

Transferring between ACS Assessment Schemes

This policy sets out;

- the difference between the two routes to ACS approval
- the principles which underpin the different routes to approval
- rules which should be invoked when companies require to transfer from one route of approval to another.

Routes to Approval

There are two routes to ACS approval; standard route and passport route.

Whilst the two routes provide a different process for approval, they both cover key outcomes. To be granted ACS approval a company needs to meet the SIA fit and proper criteria, must have paid all relevant fees and have had a successful assessment against the ACS Standard. Both routes cover these outcomes.

Standard Route requires a company to apply to the SIA in the first instance. The SIA will conduct fit and proper checks on the company and where all criteria are met, the SIA will grant eligibility. Once eligibility is granted a company may proceed with an assessment. Once the company has had a successful standard route assessment with one of the SIA appointed assessing bodies, they will be approved. Any assessment conducted prior to eligibility is at the company's own risk.

Passport Route requires a company to apply to one of the assessing bodies that operates an accredited passport scheme in the first instance. The assessing body will conduct a passport assessment and if successful will issue a company with a passport certificate. To gain ACS approval the company then applies to the SIA. The SIA conducts fit and proper checks on the company and if satisfied the SIA will grant ACS approval.

Comparison between standard and passport routes

Standard		Passport	
Open to all companies - no previous accreditation required - use the standard route which commences with the self-assessment workbook (SAW)		The SIA may accredit an alternative scheme as being equivalent to the ACS standard. A list of SIA accredited Passport schemes can be found on our website	
Step 1	Download the self-assessment workbook from the SIA website	Step 1	Contact the relevant SIA approved organisation as detailed on the SIA website
Step 2	Record scores and summary evidence in the ACS on-line achievement record (on the SIA website) Ensure the company meets the required achievement level for all indicators in the self-assessment workbook	Step 2	Gain approval /certification to an SIA-approved scheme and obtain copy of relevant certificate
Step 3	Request ACS application pack (on the SIA website)	Step 3	Request ACS application pack (on the SIA website)
Step 4	Complete and post back the application form to the SIA with relevant payment and submit achievement record (on the SIA website)	Step 4	Send application to the SIA with relevant payment and copy of certificate
Step 5	Choose and assessing body from the SIA approved list and arrange for a visit to verify your self-assessment	Step 5	Your application is approved
Step 6	Following successful verification, your application is approved provided you continue to meet the SIA eligibility requirements	Step 6	

Key differences and possible implications to note about Standard vs. Passport Route:

Standard	Passport
Assessment bodies carry out assessments on behalf of the SIA	Assessment bodies conduct audits against their own scheme (a scheme approved by the SIA)
The assessment is conducted after the ACS application is made and eligibility criteria met	The assessment is conducted before ACS application is made
The online achievement record must be completed by applicant and assessor	The online achievement record does not have to be completed by the applicant or assessor unless the scheme explicitly requires it
The assessment score is included in the SIA benchmarking data	Scores are not included in SIA benchmarking data
Assessors are subjected to SIA training and approval	Assessing bodies can make their own arrangements for training if the SIA endorse them
The SIA receive copies of visit plans and reports	The SIA can request visit plans and reports as necessary but will not automatically be provided with them, except where scheme specifies

Additional points to note about passport route:

- Holding a passport certificate does not guarantee ACS approval by the SIA
- If the assessing body withdraws a passport certificate the SIA will withdraw any corresponding ACS approval
- If the assessing body ceases to provide an accredited passport scheme the passport certificate becomes invalid and the SIA will withdraw any corresponding ACS approval

- Passport assessment schemes may vary between assessing bodies but are approved against the same SIA criteria
- Where a business chooses to achieve approval/certification for multiple standards, a passport scheme that includes other standards may result in better value for money compared to separate assessments for each standard.
- Some passport schemes offer a series of shorter assessments rather than one annual assessment
- A business may be scored by the assessing body in a way that means it cannot be verified by the SIA

Transfer Scenarios

Once approved a company may wish to move from standard route approval to passport route approval or vice versa.

Moving from Standard to Passport

The company should submit a Change of Circumstances

<https://www.sia.homeoffice.gov.uk/Documents/acs/contractors/sia-acs-circumstance.pdf> form to the SIA checking box A6 'Other' and filling in Section F explaining the circumstances i.e. their request to transfer from standard route to passport route.

The company must have been assessed via a passport scheme at the point of wishing to make the transition and within 12 months of the previous standard route assessment. The company must submit a valid passport certificate from an accredited assessing body to the SIA.

Moving from Passport to Standard

Providing the passport certificate remains valid a company can transition at any point but must have had a successful standard route assessment against all 87 indicators at the point of transfer.

The company should submit a Change of Circumstances

<https://www.sia.homeoffice.gov.uk/Documents/acs/contractors/sia-acs-circumstance.pdf> form to the SIA checking box A6 'Other' and filling in Section F explaining the circumstances i.e. their request to transfer from passport route to standard route. Evidence should be supplied with this request from the company's assessing body to show that all ACS requirements are being met. This would typically be the outcome of the latest passport route assessment. This needs to happen prior to the standard route assessment taking place.

If a company chooses to leave its passport scheme at a point in time where all ACS requirements are not being met then ACS approval will be withdrawn and the company would need to reapply via the standard route.

Moving from one Passport Scheme to another Passport Scheme

Providing the passport certificate remains valid a company can transition at any point, but must have had a successful passport assessment with the new passport body at the point of transfer. The company should submit a Change of Circumstances <https://www.sia.homeoffice.gov.uk/Documents/acs/contractors/sia-acs-circumstance.pdf> form to the SIA checking box A6 'Other' and filling in Section F explaining the circumstances i.e. their request to transfer from one passport scheme to another passport scheme. A valid passport certificate from the new passport scheme should be supplied with this request.

Exceptional Circumstances

Assessing Body ceases to provide passport scheme services

In this instance the SIA acknowledges that an approved contractor faces circumstances that will not be directly within their control, and we will work with their assessing body as far as possible to help achieve a smooth transition to standard route or alternative passport scheme under these circumstances.

In addition to the options detailed in 'Moving from Passport to Standard' above, the SIA may allow:

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- a period of no more than 12 months from the date of a last passport assessment for the company to complete a Standard route assessment, or
- a different time period on a case by case basis.
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