



Australasian Hydrographic Surveyors Certification Panel (AHSCP) GUIDELINES FOR SPECIALIST CERTIFICATION IN HYDROGRAPHIC SURVEYING

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1.0 PURPOSE

Specialist Certification in Hydrographic Surveying is the official recognition by the Geospatial Council of Australia (GCA) and Survey and Spatial New Zealand (S+SNZ) that a person has demonstrated to the satisfaction of the GCA and S+SNZ that they have the necessary knowledge and experience to competently perform hydrographic surveys and associated activities. An applicant must demonstrate that they meet the academic and experience criteria detailed in this document. Certification will confer eligibility for membership of the GCA or S+SNZ, with notation as a Certified Professional in Hydrographic Surveying – Level 1 or 2, and inclusion on the GCA List of Certified Professionals in Hydrographic Surveying (www.geospatialcouncil.org.au). Certification at Level 1 is the highest attainable level of professional hydrographic certification. Successful New Zealand applicants have the option of joining either the GCA or S+SNZ.

2.0 SCOPE

The Australasian Hydrographic Surveyors' Certification Panel (AHSCP) is structured within the GCA Hydrography Commission and is sponsored by, and comprising members of, the GCA and S+SNZ. The AHSCP assesses applications for Specialist Certification in Hydrographic Surveying and informs both bodies of its decisions. In 2019 the AHSCP adopted the use of the International Hydrographic Organization (IHO) document *S-5A Standards of Competence for Category "A" Hydrographic Surveyors (Edition 1.0.2 June 2018)*, and *S-5B Standards of Competence for Category "B" Hydrographic Surveyors (Edition 1.0.1 June 2017)* – as its references for assessment of competence. These documents should be accessed and used when compiling an application for certification and can be downloaded from the IHO website (<https://iho.int/en/standards-and-specifications>). All applications are expected to document experience against the S-5A syllabus (Basic, Foundation Science and Hydrographic Science subjects) for Level 1 certification or S-5B (Basic and Essential subjects) for Level 2 certification.

The GCA Specialist Certification Programme is open to all persons and to obtain certification a person need not be a member of GCA or S+SNZ. A person wishing to achieve certification will have to satisfy the requirements stipulated by the relevant criteria. A person who has obtained certification may use the term **Certified Professional in Hydrographic Surveying - Level 1 or 2** whilst current on the GCA List of Certified Professionals in Hydrographic Surveying.

2.1 Retention of Certification

To retain certification the individual must demonstrate a commitment to Continuing Professional Development (CPD) by meeting the requirement of yearly CPD points as detailed for GCA or S+SNZ members. **CPD is required every year post initial certification.** Further details of the CPD requirements are found in the *GCA Continuing Professional Development Policy* and *S+SNZ Policy for Continuing Professional Development*. These documents are available from the GCA Head Office and S+SNZ National Office respectively or from the GCA and S+SNZ websites (www.geospatialcouncil.org.au or www.surveyspatialnz.org).

Non-members of GCA or S+SNZ are required to apply for certification every year providing submission of documentation as per the *AHSCP Recertification Process Flowchart*, available here, [Hydrographic AHSCP Guidelines_Updated December 2024](#)

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[Recertification - Geospatial Council of Australia.](#)

Failure of members to commit to CPD and of non-members to certify annually may result in the removal of the individual's name from the GCA List of Certified Professionals in Hydrographic Surveying. To regain certification after being removed from the List, it will be necessary for an individual to re-apply for certification providing the submission documentation detailed in Section 5 and 6 but limited to the period since last certification.

3.0 DEFINITIONS

Allied Discipline	An Allied Discipline means a qualification which contains surveying principles consistent with the IHO S-5A syllabus.
Appropriate Surveying Experience	Experience need not all be sea-time but may be a combination of practical hydrographic surveying and related office surveying and/or spatial science activities.
Certified Professional in Hydrographic Surveying	Any person who has been accepted as having met the Specialist Certification in Hydrographic Surveying criteria at either Level 1 or Level 2.
Hydrographic Survey Platform	In addition to sea-going vessels, a platform may refer to remotely operated vessels undertaking 'on-water' survey tasks, or a fixed wing aircraft or helicopter undertaking remote sensing hydrographic surveys.

