

BSSS News | Summer 2024



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The BSSS acknowledges and pays respect to the past, present and future Traditional Custodians and Elders of this nation and the continuation of cultural, spiritual, and educational practices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

We acknowledge the Ngunnawal people, the traditional Custodians of the land on which our department is located and where we live, learn and work, and all others who have familiar or ongoing connections to this land.

We pay our respects to Ancestors and Elders, past and present.



Clock by Joseph, St Mary MacKillop College, Industrial Design and Technology

We love to feature student work in our publications. Contact BSSS Enquiries for consent forms and more information.

Acknowledgements

Images pp. 3, 4, 7, 12, 16 sourced from Canva for Education

Photos of Cathy Hudson were provided.

All other images from BSSS Officers.

If you are interested in seeing your images or content in this newsletter, contact bsssenquiries@act.gov.au

Welcome to Board Chair Cathy Hudson



Welcome to the 2024 academic year!

I am delighted to be a part of the ACT senior secondary system and extend my sincere thanks to the former Board Chair, Roberta Mc Rae OAM, for her significant contributions. I was fortunate to attend the Recognition of Excellence ceremony in late 2023 and was impressed by the students, their teachers, and the BSSS staff. It felt like I found some of my people – everyone celebrating all different types of success in their endeavours.

I acknowledge and appreciate the professionalism, the student-centred approach, and the commitment to working across all sectors for the benefit of all students evidenced at the ceremony. I congratulate school principals and their staff for enabling and supporting students to achieve such excellent outcomes.

I bring to the Board of Senior Secondary Studies extensive strategy, governance, and regulatory experience. In my various roles including Deputy Director-General /ACT Commissioner for Public Administration and Board member positions, I have been, and continue to be, motivated by a commitment to equity and providing opportunities for individuals to reach their potential. My background is in educational, economic, and social policy areas and I specialise in public policy where economic and social policy intersect.

My career has focussed on supporting education and young people; I have often worked in the transition into school and the transition out. I am excited to work again in education and in the ACT, bookending my career with this important role. I care about children and young people, and the quality of the services that we can provide to them. I wish that all students be

provided with the best as an investment in the future of our society through a combination of both universal and targeted approaches. I have huge admiration for the role that teachers play in our society, and have worked to advocate for, and support their work. I have three adult children now who went through the ACT Senior Secondary System across both the government and non-government schooling systems.

As I take on the role of Board Chair, I want to focus on continuous improvement and innovation – I am looking forward to engaging with the expertise of other board members, principals and the sectors, acknowledging the expertise of educators on the ground, and applying my own expertise in governance to the decisions and initiatives of the Board. I greatly enjoy seeking the golden nuggets of conversations from those ‘in the know’ such as teachers and principals and seeing what could be possible and then trying to explore and expand on that.

My experience in change management has focussed on improvement for the betterment of all, with a particular focus on those experiencing disadvantage. For example, one of my career highlights was the work I undertook on the extra year of schooling in Queensland; giving families and children access to prep classes to align with the rest of the nation. Equally, my time as Deputy Chair of the Australian Children’s Education and Care Quality Authority was deeply rewarding, and I am proud that the work I undertook as ACT Commissioner for Public Administration in the development and introduction of the Respect, Equity and Diversity Framework continues to operate today in the ACT public service. I believe that we should not be shy

about saying when things are not working, and changing so that they do; that said, improvements need to be well considered and implementation well planned. Continuous improvement is a process of collaboration and innovation, an awareness of the related evidence and listening to expertise. Thankfully, we have a wealth of expertise here in the ACT; in you as teachers, principals, and school leaders. Canberra is important as our national capital, and we should be proud and feel proud of what we have here, what we have achieved, and what we can continue to achieve. We can lead the nation.

It has been a challenging time for children, young people, schools, and teachers; the pandemic was a challenge, and in addition to our awareness of the need for continuous improvement, we need to keep an eye on our wellbeing and what is good for us. I practice yoga, spend time with family and friends, watch sport, and go to the beach to unwind. I love going to major sporting events and seeing live music and theatre. I encourage you to find what you love and make time for it, and for you. I know this can be difficult -- I have lived through the challenge of doing the best I can for my children whilst juggling an executive career. Ultimately, the reward of investing in family, self and society is worthwhile.

I hope that you and your students have a successful 2024.

Cathy Hudson



2023 Certification

Each year, the Office of the BSSS releases a report into Certification. If you wish to see a copy of the full report, please speak with your school's Certification Officer or leadership team.

Summary of key findings

- The percentage of ACT school students receiving a Senior Secondary Certificate has rebounded from lows in 2021 and 2022
- The increase in the percentage of students enrolled in Science courses in 2022 was maintained in 2023
- Total enrolments in Mathematical Methods were greater than Mathematical Applications for the first time since comparable data has been available
- Number of units completed remain lower than previous years
- Study programs remained broad with less than one percent completing courses in only three course areas or two KLAS
- Percentage of A grades awarded was lower than in 2022 and less than the long-term average
- Average male/non-binary English course scores are the lowest on record
- AST correlations were consistent with the long-term averages
- VET certificate completions by school-based RTOs continued downward trend while ASbAs continued to rise in number

In 2023, **4899 students met the requirements for an ACT Senior Secondary Certificate**. This included 4729 students enrolled in ACT schools, 55 enrolled in CIT Pathways College and 115 enrolled in international schools. In 2023, **31 home schools** were involved in the processing of final year senior secondary results; including six overseas schools located in China, Papua New Guinea, Indonesia, and Fiji; and CIT Pathways College (not included in ACT statistics).

ACT students in this cohort also completed courses/units at the Australian National University Extension Program, University of Canberra, Canberra Academy of Languages, Australian School of Contemporary Chinese, and the Spanish Language and Cultural Program; and through other jurisdictions including the Finigan School of Distance Education, and NSW School of Languages.

