

How occupations are defined and categorised in the Occupation Standard Classification for Australia (OSCA) directly influences how workforce shortages are identified and which roles and industries are prioritised for government support, funding, and policy attention.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) is currently collecting feedback for the OSCA 2027 Consultation.

Skills Insight hosted [a webinar](#) on 9 April to connect stakeholders with ABS representatives. Below we have compiled and answered some frequently asked questions about the OSCA consultation.

The ABS maintains the OSCA and will assess all proposed changes submitted by stakeholders. Feedback directly to the ABS via the [Consultation Hub](#), with optional supporting attachments.

## What are the key consultation dates?

- **24 April 2026:** ABS Consultation deadline. Stakeholders submit feedback through the [ABS Consultation Hub](#) questionnaire. You can also email supporting attachments to <mailto:occupation@abs.gov.au>
- **August 2026:** ABS publish draft changes for comment.
- **March 2027:** official [OSCA 2027 update](#) release.

## When do changes take effect?

Accepted changes from the current consultation will be incorporated into **OSCA 2027**, planned for release in March 2027. There will then be a lag before other systems (e.g. JSA occupation shortage lists, the National Training Register ([training.gov.au](http://training.gov.au)) and migration settings adopt the updated classification.

## What is OSCA and why does it matter?

### What is the Occupation Standard Classification for Australia (OSCA)?

OSCA is Australia's occupation classification framework used to collect, organise and report occupation information across key datasets, including the Census and Labour Force Survey. How an occupation is described and categorised affects visibility in national data and can influence decisions such as migration and apprenticeship skills priority lists.

[See here for more information](#) on the link between OSCA classifications and government programs to support labour market access (e.g. JSA's Occupation Shortage List, the Australian Apprenticeships Priority List, and migration pathways).

## Why is industry input important?

The ABS relies on industry to explain how jobs are changing, which new occupations are emerging and how existing ones are best described. Industry stakeholders are best-placed to suggest updates based on their first-hand experiences and can provide evidence that is not visible to the ABS through the 2021 Census or other official data.

## What is being consulted on for OSCA 2027?

### What changes are in scope for the current consultation?

For OSCA 2027, the ABS is considering updates at the occupation level only, such as:

- separately identifying new or emerging occupations
- retiring occupations that no longer meet minimum thresholds
- revising titles, tasks, specialisations, licensing and skill level descriptions.

Scope note: The OSCA 2027 update focuses on 6-digit occupation-level changes (e.g., new occupations, revised titles/tasks/skill levels), not major structural re-grouping (structural change is planned for later cycles).

## How are skill levels defined in OSCA?

### How are OSCA skill levels defined?

OSCA skill levels reflect the **minimum level of skill typically required to competently perform the occupation**, not what qualifications any individual worker holds or what a worker currently gets paid. This is commonly evidenced through relevant qualification level (AQF alignment), required experience, and any licensing/registration requirements.

The ABS define their five skill levels as follows:

OSCA Skill Level	Commensurate with:	Commensurate AQF Levels	Notes
1	Bachelor Degree or higher qualification	7 - 10	At least five years of relevant experience may substitute for the formal qualification. In some cases, relevant experience and/or on-the-job training may be required in addition to the formal qualification.
2	Diploma; Advanced Diploma; Associate Degree	5 - 6	At least three years of relevant experience may substitute for the formal qualification. In some cases, relevant experience and/or on-the-job

			training may be required in addition to the formal qualification.
3	Certificate III (which includes at least two years of on-the-job training); Certificate IV	3*- 4 <i>*with two years of on-the-job training</i>	At least three years of relevant experience may substitute for the formal qualification. In some cases, relevant experience and/or on-the-job training may be required in addition to the formal qualification.
4	Certificate II; Certificate III	2 - 3	At least one year of relevant experience may substitute for the formal qualification. In some cases, relevant experience may be required in addition to the formal qualification.
5	Compulsory secondary education; Certificate I	1	A short period of on-the-job training may be required in addition to or instead of the formal qualification for some occupations. In other occupations, no formal qualification or on-the-job training may be required.

[Read more](#) about title, alternative title, definition, specialisations, licensing and/or registration requirements.

[Read more](#) about skill level.

## What is the appropriate skill level for an occupation if there isn't a consistent supply of qualified workers?

If people are recruited without formal training (e.g. due to labour shortages) but require substantial supervised experience before being considered competent, that experience component should be factored into your recommendation for the appropriate skill level in your submission.

ABS considers both:

- the closest equivalent AQF qualification (if any)
- how many years of relevant experience are usually needed before a worker can perform the role independently.

