



## Becoming an ABSA Accredited House Energy Rating (HERS) Assessor.

### Step by Step Guide: How to Become an Accredited Assessor

The Association of Building Sustainability Assessors (ABSA) manages accreditation of practitioners who offer assessment of aspects of the environmental impact of buildings.

Building Thermal Performance assessors use sophisticated computer-based modelling tools to analyse the predicted heating and cooling loads on a building.

Building Thermal Performance assessments are one method of showing compliance with regulation requirements for new residential buildings (BCA and BASIX), which are submitted to Councils. Such assessments must be conducted by an Accredited Assessor.

An Accredited Building Thermal Performance Assessor using 2<sup>nd</sup> Generation Tools must:

- Have attended the 3 training modules in Building Thermal Performance (Residential) or equivalent and successfully completed the ABSA Accreditation exam
- have demonstrated competence in using thermal performance assessment tools such as Accurate, FirstRate5 or BERS<sup>Pro</sup> to provide ratings from design drawings
- be able to give clients appropriate advice about changes that would enable a design to achieve the required performance
- have a sound understanding of their state housing industry requirements and the building approval process
- Operate in accordance with the ABSA Code of Practice and carry professional indemnity insurance.

This document details the process for individuals to complete the National Qualification and become accredited with ABSA under the National House Energy Rating Scheme ([NatHERS](#)). Alternatively if you are interested in information about the Home Sustainability (HSA) Assessor Scheme please refer to the information on the [Home Sustainability Website \(www.hsas.net.au\)](http://www.hsas.net.au)

If, after reading the following sections, you have further queries, refer to the [ABSA website](#) for further information or please contact ABSA staff.

It is recommended that new candidates for Accreditation should also consult the related ABSA documents:

- [The ABSA National Accreditation Scheme](#)
- [2<sup>nd</sup> Generation software and the National Qualification](#)

## Step One: Pre-requisites

ABSA currently requires the successful completion of an online Competency Assessment prior to Training registration. The Competency Assessment specifically assesses the candidates ability in the following units of competency:

- ❖ Read and interpret plans and specifications (BCGCM2001B)
- ❖ Use computer technology (ICTCC129A).

There is no cost to complete an Assessment. For details and access please create an account on: [The Training Pages of the ABSA website](#)

## Step Two: Training

Accreditation Exam applicants need to successfully complete the qualification “*Short Course in Residential Building Thermal Performance*”.

The qualification is delivered by ABSA in 3 modules:

- i. **Design Theory (12 hours):** This module is an in depth exploration of building thermal performance theory including topics such as how heat flows occur through building elements, developing an understanding of the thermal physics principles that define the overall performance of a dwelling, and how performance is measured and how it can be influenced by design and construction.
- ii. **2<sup>nd</sup> Generation Software (16 hours):** This module develops the skills necessary to use 2<sup>nd</sup> generation software, to understand the assumptions it uses, and to be able to interpret outputs and propose recommendations to improve thermal performance. The module provides hands on experience using the 2nd generation software.
- iii. **Professional Practice (4 hours):** Develops an understanding of the regulatory, accreditation and professional requirements of undertaking thermal performance assessments.

The qualification *Short Course in Building Thermal Performance (Residential)* can be obtained through the attendance of all above modules, which include some short in-class assessment tasks. For further information on training courses, registration and their availability please consult the training pages of our website at <http://www.absa.net.au/Training/index.php?q=node/97>

ABSA will be offering training in all modules required to complete the National Qualification. All ABSA training has been designed and will be delivered to meet the requirements of the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF). Please ensure that any training taken from other organisations meets the requirements of the National Qualification. All training must meet the AQF requirements in order to be able to issue this qualification.

The ABSA currently administers training in the use of Accurate and Firstrate5. Assessors that complete the National Qualification in one software package can elect to be accredited in other software packages as well by undertaking further software specific training.

## Step Three: Software

In order to sit the Online Accreditation Exam you must have access to a 2<sup>nd</sup> generation software package. Please ensure that you have a current version before you purchase your online exam. **Please note software distribution and support is not undertaken by ABSA.** This is the responsibility of and provided by the software distributor and may be charged additional to the software price.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Generation Software packages can be purchased from the following software suppliers and information relating to their supply and pricing is listed on the relevant software distributor's websites. For further information just click on the links below:

Software	Provider
Accurate	<a href="#">Hearne Scientific Software</a>
BERS Pro <sup>3</sup>	<a href="#">Solar Logic</a>
FirstRate	<a href="#">Sustainability Victoria</a>

## Step Four: Exam Application and Fees

Prior to sitting the exam, each candidate must complete the [Online Exam Registration](#). The fee for the exam is \$385 (GST inc.) If for whatever reason an exam applicant decides not to proceed with the examination, ABSA will refund the Examination fees paid less an administration fee of \$100.

## Step Five: Exam Preparation

Upon successful completion of the [Short Course in Building Thermal Performance](#), you can commence the exam process by logging into the Training and Examination Web page. If you have previously used the ABSA website to purchase membership or training then you can use the same login information to purchase the exam. If you have trained with another training provider you are required to ["Create a new account"](#) to enable you to purchase the exam.

The National Accreditation Exam is an online exam. Candidates must be familiar with all documents in the *ABSA Document Schedule* especially the *ABSA Assessor's Code of Practice*, *ABSA Assessor Procedure Documents*, *Policy Documents* and the *ABSA Certificate Manager*. The content of these documents form part of the examinable content.

These documents are available for download from the ABSA site by exam candidates. Once you have purchased your exam the exam resources will become accessible. In addition to those listed it is recommended that Assessors study general regulatory requirements, energy efficient design principles and rating trends.

Once you feel sufficiently prepared to sit the Exam you can commence.

