



ACF SKILLS PROGRAM

Examination Guidelines for Coaches and Candidates

Effective July 2025

CONTENTS

| | |
|---|----|
| INTRODUCTION | 3 |
| A BRIEF OUTLINE OF THE DIVISIONS | 4 |
| Tests 1, 2 & 3 | 4 |
| Grades 1, 2, 3 & 4..... | 4 |
| Standard Grades 1, 2, 3 & 4..... | 4 |
| Medals | 4 |
| THE COACHES' ROLE | 5 |
| THE EXAMINATION | 6 |
| GENERAL DISCIPLINES AND PROTOCOLS | 6 |
| Deportment | 6 |
| Classical Technique..... | 6 |
| Turnout and Technical Development Exercises..... | 6 |
| Aesthetic and Dance Sections | 6 |
| Musicality | 6 |
| Presentation and Style | 6 |
| Examination Uniform | 7 |
| The Day of the Examination and Conduct | 7 |
| Marking/Results | 9 |
| Assessment Sheets, Certificates, Bars and Medals | 9 |
| GENERAL NOTES ON THE PROGRAM..... | 9 |
| REQUIREMENTS FOR ENTRY AND ENTRY FORMS..... | 10 |
| General..... | 10 |
| Examination | 11 |
| ACF RECOMMENDED AGES FOR EXAMINATIONS AND REQUIREMENTS FOR SOLO/DUO ENTRY | 11 |
| STATE ADMINISTRATORS | 13 |
| ACF ADMINISTRATION..... | 14 |
| Examiners' Advisory Board - Members | 14 |

INTRODUCTION

- The examination system was first introduced in 1979 by the Australian Society of Calisthenics to raise the standard of calisthenics and to unify terminology and technique throughout Australia and is a National program administered by each State/Territory committee.
- The ACF Calisthenic Skills Program forms the foundation for correct technique within the sport for participants, coaches, and adjudicators and supports participant longevity.
- Through the program, participants are supported in developing an understanding of how to execute movements correctly to ensure personal safety. The syllabus is designed to develop fitness, flexibility, coordination and rhythm, musicality, deportment and poise, self-discipline, and self-esteem.
- The system consists of three divisions – TESTS, GRADES and MEDALS. Within these divisions there is a logical progression through the various elements which make up the foundation of calisthenics.
- The test and grade examinations are based on a written syllabus and music audio which emphasises technical details, presentation, and knowledge of terminology. In the Medals section, choreography and performance are also considered.
- Mandatory minimum ages for skills exams came into effect at January 1st 2014. Candidates present within the calendar year of the minimum age(s) as stated herein.
- The ACF Calisthenic Skills Program is designed for pupils to be examined at two yearly intervals. Coaches should assess the capabilities of their pupil to ensure that they are knowledgeable and well prepared for their Test/Grade Examination before presenting to the Examiner.
- To assist in this decision, keep in mind the ability of the candidate to focus for a ½ hour exam with the knowledge that the syllabus has been designed for age appropriateness. It is no benefit to candidates to be entered too young for the tests, nor attempt Grade 3 before the body has developed to be able to execute the movements appropriately.
- Any ACF affiliated pupil whose coach is an ACF Level One or Level Two coach registered with their State/Territory Coaches Association is eligible to enter.
- Participants wishing to compete in ACF solo/graceful/duo competitions must meet the minimum skills requirements for their age group.
- Entry to the ACF Cadet Coaching Program requires the successful completion of Grade 2.
- Successful participants receive a certificate and for each Test and Grade. Shields and Bars can be purchased separately. A medal and a certificate is awarded for each Medal. The Gold Medal Honours Bar is the most prestigious award.
- The Skills Syllabus undergoes regular review by the Examiners Advisory Board (EAB) to ensure National standards are upheld and continue to improve. Qualified examiners accredited with the Australian Sports Commission travel to local, regional, and interstate locations examining pupils in the syllabus at every level. Examinations can be completed by video conference under extenuating circumstances.
- Copies of the syllabus, music and videos is available on the ACF Website. The videos are password protected. Contact your State Calisthenic Skills administrator for the password.

A BRIEF OUTLINE OF THE DIVISIONS

Tests 1, 2 & 3

The three Tests are designed to introduce younger students to the procedure of examinations, to emphasise the importance of developing correct technique and to encourage confidence. Arm and leg movements, including the use of apparatus, can be requested in any section.