If an occupation is unregulated and labour market challenges mean people are recruited with varying levels of education and experience:

- state that competence requires structured on-the-job training and time-in-role
- provide typical time-to-competence (e.g. '12-24 months supervised practice')
- list traineeships/enterprise training where available (including informal and short courses)
- include employer evidence (position descriptions, training plans, competency frameworks)
- explain broader contexts, such as employer insurance issues, economic risk management or industry expectations.

This helps the ABS consider the 'experience-equivalent' dimension of skill level, even where formal training supply is limited. The ABS looks for the 'typical' requirement for competent practice, supported by evidence from associations, training providers and employers.

## What if adequate data does not exist for occupations that should be updated?

### What sources of data does the ABS consider suitable?

The ABS want you to tell them what your recommendation is *and why*. ABS guidance emphasises using evidence from multiple sources, including administrative data and environmental scanning (e.g. job advertisements, industry reports) alongside stakeholder input. However, in many cases, data limitations mean there is a lack of evidence to support submissions.

If an occupation does not have clear data to support your submission because it is new, emerging or aggregated with other small-volume occupations in a 'not elsewhere classified (nec)' category, you can focus on **indirect indicators** (e.g. growth drivers, training enrolments, membership/licensing counts, employer surveys).

### What evidence can I provide?

The ABS will consider any credible sources that help demonstrate the size and nature of an occupation, for example:

- a list of all the alternative titles used for one occupation so the ABS can check for them in raw 2021 Census data
- industry or association membership counts
- licensing/registration data
- training enrolment and completion data (VET and higher education)
- job advertisements showing volume, tasks and entry requirements (education and/or experience)
- business, regulator or industry reports on sector growth and workforce size.

Where direct counts are limited, indirect indicators (e.g. rapid growth in a related product or service such as electric vehicle sales) can help demonstrate emerging demand. ABS may also follow up with you or other suggested stakeholders for clarification.

## What if there are current OSCA occupations that need to be split into two or more occupations?

### Is there a minimum size for an occupation to be separately identified?

Yes: as a guide, OSCA occupations generally need at least **300 workers** nationally to justify separate identification. Very small roles are usually grouped into 'not elsewhere classified (nec)' categories so that they can still be counted within statistics.

### What if an occupation is currently in an 'nec' or broad category?

You can submit evidence that:

- the occupation has at least 300 workers
- its main tasks are distinct from other occupations in the nec
- it is important for policy, regulation, safety, or workforce planning.

The ABS may split an existing occupation if there is a clear difference in tasks and labour market outcomes.

A strong split case shows a clear delineation of tasks (and often different entry pathways/skill requirements) that can be consistently applied so jobs are coded reliably and exclusively. The submission should show:

- distinct tasks and responsibilities
- distinct labour market (titles, settings, tools/tech)
- distinct training and licensing (where relevant)
- evidence the two roles are both sufficiently sizeable/trending.

## What if there is a new or emerging occupation that isn't yet covered in OSCA?

As a guide, OSCA occupations generally need at least 300 workers nationally to justify separate identification. For each new occupation you believe meets this threshold, the ABS will ask you to:

- Describe the occupation as fully as possible, including:
  - the most commonly used title
  - a unique list of main tasks involved
  - its relationship to other occupations
  - any registration or licensing requirements
  - the education and experience requirements
  - its skill level (1 to 5)
  - any relevant specialisations
  - any other titles used to describe the occupation.

[Read more](#) about title, alternative title, definition, specialisations, licensing and/or registration requirements. [Read more](#) about skill level.

- Indicate the number of people that undertake the occupation in your industry, business or workplace.
- Estimate the number of people that will be required to undertake the occupation in five years' time in your industry, business or workplace. Where possible, use evidence to support the estimates you provide. This helps ABS distinguish sustained growth from short term spikes (for example, event driven roles around the 2032 Olympics). Provide best estimate projections supported by any available evidence (growth plans, investment commitments, regulatory changes, etc).
- Identify where you think this occupation sits within the OSCA structure.
- Identify any existing occupations that have similar skill specialisation and should be grouped with this occupation.

## What can industry do to encourage the recognition of new or emerging occupations?

- Coordinate submissions so that the ABS receives **consistent messages** from employers, associations, unions and training bodies.
- Provide **clear descriptions** of tasks, skill requirements, typical training and pathways, including where on-the-job learning substitutes for formal qualifications.
- Supply as much **evidence** as possible: data, reports, job ads, membership counts, training statistics and examples of misclassification.
- Suggest **other organisations or experts** ABS should speak with, to help validate and strengthen the case.
- To build the evidence base for future OSCA updates, encourage industry to use **agreed occupation titles** in job advertisements, industry surveys, HR systems, tax returns and the [2026 Census](#).

Skills Insight and other JSCs can help by sharing guidance, coordinating sector input and directing stakeholders to the ABS Consultation Hub. Classification decisions rest with the ABS.