF CERTIFICATION

To retain certification the individual must demonstrate a commitment to Continuing Professional Development (CPD). CPD is required every year post initial certification.

- **For former GCA members** – Once AHSCP recommences, we expect that CPHS will have maintained their CPD, and a CPD audit will be taken in 2026.
- **For New Zealand** - Further details of the CPD requirements are found in the *S+SNZ Policy for Continuing Professional Development* (www.surveyspatialnz.org).
- **For non-members of the former GCA and of S+SNZ** – you are required to apply for recertification every year providing submission of documentation as per the AHSCP Recertification Process Flowchart.

3. DEFINITIONS

Allied Discipline	An Allied Discipline means a qualification which contains surveying principles consistent with the IHO S-5A syllabus.
Appropriate Surveying Experience	Experience need not all be sea-time but may be a combination of practical hydrographic surveying and related office surveying and/or spatial science activities.
Certified Professional in Hydrographic Surveying	Any person who has been accepted as having met the Specialist Certification in Hydrographic Surveying criteria at either Level 1 or Level 2.
Hydrographic Survey Platform	In addition to sea-going vessels, a platform may refer to remotely operated vessels undertaking 'on-water' survey tasks, or a fixed wing aircraft or helicopter undertaking remote sensing hydrographic surveys.

In-Charge	In-Charge relates to activities undertaken where the surveyor is in overall charge of a project, or delegated operational management under the supervision of the Surveyor In-Charge. This includes but is not limited to the planning, management and oversight of a variety of practical hydrographic survey activities including collection, processing and quality control of hydrographic survey data and supervision of field staff. Such positions could include Project Managers, Charge (Lead) Hydrographic Surveyors, Party Chiefs, and Client Representatives with whole of project oversight (including veto). In-Charge time is expected to be undertaken post completion of the Level 1 education qualifications.
International Board on Standards of Competence (IBSC)	The International Board on the Standards of Competence for Hydrographic Surveyors and Nautical Cartographers established jointly by the International Federation of Surveyors (FIG), the International Hydrographic Organization (IHO) and the International Cartographic Association (ICA).
Modules	A Category A or B hydrographic course offered by an organization listed in the IBSC List of Recognized Courses - Hydrography (www.iho.int).
Practical Hydrographic Surveying	Practical hydrographic surveying includes all activities directly related to surveying afloat, such as equipment mobilisation, calibration, data collection, processing, analysis and reporting. At least 50% of this experience must be sea-time.
Reference Document	IHO Publication S-5A (Version 1.0.2 – June 2018) – FIG/IHO/ICA Standards of Competence for Category “A” Hydrographic Surveyors, and IHO Publication S-5B Version (1.0.1 - June 2017) FIG/IHO/ICA Standards of Competence for Category “B” Hydrographic Surveyors.
Sea-time	Sea-time is defined as time spent surveying whilst embarked on a hydrographic survey platform, or time spent directly controlling or managing a remotely operated platform undertaking on-water survey tasks. For the purposes of certification one year of sea-time is defined as 180 days. 75% of total sea-time required for Level 1 and Level 2 certification needs to be achieved while embarked on a survey platform. For shore-based hydrographic surveyors one day is defined as 7.5 hours.

4. LEVELS OF CERTIFICATION

The AHSCP recognises that competence is a combination of knowledge and the ability to practically apply that knowledge gained through relevant experience. These factors are assessed against recognised international standards, detailed in IHO Publication S-5A and S-5B.

There are two levels of specialist certification in hydrography, which are detailed below. The applicant must provide evidence of academic qualifications and verified practical experience for at least the minimum aggregate time required meeting the requirements of the relevant application clause. An applicant may also be certified under the appropriate hydrographic surveying sub-specialisms detailed in Section 4.3.

4.1. Level 1

Specialist Certification in Hydrographic Surveying at Level 1 is the highest attainable level of professional hydrographic certification. At this level the Hydrographic Surveyor is assessed as competent to undertake and manage hydrographic surveying projects.

There are three pathways to certification at Level 1:

4.1.1 Category A Course

Successful completion of an IBSC recognised Category A Course. These courses provide a comprehensive and broad based knowledge of the theory and practice of hydrography and allied disciplines.