Grades 1, 2, 3 & 4

By progressing steadily through the Grades, the student builds a comprehensive vocabulary of terminology and a firm understanding of requirements of basic calisthenics. It also allows the student to develop at their own pace and within their capabilities. Exercises have been choreographed to develop co-ordination, artistry, and musicality. Arm and leg movements, including the use of apparatus, can be requested in any section.

Standard Grades 1, 2, 3 & 4

Standard Grades do not qualify for solo/duo entry, Cadet Coaching or Level 1 requirements.

Standard Grades can be adjusted for students who have additional needs. Application must be made to the relevant State Calisthenic Skills Administrator along with supporting documentation. This will be referred to the ACF Head of Skills and the applicant notified of the outcome. The ACF Head of Skills will communicate the adjustments to the officiating Examiner.

Medals

Candidates must achieve Grade 4 before commencing Medals.

Minimum ages apply for Grade 4 and Medals.

The medals have been created with the more mature student in mind and whilst they draw on the technique established in the Grades, they are designed to develop performing skills, quality of movement, musicality and a sense of floor pattern and space. Advanced movements in all facets of calisthenics must be mastered to a high standard.

Self-choreographed routines introduce the student to the art of choreography and, working with the coach, the student can explore creativity in designing routines to enhance their own capabilities.

Bronze Medal

- Candidates must achieve 60% or higher for each section to earn a medal and certificate.
- Bronze Medal must be passed before entering for Silver Medal.

Silver Medal

- Candidates must achieve 60% or higher for each section to earn a medal and certificate.
- Silver Medal must be passed before entering for Gold Medal.

Gold Medal

- Candidates must achieve 60% or higher for each section to earn a medal and certificate.
- Candidates in the Gold Medal examination who achieve a pass of 90% or higher may strive for the ultimate distinction of GOLD MEDAL HONOURS, which is for elite performers only. To qualify to present for GOLD MEDAL HONOURS a candidate must achieve 90% or higher in the combined Parts 1 and 2. A candidate will not achieve Gold Medal Honours unless they successfully complete the Stage Performance (Part 3) which consists of three routines performed before an audience and examiner, and the candidate receives a combined Parts 1, 2 and 3 total of 90% or more.

- The Stage Presentation for Gold Medal Honours must be within 12 months of the technical examination Parts 1 & 2.

Medal candidates cannot re-present for 12 months, as time is needed to improve the technical recommendations on the assessment sheet.

THE COACHES' ROLE

The examination system provides a full calisthenics syllabus which focuses on specific levels of achievement and provides satisfaction to the students and belief in themselves when they succeed. It is very important that students are well prepared for their examination. If they are entered before they are ready their confidence can be adversely affected.

Students must be allowed to progress at their own pace and not necessarily to conform to their age group. They must feel confident in their own ability to master each level and their individual development must be of prime consideration.

Under normal circumstances an unsuccessful candidate is a reflection of inadequate preparation, poor judgement by the coach in the level attempted or poor coaching.

Many coaches incorrectly assume that if a student learns the terminology and the set routines of the syllabus, then a pass will be rewarded. This is not so. A candidate must present for every examination with good deportment, footwork, musicality, and presentation. Correct technique in all movements is expected at each level.

Turnout and development exercises are included in the syllabus and coaches are encouraged to use them in class, as well as movements and terminology from the syllabus, so they become familiar to the participants.

An examination is just that – an examination. If passes were awarded to poorly prepared candidates, then a candidate who had been prepared to a high standard would gain no pride in their achievement or satisfaction for the hours of preparation and practice time.

The Examiners' Advisory Board encourages coaches to spend time with pupils after examinations to read and discuss the assessment sheets together. Always look for positives. Carefully look at the placement of ticks in the boxes on the assessment sheet to learn where a candidate's strengths and weaknesses are. Aim to work on the areas of weakness before progressing to the next level.

In order to highlight the achievements of candidates it is suggested that they are presented with certificates at a suitably important event such as presentation day or concert. Medals are presented at the State Championships where a candidate is competing.

Assessment Sheets, ACF Progressive Certificates, Individual Test/Grade Certificates, Shields and Bars, and Medals are the sole property of the candidate. Coaches must in no circumstances withhold them; they must be forwarded to the candidate immediately.

Be aware that the time spent in training an individual student for examinations will be rewarded by the significant improvement in teamwork.

