

# STANDARDS

## CERTIFICATION SCHEME



## The process of becoming a Certified Boarding School

For assessment to have a positive impact on the boarding standards of a school, it must employ both internal and external assessment. The use of internal people to do an assessment means the review is undertaken by those with a thorough knowledge of the character, purpose and idiosyncrasies of a boarding school. However, assessment by people external to the boarding school is also needed.

Familiarity can dull the eye to much-needed reform. Assessment by people external to a boarding school can also increase accountability to a level that helps motivate boarding schools to adopt the highest standards possible. Therefore, the ABSA, Intelligent Outcomes Group and Southern Cross Certified (SXC) Certification scheme is designed for use internally and for use by an approved external assessor.

### The internal self-assessment

Together, ABSA and Intelligent Outcomes Group (IOG) have developed scenarios within Scuta, IOG's risk management software tool, to allow boarding schools to undertake accreditation risk assessments for boarding schools and residences as they implement the Australian Boarding Standard. The six sections identified in AS5725: 2015 have been entered into Scuta and reviewed by ABSA and IOG and have been tested in schools with excellent results.

### The process is:

Stage 1 - Scuta Self-Assessment (1), where the baseline of implementation against the boarding standard is established, and a series of reports are prepared by IOG and delivered.

Stage 2 - Scuta Self-Assessment (2), identifies progress made by the school against the Stage 1 assessment baseline, and produces a report which details the progress made since the first self-assessment, and details work still to be done.

Stage 3 - Scuta Self-Assessment (3) where the Head of Boarding confirms the school's readiness to undertake the external audit. This self-assessment should be completed at the time of applying for Certification.

These three self-assessments will then be analysed by an approved Southern Cross Certified (SXC)

Assessor who will then conduct their own independent assessment. This will take place through two major steps - firstly an analysis of all policies and procedures to ensure they meet the requirements of the Standard, and then through an on-site audit to ensure these policies and procedures are actually being followed.

A summary of the strengths and weaknesses of the school's boarding experience will be produced for the school's management. A copy of the summary shall also be kept by the ABSA Secretariat.

If, in the opinion of SXC, a boarding school has met the Australian Boarding Standard and is therefore operating at a standard consistent with the expectations of ABSA, it will be offered both an ABSA and SXC Certificate of Compliance, which is valid for three years.

For those boarding schools that have some relatively minor matters that need to be improved, a Provisional Certificate of Compliance will be issued which is valid for one year. Thereafter, there will need to be a re-evaluation by an SXC official, to ensure the matters have been rectified appropriately.

Those boarding schools, who in the opinion of SXC, are not operating at a standard consistent with their expectations, or who fail to redress the weaknesses identified when given provisional certification, will not receive a Certificate of Compliance.

The names of boarding schools that have been issued a Certificate of Compliance will be listed on the ABSA and SXC websites.

Appeals and requests for re-evaluation of SXC findings will be handled by an independent committee comprised of people who have not been directly involved with the findings.

## The SXC Assessors

SXC Assessors will be trained and credentialed and chosen on the basis of their knowledge of, and experience, in the boarding industry. Each Assessor will:

- Have at least five years experience within a school or hostel boarding environment.
- Have completed the "Duty of Care" Certificate Course in Residential Education.
- Have been trained in the assessment of boarding schools to a level approved of by the ABSA Executive.

## Assessment process

- Prior to the SXC Assessment being scheduled, the boarding school must have completed the level one and level two self-assessments. A copy of these assessment must be included with the application for certification.
- SXC will advise the school of the appointed Assessor. The Assessor will liaise with the school to determine a mutually convenient date to visit. The visit will generally be scheduled within six months of the initial application being made by the school.
- A full day (or more likely two half days) will need to be set aside for the school visit by the Assessor.
- Within thirty school days of the visit, the school will receive a report from the Assessor and a notification of the Assessor's recommendation, or otherwise, for a Certificate of Compliance.
- If successful, a Certificate of Compliance will be issued, and the ABSA and SXC websites will be amended to show that the school has received the Certificate of Compliance. The public notification of this compliance will last three years, at which time a re-assessment will be required.

## Review and Appeal Process

In the event of an Assessor giving a Provisional Certificate of Compliance, the school will not receive a Certificate of Compliance or be listed as a complying school on the ABSA and SXC websites until the school has furnished sufficient evidence they have made the necessary improvements to be awarded a Certificate of Compliance. In such circumstances, it will usually be sufficient for evidence of improvement in the required areas to be sent electronically or in print form. If the Assessor feels the rectification has been done adequately, it will not require a further visit by the Assessor.

If a school should fail to provide the evidence necessary to be awarded a Certificate of Compliance, a written explanation will be given to the school together with recommendations for improvement. Schools wishing to appeal the non-awarding of a Certificate of Compliance may do so in accordance with the SXC appeals procedure which is available on request.

If you would like more information please contact [absa@boarding.org.au](mailto:absa@boarding.org.au)