

Differences Between the Standard and Passport Scheme Routes

The following table identifies some of the key differences in the way the standard route and passport route are operated, and the different rules or arrangements that apply. The list is not exhaustive but reflects the most commonly raised questions and queries. Further detail on specific passport schemes can be obtained from the relevant assessment body.

Question	Standard Route	Passport Route
Who conducts the assessments?	ACS assessing bodies carry out assessments on our behalf	Assessment bodies conduct audits against their own schemes which we have approved.
When is the verification visit carried out?	After an ACS application has been made to us and eligibility criteria have been satisfactorily met.	Usually before an ACS application is made to us. (ACS eligibility is not a prerequisite for passport scheme certification).
Is it necessary to have the Self-Assessment Workbook / Online Achievement Record completed by the applicant organisation?	Yes – eligibility will not be granted without submission of the online achievement record and the assessor is required to update the online achievement record following the assessment.	No – you are not required to submit the online achievement record, although some passport scheme providers recommend it, so that you benchmark yourself against the requirements of the ACS self-assessment workbook.

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Is the Online Achievement Record score (verified by the assessor) included in our benchmarking data?	Yes	No - scores can be recorded (see above) but are not included in the our standard route benchmarking data
Can we raise and issue an approved contractor with an improvement need(s)?	<p>It is usually the assessing body that raises improvement needs as required during assessment.</p> <p>However we can also raise improvement needs against either ACS Terms & Conditions and/or the ACS standard and self-assessment workbook indicators.</p>	Yes - against ACS Terms and Conditions only. The assessment body raises improvement needs (or their equivalent) as prescribed by its passport scheme.
What is the time period by which applicant companies have to close out improvement needs?	6 weeks, once approved	Periods vary depending upon the passport scheme

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Do we issue special instructions or share information in relation to you subject to assessment activity?	Yes	Yes - but the process for advising and reporting may be different
Is the assessing body under a contractual obligation to notify us when breaches of the Private Security Industry Act 2001 are identified?	Yes - within 1 working day.	Yes - within 1 working day.
Do we follow up on intelligence identifying potential non-conformance?	Yes – in accordance with a risk based approach	Yes – in accordance with a risk based approach
Can I have the same assessor for every verification visit?	No - assessing bodies are under obligation to change the assessor after 2 years, to prevent an assessor from conducting three consecutive assessments	Yes – In line with ISO 17021 and the impartiality requirements of UKAS accredited assessment bodies, and the agreed passport scheme arrangements.
Are assessors subject to our training and approval?	Yes	Yes – but we may endorse an assessment body’s alternative arrangements

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Do we provide advice and guidance to applicant companies in relation to the ACS standard and assessment criteria?	Yes - A range of our ACS guidance notes are freely available.	Some of our guidance will be relevant to passport schemes, but where a passport scheme has additional requirements, it will be for the passport scheme provider to provide assistance
Do we receive a copy of all visit plans and assessment reports?	Yes – for every ACS assessment.	Only on our request.
Does the assessing body follow our guidance for completing assessment reports?	Yes – for every ACS assessment.	The specific passport scheme will determine the type and content of any report.
Are assessors subject to the ACS Ethical Framework Questionnaire and Declaration of Interests?	Yes	Yes – on our request All such activity is managed by the assessing body in accordance with ISO 17021 (UKAS requirements).

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Are assessing bodies subject to requirements and sanctions for the prevention of corruption and fraud?	Yes	Yes - all such activity is managed by the conformity assessment body in accordance with ISO 17021 (UKAS requirements).
Are assessing bodies subject to our performance risk rating (as part of the contractual obligations between us and the ACS assessing body)?	Yes	No – but assessment bodies will be subject to our surveillance visits to ensure there management systems are adequate. Each month the passport scheme operator provides management information to us relating to the operation of the contract.
Are relevant complaints against the assessing body monitored and investigated by us?	Yes	Yes