It is the coaches' responsibility to acquire the current syllabus, official music, and recording footage available from the ACF website. It is the aim of all those associated with the examination system to develop a high standard and it is expected that coaches prepare candidates as thoroughly as possible with the aim of executing their work to the best of their ability.

Assistance is available to any coach, particularly for those wishing to show improvement on past results or those intending to enter candidates for the first time. The video recordings of the syllabus are available as a *reference only* and must not be used as a substitute for training by a qualified coach.

Every coach who enters candidates for examinations must have a thorough knowledge of calisthenics technique and know the requirements of each syllabus.

It is the responsibility of the coach or coaches signing the entry form to read and enforce the Requirements for entry. Refer to page 10

THE EXAMINATION

GENERAL DISCIPLINES AND PROTOCOLS

Deportment

The importance of correct posture cannot be over-emphasised. Whatever the age or capability, the student must be made constantly aware of posture and how it affects the technique and style of every movement performed. Posture influences turnout, flexibility, strength, extension, and style.

Classical Technique

Classical ballet positions and steps are used throughout all calisthenics items. As only the basic positions are used in the syllabi, a reasonable degree of competence is expected. If coaches exercise care and persistence throughout, a solid foundation for the technique of all movements will result.

Turnout and Technical Development Exercises

These exercises have been included in Test 3 and Grades 1, 2, 3 and 4 and are designed to create an awareness of turnout as well as body, arm, and headlines. These exercises address incorrect alignment of hips, knees and feet as highlighted in the research report by a qualified physiotherapist. Turnout from the hips must be emphasised, and not just of the knees and feet. When teaching the movements used in the syllabus, care must be taken to maintain correct deportment and equal turnout of both legs.

Aesthetic and Dance Sections

As well as executing all movements with correct technique, the candidate is expected to perform the set exercises with artistry, showing body and facial expression appropriate to the movements and music.

Also note the curtsey can be replaced with a bow where required.

Musicality

In all aspects of calisthenics, the music is extremely important to both the performer and the choreographer. It strongly influences the strength and style of every movement as well as rhythm. It is therefore considered a very important part of the examination and it is essential that the coach devotes the necessary time to develop an appreciation and understanding of the music in each section.

Presentation and Style

Marks will be forfeited if the hair is untidy, if there are holes in leotards or tights, or if underwear is showing. Garments should be well fitted.

Candidates with short hair must make every effort to conform with the appearance required.

If a candidate displays poor manners or attitude, chews gum, converses with or copies the sharing candidate this behaviour will be taken into consideration in the overall presentation.

Senior candidates are permitted to wear light makeup.

Style – overall manner in which the candidate presents herself/himself. Aim to display elegance, grace, and artistry.

Examination Uniform

- Modest black leotard with no embellishments/adornments, or well fitted black bicycle shorts with fitting plain black or white singlet or T Shirt.
- Plain black or flesh lightweight tights only can be worn under leotard (footless or stirrups allowed only, no bulky woollen tights) or no tights.
- Hair
 - Long hair – no fringe, hair in a bun (position optional). Black bow or ribbon around the bun permitted. Headband optional.
 - Short hair – neat and tidy, not covering face or eyes.
- Rods and clubs – tape and colour optional.
- No jewellery (other than medical alert bracelet or necklet). Body piercing must not be visible – remove or cover.
- No nail polish on fingers or toes.

The Day of the Examination and Conduct

- Candidates must arrive at the examination venue no later than 30 minutes prior to their given time. This will allow for checking in and warming up.
- If you are entered for Test 3 or higher you may share your examination with one other candidate.
- On arrival, check in with the supervisor who will confirm your name and number and give you a coloured sash to wear around your waist.
- The supervisor will tell you the name of your examiner.
- Warm up in the waiting area.
- Consider whether you need to visit the toilet before your exam begins.
- Be ready to enter the examination room at your scheduled examination time with your rod, clubs, and the assessment sheet which the supervisor will give you, and a bottle of water if necessary.
- When the examiner is ready for you, they will ring their bell and the supervisor will show you the way into the examination room.
- For safety reasons we recommend that candidates hold the rod vertically in one hand, and clubs in the other when entering the exam room.
- Say 'Good Morning' or 'Good Afternoon' and use the examiners name if you can remember and hand the assessment sheet to the examiner.
- You will be asked to place your rod and clubs on the floor near the wall and stand in the centre of the room ready for the examiner to tell you what they would like to see first.
- The examiner may ask you to perform your work by yourself or along with the other candidate/s.
- Do not speak to the other candidates during the examination.
- If you do not understand, or cannot hear the examiner, politely ask them to repeat the instruction.

