



Forest Stewardship Council®



General requirements for FSC accredited certification bodies

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The Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) is an independent, not for profit, non-government organization established to promote environmentally appropriate, socially beneficial, and economically viable management of the world's forests.

FSC's vision is that the world's forests meet the social, ecological, and economic rights and needs of the present generation without compromising those of future generations.

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A Objective

This standard specifies the accreditation requirements for all certification bodies operating FSC accredited certification programs. The objective of this standard is to ensure that these programs are managed in a competent, consistent, impartial, transparent, rigorous, reliable and credible manner, thereby facilitating their acceptance on a national and international basis and so furthering international trade and promoting sustainable development.

This standard was developed to ensure conformity with applicable requirements of the *ISEAL Code of Good Practice for Assuring Compliance with Social and Environmental Standards V1-0* and compatibility with *DIN EN ISO/IEC standard 17065:2013-01 Conformity assessment – requirements for bodies certifying products, processes and services*.

B Scope

This standard is for use by all certification bodies operating programs for the FSC certification of forest management, chain of custody and controlled wood against FSC standards.

All aspects of this standard are considered to be normative, including the scope, standard effective date, references, terms and definitions, notes, tables and annexes, unless otherwise stated (e.g. a text box indicated as being informative).

C Effective and validity dates

Approval date	09 November 2015
Publication date	15 December 2015
Effective date	01 April 2016
Transition phase*	01 April 2016 – 31 March 2017
Period of validity	until replaced or withdrawn

*NOTE: Certification bodies shall adapt their FSC accredited certification programs (as needed) to ensure conformity with this version of the standard by the end of the transition phase.

D References

The following referenced documents are relevant for the application of this document. For undated references, the latest edition of the referenced document (including any amendments) applies.

FSC-POL-01-004 Policy for the Association of Organizations with FSC
FSC-STD-01-001 FSC Principles and Criteria for Forest Stewardship
FSC-STD-01-002 FSC Glossary of terms
FSC-STD-01-003 SLIMF Eligibility Criteria
FSC-STD-20-002 Structure, content and local adaptation of Generic Forest Stewardship Standards
FSC-STD-20-007 Forest management evaluations
FSC-STD-20-011 Chain of Custody Evaluations
FSC-STD-20-012 Standard for Evaluation of FSC Controlled Wood in Forest Management Enterprises
FSC-STD-50-001 Requirements for the use of the FSC trademarks by certificate holders

FSC-STD-50-002 Requirements for promotional use of the FSC trademarks by non-certificate holders
FSC-PRO-01-017 Participation of external observers in on-site FSC certification audits and/ or ASI assessments
FSC-PRO-20-003 Transfer of FSC Certificates and License Agreements
FSC-PRO-20-004 General requirements for an FSC Training Program
FSC-PRO-60-007 Structure, Content and Development of Interim National Standards
ISEAL Code of Good Practice for Assuring Compliance with Social and Environmental Standards V1-0
ISEAL, Managing conflict of interest in standards and assurance, 2013
ISO 9000:2005 Quality Management systems - Fundamentals and vocabulary
ISO 9001 Auditing practices group guidance on third party auditor impartiality and conflict of interest, 2005
ISO/IEC 17000:2004 Conformity Assessment - Vocabulary and general principles
DIN EN ISO/IEC 17021:2011-07 Conformity assessment - Requirements for bodies providing audit and certification of management systems
DIN EN ISO/IEC 17024:2012-11 Conformity assessment – Requirements for bodies operating certification of persons
DIN EN ISO/IEC 17065:2013-01 Conformity assessment - Requirements for bodies certifying products, processes and services
ISO 19011:2011 Guidelines for auditing management systems
ISO/IEC Guide 2:2004 Standardization and related activities – General vocabulary
ISO/IEC Guide 60:2004 Code of good practice for conformity assessment

FSC normative documents replaced by this version of the standard

FSC-ADV-20-001-02 Maximum timeline for certification decisions
FSC-ADV-20-004 Qualification of FSC certification body auditors
FSC-ADV-20-481 Documenting the forest areas that the certification body has been contracted to evaluate for conformity with FSC standards

E Terms and definitions

For the purposes of this standard, the terms and definitions provided in *FSC-STD-01-002 FSC Glossary of Terms*, *ISO/IEC 17000:2004*, and the following apply:

Accreditation: Third-party attestation that a certification body has formally demonstrated that its established systems are capable of performing a specified type(s) of conformity assessment in accordance with applicable scheme-owner requirements.

Appeal: request by the client to the certification body for reconsideration of a decision it has made relating to that client.

Application reviewer: the person(s) that is (are) responsible for the application review, prepares the audit process and checks if an applicant for certification appears to be ready and prepared for an audit.

Audit: systematic, independent, documented process for obtaining records, statements of fact and other relevant information and assessing them objectively to determine the extent to which applicable requirements are fulfilled (adapted from ISEAL Assurance Code).

Auditor: a person competent to conduct an audit.

Audit team: is made up of one or more auditors, one of whom is appointed to be the audit team leader. When necessary, audit teams are also supported by technical

experts and/or further personnel (e.g. interpreter), who assist auditors but do not themselves act as auditors.

Audit team leader: an auditor who is competent to lead the audit and the audit team.