## Step Six: Complete the Exam

The ABSA Accreditation Exam is designed to take a well prepared candidate about 2 full days to complete. You must ensure that you complete the exam package within 21 days from the date of purchase. It consists of four sections:

- **Section 1:** In this section of the exam you will be conducting a thermal performance assessment on one supplied set of dwelling plans using an approved 2nd generation assessment software tool. It is important that you model the house as accurately as possible, taking into account as much detail as you can. ABSA is particularly interested in your ability to use the skills that you learnt in your training and apply and interpret them to model a complex dwelling.
- **Section 2:** Candidates are required to modify the base data file generated in Section 1 of this exam so that the dwelling complies with the required Regulatory Standard. Modifications should follow the Guidelines for Improving Ratings (refer to Assessor Procedures). For your 'Compliance' dwelling, install and use the ABSA Certificate Manager to generate certification documentation. Assessors must also be able to calculate estimated opinion of probable order of cost for all suggested modifications. Please provide these estimated costs for all your suggested modifications.
- **Section 3:** Application of Building Thermal Performance Theory. This section requires you to answer questions about ensuring the dwelling meets the minimum requirements, making sound recommendations and calculating costs.
- **Section 4:** Your ability to show a good knowledge of all Mandatory ABSA Procedures including the correct issuing of rating Certification and documentation, and the required ABSA procedures relating to rating procedures and professional practice issues.
- **Section 5:** Your ability to show an understanding of National and State Regulatory Requirements.

Please ensure that you set aside adequate time from your commitments to complete the exam. A late submission will not be accepted unless an extension of time is requested and agreed to. If you do not pass any Sections of the exam the first time, you will be offered an opportunity to re-sit. There are additional costs to re-sit\*. (Sections 1 & 2 only)

If you do not pass this exam you will be directed to obtain further training, prior to being offered another chance to sit the exam.

All candidates will be notified of their results for Sections 3, 4, and 5 immediately. Up to 3 weeks should be allowed for the marking of Section 1 and 2. All candidates will be provided with feedback on any errors made to ensure appropriate future practice.

<b>Reubmission Sections</b>	<b>Cost (GST included)</b>
Section 1	\$110
Section 2	\$110

## Step Seven: Insurance

It is a requirement of the ABSA Code of Practice that all Accredited Assessors must maintain adequate insurance to indemnify themselves for their role as an Accredited Assessor. This requirement provides Assessor's clients with the knowledge and confidence of suitable insurance protection for their work. It also protects Assessors in the event of errors.

ABSA assessors can benefit from a low cost Professional Indemnity insurance scheme that covers their sustainability assessment services. Fees for this insurance are determined according to the number of assessments conducted by the assessor. This insurance may be taken out concurrently with payment of accreditation fees.

ABSA PI Insurance charges:

<b>Maximum number of assessments per annum</b>	<b>Professional Indemnity Insurance Cost</b>
15	\$ 66
30	\$ 97
60	\$ 151
120	\$ 241
250	\$ 400
500	\$ 625
1000	\$ 925
2000	\$ 1225

Assessors may alternatively maintain Professional Indemnity insurance through any other provider. ABSA does not set the value of this insurance. It is the responsibility of the Assessor to ensure adequate insurance advice is sought, and that the insurance purchased covers the full extent of works and services an Assessor undertakes.

Please note:

- You do not have to have insurance in order to sit the ABSA exam. You must, however, have your insurance in place by the time you begin practicing.
- ABSA Scheme PI Insurance can be obtained immediately once you have passed your exam. An application form will be sent to you if required.
- It can take several weeks to obtain insurance through other providers. It is recommended that you seek insurance advice as early as possible if you decide to purchase your insurance through this method.
- Once Accredited your insurance details must be declared on the ABSA website (Login > My Records > Insurance).

## Step Eight: Annual Accreditation Fees

When you receive notification that you have passed the Accreditation Exam, you will be required to pay your Annual Accreditation fee. You will not become Accredited and be able to issue ABSA Certificates until this has been done. Payment of fees can be made online.

ABSA accreditation fee structure is an equitable fee structure based on the number of Certificates issued for ratings conducted annually. Any credits for Certificates unused in the 12 month period will be deducted from the following year's annual Accreditation fee.

## ABSA Accreditation Fee Structure:

Maximum number of assessments per annum	Annual Accreditation Fee
15	\$ 363
30	\$ 423
60	\$ 526
120	\$ 698
250	\$ 1001
500	\$ 1,431
1000	\$ 2006
2000	\$ 2,566

## Step Nine: Being Accredited

### Confirmation of Accreditation

Upon passing the Accreditation Exam, providing ABSA with details of your PI Insurance, and signing the Code of Practice, ABSA will send your ABSA stamp for issuing certificates, and confirmation of successful Accreditation.

Your Accreditation details will be listed on the Register of Accredited Assessors (['Find an Assessor'](#) listing).

### Training and support

ABSA provides regular seminars and workshops for its Assessors. In addition, Accredited Assessors can receive technical support from ABSA via a dedicated phone and email service.

email: [support@absa.net.au](mailto:support@absa.net.au) (preferred method of contact)

phone: 1300 889 438

fax: (02) 9281 9514

Assessors have their own area on the ABSA website, with:

- latest news on all matters of interest to Assessors
- file downloads
- An Assessor's Forum, for communicating with other Assessors, to ask questions, solve problems, and to have your say.

ABSA also offers promotion and referral services for Assessors – providing consumers with contact details for Assessors in their region.

### Accreditation renewal

Annual Accreditation fees are payable on the anniversary of Accreditation. ABSA will advise you when they're due. All Renewal fees are based on the same Annual Accreditation fee structure previously described