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In-Charge	In-Charge relates to activities undertaken where the surveyor is in overall charge of a project, or delegated operational management under the supervision of the Surveyor In-Charge. This includes but is not limited to the planning, management and oversight of a variety of practical hydrographic survey activities including collection, processing and quality control of hydrographic survey data and supervision of field staff. Such positions could include Project Managers, Charge (Lead) Hydrographic Surveyors, Party Chiefs, and Client Representatives with whole of project oversight (including veto). In-Charge time is expected to be undertaken post completion of the Level 1 education qualifications.
International Board on Standards of Competence (IBSC)	The International Board on the Standards of Competence for Hydrographic Surveyors and Nautical Cartographers established jointly by the International Federation of Surveyors (FIG), the International Hydrographic Organization (IHO) and the International Cartographic Association (ICA).
Modules	A Category A or B hydrographic course offered by an organization listed in the IBSC List of Recognized Courses - Hydrography (www.iho.int).
Practical Hydrographic Surveying	Practical hydrographic surveying includes all activities directly related to surveying afloat, such as equipment mobilisation, calibration, data collection, processing, analysis and reporting. At least 50% of this experience must be sea-time.
Reference Document	IHO Publication S-5A (Version 1.0.2 – June 2018) – FIG/IHO/ICA Standards of Competence for Category “A” Hydrographic Surveyors, and IHO Publication S-5B Version (1.0.1 - June 2017) FIG/IHO/ICA Standards of Competence for Category “B” Hydrographic Surveyors.
Sea-time	Sea-time is defined as time spent surveying whilst embarked on a hydrographic survey platform, or time spent directly controlling or managing a remotely operated platform undertaking on-water survey tasks. For the purposes of certification one year of sea-time is defined as 180 days. 75% of total sea-time required for Level 1 and Level 2 certification needs to be achieved while embarked on a survey platform. For shore-based hydrographic surveyors one day is defined as 7.5 hours.

4.0 LEVELS OF CERTIFICATION

The AHSCP recognises that competence is a combination of knowledge and the ability to practically apply that knowledge gained through relevant experience. These factors are assessed against recognised international standards, detailed in IHO Publication S-5A and S-5B.

There are two levels of specialist certification in hydrography, which are detailed below. The applicant must provide evidence of academic qualifications and verified practical experience for at least the minimum aggregate time required meeting the requirements of the relevant application clause. See **Sections 5 and 6 – Essential Documentation** for more details.

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An applicant may also be certified under the appropriate hydrographic surveying sub-specialisms detailed in Section 4.3.

4.1 Level 1

Specialist Certification in Hydrographic Surveying at Level 1 is the highest attainable level of professional hydrographic certification. At this level the Hydrographic Surveyor is assessed as competent to undertake and manage hydrographic surveying projects. Level 1 Certification confers eligibility as a Certified Professional (Level 1) of the GCA and also confers eligibility, subject to S+SNZ approval, for membership of S+SNZ as a Voting Member.

There are three pathways to Level 1 certification:

4.1.1 *Category A Course*

Successful completion of an IBSC recognised Category A Course. These courses provide a comprehensive and broad based knowledge of the theory and practice of hydrography and allied disciplines.

AND

A minimum aggregate period of 2 years appropriate experience in **practical hydrographic surveying**, and a substantial amount of the **sea-time** component should be in-charge time. Under normal circumstances this experience is expected to be gained post qualification.

4.1.2 *Suitable Bachelor Degree and Category B Course*

Successful completion of a Bachelor Degree in Surveying or an allied discipline and successful completion of an IBSC recognised Category B Course.

AND

A minimum aggregate period of 2 years appropriate experience in **practical hydrographic surveying**, and a substantial amount of the **sea-time** component should be in-charge time. Under normal circumstances this experience is expected to be gained post qualification.

4.1.3 *Suitable Bachelor Degree and Experience*

Successful completion of a Bachelor Degree in Surveying or an allied discipline

AND

A minimum aggregate period of 5 years of appropriate surveying experience; 2.5 years of which should be **practical hydrographic surveying** and a substantial amount of the **sea-time** component should be in-charge time. This experience shall demonstrate a competence that is not less than that stipulated in Clauses 4.1.1 and 4.1.2.