- If you feel extremely unwell or cannot wait until after the examination to visit the toilet, don't be afraid to tell the examiner.
- At the end of the examination pick up your rod and clubs, curtsey to the examiner and say 'Thank You' before leaving the room.

Marking/Results

- Participants in Test 1, 2 and 3 group exams must achieve an A, B or C to achieve that level.
- Participants in individual Test 3 exams must receive a pass or higher to achieve that level.
- Participants in Grades 1, 2, 3 & 4 must gain 60% in each section to achieve that level.
- Standard Grades 1, 2, 3 & 4 require a 50% overall pass rate to be awarded their certificate.
- The examiner's decision is final, and no correspondence will be entered into.
- Marks/Classification Table

| PASS MARK ACHIEVED | CLASSIFICATION WORDING |
|--------------------|---|
| 60 to 64 | Pass |
| 65 to 69 | Pass Plus |
| 70 to 74 | Commended |
| 75 to 79 | Highly Commended |
| 80 to 84 | Credit |
| 85 to 89 | Credit Plus |
| 90 to 94 | Honours |
| 95 to 100 | Honours with Distinction <i>(except for Gold Medal where a candidate performs for a Gold Medal Honours Bar (being Part 3) if the candidate achieves an average mark between 90-100 in Parts 1 & 2)</i> |

Assessment Sheets, Certificates, Bars and Medals

Assessment Sheets, Certificates, Bars and Medals are the sole property of the candidate. Coaches must in no circumstances withhold them; they must be forwarded to the candidate immediately. Shields can be purchased individually to display Test 1 to Grade 4 bars.

GENERAL NOTES ON THE PROGRAM

- A suitably qualified examiner will examine Medals.
- Candidates should present for examinations in their own State/Territory.

REQUIREMENTS FOR ENTRY AND ENTRY FORMS**General**

- Candidates or guardian/parent to sign for every entrant acknowledging that the candidate agrees to be bound by the terms and conditions contained in the entry form and guidelines.
- The coach/coaches signing the entry form take(s) responsibility for ensuring that candidates are prepared as well as possible using the up to date syllabus.
- Although it is not compulsory, it is highly recommended that candidates complete all Tests and Grades.
- A candidate new to the program can enter the skills program at Test 1 to Grade 4, taking into consideration the EAB recommended and minimum ages, although it is still recommended that they progress through all levels.
- A candidate who is 'Unable to Qualify' cannot proceed to a higher skill level until they have re-presented and passed at the original level.
- Grade 4 must be passed before attempting Medals.
- Medals – refer to page 4
- Any examination may be recorded by the EAB. This recording is strictly for examiner training purposes only and not for general distribution.
- Entry forms without payment will be returned.
- Clear, correct spelling of candidates' names is essential to ensure that names appear accurately on certificates.
- Birth dates, and ages are needed to timetable candidates fairly.
- For insurance purposes, candidates must have paid their annual affiliation fees to their state association. If not competing they must be a registered ACF participant or ACF coach.
- Entry forms to be signed by ACF Calisthenic Skills coach.
- A club co-ordinator cannot sign on behalf of an accredited coach.
- A separate entry form is required if a Skills coach is instructing candidates from another Club. Each candidate's club must be specified and the club coach named.
- A \$25.00 per candidate fee will be incurred for late entry.
- All correspondence/results will be sent to the Club coach/co-ordinator.

Examination

- Candidates must have knowledge of all individual movements (not set work) from previous syllabi as these may be requested by the Examiner.
- Candidates must present in Examination uniform (as per page 7 of this document).
- Candidates with injury/illness will not be examined. A Medical Certificate is not to be presented to the examiner on the day. Candidates entering the examination with known injuries and medical conditions do so at their own risk.
- Refunds are not available for withdrawals or non-appearance at the examination venue.
- Deferral of examination (in advance of examination date) is only possible for medical reasons and a Medical Certificate has to be presented. 50% of the fee will be deferred; so candidates will incur 50% of fee to re-present at a later date (preferably within 12 months).
- Convenor/Administrator to be notified ahead of the examination if a Special Needs candidate is presenting – preferably when entry forms are submitted. (This is not to be confused with injury/illness.)
- Disabilities must be documented and confirmed by a Medical Provider and this information must be submitted to the Skills Convenor upon entry to ensure the assigned Examiner has the information at least 48 hours ahead of the scheduled exam. Failure to do so may result in cancellation of their exam.

