

Contents

Proposed amateur radio qualification and assessor accreditation arrangements

Consultation paper

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[Executive summary](#)1

[Issues for comment](#)2

[Introduction](#)3

[Review of qualification arrangements](#)4

[Overview of proposed arrangements](#)6

[New qualifications framework](#)7

[New accreditation procedures](#)7

[Fees](#)7

[Amateur class licence supporting arrangements](#)7

[Proposed new amateur radio qualification framework](#)7

[Introduction](#)7

[Examinations](#)7

[Issuing ACMA recognition certificates](#)8

[Proposed accreditation rules](#)10

[Introduction](#)10

[Types of accreditation](#)11

[Qualifications and requirements for applicants seeking accreditation](#)11

[Accreditation process](#)11

[Conditions of accreditation](#)12

[Withdrawal of accreditation](#)12

[Accredited Assessor Guidelines](#)14

[General guidelines](#)14

[Conduct guidelines](#)14

[Examination papers](#)15

[Practical assessment](#)15

[Re-sitting assessments](#)15

[Remote and special assessments](#)15

[Preparation before, during and after the examination](#)16

[Withdrawal of accreditation](#)16

[Service levels](#)16

[Operational processes to support proposed arrangements](#)18

Examination processes	18
Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)	18
Call sign arrangements	20
Insurance	21
Fees	22
Changes to the proposed amateur class licence and nonrenewal instrument	23
Changes to other legislative instruments	25
Amateur LCD	25
Qualified Operators Determination	25
Radiocommunications (Charges) Determination 2022	25
Invitation to comment	27
Making a submission	27

Executive summary

The requirement for operators of amateur radio stations to hold an appropriate qualification is a key element of the amateur radio service in Australia and around the world.

In Australia, certain services relating to amateur radio qualifications and call sign allocations are currently provided by the University of Tasmania, represented by the Australian Maritime College (the AMC). These are managed by the AMC on behalf of the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA), under a Deed of Agreement.

In May 2023, we released an amateur e-bulletin advising that the AMC had decided not to extend the Deed for the provision of amateur qualification and call sign services beyond February 2024.

After considering how amateur radio qualifications and call signs can be best supported under a class licence framework, we intend to manage the overall amateur radio qualifications and call

sign assignment, with certain examination activities undertaken by accredited assessors.

We are now consulting on the implementation of the proposed arrangements, which consist of:

- > A new qualification framework, which will continue to ensure only persons holding the appropriate qualification are authorised to operate amateur radio stations.
- > An accreditation scheme, which enables the ACMA to accredit assessors to conduct and assess theoretical and practical examinations for amateur radio.

This consultation

paper also describes proposed consequential amendments to the Radiocommunications Licence Conditions (Amateur Licence) Determination 2015, the Radiocommunications (Qualified Operators) Determination 2016 and the draft Radiocommunications (Amateur Stations) Class Licence 2022 (amateur class licence), to support the introduction of the new arrangements.

We are also consulting on the new set of fees we are proposing to introduce to support the new arrangements – issuing ACMA recognition certificates, assessing applications for recognition of prior learning and issuing call signs.

We have carefully considered the submissions made during our September 2022 consultation on proposed class licensing arrangements. Attached to this consultation paper is an outline of our planned arrangements to be implemented alongside the amateur class licence. This will assist in understanding how the new amateur framework will operate.

We appreciate the continued engagement from amateurs about the proposed qualification and accreditation framework as we progress the implementation of the amateur class licence.

Issues for comment

We are seeking feedback on the proposed new qualification framework for amateur radio and the associated accreditation

scheme, as well as the draft 2023–24 Cost Recovery Implementation Statement(CRIS).

We welcome comments on the below questions and towards any issues addressed in this consultation paper. For ease of reference, the questions are listed below.

1. Do you have any comments on the proposed qualification framework outlined in **Attachment A**?
2. Do you have comments about the development and implementation of a wholly online system for examinations and qualifications in the future?
3. Do you have any comments on the draft accreditation rules at **Attachment B**, including the kinds of accreditation, qualifications and requirements of accredited assessors, process for applying and withdrawing accreditation, and conditions on accreditation?
4. Do you have any comments on the Accredited Assessor Guidelines at **Attachment C**?
5. Do you have any comments on the RPL process outlined in **Attachment A**, or any comments or suggestions about how the RPL assessment process could be improved?
6. Do you have any comments on the proposal to recognise Harmonised Amateur Radio Examination Certificate as a 'recognised qualification (Advanced type)'?
7. Are there any other matters we have not addressed in this consultation package that you believe should be addressed as part of the implementation of the new qualification framework?

8. Do you have any comments on the proposed fees for amateur qualification and call sign services outlined in the draft 2023–24 Fees Cost Recovery Implementation Statement?
9. Do you have any comments on the proposed consequential amendments to the draft amateur class licence to incorporate the new qualification and accredited assessor frameworks?
10. Do you have any comments on the proposal to make a new legislative instrument, at the same time as the proposed amateur class licence is made, that would prevent any existing non-assigned amateur licences from being renewed further?
11. Do you have any comments on the proposed consequential amendments to the Radiocommunications Licence Conditions (Amateur Licence) Determination 2015, the Radiocommunications (Qualified Operators) Determination 2016, or Radiocommunications (Charges) Determination 2022 to support the transition to the amateur class licence and incorporate the new qualification framework?

Introduction

Background to the amateur radio service

The amateur radio service is designed primarily to facilitate hobby radiocommunications and technical experimentation, and is a longstanding use of radiofrequency spectrum.

The ACMA supports the amateur radio service through spectrum planning and radiocommunications licensing arrangements, which allow amateur operators access to certain frequency bands, while balancing other demands for spectrum.

We currently issue a type of transmitter licence – the amateur licence – to authorise the operation of amateur

stations. The [Radiocommunications Licence Conditions \(Amateur Licence\) Determination 2015](#) (the Amateur LCD) sets out the licence conditions that apply to amateur licensees. The conditions include frequency bands of operation, transmitter output power limits, amount of bandwidth that can be used and transmission emission modes.

Overseas amateurs visiting Australia for a period of up to 90 days are authorised to operate an amateur station in Australia if they comply with the licence conditions set out in the [Radiocommunications \(Overseas Amateurs Visiting Australia\) Class Licence 2015](#), which broadly reflect the same shared set of permitted frequencies and other licence conditions set out in the Amateur LCD.

