



Fact Sheet – International Companies and the Accreditation Process

When is accreditation required?

Subject to certain financial thresholds, only builders who are accredited under the Work Health and Safety Accreditation Scheme (the Scheme) can enter into head contracts for building work that is funded directly or indirectly by the Commonwealth or a corporate Commonwealth entity.

An accredited builder must be engaged for directly funded head contracts, which include building work with a value of at least **\$4 million** (GST inclusive).

The Scheme also applies to projects that are indirectly funded by the Commonwealth or a corporate Commonwealth entity. An accredited builder must be engaged for head contracts, which include building work with a value of at least \$4 million or more (GST inclusive), **AND:**

- the contribution to the funding of the project by the Commonwealth or a corporate Commonwealth entity is at least \$6 million (including GST) and represents at least 50 per cent of the total funding; **OR**
- the contribution to the funding of the project by the Commonwealth or a corporate Commonwealth entity is at least \$10 million (including GST).

What is the accreditation process?

An application for accreditation must be lodged using FSC Online (available at www.fsc.gov.au). Once the application has been processed, one or more on-site audits are conducted. The final stage is for the Federal Safety Commissioner to determine if accreditation should be awarded.

There are no fees charged to lodge an application or undergo the audit process, and there are no ongoing fees once a company is accredited.

Timeframes for the accreditation process vary from company to company, largely due to the company's readiness for the on-site audit process, their ability to provide an active project for audit, and the speed with which they rectify any non-conformances identified at audit.

The time taken from receipt of an application to first contact with the company is up to ten business days. The audit process commences at the company's convenience.

If an audit is to be conducted overseas, an initial head office audit in Australia is conducted at the company's convenience. Accreditation can be achieved within three on-site audits, although a number of companies have taken less time. As a first step, companies are encouraged to contact the OFSC as soon as they begin to consider an application and are encouraged to apply for accreditation in advance of submitting a project tender.

Initial accreditation is granted for a period of three years, at which point companies are required to undertake a process to become reaccredited. Subsequent periods of accreditation can be for up to 6 years for companies if they have a strong track record of compliance with Scheme requirements.

What are the application requirements?

Companies seeking accreditation must submit a complete application, including company project details, Work Health and Safety performance data and a map of their system against the Scheme audit criteria.

It is important to note that accreditation is not transferrable to subsidiary companies. Discussions with the Office of the Federal Safety Commissioner (OFSC) (through the Assist Line) will assist companies in determining which entity or entities require accreditation.

Once the application review is completed, the company's Work Health and Safety Management System (WHSMS) is verified at an on-site audit(s), outlined below.

What are the onsite audit requirements?

The accreditation process requires an on-site audit.

All audits are arranged by the OFSC in conjunction with the company and Federal Safety Officer (FSO) who will conduct the audit.

The project site can be within Australia or overseas (as long as the site is English speaking to allow documentation review and discussions/interviews with on-site personnel).

A suitable site for audit is one where the company is the head contractor for the project, sufficient building work is underway and the WHSMS is the same system to the one to be applied in Australia.

Where an Australian site is available, a two-day on-site audit is conducted reviewing Scheme criteria, including two hazard criteria appropriate to the scope of works.

Where an international site is the only option, a two-day head office desktop audit of the company's system is undertaken prior to organising an overseas on-site audit. This desktop audit ensures that system gaps are identified, giving the company the best possible chance of a successful on-site audit and ensuring best value for the costs attached to travelling overseas.

For on-site audits conducted on international sites, an initial two days auditing on site is conducted, reviewing Scheme criteria as well as two appropriate hazards. The company is given a day to make any changes before a further day of

on-site auditing is conducted to review identified issues.

Flexibility is applied in reviewing those elements of the criteria that differ internationally based on differing legislative requirements. For example, Safe Work Method Statements are not a requirement in all countries, but the capacity to address them from a system perspective must be in evidence. For example, the FSO would be looking for appropriate management of subcontractors and work activities on the project site to demonstrate a system to manage these aspects, even if it differs slightly in name or requirements to the system to be applied in Australia.

Where corrective actions remain as a result of the audit, a follow up audit will be conducted either on-site in Australia or via a desktop audit.

In order for a company to progress to recommendation for accreditation, all major corrective actions must have been either closed or downgraded to minor, and there must be a minimal number of remaining minor Corrective Action Reports.

Where a company cannot provide an active project either in Australia or overseas, the application process remains on hold following a head office desktop audit, until a project can be provided. In limited situations, a project where the company is a subcontractor but the majority of their system is being used to manage Work Health and Safety on the project may be suitable for an audit.

Entering into a joint venture arrangement as an unaccredited builder

The option of entering into a joint venture to access contracts for building work funded by the Commonwealth or a corporate Commonwealth entity, is provided for under section 26(g) of the *Building and Construction Industry (Improving Productivity) (Accreditation Scheme) Rules 2019*. This process is described in the fact sheet [Joint Venture Arrangements](#).

Other requirements

International companies seeking to undertake building work in Australia may need to satisfy other prerequisites. Companies are encouraged to contact the relevant state and territory agencies to determine any additional requirements.

Scheme accreditation is now accepted as meeting the WHS requirements for state and territory pre-qualifications schemes –except Tasmania - for civil and commercial construction projects.

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- Contact the FSC Assist Line on **1800 652 500**
- Contact the OFSC via email at ofsc@jobs.gov.au