AND

A minimum aggregate period of 2 years appropriate experience in **practical hydrographic surveying**, and a substantial amount of the **sea-time** component should be in-charge time. Under normal circumstances this experience is expected to be gained post qualification.

4.1.2 Suitable Bachelor Degree and Category B Course

Successful completion of a Bachelor Degree in Surveying or an allied discipline and successful completion of an IBSC recognised Category B Course.

AND

A minimum aggregate period of 2 years appropriate experience in **practical hydrographic surveying**, and a substantial amount of the **sea-time** component should be in-charge time. Under normal circumstances this experience is expected to be gained post qualification.

4.2.3 Suitable Bachelor Degree and Experience

Successful completion of a Bachelor Degree in Surveying or an allied discipline.

AND

A minimum aggregate period of 5 years of appropriate surveying experience; 2.5 years of which should be practical hydrographic surveying and a substantial amount of the sea-time component should be in-charge time. This experience shall demonstrate a competence that is not less than that stipulated in Clauses 4.1.1 and 4.1.2.

4.2 Level 2

Level 2 Certification recognises a practical comprehension of hydrographic surveying.

There are three pathways to certification at Level 2:

4.2.1 Category B Course

Successful completion of an IBSC recognised Category B Course. These courses provide a practical comprehension of the principles of hydrographic surveying for the carrying out of various hydrographic surveying tasks.

AND

A minimum aggregate period of 2 years appropriate experience in **practical hydrographic surveying**. Under normal circumstances this experience is expected to be gained post qualification.

4.2.2 Other Qualification

Successful completion of a Diploma or Certificate in a discipline of Surveying consistent with the *FIG/IHO/ICA Standards of Competence for Hydrographic Surveyors for Category B Hydrographic Surveyors*.

AND

A minimum aggregate period of 5 years of appropriate surveying experience; 2.5 years of

which should be **practical hydrographic surveying** and which demonstrates an expertise that is not less than that stipulated in Clause 4.2.1.

4.2.3 Suitable Bachelor Degree and Experience

Successful completion of a Bachelor Degree in Surveying or an allied discipline.

AND

A minimum aggregate period of 2.5 years of appropriate experience in **practical hydrographic surveying**. Under normal circumstances this experience is expected to be gained post qualification.

4.3 Sub-Specialism Certification

Sub-specialism certification is a sub-set of Specialist Level 1 certification and recognises that an individual has expertise in a specific field of hydrographic surveying. An applicant must demonstrate to the satisfaction of the AHSCP that they have:

- Two (2) years relevant experience in a particular sub-specialism demonstrated by completion of the “Logbook of Practical Hydrographic Surveying Experience” against the specific S-5A subjects as detailed in Appendix F. Components presented in the original application for Level 1 which relate to this requirement may be identified to the Panel as evidence.
- Two (2) projects demonstrating their fieldwork, reporting and other evidence of competence in the sub-specialism applied for. Components presented in the original application for Level 1 which relate to this requirement may be identified to the Panel as evidence.

Certification in any of the hydrographic surveying sub-specialisms may be applied for at the initial application stage or at any time post-certification. Certification in multiple sub-specialisms is possible. The following specialism areas are based on the optional units previously listed in IHO Publication S-5 (Version 11.0.1 – May 2011).

Although these have been removed from the later S-5 versions, the AHSCP considers that, as an applicant’s experience often relates to specific areas of hydrography, additional certification in the applicant’s sub-specialism more clearly defines their area of expertise.

Appendix F to the Guidelines provides a summary of subject matter that feeds into each sub-specialism:

There are four sub-specialisms pathways, as follows:

4.3.1 Hydrography in Support of Coastal Management

This sub-specialism incorporated the previous S-5 11th Edition optional units of Nautical Charting, Military Hydrography, Remote Sensing and Hydrography to support Port Management and Coastal Engineering. Applicants will be assessed against a demonstrated level of experience and expertise in S-5A subjects listed at Appendix F.

4.3.2 Hydrography in Support of Inland Waters Management

Applicants will be assessed against a demonstrated level of experience and expertise in S-5A subjects listed at Appendix F.