Our responsibilities for the regulation of the amateur radio service include:

- > ensuring that the operation of amateur stations is appropriately authorised
- > ensuring that licensing arrangements are consistent with Australia's obligations under the International Telecommunication Union's Radio Regulations (ITU RR)
- > ensuring that our spectrum management functions are performed in accordance with the object of the [Radiocommunications Act 1992](#) (the Act)
- > managing the risk of interference to other spectrum users and congestion within bands authorised for amateur use.

Current amateur radio licensing arrangements

Amateur licences are a type of transmitter licence that authorise the operation of amateur stations in specified frequency bands and areas. There are 2 categories of amateur licence:

12. Assigned licences, which authorise the holder to operate either a repeater or beacon amateur station on frequencies specified in the licence.
13. Non-assigned licences, which authorise the holder to operate either a foundation, standard or advanced amateur station (other than a beacon or repeater station) on common frequencies specified in the amateur LCD.

The Radiocommunications (Qualified Operators) Determination 2016 specifies that a person must be a qualified operator to operate an amateur station (beacon, repeater, foundation, standard or advanced) under an amateur licence. The term 'qualified operator' is defined in the Act to mean a person who holds a Certificate of Proficiency (CoP). A CoP for amateur radio is usually issued to a person if the person has successfully completed a relevant amateur radio examination.

Call signs are a unique combination of letters and numbers specified in an amateur licence. Call signs must be used for all on-air communications under the licence. The call signs specified by the ACMA in amateur licences conform with the requirements set out in Article 19 (Identification of stations) of the ITU RR.

Under the Act, we may approve a body or organization to conduct examinations and delegate the power to issue CoPs to that body or organisation. Currently, the ACMA has approved the conduct of examinations by and delegated the power to issue CoPs to the University of Tasmania, represented by the AMC. The Commonwealth also has a Deed of Agreement with the University of Tasmania in relation to these matters. The AMC conducts examinations, issues CoPs and recommends call signs for successful examination candidates to the ACMA. After the call sign recommendation has been provided to us, we decide whether to issue an amateur licence. If the ACMA issues a licence, it will specify a call sign in the licence.

The current Deed arrangements have been designed to operate in concert with the apparatus licensing framework.

The AMC has authorised a network of volunteer assessors (AMC assessors) to conduct examinations for amateur radio. The AMC assessors are required to adhere to the AMC Assessor Guidelines, which detail the requirements of assessors and their key responsibilities.

The AMC charges fees for examinations and to make call sign recommendations. AMC assessors do not separately charge a fee for conducting examinations and are not paid by the AMC.

Since 2020, the ACMA has [consulted on licensing arrangements](#) for the transition of non-assigned amateur licences to a class licensing framework. In September 2022, we [published a consultation](#) on proposed class licensing arrangements. That consultation included the draft amateur class licence, which incorporated feedback from previous consultation processes.

Review of qualification arrangements

We have considered whether the current qualification arrangements for amateur radio align with our transition to amateur class licensing. As part of this review, we identified an approach that is consistent with the ACMA's spectrum management functions and also maintains the integrity of the amateur radio service.

In identifying this approach, we considered:

- > Australia's domestic and international obligations relating to the amateur radio service
- > the impact and risks to the integrity of the amateur radio service
- > the extent to which the approach facilitates and supports an efficient transition to class licensing
- > any regulatory and financial impact on amateur operators.

The approach identified by the ACMA is to introduce a new qualification framework accompanied by new accreditation rules called the Radiocommunications Accreditations (Amateur Radio Examinations) Rules 2023 (the Accreditation Rules). This approach allows us to align it with the amateur class licence to provide a consistent, simplified regulatory framework for amateur operators.

The use of an accreditation scheme enables the ACMA to use the expertise of experienced amateur operators to conduct and assess examinations. This approach also helps minimise costs for amateur radio examination candidates.

We consider that this approach can be implemented before the Deed expires in February 2024, thereby minimising disruption to the amateur radio service.

Under this approach we are also able to retain components from previous assessor frameworks to provide the best continuity of arrangements for amateur operators.

Overview of proposed arrangements

New qualifications framework

We are proposing a new amateur radio qualification framework to support the transition to amateur class licensing. A draft of the new qualification framework can be found at **Attachment A**.

The new framework operates in a similar manner to the current framework, with the key difference being in the change of name for the qualification documents that are issued. Under the Act, 'Certificate of Proficiency' only relates to transmitter licences. Under the new class licensing arrangements, certificates issued under the new framework will be referred to as 'ACMA recognition certificates.'

The new qualification framework will retain the current qualification levels – foundation, standard and advanced. It will also continue to recognise qualifications that were obtained or recognised under the current framework.

We will remain responsible for approving the syllabi for the examinations. While we are proposing minor alterations to the syllabi to reference the new framework, we do not propose substantial changes to the syllabi at this time. This is because we are prioritising continuity of amateur radio services. Doing so means that we can deliver the new qualification framework by February 2024.

We do not intend to use an online examination system for amateur radio examinations at this time. This is a topic on which we have received varying views from amateur radio stakeholders. We would like to know your views on the possibility of developing a wholly online system to provide amateur radio examinations.

Long term I would welcome an online exam solution. However it is not a feasible and cost effective solution for ACMA to develop given the number of exams conducted each year is less than 1000. There are

already local online Amateur exam solutions. I am aware Trainsafe has one as does the WIA (which is the exam generating software) and the USA exam delivery platform which can be adapted to Australian exams with some local Australian exam paper adjustments.

New accreditation procedures

As part of the qualification framework, we propose to establish an accreditation scheme that will underpin the conducting and assessment of amateur examinations.

Under the proposed accreditation scheme, assessors will be accredited to:

- › Conduct and assess theoretical and practical examinations for the amateur radio service to assess a person has achieved satisfactory results to operate an amateur radio station
- › Recommend candidates to us for the issue of ACMA recognition certificates, upon successful completion of an examination.
- › Assess a person's prior experience in operating an amateur radio station and/or the equivalency of domestic qualifications (i.e., recognised domestic qualifications). We intend to introduce a new set of Accreditation Rules, under subsection 266(1) of the Act, which will provide a formal accreditation framework for amateur radio examinations. The proposed Accreditation Rules are at **Attachment B**.

