

Audit Report Timeframes Policy

1. Purpose

This policy outlines the Australian Community Industry Alliance's (ACIA) policy for audit report timeframes under the Australian Community Industry Standard (ACIS). It establishes ACIA's minimum requirements for Certification Bodies (Conformity Assessment Bodies - CABs) to support timely, consistent and transparent audit reporting.

This policy supports the integrity of the ACIS certification process and enables prompt action where corrective measures are required.

2. Scope

This policy applies to:

- All CABs conducting Certification, Surveillance or Recertification Audits under the ACIS Scheme
- All ACIS-certified Service Providers
- All audit-related communication, reporting and decision-making processes linked to ACIS certification

This policy does not override other ACIA governance documents and should be read in conjunction with them.

3. Guiding Principles

- **Timely Reporting** – Audit reports, corrective action requirements and certification documentation must be issued within the required timeframes
- **Consistency** – CABs must apply audit reporting timeframes consistently across audits conducted under the ACIS Scheme
- **Transparency** – Service Providers and ACIA must be informed of audit outcomes, corrective actions and certification decisions within the required timeframes
- **Risk Escalation** – Significant non-conformities or issues that present risk to clients or staff must be promptly reported to ACIA
- **Accountability** – CABs are responsible for implementing internal processes to meet or exceed the timeframes set out in this policy
- **Scheme Integrity** – Timely reporting supports the integrity of the ACIS certification process and enables appropriate follow-up where corrective action is required

4. Audit Reporting Framework

CABs must provide ACIA, on request, with:

- A list of Certification and Surveillance audits completed in the last 12 months
- A list of planned audits over the next 6 months

CABs must issue the Audit Report, including any identified non-conformities and Corrective Action Requests (CARs), to the Service Provider within **15 business days** of the audit.

5. Corrective Action and Non-Conformity Timeframes

Service Providers must submit their Corrective Action Plan (CAP) to the CAB within **5 business days** of written notification of non-conformities.

CABs must review the CAP promptly and confirm acceptance or request amendments.

Major non-conformities must be closed within **3 months**, and minor non-conformities within **6 months** of the initial written notification, unless an alternative timeframe is formally approved in writing by the CAB and communicated to ACIA.

Where a major non-conformity is downgraded to a minor non-conformity, the timeframe to downgrade is deducted from the 6-month period allowed for a minor non-conformity. A total of 6 months will be allowed for the close out of the non-conformity.

6. Certification Decisions and Status Changes

The CAB must provide ACIA with the Final Audit Report and completed Self-Assessment, where applicable, upon finalisation.

The Certification Certificate must be submitted to ACIA within **10 business days** of the certification decision date, or **10 business days** prior to the previous certification expiry date if the audit is completed well in advance. Where delays occur due to internal compliance review processes, the CAB must ensure the total turnaround time from the audit to ACIA notification does not exceed **35 business days**, unless an extension is agreed in writing.

CABs must inform ACIA within **10 business days** of any decision to terminate, reduce, suspend or withdraw certification, including supporting evidence for the decision.

7. Significant Non-Conformities or Risk Issues

If, during an audit or as a consequence of an audit, the CAB identifies any non-conformities or issues that present a risk to the people being supported by the provider, or to staff, the CAB should notify ACIA within **24 hours** of identifying the non-conformity or issue.

This notification is in addition to the CAB's other reporting responsibilities.

The notification may be provided verbally or by email. If notification is provided verbally or by informal email, a brief written report of the issues identified must be provided to ACIA within **5 business days** of the notification.

ACIA may request further information based on the circumstances of the situation.

8. Roles and Responsibilities

CABs must:

- Implement internal processes to meet or exceed the timeframes in this policy
- Communicate promptly with Service Providers and ACIA regarding any delays or barriers
- Participate in ACIA-led consultation processes to review and refine timeframes as needed

Failure to comply with this policy may result in:

- Review of the CAB's eligibility to conduct ACIS audits
- Notification to relevant accreditation bodies
- Potential suspension of the CAB's authorisation under the ACIS Scheme

9. Review

This policy will be reviewed every 3 years, or earlier if industry feedback, operational experience or changes to ACIS requirements indicate a need for amendment.

10. Related Documents

This policy should be read in conjunction with relevant ACIA documents, including:

- ACIA External 031 - The Australian Community Industry Standards (ACIS)
- ACIA External 032 - The Australian Community Industry Certification Scheme (ACICS)
- ACIA External 046 - Prevention and Management of Adverse Events in Community Care Policy
- ACIA External 047 - Information Sharing Guidelines