The more significant certification issues in 2023 were related to the checking of student packages and the

grouping of interdisciplinary courses which allow units from a number of 'child' courses within them. Multiple schools did not institute adequate processes, or there was a breakdown in processes, for identifying students not receiving certificates or for fixing Interdisciplinary courses. Many of these issues were not identified until after final scaling.

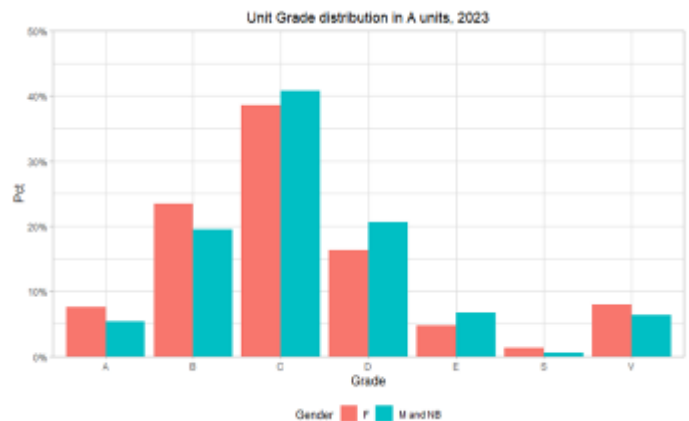
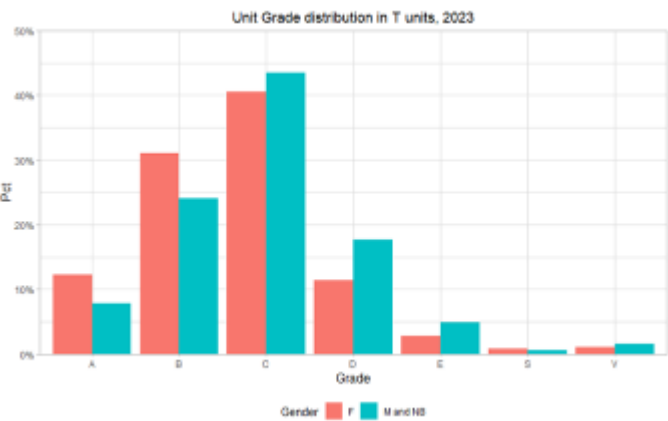
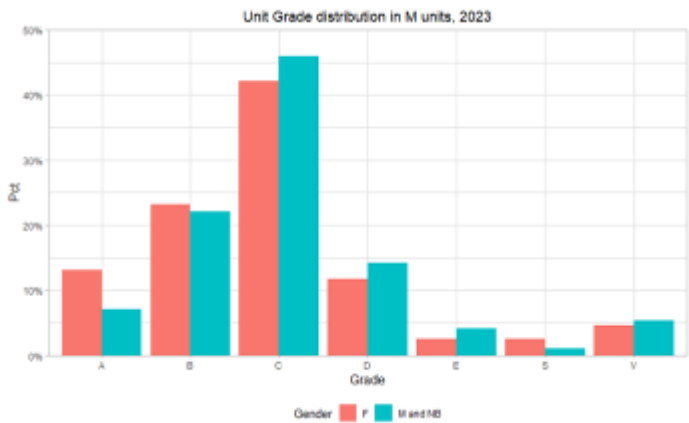
Schools are reminded that neither of these situations are 'fatal errors' that prevent certification from occurring and that manual checks are required during the final semester to ensure things are not missed during the certification timeline. Changes after final scaling are particularly intense in workload as they require careful manual calculations, individual printing, and individual communication with UAC.

We've included some of the information from certification 2023 for your interest; what people are studying, and a trend in grading that we'll keep an eye on!