We have also drafted ACMA Accredited Assessor Guidelines at **Attachment C**, which contains the operational and conduct requirements on assessors.

The benefits of the proposed arrangements include:

- › Examinations will be conducted and assessed by experienced amateur radio operators, to ensure a person has achieved satisfactory results to operate an amateur radio station. (Must be Advanced Class)
- › Amateur radio examination candidates are able to gain feedback on their assessed examination from accredited assessor(s).
- › Costs for amateur radio examination candidates are minimised.

- › There will be a high level of service continuity for amateur radio examinations.

Fees

We intend to recover our costs for issuing ACMA recognition certificates, assessing applications for recognition of prior learning and issuing call signs under the new arrangements.

Amateur class licence supporting arrangements

We intend to commence the new qualification framework and relevant parts of the Accreditation Rules at the same time as the class licence.

Following consideration of the submissions to the September 2022 consultation, arrangements that will be put in place to support the implementation of the class licence have been finalised. These arrangements, such as call sign registers, interact closely with the new qualification and examination arrangements. An overview of the class licence supporting arrangements that will be put in place is outlined at **Attachment D**.

A Public call sign register must be made available of issued call signs and the holders. Names are not private information. These public registers like the current RRL or WIA Callbook should have names, suburbs and locations but may exclude actual residential addresses.

Proposed new amateur radio qualification framework

Introduction

Candidates who successfully pass a recognised amateur radio examination will be required to apply to us for an ACMA recognition certificate. The certificate issued will correspond to the type of examination taken and to the existing 3 types of amateur radio qualifications – Foundation, Standard and Advanced:

- › **ACMA recognition certificate (Foundation)** can be obtained following successful completion of the amateur radio foundation examination. This examination provides an introduction to

amateur radio. It is the simplest and most suitable for those looking to become involved in amateur radio.

- > **ACMA recognition certificate (Standard)** can be obtained following successful completion of the amateur radio standard examination.

This examination increases in difficulty from the foundation level and is suitable for persons who have an intermediate knowledge of amateur radiocommunications.

- > **ACMA recognition certificate (Advanced)** can be obtained following successful completion of the amateur radio advanced examination.

This examination is the highest level a candidate can obtain for amateur radio and is suitable for persons with complex knowledge of amateur radiocommunications.

The 3 levels of qualification reflect the difficulty in the subject matter. Different licence conditions will apply to a person under the amateur class licence, depending on their qualification level. A person with an ACMA recognition certificate (Advanced), for example, will be able to operate on more frequencies than a person with another kind of certificate.

Examinations

The ACMA will maintain a list of accredited assessors on our website, which can be used by potential candidates to contact assessors and request an examination.

Under the new arrangements, accredited assessors will be responsible for:

- > arranging a time and location for the examination to take place
- > conducting examinations in accordance with the Accreditation Rules and Accredited Assessor Guidelines
- > providing a copy of the examination, results and correspondence, relating to the examination to the ACMA, following completion of the examination
- > communicating the results of the examination to the candidate.

Consistent with current arrangements, candidates must achieve a mark of 70% or higher in the examination to successfully pass the qualification. If a candidate scores below the threshold of 70%, the

candidate will need to re-sit the examination to be given the relevant ACMA recognition certificate.

Accredited assessors with Specialist Assessor Accreditation can conduct and assess special examinations for people with a disability or in a situation that prevents them from participating in a general examination.

Remote examinations will also be permitted in certain circumstances, for example when a candidate lives more than 50 km away from an assessor or when a candidate has an impairment that prevents them from attending the assessment in person.

There is no valid reason to have a 50km limit and must be dropped to allow for remote exams to be conducted with any candidate. It is a time and cost saving to volunteers and candidates alike. Since covid, many more people are familiar with using platforms such as zoom and skype to communicate. It just makes sense to minimize the cost burdens on volunteers and candidates for unnecessary travel.

The foundation examination consists of a practical and theoretical examination, consistent with the foundation syllabus. The Standard and Advanced qualification require theory and regulations examinations. A practical component may also be required for the standard or advanced examination if an accredited assessor deems it necessary – for example, if the candidate has not previously undertaken a practical assessment.

Issuing ACMA recognition certificates

Those who have successfully passed an amateur radio examination conducted by an accredited assessor will be able to apply to us for an ACMA recognition certificate.

As amateur operators will be required to use a call sign during transmission under the amateur class licence, those applying for an ACMA recognition certificate may also apply to the ACMA to be assigned a call sign if they do not already have a call sign assigned.

Under the new framework, to be included in the amateur class licence, we intend to assess applications for ACMA recognition certificates with consideration to the following criteria:

- > whether the applicant has provided the necessary information in accordance with the prescribed application form
- > whether the applicant has paid the application fee
- > the type of certificate requested by the applicant
- > whether the applicant has passed the corresponding amateur radio examination (for example, the results of the examination)
- > whether that examination was undertaken by an accredited assessor
- > whether the accredited assessor has made any recommendation to the ACMA about the applicant
- > whether the applicant had previously failed an amateur radio examination and if so, ensuring the applicant was provided a different examination paper when re-sitting the examination
- > whether the applicant has previously obtained an international qualification in amateur radio
- > any other matter the ACMA considers relevant.

We intend to assess applications for an ACMA recognition certificate within 10 business days of receiving a complete application.

Following assessment, we decide whether to issue or to refuse the application for an ACMA recognition certificate. If a decision is made to refuse an application, we will notify the applicant in writing and provide reasons for our decision. We have developed a reconsideration process, which is outlined in greater detail in the new qualification framework at **Attachment A**.

Question 1

Do you have any comments on the proposed qualification framework, outlined in **Attachment A**?

A Public call sign register must be made available of issued call signs and the holders. Names are not private information. These public registers like the current RRL or WIA Callbook should have names, suburbs and locations but may exclude actual residential addresses.

There is no valid reason to have a 50km limit and must be dropped to allow for remote exams to be conducted with any candidate. It is a time and cost saving to volunteers and candidates alike. Since covid, many more people are familiar with using platforms such as zoom and skype to communicate. It just makes sense to minimize the cost burdens on volunteers and candidates for unnecessary travel.

Question 2

Do you support the development and implementation of a wholly online system for examinations and qualifications in the future?