4.3.3 Hydrography in Support of Offshore Infrastructure Development

Applicants will be assessed against a demonstrated level of experience and expertise in S-5A subjects listed at Appendix F.

4.3.4 Hydrography in Support of Safe Navigation

Applicants will be assessed against a demonstrated level of experience and expertise in S-5A subjects listed at Appendix F.

5. APPLICATION PROCESS

The application process is currently on hold. Once activated again, it will include payment of a fee and submission of documents, as listed in the Checklist of Documentation Submitted (Appendix E).

Below is specific guidance regarding requirements for the Logbook, Referee Reports, Educational Qualifications, and Hydrographic Survey Reports and Plans.

5.1 Logbook of Practical Hydrographic Surveying Experience (Logbook)

The Logbook must contain sufficient detail for the AHSCP to assess their hydrographic surveying experience and relative competencies cross referenced to the subject content and level of learning required by the S-5A (for Level 1) or S-5B syllabus (for level 2). The IHO Publications S-5A and S-5B are also available for download at <https://iho.int/en/standards-and-specifications>.

The Logbook's purpose is to provide the AHSCP with sufficient information to determine the applicant's achievement of the requisite degree of hydrographic surveying competence for the level of certification sought. An applicant's practical experience may vary greatly between projects and clients and the AHSCP considers that, for Specialist Certification in Hydrographic Surveying, applicants must have enough practical experience to prove their competency.

The Logbook should contain comprehensive descriptions of specific hydrographic surveying tasks or projects undertaken, together with competencies gained or exercised, in order that the AHSCP can determine the practical requirements of the work undertaken. Information to include:

- Task or project description and their aims.
- The applicant's personal responsibilities on these projects.
- Equipment used by the applicant on these projects.
- Evidence of having taken charge of and being responsible for hydrographic surveys and related activities, such as being delegated "In Charge" of a survey activity by a supervising Surveyor in Charge.

5.1.1 Assessment of Logbook Competencies

In order to assist with the assessment of the requisite degree of hydrographic surveying competence, applicants are asked to detail the competencies exercised on each project against those listed as Foundation Science, and Hydrographic Science subjects in S-5A for Level 1 certification and Essential Subjects listed in S-5B for Level 2 certification. The designated S-5A or S-5B reference numbering for each competency either gained or exercised on a particular project should be noted in the logbook column provided. The applicant should only indicate completion of the competence if they are of the opinion that they have satisfied the S-5A or S-5B requirement.

5.1.2 Assessment of Sea Time

Sea-time is a critical component of the certification process and, for the purposes of assessment, the definition of sea-time in Section 3 will apply. The AHSCP recognises that in some disciplines of the profession sea-time may only constitute part of a day's work with the remainder of the day taken up with field work preparation, calculations or the processing of data from a survey. All, are valid hydrographic surveying tasks that are undertaken onshore and contribute to a sea-time day. In recognition of increased use of unmanned platforms the AHSCP has expanded the definition of Sea-Time to include 'On-Water' activities, which the applicant can demonstrate she/he has control over remotely controlled vessels.

5.1.3 Verification of Logbook

Every Logbook entry verified by the applicant's supervisor. The AHSCP considers authentication by signature on the application Logbook by the applicant's immediate supervisor to be the preferred option. This may include the applicant's offshore manager/party chief, senior surveyor, commanding officer, project manager or client. In some sectors of the profession, particularly the industrial offshore surveying sector, it is appreciated that there are difficulties associated with verification post project. However, without verification the application will not succeed. An acceptable alternative when the immediate supervisor is not available is verification of the Logbook details by covering letter from an appropriate referee who confirms they were in a position to verify the applicant's employment as detailed by the log book and who also signs the logbook in lieu of the immediate supervisor.

5.2 Referee Reports

A minimum of two referee reports are required. These should be from the applicant's most recent supervisors, or clients who are familiar with the applicant's technical work experience. Applicants must provide a copy of their Logbook to their referees for comment and verification. Applications for certification will not proceed until at least two references have been received by the Secretary.