4.2 Level 2

Level 2 Certification recognises a practical comprehension of hydrographic surveying and confers eligibility as a Certified Professional (Level 2) of the GCA and also confers eligibility, subject to S+SNZ approval, for membership of S+SNZ as an Associate Member.

There are three pathways to certification at Level 2:

4.2.1 *Category B Course*

Successful completion of an IBSC recognised Category B Course. These courses provide a practical comprehension of the principles of hydrographic surveying for the carrying out of various hydrographic surveying tasks.

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AND

A minimum aggregate period of 2 years appropriate experience in **practical hydrographic surveying**. Under normal circumstances this experience is expected to be gained post qualification.

4.2.2 Other Qualification

Successful completion of a Diploma or Certificate in a discipline of Surveying consistent with the *FIG/IHO/ICA Standards of Competence for Hydrographic Surveyors for Category B Hydrographic Surveyors*.

AND

A minimum aggregate period of 5 years of appropriate surveying experience; 2.5 years of which should be **practical hydrographic surveying** and which demonstrates an expertise that is not less than that stipulated in Clause 4.2.1.

4.2.3 Suitable Bachelor Degree and Experience

Successful completion of a Bachelor Degree in Surveying or an allied discipline.

AND

A minimum aggregate period of 2.5 years of appropriate experience in **practical hydrographic surveying**. Under normal circumstances this experience is expected to be gained post qualification.

4.3 Sub-Specialism Certification

Sub-specialism certification is a sub-set of Specialist Level 1 certification and recognises that an individual has expertise in a specific field of hydrographic surveying. An applicant must demonstrate to the satisfaction of the AHSCP that they have:

- a. Two (2) years relevant experience in a particular sub-specialism demonstrated by completion of the “Logbook of Practical Hydrographic Surveying Experience” against the specific S-5A subjects as detailed in Appendix F. Components presented in the original application for Level 1 which relate to this requirement may be identified to the Panel as evidence.
- b. Two (2) projects demonstrating their fieldwork, reporting and other evidence of competence in the sub-specialism applied for. Components presented in the original application for Level 1 which relate to this requirement may be identified to the Panel as evidence.

Certification in any of the hydrographic surveying sub-specialisms may be applied for at the initial application stage or at any time post-certification. Certification in multiple sub-specialisms is possible.

The following specialism areas are based on the optional units previously listed in IHO Publication S-5 (Version 11.0.1 – May 2011). Although these have been removed from the later S-5 versions, the AHSCP considers that, as an applicant’s experience often relates to specific areas of hydrography, additional certification in the applicant’s sub-specialism more clearly defines her/his area of expertise. **Appendix F** to the Guidelines provides a summary of subject matter that feeds into each sub-specialism:

4.3.1 Hydrography in Support of Coastal Management

This sub-specialism incorporated the previous S-5 11th Edition optional units of Nautical Charting, Military Hydrography, Remote Sensing and Hydrography to support Port Management and Coastal Engineering. Applicants will be assessed against a demonstrated level of experience and expertise in S-5A subjects listed at Appendix F.

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4.3.2 *Hydrography in Support of Inland Waters Management*

Applicants will be assessed against a demonstrated level of experience and expertise in S-5A subjects listed at Appendix F.

4.3.3 *Hydrography in Support of Offshore Infrastructure Development*

Applicants will be assessed against a demonstrated level of experience and expertise in S-5A subjects listed at Appendix F.

4.3.4 *Hydrography in Support of Safe Navigation*

Applicants will be assessed against a demonstrated level of experience and expertise in S-5A subjects listed at Appendix F.

5.0 PROCEDURE FOR SUBMISSION

The AHSCP meets 4 times per year to review applications for certification and notifies the GCA or S+SNZ of its decision. The deadline for the submission of applications is one month prior to each meeting of the AHSCP. Details of AHSCP meeting dates are listed here:

<https://Geospatialcouncil.org.au/apply-for-hydrographic-certification>

The application must contain sufficient information to enable the AHSCP to assess an applicant's education and experience to determine eligibility for certification in accordance with the relevant clause of Section 4.