Long term I would welcome an online exam solution. However it is not a feasible and cost effective solution for ACMA to develop given the number of exams conducted each year is less than 1000. There are already local online Amateur exam solutions. I am aware Trainsafe has one as does the WIA (which is the exam generating software) and the USA exam delivery platform which can be adapted to Australian exams with some local Australian exam paper adjustments.

Proposed accreditation rules

Introduction

We are proposing to make the draft Accreditation Rules in **Attachment B**.

The Accreditation Rules include the:

- > kinds of accreditation that may be granted
- > qualifications and requirements for applicants seeking to be accredited
- > accreditation process
- > conditions of accreditation
- > process to withdraw accreditation.

The Accreditation Rules are intended to maintain the current level of service continuity and integrity for amateur radio examinations by continuing to use the experience of qualified assessors to conduct

and mark amateur radio examinations. This is also expected to reduce administrative costs for amateurs, while ensuring consistency with our international obligations.

While the Accreditation Rules are a new addition to the regulatory framework for amateur radio, they essentially maintain the status quo by administering the delivery of examinations in broadly the same manner as the current Deed (i.e., assessors will now volunteer for the ACMA instead of the AMC).

Current AMC assessors will not need to apply for re-accreditation. Once the Accreditation Rules are made, if the ACMA decides to give accreditation to a current AMC assessor, a notice of accreditation will be given to that person. Those given a notice of accreditation under the Accreditation Rules are subject to the conditions of their accreditation, including compliance with the ACMA's Accredited Assessor Guidelines. Once a person has been given a notice of accreditation, they will be authorised to conduct and assess amateur radio examinations, consistent with their accreditation. If an existing AMC assessor does not wish to continue being an assessor under the ACMA's arrangements, they may opt out by providing notice to the AMC and the ACMA before the Accreditation Rules are made, or afterwards by providing notice to the ACMA.

We intend to make the Accreditation Rules prior to the expiry of the Deed.

We propose to commence all parts of the Accreditation Rules, except for those sections relating to application as an assessor, during December 2023 and prior to the commencement of the amateur class licence. This is to ensure that we can give accreditation to those who are already listed as General and Specialist Assessors (i.e., current AMC assessors) ahead of the amateur class licence commencement. This is to allow us time to onboard them, in order to ensure assessors are ready to provide examinations under the ACMA qualification framework from February 2024.

We propose that the section of the Accreditation Rules that relates to application as an assessor (and enables new applicants to apply to the ACMA for accreditation), should commence on the day the amateur class licence commences.

Types of accreditation

Under the Accreditation Rules there are 2 types of accreditation:

- > General Assessor Accreditation (General assessors)
 - > Specialist Assessor Accreditation (Specialist assessors).
- Both general and specialist assessors can deliver face-to-face and remote examinations. Specialist assessors can also conduct and assess special assessments for candidates with a disability or situation that prevents them from participating in a general assessment.

Qualifications and requirements for applicants seeking accreditation

Consistent with the current arrangements, both General and Specialist assessors will need to:

- > Hold an ACMA recognition certificate (Advanced) or an Advanced Amateur Radio Operator Certificate of Proficiency.
- > Comply with state and territory legislation about working with children or vulnerable people (which may require the assessor to undergo a Working with Children and/or Working with Vulnerable People check).

Specialist assessors will also need to hold formal teaching or education based qualifications granted by an Australian education institution.

Accreditation process

Applicants for accreditation will need to complete a form published on the ACMA website.

Under the draft Accreditation Rules, when considering an application, we would need to consider:

- > the object of the Act

- > the applicant's experience in conducting an approved examination or other similar examination
- > the applicant's qualifications
- > whether the ACMA has withdrawn accreditation from the applicant during the 5 years before the application was made
- > whether that person was on the AMC's list of Authorised Assessors on the day before the Accreditation Rules commenced
- > if the person was not on the AMC's list of Authorised Assessors on that day, whether that person had been removed from the AMC's list before that day
- > whether the person holds a current Working with Children or Vulnerable Persons Check in the state or territory where that person is ordinarily resident, or where that person intends to conduct or assess amateur radio examinations
- > any other matters the ACMA considers relevant.

If we decide to grant accreditation, we will provide a notice of accreditation to the applicant. If the ACMA decides to refuse to grant a notice of accreditation, we will notify the applicant in writing, and provide the reasons for our decision.

A person who obtains a kind of accreditation under the Accreditation Rules is known as an 'accredited assessor'.

Conditions of accreditation

Under the draft Accreditation Rules, General assessors and Specialist assessors would not be able to receive or obtain any financial reward for conducting amateur radio examinations.

Examinations may be conducted or assessed in relation to either a foundation, standard or advanced qualification under the class licence and would have to be consistent with the ACMA's Accredited Assessor Guidelines and any other relevant ACMA policies.

General assessors cannot conduct a special assessment.

Accredited assessors would also be required to abide with record keeping provisions as described in the Accreditation Rules, including keeping records of:

- > any written communication between the accredited assessor and the candidate
- > any personal information collected for the purpose of conducting an amateur radio examination
- > a copy of each examination undertaken, including examinations that were not completed
- > the notification of the results of an examination (whether successful or not) to the candidate.

All records must be provided to the ACMA within 15 business days of the examination being completed.

We intend to streamline the process for examinations and record keeping by using digital tools. Accredited assessors will be able to upload the information listed above, and provide it to the ACMA in a digital format.

Withdrawal of accreditation

The ACMA may withdraw accreditation if:

- > the accreditation is no longer in accordance with the Accreditation Rules
- > a person has contravened a condition of the accreditation.

We must provide a notice to the person setting out the reasons for withdrawing their accreditation.

The ACMA must provide a written notice to a person who it is considering withdrawing their accreditation and provide at least 14 days for them to respond.

In considering whether to withdraw an assessor's accreditation, we may consider the following matters:

- > whether the accredited assessor has conducted or assessed examinations within the last 2 years
- > if the accredited assessor has, on more than one occasion, incorrectly awarded a person a result of at least 70% or above in relation to an amateur radio examination
- > breach of a condition of their accreditation
- > any other matter the ACMA considers relevant in assessing whether to withdraw an assessor's accreditation.