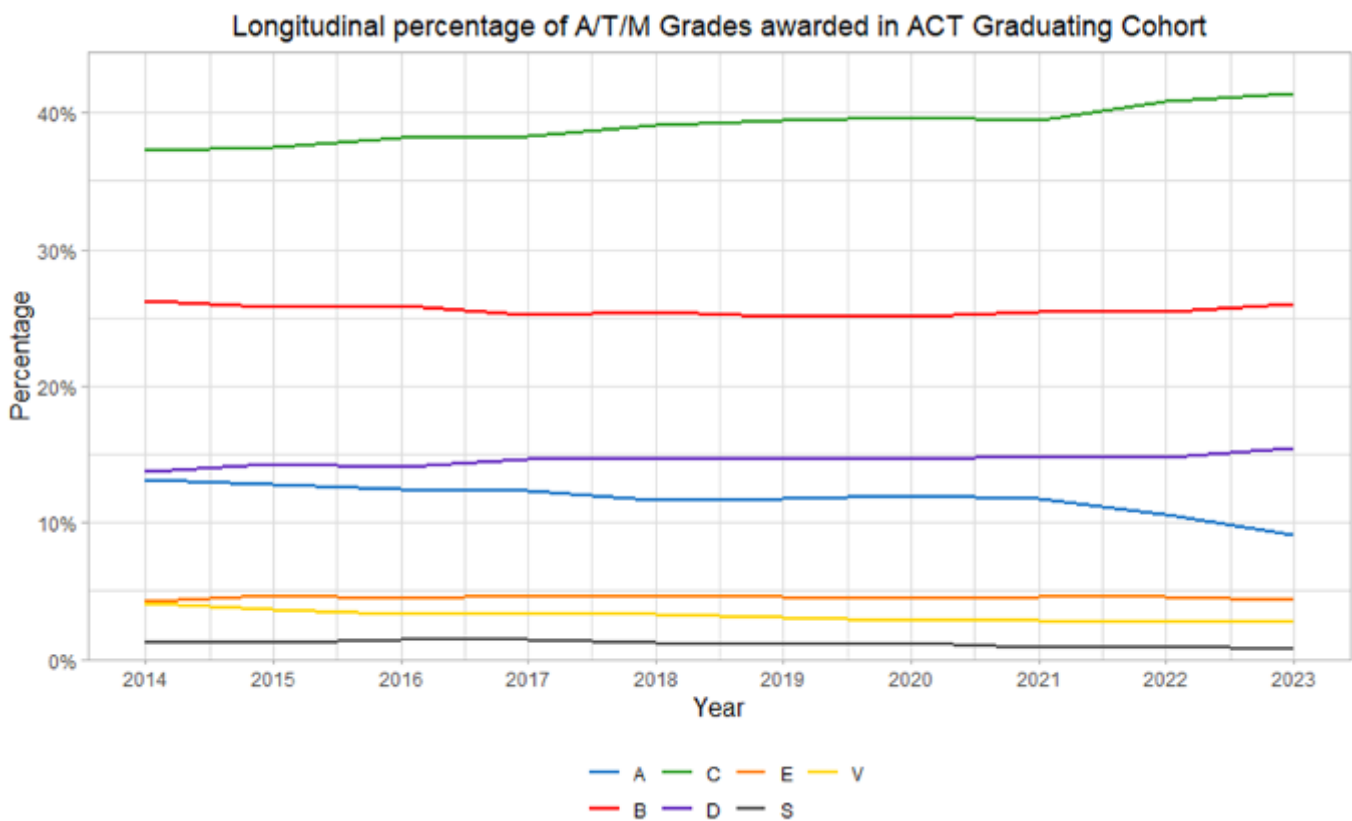
Grade analysis 2023

The awarding of grades is underpinned by the Achievement Standards detailed in Frameworks. It is an absolute scale regardless of cohort and there is no requirement for teachers to distribute grades according to a normal distribution. Grades are reviewed by peers through Moderation Days.

As an absolute scale, student outcomes can be evaluated through reviewing the distribution of grades awarded.



The percentage of A grades awarded to the 2023 cohort is below the long-term average, while the percentage of C grades is considerably higher. B grades remain close to the long-term average. Similar observations were made in 2022.



Courses studied: This table indicates the number and percentage of students who had a course from the nominated course area/s on their Senior Secondary Certificate. It is positive to note that a large majority of students studied more than the minimum number of units with over 47% of non-TES receivers completing more than 19 units and over 46% of TES receivers completed more than 22 units.

Course Area(s)	Number of ACT Senior Secondary Certificate receivers who completed a course from this course area	Percentage of ACT Senior Secondary Certificate receivers who completed a course from this course area
Art/Photography	927	18.9%
Commerce	1,176	24%
Design/Technology	1,216	24.8%
Drama	260	5.3%
English/EAL	4,899	100%
Geography/Global Studies/Politics	381	7.8%
History	698	14.2%
IT	463	9.5%
Languages	635	13%
Mathematics	4,586	93.6%
Media	233	4.8%
Music	266	5.4%
Religious Studies	1,343	27.4%
Science	2,736	55.8%
Sociology	479	9.8%
Sports Science/ Human Movement/ Outdoor Ed	1,510	30.8%

Average number of standard units on Senior Secondary Certificates 2023 – Standard Package by accreditation type

	T/H units	A/M/C/E/W units	R units
All SSC Receivers	14.4	5.4	1.5
Non-TES Receivers	4.9	13.0	1.5
TES Receivers	20.0	0.8	1.4

Policy Changes



As with the start of any year, there are policy changes. Information about these changes has been communicated to principals and coordinators in schools so that they can inform school staff, and through the newsletters and web-site for new staff and members of the public.

Assessment Item Coversheets

It is now compulsory to create assessment item coversheets in ACS. You can find a help document [here](#), or a video [here](#). This will replace the need to upload coversheets and clean copies of tasks at the end of semester for Moderation Day.

What will you need to get started?

- If you don't have an ACS logon, ask your ACS or certification co-ordinator for a logon and make sure they have given you access to the mark-books you'll need.
- An ACS markbook that has already been set up for that unit, with assessment item names and weights.
- At least one of the assessment items on the unit outline has been given a due date.
- An assessment that has been planned and written.

Note that to *complete* an assessment item coversheet, the unit outline must be published.

What does ACS do automatically?

- Assessment Item Summary is pre-filled (course, unit, date, etc.)
- The correct half-unit assessment weights are automatically displayed
- VET competencies are automatically displayed
- Standard assessment policies are pre-filled and can be selected from the drop-down
- Information can be automatically populated from units in the same markbook (e.g., if you have multiple classes and the same/similar assessments)

What specialist fields can I include?

If ticked, ACS will generate blank spaces for:

- Mark/grade
- Student name/ID
- Teacher name

These blank spaces are for when cover sheets are attached to tests and names, marks, teacher names are likely to be hand-written.

Other optional or specialist fields:

- Additional date information – e.g., a date range for an item run across multiple classes, or a draft due date with the final task due on a different day.
- VET competencies; these will automatically populate from the unit. You will need to tick the relevant competencies for the task.
- Assessment policies: you can choose between “standard information”, or “school assessment information”. The latter is specific to your school, and entered by a certification officer or faculty head at the school.
- Assessment conditions and submission requirements
- Assessment instructions
- Attachments (e.g., if you have formatted a file the way you like, and you would like to simply upload that; or if there's a file students will need to download to work on, and the rubric if necessary)

Recognition of VET on the Senior Secondary Certificate

The changes to the recording and recognition of VET are now policy.

Who does this apply to?