Failure to provide documentation in accordance with **Section 5.1** may result in the application being rejected.

5.1 Application

All applicants are to comply with the following:

- a. The required documentation is to be provided in digital format (scanned at a minimum resolution of 300 dpi for archive compliance) and submitted in accordance with instructions on the application form.
- b. Applicants **must** complete the **application form** attached as **Appendix A**.
- c. Application fees as detailed on the reverse of the application form (Appendix A) must be paid at the time of application. An applicant who is not a member of GCA or S+SNZ is required to apply every year with the applicable application fee. Members of the GCA or S+SNZ are required to comply with yearly CPD as per the relevant policy.
- d. Applicants must submit a **Logbook of Practical Hydrographic Surveying Experience (Logbook)** detailing their work experience in the format prescribed (**Appendix B**). This logbook must contain sufficient detail for the AHSCP to assess their hydrographic surveying experience and relative competencies cross referenced to the subject content and level of learning required by the S-5A (for Level 1) or S-5B syllabus (for level 2). **Appendix D** to the Guidelines provides an extract of subject content for the S-5A and S-5B syllabi. The IHO Publications S-5A and S-5B are also available for download at <https://iho.int/en/standards-and-specifications>.

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- e. A minimum of two references are required. These should be from the applicant's most recent supervisors, or clients who are familiar with the applicant's technical work experience. Applicants must provide a copy of their Logbook to their referees for comment and verification. Referees must complete the **Referee's Report (Appendix C)** and return it directly to the AHSCP Secretariat.
- f. Individuals must submit details of their educational qualifications in support of their application as detailed in Section 6 below. Courses that are not related to hydrographic survey knowledge enhancement are not required. Such courses include: HUET, First Aid, Work Health Safety, Offshore Survival etc.
- g. Applicants must ensure that they have completed **Appendix E - Checklist of Documentation Submitted** and include it with their submission. When submitting your documentation please follow the file naming convention listed in **Appendix E**, eg:

- 01 Applicant name_Checklist
- 02 Applicant name_Cover Letter
- 03 Applicant name_CV
- 04 Applicant name_AHSCP Application Form
- 05a Applicant name_Certificate A xxx
- 05b Applicant name_Certificate B yyy

5.1.1 Level 1 Applicants

Level 1 applications are required to submit two of their own recent hydrographic survey reports and plans for different survey projects. These may be sanitised of client details but all relevant hydrographic metadata and conclusions are to remain. It is important that a Level 1 applicant clearly articulates their in-charge capabilities relating to practical survey conduct and management.

Plans are considered to be, but not limited to fairsheets / faircharts / drawings / plans / end product charts which show appropriate hydrographic content and should be submitted in pdf format at a minimum resolution of 300 dpi ensuring all text is legible.

There is no requirement to supply information which is repetitive in nature and has already been presented within each project portfolio e.g. If you supply a copy of an oceanographic observation form for one day's observations, the Panel does not require a further series of forms showing similar information for the entire survey period.

The Panel does not have access to commercial software required to open proprietary project or data files. Only word, excel, image or .pdf files are accepted for assessments. The preferred format is .pdf for ease of universal access. As the Secretariat cannot evaluate which of your files are critical to your application, please submit only files required in the prescribed format providing sufficient information to fulfil your certification requirements.

5.1.2 Lodgement

Please contact the AHSCP Secretary (ahs.cp@defence.gov.au) and request access to the AHSCP file sharing site. Once you have requested access you will be sent an email with login details, so that you can register and upload your application files. This Application Form, together with supporting documentation and payment as listed in Appendix E – Checklist of Documentation Submitted, should be scanned in colour at a resolution of 300 dpi and submitted to the file sharing site once you have received your login details.

The deadline for lodgement of applications is **one month** prior to a meeting of the AHSCP. The AHSCP meets every three to four months – details of meeting dates can be found on the GCA Area of Practice-Hydrography pages or contact the Secretary.

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Following review of the application by the AHSCP, the applicant may be required to submit additional supporting evidence. Such evidence would typically include, but is not restricted to, personal statements, copies of survey documentation, letters of reference, affidavits, academic transcripts and copies of professional licensing/registration. Level 1 applicant's may also be contacted by a member of the AHSCP in order to discuss the submitted portfolio.