Question 3

Do you have any comments on the draft Accreditation Rules at **Attachment B**, including the kinds of accreditation, qualifications and requirements of accredited assessors, process for applying and withdrawing accreditation, and conditions of accreditation?

Accredited Assessor Guidelines

We have prepared a draft set of guidelines, referred to as the Accredited Assessor Guidelines. The Accredited Assessor Guidelines include:

- > information on how to apply for accreditation
- > operational guidance on how to conduct amateur radio examinations
- > information on the ACMA withdrawing accreditation
- > conduct guidelines
- > social media guidelines.

A draft of the Accredited Assessor Guidelines can be found at **Attachment C**.

Where possible, we have tried to mirror the AMC Assessor Guidelines to ensure consistency for both amateur operators and accredited assessors.

General guidelines

An examination consists of 2 components:

14. A practical component that must be successfully completed (success is to be assessed by the assessor). This will be required when a candidate has not previously completed a practical assessment.
15. A written component – a multiple choice theoretical examination. Examinations would not be conducted in a private residence, unless the examination is a remote examination (e.g., conducted online).

It is our view that examinations should only be conducted at venues with appropriate public liability insurance. Examples of appropriate venues might include local council meeting rooms, radio club/associations or a local community hall.

Accredited assessors would not be allowed to conduct or assess examinations for immediate family members.

Conduct guidelines

Accredited assessors should conduct themselves in an impartial and unbiased manner.

Accredited assessors are not representatives of the ACMA or the Australian Government, and must not act in a way that gives the impression that they are.

Accredited assessors must act in a professional and respectful manner and comply with the law at all times.

Accredited assessors should not misuse their accreditation – for example, by using their accreditation for any other purpose than to conduct and assess an amateur radio examination.

Examination papers

Accredited assessors can only use examination materials provided by the ACMA. They will be able to generate examinations from predetermined question pools developed by the ACMA.

Accredited assessors will have access to the question pool and will be able to notify the ACMA if there are any issues relating to specific questions.

When handling exam papers or material, any modifications, copying or sharing of papers with someone other than the ACMA would not be permitted by the Accredited Assessor Guidelines. Examination material can be downloaded by accredited assessors, or they can ask for us to email the material to them. Once printed by the accredited assessor, the materials need to be securely stored in a safe location at all times.

Practical assessment

The ACMA will provide accredited assessors with the relevant material to conduct a practical assessment.

This needs to be reworded as to complete a practical assessment candidates need to use a multimeter, wind coils on ferrites, operate a radio transceiver with cables, power supply and dummy load etc.

I don't see ACMA supplying this "Practical Kit" to each assessor.

In my opinion, given OFCOM in the UK have dropped the practical assessment, ACMA should give it consideration to also drop the practical and include the practical questions into the theory exam questions, which could easily be done.

Nowadays there is so much online youtube training available for "practical education" before and after assessments.

Foundation level candidates must undertake a practical assessment. An accredited assessor may require standard and advanced level candidates to undergo a practical assessment if they have not previously undertaken a practical assessment.

Accredited assessors may waive the practical assessment (and sign off the assessment sheet) for an active amateur radio operator who the accredited assessor deems to have suitable practical operating experience. If the assessor is unsure whether to waive this requirement, they should seek advice from a Specialist assessor or the ACMA.

Re-sitting assessments

We have developed guidance where a candidate is 're-sitting' an examination. It is not appropriate for a re-sit candidate to undertake the same examination questions as their previous attempt(s). Accredited assessors would have to notify the ACMA of the candidate's name and details before they re-sit the examination.

I disagree with needing to inform ACMA if the candidate needs to resit their exam if they fail. The assessor who ACMA have entrusted to conduct the exam correctly should allow the candidate to resit on the spot BUT with a different exam paper. Given exams are free it makes sense to do so. An example is that a US Amateur exam candidate can resit multiple times on the same day as long as each exam papers are different for each attempt. This is appropriate if the candidate has

failed by one or two questions. If the candidate has a very poor score the assessor can suggest to not resit but do more study and rebook for a later date.

The assessor should also advise us of the examination paper is being used for a re-sit examination. The assessor would need to ensure that the questions provided to the candidate during the re-sit examination are different to those previously attempted by the candidate.

Remote and special assessments

We are proposing that the current AMC arrangements for remote assessments continue. A remote assessment can be conducted by an accredited assessor when the candidate is unable to attend the assessment in person due to long distances, having to quarantine, or if they are unable to attend in person due to an impairment or disability.

Special assessments can be conducted by specialist assessors. We recommend that a special assessment be conducted for a candidate that has a disability, or who is in a situation that would prevent them from participating in a normal assessment.

Does the candidate need to have a medical certificate stating the disability? Many people are dyslexic or have other challenges that are not documented.

If an accredited assessor is unsure of which method of assessment to be used, we recommend that they seek advice from a Specialist assessor or the ACMA.

Further information on how examinations may be conducted is in the draft Accredited Assessor Guidelines.

Preparation before, during and after the examination

Accredited assessors would have to notify candidates of the date, time and venue for their scheduled examination.

Similar to the AMC arrangements, a minimum of one accredited assessor would be available for every 5 candidates.

Prior to an examination taking place, an accredited assessor would have to verify the candidate's identity and exclude candidates from the examination if they cannot sufficiently verify their identity based on the candidate's appearance and details provided.

Assessors would also be required to print examination papers and ensure that the examination's date, time and location are displayed on the paper.

Other details regarding appropriate use of stationery, mobile devices, examination commencement times and required conduct during and after the course of the examination can be found in the draft Accredited Assessor Guidelines.

Withdrawal of accreditation

Under the Accreditation Rules, accredited assessors would have to comply with the Accredited Assessor Guidelines. Any non-conformance with the guidelines by an accredited assessor may result in their accreditation being withdrawn.

An assessor who has previously had their accreditation withdrawn by the ACMA or the AMC may only be re-accredited at the ACMA's discretion.

Service levels

The draft Accredited Assessor Guidelines contain the following expected service levels:

- > Accredited assessors would have to assess a completed examination paper and notify the candidate of their results within 10 business days of the examination taking place
- > Successful candidates are encouraged to submit their application for an ACMA Recognition Certificate and call sign (if required) within 90 days of receiving the results of their examination.
- > Accredited assessors would have to upload and provide all relevant documentation to the ACMA within 15 business days of the examination taking place, including:
 - > all correspondence with the candidate
 - > the examination completed by the candidate
 - > the candidate's results.