ACF RECOMMENDED AGES FOR EXAMINATIONS AND REQUIREMENTS FOR SOLO/DUO ENTRY

All ages as of 31st December

The following are **ALL COMPULSORY MINIMUM AGES**, and **candidates must be the minimum age in the year of examination**.

- The ACF Calisthenic Skills Program is designed for pupils to be examined at two yearly intervals.
- Please be aware that these are recommended ages (except Grade 4 and Medals) and coaches should assess the capabilities of their pupils to ensure that they are knowledgeable and well prepared for the Grade Examination before presenting to the Examiner.
- Please use the information below to assist you in this decision keeping in mind the ability of the candidate to focus for ½ hour exam and the knowledge that the syllabus has been designed for age appropriateness. It is of no benefit to candidates to be entered too young for the tests, e.g. prior to commencing school, nor is it of benefit to be attempting Grade 3 before the body has developed to be able to execute the movements appropriately.
- Participants wishing to compete in solo/graceful/duo competitions must meet the minimum skills requirements for their age group.
- Entry to the ACF Cadet Coaching Program requires the successful completion of Grade 2.

| EXAMINATION | ACF MINIMUM AGE | SOLO/DUO/GRACEFUL REQUIREMENT |
|--|--|-------------------------------|
| Test 1 | 7 years | 8 years |
| Test 2 | 7 years | 9 years |
| Test 3 | 9 years | 10 & 11 years |
| Grade 1 | 11 years | 12 & 13 years |
| Grade 2 | 13 years | 14 & 15 years |
| Standard Grade 1 | 10 years | Not applicable |
| Standard Grade 2 | 12 years | Not applicable |
| Standard Grade 3 | 13 years | Not applicable |
| Standard Grade 4 | 15 years | Not applicable |
| Grade 3 | 14 years | 16 years |
| <u>Please note the following compulsory minimum ages:</u> | | |
| Grade 4 | Min 15 years | 17 years |
| Bronze Medal | Min 16 years <i>Must have Grade 4</i> | |
| Silver Medal | Min 17 years <i>Must have Bronze Medal</i> | |
| Gold Medal | Min 18 years <i>Must have Silver Medal</i> | |
| Gold Medal Honours | Min 18 years <i>Must have attained 90% or higher in Gold Medals Parts 1 and 2</i> | |

STATE ADMINISTRATORS

Please contact the relevant State Administrators.

| | | |
|-----|---|---|
| ACT | Jossie Edmonds c/- 15 Hebblewhite Street Monash ACT 2904 | Mobile 0407 063 654 Email skills@calisthenicsact.com.au |
| NSW | Mrs Jenny Buchanan 4 Browallia Cres Loftus NSW 2232 | Phone 02 9521 5226 Mobile 0419 195 393 Email jennybuchanan@y7mail.com |
| NT | Emma Blight | Mobile 0423 075 975 Email emma.blight@optusnet.com.au |
| WA | Stephanie Humphrey 2 Woodspring Grove Ballajura WA 6066 | Home 08 9249 2533 Mobile 0401 132 408 Email rhum4253@bigpond.net.au |
| QLD | CAQI Administrator Calisthenics Assoc of Qld Inc Melissa Murray | website: www.calisthenicsqld.com.au Email admin@calisthenicsqueensland.com.au |
| SA | Kristine Reynolds PO Box 343 Brighton SA 5048 | Email skills@calisthenicssa.com.au |

ACF ADMINISTRATION

Head of Skills, Examination Co-Ordinator
And Convenor of Examiners' Advisory Board

Diane Winterling
Email: skills@calisthenicsaustralia.com.au

All supporting resources available on the website
<https://calisthenicsaustralia.com.au/syllabus-and-resources>

Examiners' Advisory Board - Members

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|-------------------|---|
| Diane Winterling | EAB Convenor and ACF Head of Skills |
| Michelle Symons | Representative for South Australia And Skills Examiner Accreditation Officer |
| Jacqui Hendricks | Representative for Western Australia |
| Maree Colledge | Representative for Queensland |
| Frances Madafarri | Representative for Australian Capital Territory |