Certificate: a document issued under the rules of a certification system, indicating that adequate confidence is provided that a duly identified product, process or service is in conformity with a specific standard or other normative document (ISO/IEC Guide 2:1991 paragraph 14.8 and ISO/CASCO 193 paragraph 4.5).

Certification: third-party attestation related to products, processes, systems or persons.

Certification body: body that performs conformity assessment services and that can be the object of accreditation (adapted from ISO/IEC 17011:2004 (E)).

Certification decision: granting, maintaining, renewing, expanding the scope of, reducing the scope of, suspending, reinstating, or withdrawing certification.

Certification decision making entity: the person(s), group or committee who makes the final certification decision.

Client: applicants for FSC certification and FSC certified organizations.

Competence: the demonstrated ability to apply knowledge, skills and personal attributes in order to achieve intended results (adapted from DIN EN ISO/IEC 17065:2013-01).

Complaint: expression of dissatisfaction by any person or organization presented to a certification body relating to the FSC activities of that certification body and/ or the FSC activities of their clients (adapted from ISO/IEC 17000:2004 (E)). In the context of FSC, a complaint includes the name and contact information of the complainant, a clear description of the issue and evidence to support each element or aspect of the complaint.

Conflict of interest: situation in which a party has an actual or perceived interest that gives, or could have the appearance of giving, that party an incentive for personal, organizational, or professional gain, such that the party's interest could conflict, or be perceived to conflict with, the conduct of an impartial and objective certification process.

Consultancy: participation in

- i. the designing, manufacturing, installing, maintaining or distributing of a certified product or a product to be certified; or
- ii. designing, implementing, operating or maintaining of a certified process or a process to be certified; or
- iii. the designing, implementing, providing or maintaining of a certified service or a service to be certified; or
- iv. the designing, implementing or maintaining of a certified management system or a management system to be certified.

NOTE 1: Arranging training and participating as a trainer is not considered consultancy, provided that, where the course relates to management systems or auditing, it is confined to the provision of generic information that is freely available in the public domain; i.e. the trainer should not provide company-specific solutions, or conduct one-on-one trainings.

NOTE 2: The certification body is allowed to explain its findings and/or clarify the requirements of normative documents but shall not give prescriptive advice or consultancy as part of an audit.

Days: timelines mentioned in this standard in days refer to business days unless otherwise specified.

Evaluation: the combined processes of audit, review, and decision on a client's conformity with the requirements of a standard (ISEAL Assurance Code).

Types of evaluation:

Pre-Evaluation: assessment to determine the applicant's readiness for their main evaluation.

Main Evaluation: assessment of an applicant for FSC certification.

Re-Evaluation: assessment for re-certification.

Surveillance Evaluations: see "*surveillance*"

NOTE: The certification body may also conduct other types of evaluations in addition to the ones listed above, e.g., corrective action request and pre-condition verification audits, expansion of scope evaluations, certification transfer evaluation.

FSC: if used in this standard without any further designation such as "IC" or "GD", it is used as a general term referring to all operational entities under the ownership of Forest Stewardship Council A.C, excluding the FSC accreditation body "Accreditation Services International" (ASI).

FSC Accreditation Requirements: all normative rules and regulations applicable to FSC accredited certification bodies and to applicant certification bodies.

FSC Certification Requirements: all normative rules and regulations applicable to the certification of forest management organizations and/or chain of custody organizations.

FSC Normative Framework: the collection of FSC policies, standards, and procedures which are mandatory for FSC accredited certification bodies, certificate holders, and applicants (and any other party as specified in a document's scope) to be followed. Includes advice notes where these exist (stand-alone or compiled in directives).

Impartiality: actual and perceived presence of objectivity, meaning that conflicts of interest do not exist or are resolved so as not to adversely influence subsequent activities of the certification body.

License Agreement for the FSC Certification Scheme: an agreement, that each applicant for FSC certification and/or FSC certificate holder has to enter into with FSC Global Development, in order to be eligible for FSC certification.

Operational procedure: describes the processes used to effectively meet the objective of the activity (e.g. who, what, when, where, why).

Peer reviewer: an external person (auditor or technical expert) reviewing an audit report.

Personnel: In the context of this standard this includes any person working under an individual contract or formal agreement for the certification body that places them under the authority and direct control of the certification body.

Surveillance: systematic repetition of conformity assessment activities as a basis for maintaining the validity of FSC certification.

Suspension: temporary invalidation of the FSC certification for all or part of the specified scope of attestation.

Technical expert: a person supporting an audit team by providing specific knowledge or expertise about a specific sector, content, process or activity being audited. The person does not act as auditor.

Termination: revocation or cancellation of the certification agreement by the certification body or the client according to contractual arrangements.

Top management: the highest ranking executive(s) (board, group of persons or person), having overall authority and responsibility to lead an organization.

Withdrawal: revocation or cancellation of the FSC certification.

Witness audit: evaluation of the performance and verification of the competence of an auditor on-site by a third party who is not part of the audit team.

Verbal forms for the expression of provisions

[Adapted from *ISO/IEC Directives Part 2: Rules for the structure and drafting of International Standards*]

“*shall*”: indicates requirements strictly to be followed in order to conform with the standard.