Question 4

Do you have any comments on the Accredited Assessor Guidelines at **Attachment C**?

1: This needs to be reworded as to complete a practical assessment candidates need to use a multimeter, wind coils on ferrites, operate a radio transceiver with cables, power supply and dummy load etc.

I don't see ACMA supplying this "Practical Kit" to each assessor.

In my opinion, given OFCOM in the UK have dropped the practical assessment, ACMA should give it consideration to also drop the practical and include the practical questions into the theory exam questions, which could easily be done.

Nowadays there is so much online youtube training available for "practical education".

2: I disagree with needing to inform ACMA if the candidate needs to resit their exam if they fail. The assessor who ACMA have entrusted to conduct the exam correctly should allow the candidate to resit on the spot BUT with a different exam paper. Given exams are free it makes sense to do so. An example is that a US Amateur exam candidate can resit multiple times on the same day as long as each exam papers are different each attempt. This is appropriate if the candidate has failed by one or two questions. If the candidate has a very poor score the assessor can suggest to not resit but do more study.

3: Does the candidate need to have a medical certificate stating the disability? Many people are dyslexic or have other challenges that are not documented.

4: although ACMA allow the "one assessor" model to conduct exams, it allows for unqualified candidates to "pass" the exam. Previously the WIA had a 2 assessor exam model which worked very well and allowed for cross checking and scrutiny. It kept every one honest in their conduct. The one assessor model has allowed a number of "unqualified" people access to the amateur bands.

Operational processes to support proposed arrangements

Examination processes

We are looking to make some adjustments to the examination process to make it easier for accredited assessors and implement some of the feedback we have received thus far.

We intend to make access to the examination papers available for accredited assessors digitally, but not replace the examination process with an online examination system.

However, we are proposing to develop an online accredited assessor portal that will allow assessors to apply for accreditation, download examination papers from a question bank and provide copies of completed examination papers to the ACMA.

We consider the use of a question bank and randomly generated examination papers will reduce the likelihood of cheating and address concerns raised in previous consultations about the potential for collusion when multiple candidates undertake an examination at the same venue.

The ACMA is not proposing to make the question bank available publicly.

Accredited assessors will also be able to download the relevant answer sheets that correspond to the examination, to assist with marking the completed examination.

Following completion of the examination and notification of results, accredited assessors can provide this information to us by uploading it to the assessor portal.

We will continue to ensure all relevant privacy implications are addressed when moving to digital formats.

As part of the move to more digital formats, we will not reimburse accredited assessors for any costs associated with undertaking an amateur radio examination (e.g., printing costs).

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

Currently, the AMC administers an assessment process called 'Recognition of Prior Learning' (RPL). If an applicant for a CoP already holds an international amateur radio qualification, as an alternative to sitting an examination to be eligible for an amateur CoP, they can apply for RPL.

The AMC recognises prior learning where it decides a person holds qualifications that are equivalent to or higher than the qualification being applied for. This allows amateurs to obtain a full or partial exemption to certain parts of the examination process. For example, following an RPL assessment, the AMC may determine that an amateur can be issued a CoP without sitting an examination. Alternatively, the AMC may determine an applicant has sufficient knowledge of the practical and theoretical aspects of amateur radio, but would still need to undertake the Australian Regulations aspect of the examination to be issued a CoP.

Since many overseas jurisdictions do not have the same comparative amateur radio qualification levels or licence types, the process requires that the RPL assessor has the specialist knowledge needed to determine whether an applicant is appropriately skilled. The current RPL process is often time intensive. This is because the assessment can involve:

- > detailed consideration of the applicants' qualifications with reference to each aspect of the relevant syllabus (either foundation, standard or advanced)
- > liaison with the relevant amateur radio regulator from the country that the qualification was issued from
- > correspondence with the applicant to obtain translated materials proving their understanding of the existing syllabus
- > an interview with the applicant to test their existing knowledge of amateur radio.

As a result of the more protracted nature of these assessments, it currently costs more to apply for RPL than sitting an exam. In practice, this means RPL applications are infrequent, as many overseas qualified amateurs seeking to operate longer-term in Australia undertake the equivalent examination before applying for an amateur CoP because this process costs less than completing an RPL assessment.

Under the amateur radio class licensing framework, overseas visiting amateurs holding recognised qualifications and licences specified in [Table C](#) of the ACMA's Tables of Equivalent Qualifications and Licences will be able to operate amateur stations in accordance with the corresponding Australian qualification and use the call sign issued by the overseas jurisdiction. Overseas qualified amateurs taking up residency in Australia would cease to be authorised by the proposed class licence for longer than 365 continuous days until they have obtained an Australian qualification and call sign to operate under the proposed class licence.

RPL assessments from some jurisdictions are simpler than others. For example, Australia's participation in the Conference of Postal and Telecommunications Administration's (CEPT) Recommendation T/R 61-02 (Harmonised Amateur Radio Certificates) (HAREC) means that assessing the equivalency of overseas amateurs from HAREC-participating countries is generally a much simpler process. This is because CEPT reviews relevant national examinations to ensure they correspond to the CEPT examination standard before that country is able to participate.

However, many other overseas jurisdictions do not have the same comparative amateur radio qualification levels or licence types, which means more work is needed to determine equivalency or not.

Australia is not obligated to provide an RPL process for amateur radio. For example, countries such as the US do not have an equivalent process to allow an amateur to obtain RPL and avoid undertaking an examination to become a qualified amateur operator. However, we currently facilitate RPL; an alternative pathway to sitting an

examination (which will be at no charge under the accredited assessors model).

Our priority is to ensure the prompt commencement of the accreditation scheme to provide the best continuity for the amateur radio service. As such, we propose to offer an RPL process in a similar manner as provided by the AMC.

Further detail about how the ACMA will manage RPL can be found in the new qualification framework at **Attachment A**.

The proposed new fees for RPL from February 2024 are set out in the 'Fees' section below. The proposed RPL fee varies based on whether the application is for a HAREC or non-HAREC RPL. This is because it takes less time to consider and process an RPL from a HAREC licensee.