6.0 DOCUMENTS REQUIRED TO SUPPORT SUBMISSION

6.1 Evidence of Educational Qualifications

The following educational information (where applicable) should be included with an application:

- a. The applicant's educational qualifications in surveying, hydrographic surveying, or an allied degree obtained from a University, College of Tertiary and Further Education (TAFE), Polytechnic or similar tertiary institution. High school qualifications are not required.
 - i. Include all short courses in subjects directly related to surveying or hydrographic surveying.
 - ii. State the qualification type, tertiary institution and dates of study.
 - iii. For courses other than surveying or hydrographic surveying, include details of relevant surveying subjects completed in the course.
 - iv. For applicants **who do not have** an IBSC Cat A or Cat B qualification, transcripts of subjects from the institution or a copy of the completion certificate of the course which describes the subject matter, and a mapped linkage to subjects within the IHO S5-A or S5-B syllabus using **Appendix G** to these guidelines, are to be provided. If available, the transcript should contain grades achieved.
- b. Certified true copies of all certificates including academic transcripts should be supplied to enable the AHSCP to assess the applicant against the relevant Category A or Category B syllabus requirements detailed in IHO Publication S-5A or S-5B.
- c. If a course was not completed, supply details of units or subjects completed and those not completed.
- d. If appropriate, give details of completed hydrographic surveying tasks in the course, including any field training.

6.2 Logbook of Practical Hydrographic Surveying Experience

The Logbook's purpose is to provide the AHSCP with sufficient information to determine the applicant's achievement of the specified hydrographic experience criteria detailed in Section 4 of these Guidelines and achievement of the requisite degree of hydrographic surveying competence for the level of certification sought.

The Logbook should contain comprehensive descriptions of specific hydrographic surveying tasks or projects undertaken including the following information:

- a. Task or project description and their aims.
- b. The applicant's personal responsibilities on these projects.
- c. Equipment used by applicant on these projects.
- d. A brief description of the work undertaken, together with competencies gained or exercised (see Section 6.2), in order that the AHSCP can determine the practical requirements of the

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work undertaken. It is recognised that an applicant's practical experience may vary greatly between projects and clients and the AHSCP considers that, for Specialist Certification in Hydrographic Surveying, applicants must have enough practical experience to prove their competency.

- e. Independent authentication of an applicant's involvement in these projects. The AHSCP considers authentication by signature on the application Logbook by the applicant's immediate supervisor to be the preferred option. An acceptable alternative when the immediate supervisor is not available is verification of the Logbook details by covering letter from an appropriate referee who confirms they were in a position to verify the applicant's employment as detailed by the log book and who also signs the logbook in lieu of the immediate supervisor.
- f. Evidence of having taken charge of and being responsible for hydrographic surveys and related activities, such as being delegated "In Charge" of a survey activity by a supervising Surveyor in Charge.

Every Logbook entry must be verified by the applicant's supervisor. This may include the applicant's offshore manager/party chief, senior surveyor, commanding officer, project manager or client. In some sectors of the profession, particularly the industrial offshore surveying sector, it is appreciated that there are difficulties associated with verification post project. However, without verification the application will not succeed. **Appendix B** contains a proforma Logbook and two examples.

6.2.1 Assessment of Logbook Competencies

In order to assist with the assessment of the requisite degree of hydrographic surveying competence, applicants are asked to detail the competencies exercised on each project against those listed as Foundation Science, and Hydrographic Science subjects in S-5A for Level 1 certification and Essential Subjects listed in S-5B for Level 2 certification. The subject titles are detailed at **Appendix D**. The designated S-5A or S-5B reference numbering for each competency either gained or exercised on a particular project should be noted in the logbook column provided. The applicant should download S-5A or S-5B logbook from the GCA Area of Practice-Hydrography certification webpage and only indicate completion of the competence if they are of the opinion that they have satisfied the S-5A or S-5B requirement.

