

2026 Australian Schools Cyber Challenge



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Student Handbook

This handbook contains all the information you need to know when participating in ASCC.

Step into the world of cyber security and test your skills in hands-on scenarios that mirror the real world.

Unlike traditional classroom learning, ASCC immerses participants in industry-standard environments where they defend against simulated cyber threats using professional tools and virtual machines.

More than a competition, ASCC is an experience designed to inspire, challenge, and prepare students to be part of the next generation of cyber professionals.



How it Works:

The Australian Schools Cyber Challenge (ASCC) is one of the most exciting opportunities for students to step into the world of cyber security. The challenge gives secondary students across Australia the chance to test their skills in hands-on scenarios that mirror the real world.

Instead of learning from a textbook, participants work in industry-style environments where they defend against simulated cyber threats using professional tools and virtual machines. Along the way, students build practical technical skills — from log analysis and cryptography to threat detection and network analysis — while also developing teamwork, problem-solving, and communication skills that are valuable in any future career.

For many students, ASCC is their first introduction to the possibilities of a career in cyber. It's a chance to discover strengths, gain confidence, and explore a pathway into one of Australia's fastest-growing fields.

- Participants undertake a series of hyper-realistic cyber challenges through an integrated VM and LMS
- Combining theoretical frameworks with applied practice to develop, benchmark, and validate core cybersecurity competencies.
- Event rounds commence Term 2 2026 and consist of an initial 2 virtual rounds
- The challenge is accessible 24/7 from any location



Round Format:

The 2026 Australian Schools Cyber Challenge will be scheduled across four rounds of competition. Rounds 1-3 will be held virtually – students will have 4 weeks to complete each round. Round 4 (Finals) will be a 3-hour in-person challenge.

Rounds 1 & 2 will be non-elimination rounds and consist of a series of foundational cyber security challenges that each participating student will be required to solve and upload answers into the competition platform. Round 1 launches in Term 2, with Rounds 1 & 2 released progressively over 8 weeks for deeper engagement.

The top 16 teams, based on combined scores from Rounds 1 & 2 will progress to Round 3 (Semi Finals). The Top 4 teams will progress to the in-person final.

Challenges will increase in difficulty through each round.

Finals Round:

The Final Round is a live-fire, in-person competition. Teams will be allocated three hours to complete a live-fire security challenge, with access to secure high-speed networks.

This round is designed to simulate a live crisis in a Security Operations Centre, with students working as a team to identify and shut down the cyber threat.

This is a test of accuracy and speed, scores will be calculated based on the accuracy of answers; First Blood means the first team to answer correct receives 100, next receives 90, & so on.



Judging/Scoring:

For Rounds 1–3 each participating student is required to enter their answers to the challenge questions in the competition platform. Each team score will be calculated as the average score of all participating students in the team.

Rounds 1 and 2 are non-elimination rounds; Round 3 will be opened to the Top 16 Teams based on the combined scores of Rounds 1 and 2.

The Final Round is a time-based, live-fire team challenge – each team is required to enter one answer per question.

The team with the most correct answers to the scenario will be declared the ASCC champions.

Technology:

The competition will be conducted within a secure LMS – Axcelerate and utilise Azure Virtual Machines for the practical components.

All challenge exercises will be able to be completed within the challenge platform, and there is no requirement for additional software to be downloaded onto student machines.

The challenge platform is secure, hosted by AWS/Microsoft and all data is located onshore in Australia.

Student accounts will be created within the LMS and Azure VM based on the credentials provided by each school during team registration.

Schools will need to whitelist the challenge URL if you would like students to access the environment while using school networks.



Content:

Students will learn a range of topics including but not limited to:

- Ethics in Cyber
- Cyber Security Fundamentals
- Cyber Hygiene & Best Practices
- Common Attack Types
- Social Engineering & Phishing Awareness
- Business Email Compromise
- Access Controls & Password Security
- Advanced Password Cracking Techniques
- Cryptography (Encryption & Decryption)
- Network and Web Security Basics
- Log File Analysis
- Network Packet Analysis
- Open Source Intelligence
- Reverse Engineering
- Python Vulnerabilities

Support:

In order for all participants to have the best experience, we have ensured that technical support is available throughout the challenge.

All teachers and students will have access to technical support if required.

Simply submit a ticket to: **support@cyberpathways.com.au**

Which is sent directly to our customer service and support team who are available between 8:30am – 4:30pm Monday – Friday.

All support tickets will be triaged based on the severity of the issue.

2026 Key Dates

2026 EOI Open	01/09/2025
Sponsor Registrations Open	01/10/2025
Team Registrations open	14/11/2025
Practice Range opens – labs for student practice	14/02/2026
Range Walkthrough & Round 1 & 2 Preview (Webinar)	various dates
Lead up activities	03/04/2026
Registrations Close	22/04/2026
Range Walkthrough & Round 1 & 2 Preview (Webinar)	22/04/2026
Round 1 Opens (All Teams)	5/05/2026
Round 2 content released	01/06/2026
Round 1 & 2 Closes	27/06/2026
Semi finalists announced	07/07/2026
Semi Final Opens (Top 16 Teams)	21/07/2026
Semi Final Close	21/08/2026
Judging Round 3	24/08/2026
Finalist Announcement	28/08/2026
Finals – In person (date tentative)	29/09/2026

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