Any student starting Y11 in 2024, and any Y12 student starting an ASbA, will be awarded credit as E and W units as per 2024 Policy and Procedure. This applies regardless of whether the ASbA began before 2024.

What about current Year 12s?

Any Y12 student continuing an ASbA from 2023 will be awarded credit as per 2023 Policy and Procedure.

Where can I find more information?

You can find resources, FAQs and other details about VET and the ACT SSC at: https://www.bsss.act.edu.au/act_senior_secondary_system/vet_information



Summary of ASbA Processes for Recognition on the ACT Senior Secondary Certificate


For existing and new ASbA students starting Year 11 in 2024.

Check that all student details in AVETARS are correct and reflect their senior secondary school.


Notify the Office of the BSSS of a student participating in an ASbA using the spreadsheet available on the BSSS website. Spreadsheets can be updated throughout the year to reflect changes.




At the end of each semester

**ACT ASbA**

- BSSS sends schools information about how much credit can be entered for each student
- Use ACS to enter this credit under E Units
- Do a package check; focus on duplication and total number of units.

**NSW ASbA**

- Student supplies evidence to their school of competencies achieved that semester
- Use the BSSS calculator to determine how much credit can be awarded
- Use ACS to enter this credit under E Units
- Using the E external credit application, provide evidence to BSSS
- Do a package check; focus on duplication and total number of units.

**W Units: both ACT and NSW ASbAs**

- Student provides evidence of time spent in on-the-job training (e.g., timesheets, logs of hours)
- Enter into ACS as W units based on the hours evidenced
- Do a package check

If in doubt, check the website: [bsss.act.edu.au/act_senior_secondary_system/vet_information](https://www.bsss.act.edu.au/act_senior_secondary_system/vet_information)

Have you considered VET as part of senior secondary study?

Did you know that all ACT senior secondary students can undertake Vocational Education and Training (VET) and have this contribute to getting an ACT Senior Secondary Certificate (SSC)?

VET leads towards gaining a nationally recognised qualification in a specific area of work such as carpentry or hospitality. Generally, for a senior secondary student these would be at the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) level 2 or 3. For example a Certificate III in Plumbing or Certificate II in Workplace Skills.

There are a number of ways students can go about completing VET:

- Courses including a V component
- Learning through a Registered Training Organisation
- Undertaking an Australian School-based Apprenticeship (ASbA)

You can find profiles of VET students and teachers in the Spring 2023 newsletters. VET develops highly desirable and marketable skills and the attainment of competencies provides evidence of those skills, no matter a student's planned career trajectory. Next time a student says "I'm considering my options" or "I want to keep my options open", one of those options can and should be VET!

The BSSS Ethical Research Principles and Guidelines



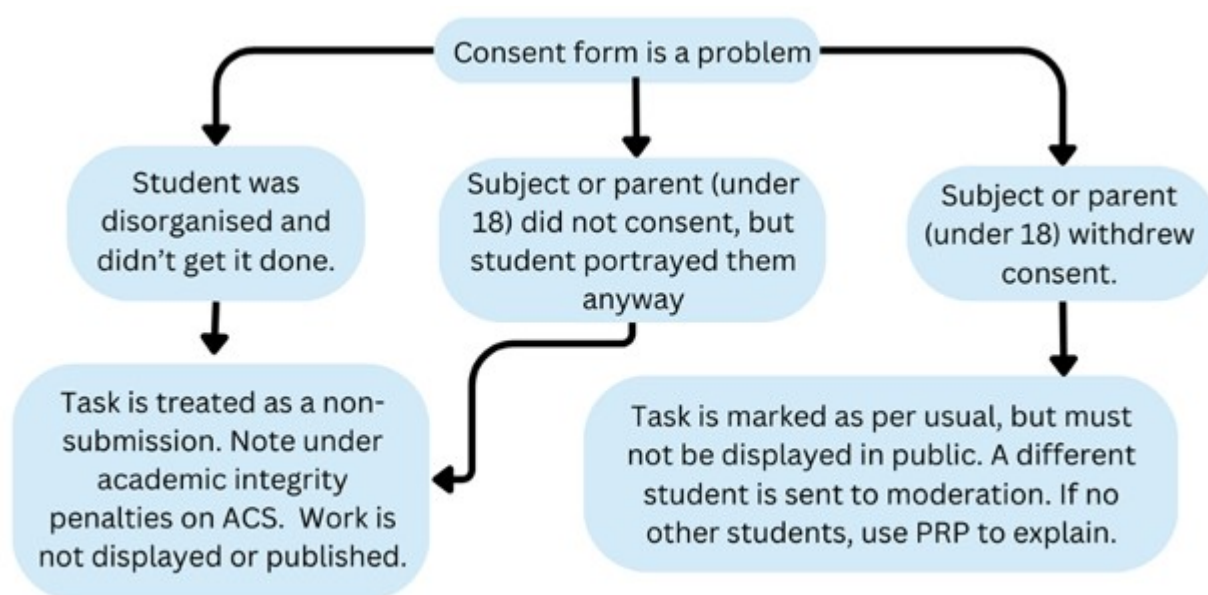
The BSSS Ethical Research Principles and Guidelines are now active policy. There is a TQI-accredited course that will be run several times this year, and [is also available as a self-paced, online workshop](#). You can find the full guidelines and consent forms in the *Policy and Procedures Manual*.

The accompanying flowcharts are intended to aid in the decision-making process when considering whether students will need to seek consent before undertaking human research.

Where the risk is negligible, or the work a teacher-guided class activity, it is not necessary to undertake the consent form processes. Note, however, that self-protective behaviours never go astray, and if you are planning to do a task with an element of risk, it may be worth talking it over with a trusted colleague before making the final decision.