“*should*”: indicates that among several possibilities one is recommended as particularly suitable, without mentioning or excluding others, or that a certain course of action is preferred but not necessarily required. A certification body can meet these requirements in an equivalent way provided this can be demonstrated and justified.

“*may*”: indicates a course of action permissible within the limits of the document.

“*can*”: is used for statements of possibility and capability, whether material, physical or causal.

F FSC Accreditation Standards Map

Accreditation Scope	Forest management	Chain of Custody
Mandatory combination	Chain of Custody	
Accreditation standards	G	FSC – STD – 20 – 001 General requirements for CBs
	S	FSC-STD-20-006 Stakeholder consultation for forest evaluations FSC-STD-20-007 FM evaluations FSC-STD-20-012 Evaluation of FSC CW FSC-STD-20-011 CoC evaluations

G= Generic requirements, S= Scope-specific requirements

This table provides an overview of the main accreditation standards for the two (2) available scopes of FSC accreditation. All documents of the FSC normative framework are listed in the FSC document catalogue and are published on the FSC website (ic.fsc.org).

Part 1: General requirements

1.1 Accreditation scope

1.1.1 The certification body shall define the scope of FSC accreditation based on the following two (2) options:

- a) forest management (including controlled wood forest management) and chain of custody (including controlled wood chain of custody); or
- b) chain of custody (including controlled wood chain of custody).

NOTE: Certification bodies have the option to exclude controlled wood forest management from scope a).

1.1.2 The certification body shall conduct its certification operations according to their defined accreditation scope and in conformity with:

- a) the requirements specified in this standard;
- b) the requirements of all applicable FSC normative documents as published on the FSC website (ic.fsc.org);
- c) its operational policies, procedures and instructions.

1.1.3 The certification body shall inform affected clients within thirty (30) calendar days after the reduction, suspension or withdrawal of their scope of FSC accreditation, that their accreditation scope has been reduced, suspended or withdrawn. The clients shall be informed that they have to seek a new certification body within six (6) months to keep their certification valid, as applicable.

1.2 Legal and contractual matters

1.2.1 The certification body shall be a legal entity, or a defined part of a legal entity, such that the legal entity can be held legally responsible for all its certification activities.

1.2.2 The certification body shall ensure that a legally enforceable certification agreement is signed by the certification body and the client prior to the main evaluation and after the client has obtained a 'License Agreement for the FSC Certification Scheme'.

1.2.3 The certification agreement shall require the client at least to:

Regarding the obligations of the client

- a) conform with all applicable certification requirements;
- b) conform with any conditions set by the certification body for granting or maintaining certification;
- c) disclose current or previous application or certification with FSC and/or other forestry certification schemes in the last five years;
- d) agree to the conduct of evaluations at the required intervals, including the certification body's right to carry out unannounced or short notice audits;
- e) agree to witness audits of ASI;
- f) agree, that specified information is published, as indicated in the applicable FSC normative documents;
- g) consider the participation of observers as specified in *FSC-PRO-01-017*;

- h) agree, that a complaint is first handled according to the certification body's dispute resolution procedure and if not resolved referred to ASI and ultimately to FSC, in case of disagreement with audit findings related to FSC normative documents;
- i) making claims regarding certification consistent with the scope of certification and not making any claims of conformity (or near conformity) with FSC certification requirements until and unless certification is granted;
- j) not use its certification in such a manner as to bring the certification body, FSC or ASI into disrepute and not make any statement regarding its certification that may be considered misleading or unauthorized;
- k) keep a record of all complaints made known to it relating to conformity with certification requirements and make these records available to the certification body when requested, and:
 - i. take appropriate action with respect to such complaints and any deficiencies found in products that affect conformity with FSC certification requirements;
 - ii. document the actions taken.
- l) inform the certification body within ten (10) days of changes in the ownership, structure of the organization (e.g. changes in key managerial staff), certified management systems or circumstances which relate to the implementation of FSC certification requirements;
- m) agree, that in case of reduction, suspension or withdrawal of the scope of certification body's FSC accreditation, the certification of the affected clients will be suspended within six (6) months after the date of reduction, suspension or withdrawal of the respective scope of FSC accreditation;

Regarding the rights of the certification body, ASI and FSC

- n) agree, that the certification body has the right to delay or postpone its decision on certification, in order to take account of new or additional information which has not already been considered in its audit report and which, in the opinion of the certification body, could affect the outcome of its evaluation;
- o) agree, that the certification body shall not be obliged to grant or maintain certification, if activities of the client conflict with the obligations of the certification body as specified in its accreditation contract with ASI, or which, in the sole opinion of the certification body, reflect badly on the good name of the certification body;
- p) agree, that the certification body and FSC have the right to revise the requirements of certification within the period of validity of the certification, including the revision of costs and fees;
- q) agree, that the certification body, FSC and ASI have the right to access confidential information, examine documentation deemed necessary, and access to the relevant equipment, location(s), area(s), personnel, and bodies providing outsourced services to clients;
- r) agree, that the certification body has the right to use information which is brought to its attention, to follow up on misuses of the FSC trademarks and of the intellectual property rights held by FSC;