6.2.2 Assessment of Sea Time

Sea-time is a critical component of the certification process and, for the purposes of assessment, **the definition of sea-time in Section 3** will apply. The AHSCP recognises that in some disciplines of the profession sea-time may only constitute part of a day's work with the remainder of the day taken up with field work preparation, calculations or the processing of data from a survey. All, are valid hydrographic surveying tasks that are undertaken onshore and contribute to a sea-time day. In recognition of increased used of unmanned platforms the AHSCP has expanded the definition of Sea-Time to include 'On-Water' activities, which the applicant can demonstrate she/he has control over remotely controlled vessels.

6.3 Work Examples

Level 1 applicants are required to submit additional information in accordance with Section 5.1.1. The applicant is to ensure that they have appropriate permission to provide documentation and data to the AHSCP.

Level 2 applicants should be prepared to forward samples of fieldwork, reports and other evidence of competence if the AHSCP considers it necessary.

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6.4 References

A minimum of two references are required. These should be from the applicant's most recent supervisors, or clients who are familiar with the applicant's technical work experience. All referees must be supplied with the Referee's Report (**Appendix C**) **signed by the applicant**. The **Referee** should complete and return the form **directly** to the AHSCP Secretary at least one month prior to the closing date for the next sitting of the AHSCP (refer to **Section 5.0 Procedure for Submission**). **The application for certification will not proceed until at least two references have been received by the Secretary.**

6.5 Other Relevant Information

An applicant may supply any other information that will contribute to providing evidence of meeting the requirements of Section 4 or of obtaining the competencies in IHO Publication S-5 to enable the AHSCP to assess their suitability for Specialist Certification in Hydrographic Surveying.

7.0 PROCEDURE FOR RECOGNITION

AHSCP members individually review material submitted and discuss their findings at regular meetings. Individuals may find it advantageous to discuss their presentations with one of the AHSCP members before submission. An AHSCP member will not assess an application from an individual who is a former/current employee, or from an individual for whom the AHSCP member is acting as a referee. In these cases the AHSCP member will stand aside from the assessment activity.

- a. Applicants should be prepared to allow an inspection of documents completed by them (e.g. reports, charts etc.) by AHSCP members.
- b. If an applicant is judged as meeting the required level, the AHSCP will advise the GCA or S+SNZ, detailing the level achieved and recommend the issue of a certificate (and membership as applicable).
- c. The certificate issued will remain current providing that for members of the GCA or S+SNZ, CPD requirements are met and conversely certification by non-members via application for certification through the AHSCP is maintained. Retention on the List of Certified Professionals in Hydrographic Surveying will be conditional upon meeting those requirements and the applicant's certification certificate will state that their name will appear on this list for as long as certification is retained.

8.0 APPEAL

If the Panel denies a certification application, the applicant may appeal to the AHSCP Chair to have their application reconsidered. If the applicant is unsatisfied with the process of the Panel, they may seek review through the GCA complaints mechanism.

9.0 POST NOMINALS (NOTATION)

A person who has achieved Certification at Level 1 will be entitled to use the post nominal **Certified Professional Hydrographic Surveyor Level 1 (CPHS1)** after their name.

A person who has achieved certification at Level 2 will be entitled to use the post nominal **Certified Professional Hydrographic Surveyor Level 2 (CPHS2)** after their name.

The continued use of the post nominal is subject to an ongoing commitment to CPD in order to retain certification.

A person who has achieved Certification and joins either the GCA or S+SNZ will be entitled to use the

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post-nominal after their respective organization membership eg. **FGCA (CPHS1)**, **MS+SNZ (CPHS1)**,
MGCA (CPHS2) or **MS+SNZ (Assoc) (CPHS2)**.

Letter preceding the abbreviation: Fellow = F, Member = M

10.0 CODE OF ETHICS

For applicants who are not members of the GCA or S+SNZ, the AHSCP will consider applications against the intent of the *GCA Code of Ethics* (www.geospatialcouncil.org.au).

Members of GCA and S+SNZ are bound by their respective Code of Ethics. The S+SNZ Code of Ethics is contained in *S+SNZ Council Policy – A19 to 24 Conduct of Members* (www.surveyspatialnz.org).

11.0 RESPONSIBILITIES

Responsibilities of Certified Professionals in Hydrographic Surveying who subsequently join the GCA will be in accordance with the *Geospatial Council of Australia Constitution* and in accordance with the *Rules of Survey and Spatial New Zealand* for those who join the S+SNZ.