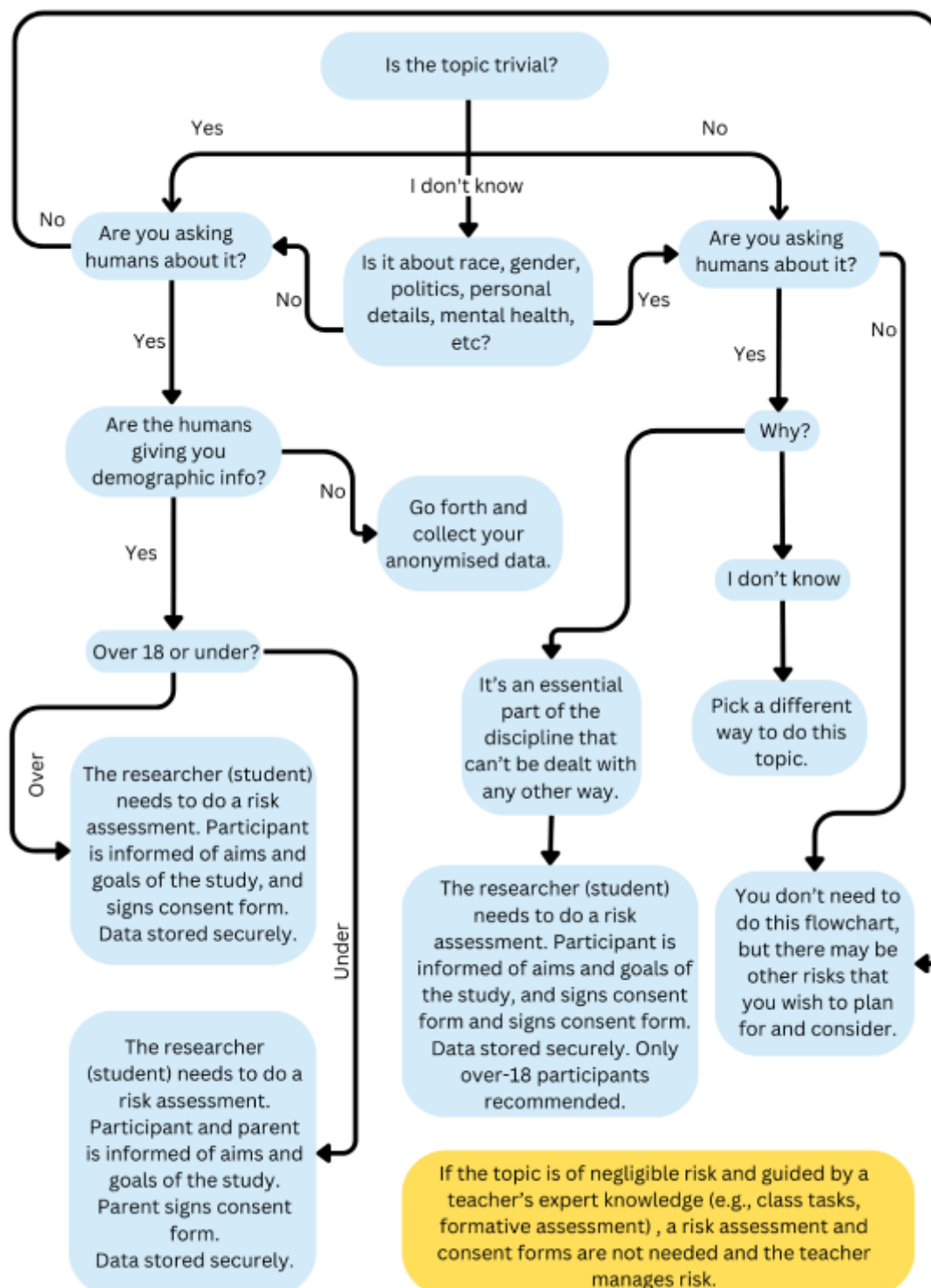
Flowchart 1: Consent forms, marking, and moderation

This flowchart is intended to make clear the responsibility of the student in seeking consent, and the actions of the teacher if consent is not sought or if consent is not given.