- s) acknowledge the title of the FSC's intellectual property rights and that FSC retains full ownership of the intellectual property rights and that nothing shall be deemed to constitute a right for the client to use or cause to be used any of the intellectual property rights;
- t) agree, that the certification body has the right to suspend and/ or withdraw its certification with immediate effect if, in the sole opinion of the certification body, the client is not in conformity with the conditions specified for the maintenance of certification;

Regarding the actions relating to suspensions or withdrawal of certification

- u) meet the following obligations on suspension or withdrawal of certification:
 - i. immediately cease to make any use of any FSC trademarks, or to sell any products previously labeled or marked using the FSC trademarks, or to make any claims that imply that they conform with the requirements for certification;
 - ii. identify all existing certified and uncertified customers, inform those customers of the suspension or withdrawal in writing within three (3) days of the suspension or withdrawal, and maintain records;
 - iii. cooperate with the certification body and with FSC in order to allow the certification body or FSC to confirm that these obligations have been met.
 - v) meet the following additional obligations on withdrawal of certification:
 - i. return the certificate to the certification body or destroy the original, and commit to destroy any electronic copies and printed copies in their possession;
 - ii. at its own expense remove all uses of FSC's name, initials, logo, certification mark or trademarks from its products, documents, advertising or marketing materials.
- 1.2.4 The certification agreement shall cite the relevant FSC normative documents and rules and regulations in its most recent version and shall explain where the client can obtain the most recent version online.

1.3 FSC trademarks and promotion

- 1.3.1 The certification body shall conform with applicable FSC trademark requirements and any other requirements relating to the intellectual property of FSC.
- 1.3.2 The certification body shall be responsible for the approval of the FSC trademark use by their clients according to FSC trademark requirements, relating to both on-product and promotional uses.
- 1.3.3 The certification body shall control the FSC trademark use by their clients, both on-product and promotional uses by:
 - a) auditing the trademark use at minimum at the time of the surveillance audit and re-evaluations (sampling can be applied); and
 - b) addressing cases of detected or reported trademark misuses by their clients.

- 1.3.4 The certification body shall not promote standards of other forestry certification schemes as equivalent to FSC standards.

NOTE: If a certification body offers certification services of other forestry certification schemes, the FSC system and standards shall clearly and accurately be differentiated relative to the other schemes in promotional media and communication to clients according to specific information as provided by FSC.

1.4 Granting, maintaining, extending, reducing, suspending, withdrawing and reinstating certification

Granting certification

- 1.4.1 The certification body shall only grant (re)certification when their client:
- a) has entered into and holds a valid and most recent version of the 'License Agreement for the FSC Certification Scheme', where the right to use the FSC trademarks is not suspended;
 - b) conforms with the requirements of all applicable FSC normative documents, which means that major nonconformities shall be corrected before granting of certification and minor nonconformities shall be corrected within the maximum timeline specified by the certification body. Open minor nonconformities do not prevent granting of certification;
 - c) signed a certification agreement with the certification body.
- 1.4.2 The period of validity of FSC certification shall not exceed five (5) years.
- 1.4.3 Recertification may be granted as the result of a re-evaluation.
- 1.4.4 The specified period of validity of certification may be extended for a single exceptional extension of up to six (6) months in order to permit re-evaluation to be completed, when justified by circumstances beyond the control of the certification body *and* their client. The certification body shall take the following steps:
- a) record such circumstances;
 - b) update the entry in the FSC certification database (info.fsc.org).

NOTE 1: Justifiable circumstances for an extension exclude problems in planning or scheduling an audit *per se*.

NOTE 2: Clause 1.4.4 does not apply in the context of chain of custody project certification.

Maintaining certification

- 1.4.5 The certification body shall only approve maintenance of certification when their client:
- a) conforms and continues to conform with all the certification body's conditions for maintaining certification;
 - b) conforms with all the certification body's and FSC's requirements regarding claims, logos, certification marks or trademarks;
 - c) corrects any nonconformities with applicable FSC normative document(s) within the maximum period specified by the certification body;
 - d) continues to pay all specified fees and costs in a timely manner;

- e) undergoes surveillance as determined by the certification body and as required by FSC;
- f) holds a valid version of the 'License Agreement for the FSC Certification Scheme', where the right to use the FSC trademarks is not suspended.

Extending and reducing the scope of certification

1.4.6 The conditions necessary for the certification body to change the scope of certification shall include the following requirements:

- a) the change of scope shall not include or result in an extension of the certification's expiry date beyond the time period for which it was originally granted;
- b) where applicable, the old certificate shall be returned to the certification body or destroyed by the client, and a new certificate issued reflecting the change of scope.

NOTE 1: An increase or decrease in the Participating Sites of a group certification is not considered a change of scope unless, in the opinion of the certification body, the change requires significant changes to the group certification holder's management systems.

NOTE 2: A change of scope may be necessary as a result of changes in ownership, structure of the organization, or management systems (see Clause 1.2.3.I), above).

Suspending and withdrawing certification

1.4.7 In the event that the certification body suspends or withdraws certification, the certification body shall update the certification status in the FSC certification database (info.fsc.org), together with the effective date and reason of suspension or withdrawal within three (3) days of the suspension or withdrawal.

