



FACT SHEET: Hydrographic Surveying Australasian Hydrographic Surveyors Certification Panel

The Australasian Hydrographic Surveyors Certification Panel (AHSCP) provides a pathway for certification of hydrographic surveyors to international standards. It is jointly sponsored by the Australasian Hydrographic Society (AHS) and Survey and Spatial New Zealand.

The AHSCP, which has been operating since 1994, has assessed over 400 applications from around the world. In Australia and New Zealand, AHSCP certification has been widely adopted as the competency standard for hydrographic surveyors undertaking safety of navigation surveys. The certification is designed to ensure that those employed as hydrographic surveyors have the appropriate skills, education and experience to undertake their tasks. It is especially useful for potential employers or contractors to know that prospective employees have been assessed to a common international standard.

The FIG/IHO/ICA International Board on Standards of Competence for Hydrographic Surveyors & Nautical Cartographers (IBSC) has awarded international recognition to the AHSCP Certification Scheme.

Everything you need to know about becoming a Certified Professional Hydrographic Surveyor can be found at the [AHS website](#), or for New Zealand based hydrographic surveyors from [S+SNZ](#).

The AHSCP standards

The global nature of the shipping industry is such that common standards need to be applied across state and national borders. Hydrographic surveying standards are set by the International Hydrographic Organisation (IHO) and documented in the [IHO publication S-44](#). International standards of competence for hydrographic surveyors are set by the IBSC and documented in IHO publication S-5A and B ([Standards of Competence for Hydrographic Surveyors](#)).

The AHSCP Certification Process applies the FIG/IHO/ICA endorsed competency requirements for hydrographic surveyors by confirming evidence of academic study and combines this with a detailed assessment of their verified employment history, relevant hydrographic experience and work examples to assess the competency of individuals and award certification.

What is competence in hydrographic surveying?

The underpinning philosophy of the work of the IBSC in publishing S-5A and B is that Competence = Knowledge + Experience. It is important to note that completion of the academic course alone, without gaining the ensuing appropriate field experience, does not equate to having attained competence.

Level 1 certification

There are three pathways for certification at Level 1:

1. Successful completion of an IBSC recognised Category 'A' Course AND a minimum aggregate period of two (2) years appropriate experience in practical hydrographic surveying, and a substantial amount of the sea-time component should be 'in-charge' time.
2. Successful completion of an approved Bachelor Degree, in Surveying or an allied discipline AND successful completion of a Category 'B' Course AND a minimum aggregate period of two (2) years appropriate experience in practical hydrographic surveying, and a substantial amount of the sea-time component should be 'in-charge' time.
3. Successful completion of an approved Bachelor Degree, in Surveying or an allied discipline AND a minimum aggregate period of five (5) years appropriate surveying experience; two and a half (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 stipulated in (i) and (ii) above.

Level 2 certification

There are three pathways for certification at Level 2:

1. Successful completion of an IBSC recognised Category 'B' Course AND a minimum aggregate period of two (2) years appropriate experience in practical hydrographic surveying.
2. Successful completion of an approved Diploma or Certificate in Surveying, or an allied discipline, AND a minimum of five (5) years appropriate surveying experience; two and a half (2.5) years of which should be practical hydrographic surveying and which demonstrates an expertise that is not less than that stipulated in (i) above.
3. Successful completion of an approved Bachelor Degree in Surveying, or an allied discipline, AND a minimum aggregate period of two and a half (2.5) years of appropriate experience in practical hydrographic surveying.

'Sea-time'

Sea-time is a critical component of the certification process and, for the purposes of assessment, 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.

'Days in charge'

In attaining certification at Level 1, the Hydrographic Surveyor has been assessed as competent to undertake and manage hydrographic survey projects. It is essential that for certification at this level the applicant has to clearly articulate (in Logbook of Practical Hydrographic Surveying Experience) his/her experience in charge of the planning, management and conduct of a variety of practical hydrographic survey activities.

Applications

Applications are assessed in terms of their overall hydrographic surveying competence taking into consideration the applicant's relevant academic qualifications and practical experience, noting that competence is a combination of knowledge and the ability to practically apply that knowledge gained through relevant experience.

Candidates are encouraged to read the [AHSCP Guidelines](#) before starting their application. All application forms, templates and handy hints are available on the [AHS website](#).

Skilled Migration

Surveyors, including hydrographic surveyors are a priority employment category for skilled migration to Australia. The assessing authority is the [Institute of Surveyors NSW](#).

For hydrographic surveyors, the [AHSCP](#) assesses qualifications and education against the IHO S5A syllabus.

The benefits of certification

This robust system of competency assessment and certification of individuals supports and protects:

- maritime authorities - by ensuring that work is done by a competent professional.
- employers and contractors - by reducing their overheads in assessing the experience and qualifications of their prospective job applicants.
- hydrographic surveyors themselves - by providing a credible system that certifies their competency.

The AHSCP certification programme has already made a significant contribution towards ensuring that the hydrographic surveys critical to safety of navigation and marine exploration are conducted by competent professionals, thus reducing risk of incident and promoting marine safety and environmental protection.