The current approach for HAREC licensees taking up residency in Australia is that, before they have been in Australia for more than 365 days, they must undertake and pass an Australian amateur examination or RPL assessment and then apply to for the relevant CoP and a call sign.

CEPT Recommendation T/R 61-02 (HAREC) recommends that:

- > 'administrations participating in this [HAREC] system agree, subject to their national laws and regulations to issue national licences corresponding to the CEPT examination standard to forging nationals who possess a HAREC issued by an Administration participating in this system who stay in their country for a period longer than three months'
- > 'that any person who has obtained a HAREC in any country participating in this system, has the right on return to [their] own country to obtain a licences there without having to pass a further examination'.

An alternative approach for HAREC licensees taking up residency in Australia is that, under the new arrangements, we could recognise HAREC licences as 'a recognised qualification (Advanced type)'. This would then allow them to operate under the amateur class licence

after they have been in Australia for more than 365 continuous days.

Under this alternative approach, should a HAREC licenced operator wish to become an accredited assessor, they would need to meet the requirements for accreditation, which includes holding an ACMA recognition certificate (Advanced).

Other overseas reciprocal licensing and qualification arrangements will need to be revisited to ensure their accuracy and relevance. Given our current focus on ensuring the smooth operation of new arrangements from February 2024, this is something we consider is best undertaken when a review of the syllabi is undertaken, since any major changes to the syllabi may impact our reciprocal arrangements.

We welcome comment on the RPL process, any suggestions for future improvements to the RPL assessment process, and any comments on the proposed alternative approach to HAREC licences.

I am of the opinion to minimize workload to assessors and ACMA staff that any HAREC or equivalent licensee should be issues an equivalent Australian licence without any further examinations.

Given that CEPT Recommendation T/R 61-02 (HAREC) recommends:, “that any person who has obtained a HAREC in any country participating in this system, has the right on return to [their] own country to obtain a licences there without having to pass a further examination’.

Call sign arrangements

Under the new arrangements we will remain responsible for issuing call signs. Once a candidate has received confirmation of successful examination results, they can apply for an ACMA recognition certificate and an available call sign.

During September 2022, we sought views on a number of matters relating to call sign assignment, undertaking regular checks on call signs, options for a register and its privacy implications. Further information about our policy position in relation to these matters can be found at **Attachment D**.

Insurance

Similar to current arrangements in place under the AMC, the ACMA will not require accredited assessors to hold any kind of insurance. However, if an accredited assessor does wish to be insured, it is their own responsibility and at their own cost.

As amateur radio is a hobby, our view is that requiring assessors to provide their own insurance would be prohibitively expensive. The ACMA has previously made the Radiocommunications Accreditation (General) Rules 2021, which allows us to accredit people to issue frequency assignment certificates and interference impact certificates under the Act. There is a condition on the accreditation specified in those Rules that requires accredited persons to be covered by an insurance policy – the insurance policy must indemnify the accredited person for any loss or damage up to \$2 million as a result of the person negligently issuing a certificate or otherwise acting as an accredited person.

The draft Accreditation Rules do not require an accredited assessor to retain a public liability insurance policy. We also consider that examination activities are likely to carry a relatively low risk to assessors and applicants. However, all assessors and applicants are responsible for making their own decisions about examination activities.

Therefore, we are proposing that assessors undertake assessments in certain venues which would help cover public liability concerns. More information about permitted venues for examinations is outlined in the draft Accredited Assessor Guidelines (at **Attachment C**).

Previously when the WIA conducted examinations, assessors needed to be a member of the WIA as this provided public liability insurance to the assessor.

I will be proposing to the WIA “that the WIA consider a separate Assessor insurance policy for assessors but for WIA members who may also be accredited acma assessors.”

Question 5

Do you have any comments on the RPL process outlined in **Attachment A**, or any comments or suggestions about how the RPL process could be improved?

The Current CEPT and HAREC equivalent overseas qualifications should be simply accepted by ACMA for equivalent Australian Amateur qualifications using “Table A or Table B”. It is a cost effective and efficient process which does not burden assessors or ACMA with excessive “paperwork’ and time wasting. A simple fee for application and issuance of an ACMA recognition Certificate once approved. In most cases it seems a little pointless to request a “Regulations exam be completed, given ACMA will allow these holders to operate for 12 months without any need for “Australian regulations”. However the global Regulations are I expect 80-90% of the Australian Regulations anyway.

It is only the local and Australia specific regulations that need be given to the applicant by simply a link to a website page location with the specifics to Australia being listed.

Question 6

Do you have any comments on the proposal to recognise Harmonised Amateur Ratio Examination Certificates as a ‘recognised qualification (Advanced type)’? [see above Q5](#)

Question 7

Are there any other matters we have not addressed in this consultation package that you believe should be addressed as part of the implementation of the new qualification framework?

Fees

We intend to cost recover our costs for issuing ACMA recognition certificates, assessing applications for RPL and issuing call signs, under the new arrangements.

The proposed charges for each activity will be consistent with the time it is expected for staff to consider and assess each process.

A full outline of the fees for the activities are outlined the draft 2023-24 Fees Cost Recovery Implementation Statement (CRIS), which is open for consultation in parallel to this consultation, and available on the ACMA website [link to webpage when created].

An overview of the proposed fees and charges amounts are outlined below for convenience:

- > ACMA recognition certificate application – \$45.20.
- > Recognition of prior learning assessment application – ranging from \$75.35 to \$188.35, based on application type.
- > Call sign application – ranging from \$30.15 to \$52.75, based on application type.

These proposed charge amounts are similar to the current AMC prices for these services.

The ACMA welcomes comments from interested stakeholders on the proposed new fees in the draft 2023–24 Fees CRIS [link to webpage when created].

Question 8

Do you have any comments on the proposed fees for amateur qualification and call sign services outlined in the draft 2023–24 Fees Cost Recovery Implementation Statement?

I would like to propose that ACMA look for a 3rd party to conduct the simple HAREC/CEPT Table A and Table B reciprocal licencing approvals. WIA could easily do this and also the RPL type syllibus mapping which I understand WIA successfully processed for ACMA previously. Costs would be lower and processing times quicker.

Changes to the proposed amateur class licence and nonrenewal instrument

The Accreditation Rules are part of the broader changes we are proposing to make for amateur service arrangements. Stakeholders would be aware that, in September 2022, we consulted on a draft of the amateur class licence. We have considered the submissions made during this consultation and have finalised some arrangements to be implemented with the amateur class licence. **Attachment D** provides an overview of these supporting arrangements.