1.4.8 The certification body shall issue a letter of notification to clients whose certification has been suspended or withdrawn. The notification letter shall include:

- a) a clear statement about the invalid status of certification (suspended, or withdrawn);
- b) the date from which the invalid status of certification is official;
- c) the rationale supporting the invalid status of certification which shall include, but is not limited to, the details of the breach of the certification agreement and the demonstration of nonconformities with applicable certification requirements;
- d) the requirement to withdraw all uses of the FSC trademarks;
- e) the requirement to stop making FSC claims;
- f) in the case of suspended certification, the information that the maximum duration of suspension is twelve (12) months (or in exceptional cases up to eighteen (18) months, see Clause 4.7.5) and after this period, the certification will be withdrawn.

1.4.9 The certification body shall keep the evidence that the client has received the letter of notification (e.g. client's written acknowledgement of receipt, delivery receipt from the mail service).

Reinstating certification

- 1.4.10 The certification body may reinstate certification after suspension if all major nonconformities have been corrected; and in cases where certification has been suspended for more than twelve (12) months, a surveillance audit has been conducted.
- 1.4.11 If certification is reinstated after suspension or if the certification scope is reduced as a condition of reinstatement, the certification body shall make all necessary modifications to formal certification documents, public information and authorizations for use of FSC trademarks.

1.5 Impartiality

- 1.5.1 The certification body shall be responsible for ensuring that certification activities are undertaken impartially and shall not allow commercial, financial or other pressures to compromise impartiality.
- 1.5.2 The certification body shall have top management commitment to impartiality.
- 1.5.3 All certification body personnel (either internal or external) and committees involved in certification activities shall act impartially.
- 1.5.4 The certification body and any part of the same legal entity and entities under its organizational control or controlling it shall not offer or provide consultancy within the scope of accreditation to its clients, in conformity with the requirements specified in Annex 1.
- 1.5.5 The certification body shall maintain and implement written policy and procedures for avoidance of conflicts of interest. These procedures shall include:
- a) the contractual obligation for all personnel involved in the certification process, to disclose in writing to the certification body all possible and actual conflicts of interest, at the time that the conflict or possibility of conflict becomes evident;
 - b) documented procedures for determining timely and appropriate responses to such declarations of conflict of interest as they arise, to ensure that the declared interests neither influence, nor are perceived to influence, the decisions of the certification body;
 - c) the maintenance of records of:
 - i. all declarations of potential conflicts of interest;
 - ii. every action which has been taken to resolve the possibility and actual occurrence of conflicts of interest.
- 1.5.6 The certification body shall identify, analyse and document risks to its impartiality on an ongoing basis. This shall include those risks that arise from its activities, from its relationships, or from the relationships of its personnel. However, such relationships may not necessarily present a certification body with a risk to impartiality.

NOTE: A relationship presenting a risk to impartiality of the certification body can be based on ownership, governance, management, personnel, shared resources, finances, contracts, marketing (including branding), and payment of a sales commission or other inducement for e.g. the referral of new clients.

- 1.5.7 If a risk to impartiality is identified, the certification body shall be able to demonstrate how it eliminates or mitigates such risk.
- 1.5.8 The certification body shall ensure that activities of separate legal entities with which it has relationships, do not compromise the impartiality of its certification activities. This also applies to separate legal entities that have a relationship with the legal entity of which the certification body forms a part of.
- 1.5.9 When a separate legal entity offers or provides consultancy, the certification body's management personnel and personnel in the audit, review and certification decision-making process shall not be involved in the consultancy activities of the separate legal entity. The personnel of the separate legal entity shall not be involved in the management of the certification body, audit, review, or the certification decision.
- 1.5.10 The certification body's activities shall not be marketed or offered as linked with the activities of an organization that provides consultancy, implying that certification would be easier, faster or less expensive if a specified consultancy organization were used.
- 1.5.11 To ensure that there is no conflict of interest, personnel (including those acting in a managerial capacity) who have provided consultancy, or been employed by a client, shall not be used by the certification body to audit, review, make certification decisions or to review or approve the resolution of a complaint or appeal for that client within three (3) years following the end of the consultancy or employment.
- 1.5.12 The certification body shall have, maintain and implement a documented anti-corruption policy.

Committee for safeguarding impartiality

- 1.5.13 The certification body shall have a committee for safeguarding its impartiality. The committee shall provide input on the following:
- a) the policies and procedures relating to the impartiality of its certification activities;
 - b) any tendency on the part of a certification body to allow commercial or other considerations to prevent the consistent impartial provision of certification activities;
 - c) matters affecting impartiality and confidence in certification.
- 1.5.14 The committee's terms of reference shall be documented to ensure the following:
- a) a balanced representation of interested parties, such that no single interest predominates (internal or external personnel of the certification body are considered to be a single interest, and shall not predominate);
- NOTE 1: FSC membership or FSC chamber balanced representation is not a precondition for the committee. Balanced representation may be achieved by participation of parties with a variety of expertise, providing economic, social and environmental perspectives.
- NOTE 2: Interested parties can include clients of the certification body, customers of clients, manufacturers, suppliers, users, conformity assessment experts, representatives of industry trade associations, representatives of governmental regulatory bodies or other governmental services, and

representatives of non-governmental organizations, including consumer organizations.