Flowchart 2: Human Research

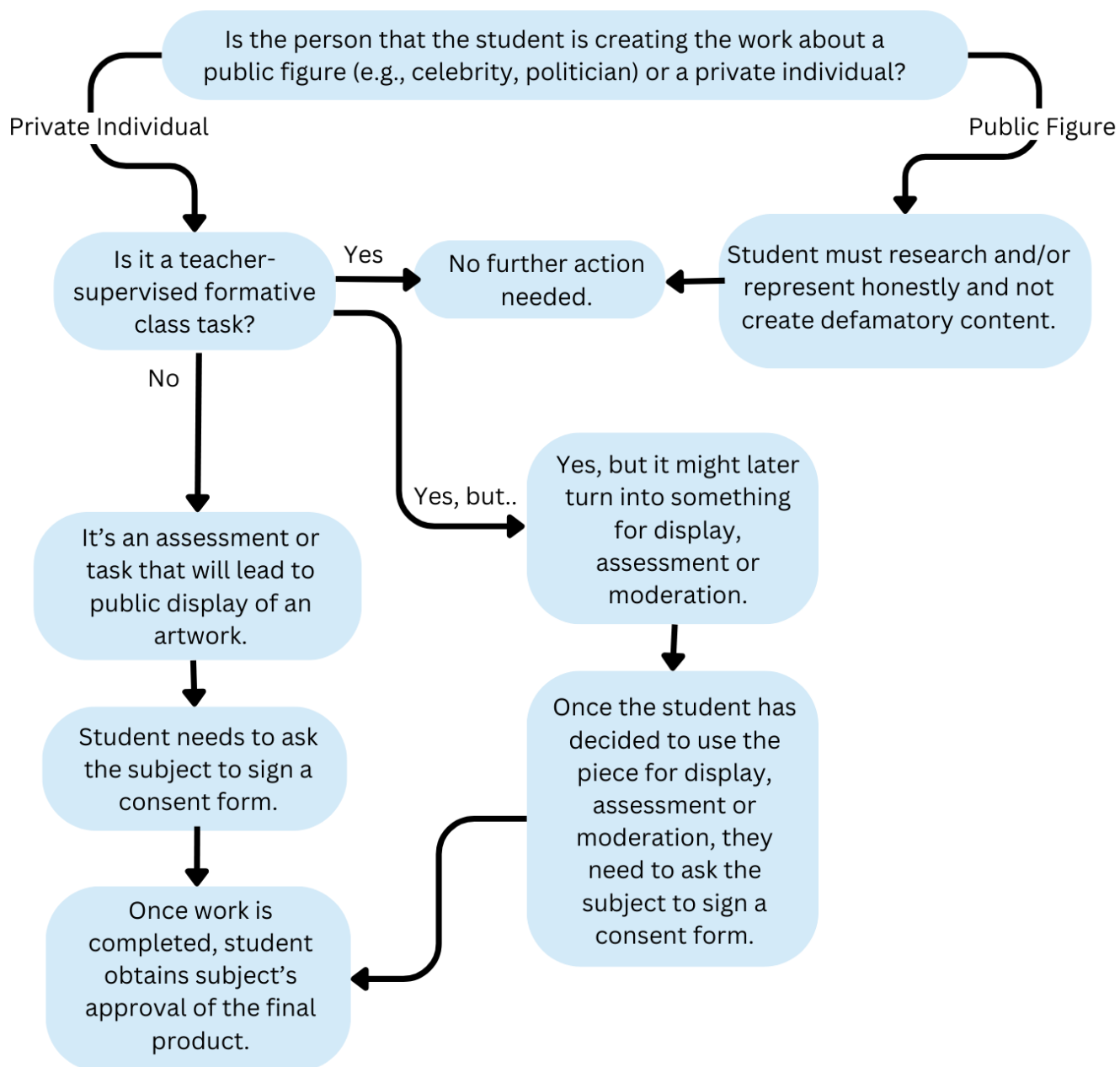
This flowchart is shareable with students, and outlines when the researcher – the student – should be completing a risk assessment and consent form for human research.



“The expression ‘negligible risk research’ describes research in which there is no foreseeable risk of harm or discomfort; and any foreseeable risk is no more than inconvenience.” *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research 2007 (updated 2018)*, p. 13.

Flowchart 3: Portrayal of a person

This flowchart is shareable with students, and outlines when the researcher – the student – should be completing a risk assessment and consent form for portraying a human. In instances where a person portrayed is a private individual who is dead (e.g., family history research), treat them as if a public figure, unless there are any sensitivities involving culture, religion, or descendants.



Looking for a student-focussed version of this information?

Check out the 2024 Semester One student newsletter, where we have explained the guidelines for students to help them understand their responsibilities.



The Office will continue to work on providing information and advice to schools about AI.

At the end of 2023, we published guidance for schools about the Australian Framework for Generative AI in Schools, and collated information published throughout the year into three AI-specific publications about academic integrity — one for teachers, one for students, and one for parents.

At the end of November, the ACT government provided [direction for the use of artificial intelligence tools](#). It covers the important point that you should never enter personal identifying information into an AI tool, which the BSSS has also [discussed previously](#) and which is covered in the [Australian Framework for Generative Artificial Intelligence \(AI\) in Schools](#) (Guiding statements 6.1 and 6.3).

The ACT Education Directorate has also released an [interim position statement on the use of AI in ACT schools](#). This may be of interest both to staff in Directorate schools, and staff in Independent schools when comparing the use of AI, or formulating policy.

There was also a [wonderful article in the Canberra Times](#) discussing innovative practice in some Canberra schools; congratulations to those people interviewed.

What’s out there? AI tools available from February 2023

No endorsement of these tools is given or should be inferred: this information is to help you keep up with new developments so that you don’t need to sift through the news, not to recommend a particular product!

Bing Chat

The creative and precise modes use ChatGPT4, the current most powerful generative AI. Note, however,



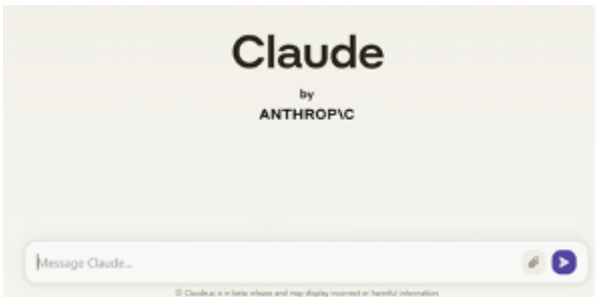
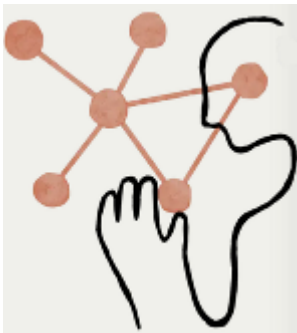
that sometimes it will not be able to respond due to high demand.