If made, the amateur class licence would authorise the operation of amateur stations on frequencies set out in the amateur class licence. We intend the amateur class licence to replace amateur licences for advanced, standard and foundation amateur stations.

We intend to make the new qualification framework, Accreditation Rules and the amateur class licence in December 2023, at which time relevant parts of the Accreditation Rules will commence. We plan for the final part of the Accreditation Rules, qualification framework and amateur class licence to commence in February 2024.

Because of the proposed Accreditation Rules, we need to make some additional changes to the draft amateur class licence. The

changes will include the insertion of definitions and provisions about the new ACMA recognition certificates referred to above.

The 3 types of recognition certificate are: advanced, standard and foundation. A new schedule in the amateur class licence includes the application process for obtaining such a certificate, and the reconsideration and review process should an application be refused. These changes will allow us to give a recognition certificate to a candidate who has successfully completed the relevant competency requirements at the foundation, standard or advanced level, and subsequently applied to the ACMA for a recognition certificate.

We will also remove all references to 'Call Sign Entity' in the amateur class licence. This is because we will be fulfilling this role under the new arrangements. We will also specify that call signs can be assigned for a time period and can be renewed. This will be relevant for certain call signs, including 'special event call signs', which are attributable to certain amateur radio events.

We also need to make some minor changes to the draft amateur class licence based on submitter comments to the September 2022 consultation process. The minor changes include:

- > a correction to the definition of pY
- > a correction to the date of a World Radio Conference
- > the inclusion of a provision about the use of amateur stations in emergency services operations and training
- > restrictions on connection to a public telecommunications network
- > the inclusion of a footnote about the use of the AX call sign on specified dates
- > a correction to the definition of IEC 62232
- > correction of typographical and grammatical errors.

At the same time the amateur class licence is implemented we plan to make a new legislative instrument that would prevent any existing non-assigned amateur licences from being renewed further. This is because non-assigned amateur apparatus licences will not be required once the amateur class licence commences.

ACMA need to make amendment to the use of the 2x1 contest callsigns.

Firstly: “2x1 callsigns cannot be used for more than a single 48 hour period in any one contest.”

Wording from the UK OFCOM Website:

<https://rsgb.org/main/operating/licensing-novs-visitors/online-nov-application/application-for-a-special-contest-call-sign/>

“This call sign may only be used in amateur radio contests of no more than 48 hours duration, run with the aim of contacting as many other stations as possible in a given period of time and run by an amateur radio club, national or international amateur radio association or another organisation (including amateur radio publications), generally accepted within the amateur radio hobby (locally, nationally or internationally) as being a bona fide contest organiser.”

If the rules for 2x1 use are a “supplement” document, then they can be easily amended later.

Question 9

Do you have any comments on the proposed consequential amendments to the draft amateur class licence to incorporate the new qualification and accredited assessor frameworks?

Question 10

Do you have any comments on the proposal to make a new legislative instrument, at the same time as the proposed amateur class licence is made, that would prevent any existing non-assigned amateur licences from being renewed further?

Changes to other legislative instruments

To support the new accredited assessor and qualification arrangements we need to make consequential amendments to some other legislative instruments.

These amendments will provide continuity of arrangements, by continuing to ensure only persons holding the appropriate amateur qualifications are authorised to operate amateur radio stations.

The requirement for a person to be a qualified operator when operating the 5 types of amateur station arrangements is currently contained in the Radiocommunications (Qualified Operators) Determination 2016 (Qualified Operators Determination). The Amateur LCD also includes a condition requiring that a person operating an amateur beacon station or an amateur repeater station must be a qualified person.

The transition to the amateur class licence means these arrangements are no longer appropriate. Instead, we propose that the qualification requirements for beacon and repeater stations will be contained solely within the Amateur LCD. Qualification requirements will be contained with the amateur class licence for foundation, standard and advanced stations.

Amateur LCD

We propose to include in the Amateur LCD a condition requiring that a person operating an amateur beacon station, or an amateur repeater station must be a qualified person (meaning they have certain specified qualifications).

We propose to retain references to all amateur stations in the Amateur LCD. This is because there would be apparatus licences that authorise the operation of nonassigned amateur stations still in force. The Amateur LCD is due to 'sunset' in 2025. As part of the sunset process, we will sunset those provisions in the Amateur LCD that apply to non-assigned amateur stations.

Qualified Operators Determination

We propose to remove from the Qualified Operators Determination the requirement for a person to be a qualified operator when operating any of the 5 types of amateur stations under a transmitter licence. The requirement for a person to have certain qualifications when operating an amateur beacon station or an amateur repeater station will be included in the Amateur LCD.

Radiocommunications (Charges) Determination 2022

We propose to amend the Radiocommunications (Charges) Determination 2022 to implement the fees for issuing ACMA recognition certificates, assessing applications for recognition of prior learning and issuing call signs, as well as removing any redundant fees. Also, the existing fees in items 4.1.1 to 4.1.3 of Table 1 of Part 4 to the Charges Determination will be amended to specify fees for instances where we conduct examinations for the issue of ACMA recognition certificates.

Question 11

Do you have any comments on the proposed consequential amendments to the Radiocommunications Licence Conditions (Amateur Licence) Determination 2015, the Radiocommunications (Qualified Operators) Determination 2016, or the Radiocommunications (Charges) Determination 2022 to support the transition to the amateur class licence and incorporate the new qualification framework?

Invitation to comment

Making a submission

The ACMA invites comments on the issues set out in this consultation paper.

- > [Online submissions](#) can be made by uploading a document. Submissions in PDF, Microsoft Word or Rich Text Format are preferred.
- > Submissions by post can be sent to:
The Manager

Spectrum Licensing Policy Section
Australian Communications and Media Authority
PO Box 13112 Law Courts
Melbourne VIC 8010

The closing date for submissions is **COB, 25 September 2023**.

Consultation enquiries can be
emailed to SLPSConsultations@acma.gov.au.

Publication of submissions

We publish submissions on our website, including personal information (such as names and contact details), except for information that you have claimed (and we have accepted) is confidential.

Confidential information will not be published or otherwise released unless required or authorised by law.

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