- b) access to all the information necessary to enable it to fulfil all its functions;

NOTE 3: This includes the documents mentioned in Clauses 1.5.5, 1.5.6, 1.5.7, 1.5.13, as well as other documents, such as information about the organizational structure, relevant management reports and results of external assessments, where they exist.

- c) at least one (1) annual meeting;
- d) its independence of the financial control of the organization;
- e) its independence of certification decision making;
- f) records of its discussions and recommendations;
- g) records of the certification body's response(s) to its discussions and recommendations.

1.5.15 If the top management of the certification body does not follow the recommendations of this committee, the committee shall have the right to take independent action (e.g. informing authorities, ASI, stakeholders). In taking appropriate action, the confidentiality requirements of Section 1.8 relating to the client and certification body shall be respected.

1.5.16 Committee's recommendations that are in conflict with the operating procedures of the certification body or other mandatory requirements should not be followed. Management should document the reasoning behind the decision to not follow the recommendations and maintain the document for review by ASI.

1.6 Liability and financing

1.6.1 The certification body shall be able to demonstrate that it has:

- a) evaluated the risks arising from its certification activities, and
- b) that it has adequate arrangements (e.g. insurance or reserves) to cover liabilities arising from its operations in each of its fields of activities and the geographic areas in which it operates.

1.6.2 The certification body shall have the financial stability and resources required for its operations.

1.7 Non-discriminatory conditions

1.7.1 The policies and procedures under which the certification body operates, and the administration of them, shall be non-discriminatory. Procedures shall not be used to impede or inhibit access to the certification process by clients, other than as provided for in FSC requirements.

1.7.2 Access to the certification process shall not be conditional upon the size of the client or membership of any association or group, nor shall certification be conditional upon the number of certifications already issued. There shall not be undue financial or other conditions.

1.7.3 Notwithstanding the requirements of Clauses 1.7.1 and 1.7.2 above, a certification body can deny certification to a client when fundamental and demonstrated reasons exist (e.g. illegal activities).

1.8 Confidentiality

- 1.8.1 The certification body shall be responsible, through legally enforceable commitments, for the management of all information obtained or created during the performance of certification activities. Information is considered proprietary and shall be regarded as confidential, except for information that the client makes or is required to make publicly available, that FSC and ASI are entitled to access, or when agreed between the certification body and the client (e.g. for the purpose of responding to complaints).
- 1.8.2 The certification body shall maintain and implement documented policies and procedures for maintenance of confidentiality, including:
- a) a policy statement on confidentiality;
 - b) procedures for ensuring that personnel are aware of the policy and of their consequent obligations;
 - c) a written confidentiality agreement to be signed by all personnel who have access to confidential information. Such personnel shall include but is not limited to:
 - i. administrative staff;
 - ii. auditors, technical experts and audit observers;
 - iii. consultants and persons providing outsourced services;
 - iv. certification decision makers;
 - v. peer reviewers;
 - vi. committee members.
- 1.8.3 When the certification body is required by law or authorized by contractual arrangements to release confidential information, the client or person concerned shall, unless prohibited by law, be notified of the information provided.
- 1.8.4 Information about the client that is not publicly available and is obtained from sources other than the client (e.g. from a complainant) shall be treated as confidential, unless the source of information and the client give written consent to disclose it.

1.9 Complaints and appeals

- 1.9.1 The certification body shall have a documented procedure to receive, evaluate and make decisions on complaints and appeals, which shall at least include the following elements:
- a) to allow the aggrieved party the opportunity to present the complaint or appeal to an entity (person(s), group or committee) which must be within the certification body's contractual (e.g. employee) or organizational control (e.g. committee);
 - b) to require the complainant or appellant to include a clear description of the complaint or appeal, objective evidence to support each element or aspect of the complaint or appeal, and the name and contact information of the submitter.
- 1.9.2 Summary information about the procedures for submitting and handling complaints and appeals shall be easily accessible on the websites of both the

certification body and any bodies providing outsourced services in the local language of the country of operation. For forest management this information shall be publicly available in the same language as the public summary certification report published by the certification body.

- 1.9.3 Upon receipt of a complaint or appeal, the certification body shall confirm whether the complaint or appeal relates to certification activities for which it is responsible and, if so, shall address it.
- 1.9.4 The certification body shall respond to complaints and appeals in the same language that is used in the public summary certification report, or shall agree with the complainant on the language used.
- 1.9.5 The certification body shall retain the anonymity of the complainant in relation to the client, if this is requested by the complainant.
- 1.9.6 The certification body shall treat anonymous complaints and expressions of dissatisfaction that are not substantiated as complaints as stakeholder comments and address these during the next audit.
- 1.9.7 The certification body shall register all complaints with FSC.
- 1.9.8 The certification body shall be responsible for gathering and verifying all necessary information (as far as possible) to progress the complaint or appeal to a decision.
- 1.9.9 The certification body has the duty of seeking a timely resolution of complaints and appeals, in particular to:
 - a) acknowledge receipt of a complaint or appeal;
 - b) provide an initial response, including an outline of the certification body's proposed course of action to follow up on the complaint or appeal, within two (2) weeks of receiving a complaint or appeal;
 - c) keep the complainant(s)/ appellant(s) informed of progress in evaluating the complaint/ appeal;
 - d) investigate the allegations and specify all its proposed actions in conclusion to the complaint or appeal within three (3) months of receiving the complaint or appeal;
 - e) notify the complainant when the complaint is considered to be closed, meaning that the certification body has gathered and verified all necessary information, investigated the allegations, taken a decision on the complaint and responded to the complainant.
- 1.9.10 The decision resolving the complaint or appeal shall be made by, or reviewed and approved by, person(s) not involved in the evaluation related to the complaint or appeal.
- 1.9.11 The certification body shall record and track complaints and appeals, as well as actions undertaken to resolve them.
- 1.9.12 A complainant shall be offered the opportunity to refer their complaint to ASI, if the issue has not been resolved through the full implementation of the certification body's own procedures, or if the complainant disagrees with the conclusions reached by the certification body and/ or is dissatisfied by the way the certification body handled the complaint. As the ultimate step, the complaint may be referred to FSC.