Prompt: Create a representation of Lob’s theorem on paradoxes caused by agents self-referencing



Claude

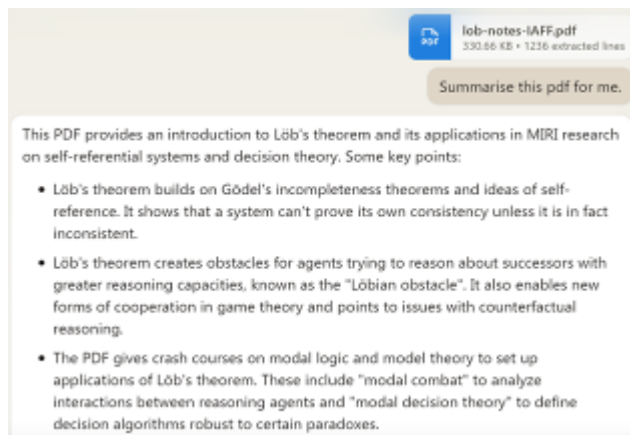
[Claude](#), the generative AI from Anthropic, is now available in Australia.



It should be noted, however, that there are size and length limits to what you can upload, and the free version is more restrictive than the paid one.

Unlike Bing Chat, Claude does not have internet access. However, you can upload files to it—pdfs, text files, csv files, for example—and then chat with it about the contents of the files. This can be extremely useful.

For example, here is its response to the upload of an academic paper:



lob-notes-IAFF.pdf
330.66 KB • 1226 extracted lines

Summarise this pdf for me.

This PDF provides an introduction to Löb's theorem and its applications in MIRI research on self-referential systems and decision theory. Some key points:

- Löb's theorem builds on Gödel's incompleteness theorems and ideas of self-reference. It shows that a system can't prove its own consistency unless it is in fact inconsistent.
- Löb's theorem creates obstacles for agents trying to reason about successors with greater reasoning capacities, known as the "Löbian obstacle". It also enables new forms of cooperation in game theory and points to issues with counterfactual reasoning.
- The PDF gives crash courses on modal logic and model theory to set up applications of Löb's theorem. These include "modal combat" to analyze interactions between reasoning agents and "modal decision theory" to define decision algorithms robust to certain paradoxes.

[The AI Pedagogy project](#)

The AI Pedagogy project at MetaLab at Harvard is providing free resources for humanities assignments in the age of AI.



AI Guide

Focused on the essentials and written to be accessible to a newcomer, this interactive guide provides background you need to feel more confident with engaging conversations about AI in your classroom.



PART 1: AI STARTER

For educators who are new to using AI tools, Part 1 introduces and suggests classroom AI policies, and more.



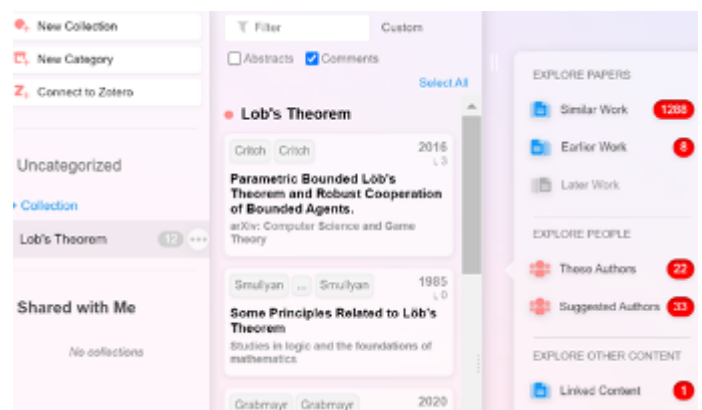
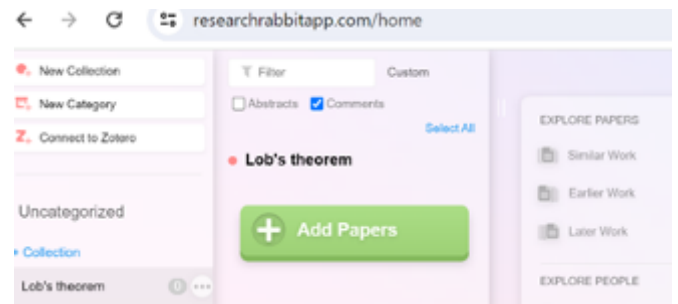
PART 2: LLM TUTORIAL

A guided demonstration of ChatGPT, recommended even for those who have used it before. You'll learn essential dos and don'ts, debunk common myths, and be prepared to use large language models responsibly.

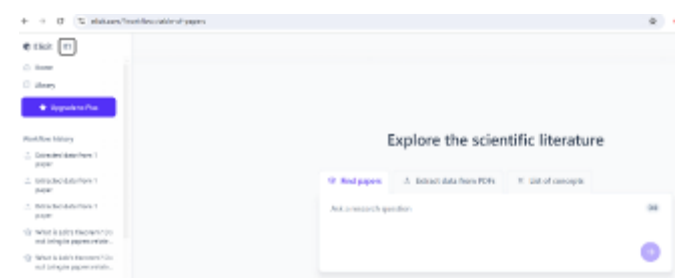
[You can even submit your own!](#)

Research Tools

[ResearchRabbit](#) is useful for research on various topics. You can create a collection and add papers by title or keywords. You can even add collaborators who can access and add to your collection.



[Elicit](#) is another useful research tool:



You can ask research questions and it finds papers for you.

You can also upload PDFs and have it extract the data. Your queries are saved and you can also build a library of papers.

Find papers

What is the best way to teach about the potential social impact of artificial intelligence?

○ Searching for papers
○ Summarizing 4 abstracts
● Final answer

Summary of top 4 papers Copy

The potential social impact of artificial intelligence can be effectively taught through a variety of methods. [Oguel \(2019\)](#) suggests the use of a simulation game to help students understand the concept of machine learning, while [Tuomi \(2018\)](#) emphasizes the need for well-informed policy-oriented work and research. [Ozetskyi \(2020\)](#) highlights the financial and social benefits, as well as the threats, of AI in education, and [Hodgson \(2020\)](#) explores the transformative and disruptive potential of AI in higher education, particularly in the field of social work. These studies collectively underscore the importance of a multidisciplinary approach that incorporates ethical, social, and

Please check with your school or sector IT policies and relevant departments before implementing the use of any AI tool in your teaching planning or practice.