5.3 Evidence of Educational Qualifications

To enable the AHSCP to assess the applicant against the relevant Category A or Category B syllabus requirements detailed in IHO Publication S-5A or S-5B, the following educational information (where applicable) should be included in the application:

- Certified true copies of all certificates and academic transcripts of the applicant's educational qualifications in surveying, hydrographic surveying, or an Allied degree obtained from a University, College of Tertiary and Further Education (TAFE), Polytechnic or similar tertiary institution. High school qualifications are not required.
 - Include all short courses in subjects directly related to surveying or hydrographic surveying.
 - State the qualification type, tertiary institution and dates of study.
 - For courses other than surveying or hydrographic surveying, include details of relevant surveying subjects completed in the course – preferably include the subject description from the university handbook
 - For applicants who do not have an IBSC Cat A or Cat B qualification, please provide:
 - Transcripts of subjects from the institution or a copy of the completion certificate of the course which describes the subject matter. If available, the transcript should contain grades achieved.
 - Mapped linkage to subjects within the IHO S5-A or S5-B syllabus (Appendix G)
- If a course was not completed, supply details of units or subjects completed and those not completed. If appropriate, give details of completed hydrographic surveying tasks in the course, including any field training.

5.4 Hydrographic Survey Reports and Plans (Level 1 Applicants only)

Level 1 applications are required to submit two of their own recent hydrographic survey reports and plans for different survey projects. These may be sanitised of client details but all relevant hydrographic metadata and conclusions are to remain. It is important that a Level 1 applicant clearly articulates their in-charge capabilities relating to practical survey conduct and management.

Plans are considered to be, but not limited to fairsheets/faircharts/drawings/plans/end product charts which show appropriate hydrographic content and should be submitted in pdf format at a minimum resolution of 300 dpi ensuring all text is legible.

The applicant is to ensure that they have appropriate permission to provide documentation and data to the AHSCP. There is no requirement to supply information which is repetitive in nature and has already been presented within each project portfolio e.g. If you supply a copy of an oceanographic observation form for one day's observations, the Panel does not require a further series of forms showing similar information for the entire survey period.

Only Word, Excel, image or PDF files are accepted for assessments. The preferred format is PDF for ease of universal access. As the Secretariat cannot evaluate which of your files are critical to your application, please submit only files required in the prescribed format providing sufficient information to fulfil your certification requirements.

Following review of the application by the AHSCP, the applicant may be required to submit additional supporting evidence. Such evidence would typically include, but is not restricted to, personal statements, copies of survey documentation, letters of reference, affidavits, academic transcripts and copies of professional licensing/registration. Level 1 applicant's may also be contacted by a member of the AHSCP in order to discuss the submitted portfolio.

6. PROCEDURE FOR RECOGNITION

AHSCP members individually review material submitted and discuss their findings at regular meetings. Individuals may find it advantageous to discuss their presentations with one of the AHSCP members before submission. An AHSCP member will not assess an application from an individual who is a former/current employee, or from an individual for whom the AHSCP member is acting as a referee. In these cases the AHSCP member will stand aside from the assessment activity.

- a. Applicants should be prepared to allow an inspection of documents completed by them (e.g. reports, charts etc.) by AHSCP members.
- b. If an applicant is judged as meeting the required level, the AHSCP will recommend the issue of a certificate.
- c. The certificate issued will remain current providing that the appropriate requirements are met.

7. APPEAL

If the Panel denies a certification application, the applicant may appeal to the AHSCP Chair to have their application reconsidered.

8. POST NOMINALS (NOTATION)

Post-nominal for Certification at Level 1: Certified Professional Hydrographic Surveyor Level 1 (CPHS1)

Post-nominal for Certification at Level 2: Certified Professional Hydrographic Surveyor Level 2 (CPHS2)

The continued use of the post nominal is subject to an ongoing commitment to CPD in order to retain certification.

A person who has achieved Certification and joins S+SNZ will be entitled to use the post-nominal after their respective organization membership eg. MS+SNZ (CPHS1), MS+SNZ (Assoc) (CPHS2).

9. CONTACT US

For queries relating to AHSCP certification as a hydrographic surveyor, please contact the AHSCP Secretariat at ahs.cp@defence.gov.au.