1.10 Publicly available information

1.10.1 The certification body shall maintain, and make easily accessible on its website, the following:

- a) information about the certification body's scope of FSC accreditation;
- b) a description of the sources of funding and general information on the fees charged to clients;
- c) a list of bodies providing outsourced services to the certification body for FSC accredited certification programs;
- d) a description of the rights and duties of clients, including requirements, restrictions or limitations on the use of the certification body's name and FSC trademarks and on the ways of referring to the certification granted;
- e) information about procedures for handling complaints and appeals;
- f) a link to the FSC certification database (info.fsc.org);
- g) a link to the FSC normative documents for certification, according to the certification body's accreditation scope.

Part 2: General management system requirements

2.1 Organizational structure

2.1.1 The certification body shall document its organizational structure, showing duties, responsibilities and authorities of management and other certification personnel and any committees and entities under the organizational control of the certification body. When the certification body is a defined part of a legal entity, the structure shall include the line of authority and the relationship to other parts within the same legal entity.

2.1.2 The management of the certification body shall identify the board, group of persons, or person having overall authority and responsibility for each of the following:

- a) management system of the certification body (see Section 2);
- b) contractual arrangements;
- c) delegation of authority to committees or personnel (where applicable);
- d) personnel competence requirements (see 3.1 and Annex 2);
- e) reviewing the independence of the certification body;
- f) resolution of complaints and appeals;
- g) development of certification activities;
- h) provision of adequate resources for certification activities;
- i) development of certification requirements;
- j) evaluation (see Sections 4.3, 4.4 and 4.5);
- k) supervision of the finances of the certification body.

2.2 Management system documentation

2.2.1 The certification body's top management shall establish, document, and maintain policies and procedures for implementation of this standard and

other applicable FSC requirements. The top management shall ensure that the policies and procedures are acknowledged and implemented at all levels of the certification body's organization relevant to FSC certification.

- 2.2.2 The certification body's top management shall appoint a management representative as having overall responsibility and authority to establish, implement and maintain the management system.
- 2.2.3 All documentation, processes, systems, records, etc. related to the implementation of FSC requirements shall be included, referenced, or linked to documentation of the management system.
- 2.2.4 All personnel involved in certification activities shall have access to the parts of the management system documentation and related information that are applicable to their responsibilities (personnel in the certification body's office and, as appropriate, in the field).
- 2.2.5 The certification body shall have a quality manual and associated operational procedures for:
 - a) handling of applications;
 - b) preparing and conducting audits (in pre-evaluation, main evaluation, surveillance and re-evaluation processes) according to the applicable FSC normative documents;
 - c) conducting unannounced or short notice audits according to specified criteria and conditions;
 - d) report reviewing and finalizing certification reports, (including public summary certification reports and surveillance reports);
 - e) identification, management and tracking of nonconformities of clients;
 - f) all types of certification decision making;
 - g) registering the certification status and issuing of certificates;
 - h) the review and approval of requests to use the FSC trademarks;
 - i) managing conflicts of interest;
 - j) managing complaints and appeals;
 - k) control of internal and external documents;
 - l) conducting internal audits;
 - m) identification, management and tracking of nonconformities of certification body's operations and related preventive and corrective actions;
 - n) other procedures as necessary to conform with applicable FSC requirements.

2.3 Control of documents

- 2.3.1 The procedures for control of internal and external documents shall contain the requirements needed to:
 - a) approve documents prior to issue;
 - b) review and revise documents;

- c) track document changes and identify the status of documents (draft version, final version);
- d) ensure that documents of external origin are identified and their distribution is controlled;
- e) prevent the unintended use of outdated documents.

2.4 Records

2.4.1 Accurate, complete and legible records related to implementation of FSC requirements shall be kept and be readily available for evaluation by ASI, including for example the following:

- a) certification body personnel records including CVs, qualifications, confidentiality agreements, training records and declarations of potential conflicts of interest;
- b) auditor performance appraisals;
- c) list of bodies providing outsourced services and related agreements;
- d) operation of certification body committees;
- e) certification applications;
- f) audit and certification agreements;
- g) certification audit reports and summaries;
- h) stakeholder and peer review comments and certification body responses;
- i) certification decisions;
- j) register of clients and their certified products;
- k) certification complaints or appeals, including minutes or notes of committee meetings responsible for reviewing such complaints or appeals;
- l) the implementation of internal audits and management reviews;
- m) approvals for use of FSC trademarks;
- n) communication of new or revised FSC certification requirements to affected clients.