Do not use unauthorised tools!

It summarises the abstract and can also give you different things to search the papers for – in this case, the example includes 'Main Findings'.

+ 1 columns added Sort Filters CSV PLUS BIB PLUS

Paper	Abstract summary	Main findings
<input type="checkbox"/> Exploring the impact of artificial intelligence on teaching and learning in higher education <small>DOI: Stefan A. D. Popenici +1</small> <small>Res. Pract. Technol. Enhanc. Learn.</small> <small>2017 228 citations PDF DOI</small>	The adoption of these technologies for teaching, learning, student support, and administration challenges higher education institutions and student learning in higher education.	The main findings of the paper include the emergence and progression of artificial intelligence in teaching and learning in higher education, the potential structural changes in university administrative services and the challenges in the realm of teaching and learning in higher education due to AI solutions, and the need for scholarly discussions and a serious debate about the future role of AI in teaching and learning in higher education.
<input type="checkbox"/> Artificial Intelligence in Education: A	AI has been extensively adopted and used	- AI has been extensively adopted and

Search or create a column
Describe what kind of data you want to extract
e.g. summary, counter-arguments

CURRENT COLUMNS
Main findings

ADD COLUMNS
+ Intervention
+ Outcome measured
+ Intervention effects

To finish off this bit on AI, one of the core responsibilities of teachers in this age of AI is to help students understand the ethical implications of the development and use of this technology. A [question for this term's issue](#) to get people thinking comes courtesy of [Jack Clark](#), Co-founder of [Anthropic](#) (the company behind Claude):

How much permission do AI developers need to get from society before irrevocably changing society

Generated images from [Bing Create](#); screenshots from the relevant websites.





Looking for information you think we might have missed? It could be in a past newsletter. If you are new to the system, you may also find some helpful hints and ideas in the past newsletters.

Teacher Newsletters

[Spring 2022](#)

- The AST
- Annotations
- Appeals processes
- Preparing for moderation
- Bulk-entering grades in ACS
- In-school moderation and meshing clarifications

[Summer 2023](#)

- Scaling: the basics
- Scores: hints for new educators
- Special Provisions
- ACS Unit Outline Generator
- Insubstantial attempts
- Which courses can and cannot be combined
- A glossary of BSSS terms

[Autumn 2023](#)

- Ethical Research Guidelines
- Moderation Risk Matrix
- Certification Report 2022
- Outlying z-scores: what do they mean?
- How to hide and unhide columns in ACS mark-books
- Lines of communication with the office
- External VET in 2024

[Spring 2023](#)

- VET: an explainer
- Profiles of VET staff in schools
- Changes to estimates in 2024
- Small Group Moderation
- AST special provisions: help us get the message to everyone
- ACS changes + tips and tricks
- Why is the ACT system different to other systems?
- Farewell to Board Chair Roberta McRae OAM

Student Newsletters

[Semester 1 2023](#)

- Studying in the ACT
- Transition to College: things to know
- Study myths
- Requesting a review or appeal
- What are special provisions?
- Late penalties
- Scaling
- A glossary of BSSS terms

[Semester 2 2023](#)

- What is VET?
- What is studying VET like? (Interviews with students)
- What should I do if I'm accused of AI plagiarism?
- Reminders for students aiming for university
- Questions from students: why is the ACT system different to other states? What should I do if my school is pressuring me to pick up or drop a subject?

Can you clarify that?

How does someone end up on the Board? How long can they stay there?

When the Board Chair's time is up, the position is advertised and people can apply for it. These are usually people with a strong record of working for the public good, particularly in education. This position is then appointed by the Minister, upon consideration of all applicants.

Other Board members are appointed by the Minister after consultation with relevant groups and stakeholders. Although they come from different institutions and groups, Board members act for the good of all students in the ACT, and not for any particular school or setting.

From the BSSS Act:

- a chair;
- 1 person appointed after consultation with the Canberra Institute of Technology;
- 1 person appointed after consultation with vocational education and training organisations;
- 1 person appointed after consultation with the Australian National University;
- 1 person appointed after consultation with the University of Canberra;
- 1 person appointed after consultation with the Australian Catholic University
- 1 person appointed after consultation with the body known as the Association of Independent Schools;
- 1 person appointed after consultation with the ACT branch of the Australian Education Union;
- 1 person appointed after consultation with the body known as the Catholic Education Commission;
- 1 person appointed after consultation with the body known as the ACT Principals' Association Inc.;

- 1 person appointed after consultation with the body known as the ACT Council of Parents and Citizens Associations;
- 1 person appointed after consultation with the Association of Parents and Friends of the ACT Schools Inc.;
- 1 person appointed after consultation with business and industry representative organisations in the ACT;
- 1 person appointed after consultation with the ACT Trades and Labour Council;
- the director-general.

Board members, with the exception of the Director-General are appointed by the Minister for a term of no more than 3 years. If they are eligible to be appointed, they may also be reappointed.

[You can find the makeup of the current Board on our website.](#) The people you speak to in the Office are not members of the Board; we are the Secretariat of the Board. Jobs in the OBSSS are filled through the usual advertising and interview processes undertaken for all Education Directorate positions. Keep an eye out on JobsACT if you're interested in working for the OBSSS; there may be positions coming up early this year.

When a teacher changes schools, what happens to their ACS account?

The Certification or ACS officer for the new school needs to email bssscertification@act.gov.au to let us know about the new person, including their name, where they were previously, and where they have moved to. Please make this an email rather than a phone call so we have a record.

Where are you moving, and when?

We are most likely moving in the first half of 2024. We will tell you where as soon as we know!



Recognition of Excellence 2023





B S S S