2.4.2 The certification body shall establish procedures to define the controls needed for the identification, transport, transmission, storage, protection, retrieval and disposition of its records related to the implementation of FSC requirements, including controls to safeguard confidentiality.

2.4.3 Records shall be readily accessible for a period of at least seven (7) years.

2.5 Internal audits

NOTE: *ISO 19011* provides guidelines for conducting internal audits.

2.5.1 An internal audit program shall be planned, taking into consideration the importance, scale and risk of the processes and areas to be audited, as well as the results of previous audits.

2.5.2 The internal audit program shall include all bodies providing outsourced services.

- 2.5.3 Internal audits shall consider all new or revised FSC normative documents and guidelines, to ensure that the certification body's policies and procedures continue to be in conformity with all applicable FSC requirements.
- 2.5.4 Internal audits shall be performed at least annually.
- 2.5.5 Each body providing outsourced services shall be subject to at least one (1) annual audit. At least one (1) on-site audit shall be conducted by the certification body every three (3) years. Furthermore, the internal audit procedure shall specify criteria and conditions (e.g. risk assessment results, internal corrective actions requests, number of clients, complaints) where on-site audits of bodies providing outsourced services are required.
- 2.5.6 The certification body shall ensure that:
- a) internal audits are conducted by personnel knowledgeable in certification, auditing, the requirements of this standard and applicable requirements of FSC normative documents;
 - b) auditors do not audit their own work;
 - c) personnel responsible for the area audited are informed of the outcome of the audit;
 - d) any follow-up actions resulting from internal audits are taken in a timely and appropriate manner;
 - e) existing opportunities for improvement are identified.

2.6 Management review

- 2.6.1 The certification body's top management shall establish procedures to review its management system at least once a year, in order to ensure its continuing suitability, adequacy and effectiveness, related to the implementation of FSC requirements.
- 2.6.2 The input to the management review shall include information related to the following:
- a) results of internal and external audits;
 - b) feedback from clients and interested parties (such as FSC) related to the implementation of FSC requirements;
 - c) feedback from the committee for safeguarding impartiality;
 - d) the status of internal preventive actions and corrective actions issued by the certification body;
 - e) follow-up actions from previous management reviews;
 - f) changes that could affect the management system;
 - g) appeals and complaints.

2.7 Corrective actions and preventive actions of the certification body

- 2.7.1 The procedures for corrective actions and preventive actions shall define requirements for the following:
- a) identifying nonconformities (e.g. from complaints and internal and external audits) and potential nonconformities;
 - b) determining the causes of nonconformity;

- c) correcting nonconformities;
 - d) evaluating the need for actions to ensure that nonconformities do not occur or recur;
 - e) determining and implementing the actions needed in a timely manner;
 - f) recording the results of actions taken;
 - g) reviewing the effectiveness of corrective actions and/or preventive actions.
- 2.7.2 Corrective actions and preventive actions shall be appropriate to the impact of the problems encountered.

Part 3: Resource requirements

3.1 Certification body personnel involved in certification activities

- 3.1.1 The certification body shall have personnel competent for managing its work related to the implementation of the FSC accredited certification program.
- 3.1.2 The certification body shall have personnel with sufficient capacity to cover all operations and to handle the volume of work related to the implementation of the FSC accredited certification program.
- 3.1.3 The certification body shall have, implement and maintain a procedure for the management of competencies of personnel involved in the implementation of the FSC accredited certification program.
- 3.1.4 This procedure shall require the certification body to determine the criteria for the competence of personnel for each function in the implementation of the FSC accredited certification program, taking into account the following requirements:
- a) the person(s) that is (are) responsible for the application review shall incorporate a level of knowledge and experience sufficient to prepare the audit process;
 - b) auditors shall be qualified and maintain their qualification as specified in Annex 2;
 - c) technical experts shall have demonstrated competence in the relevant field of expertise;
 - d) peer reviewers shall have demonstrated competence in the relevant field of expertise;
 - e) the person(s) of the certification decision making entity shall be qualified as an auditor for the respective scope as specified in Annex 2 and shall incorporate a level of knowledge and experience sufficient to assess the evaluation processes, the audit report and associated evidence and recommendations made by the audit team;
 - f) those approving the trademark use shall demonstrate the required competence through the successful completion (certificate) of the FSC Trademark Training Module (see *FSC-PRO-20-004*);
 - g) the audit team leader shall be a qualified auditor in the respective scope with the ability to manage the audit process and the audit team - including report writing, effective use of team resources, team management, external team representation during audit process,

management of stakeholder engagement including prevention or resolution of conflicts.

3.1.5 In terms of the personnel qualification this procedure shall require the certification body to:

- a) identify individual initial and continuous training needs according to the function of the person;
- b) define the scope of initial and continuous training according to the findings mentioned under a) and/or monitoring and evaluation results against the applicable qualification requirements;
- c) carry out an in-house training covering all internal aspects of the certification body relevant to certification processes as part of the initial training;
- d) provide an initial FSC Training Program for auditors (see *FSC-PRO-20-004*) and ensure continuous training (see Annex 2), either internally or through external service providers approved by ASI – if not specified differently by FSC;
- e) demonstrate that the personnel has the required competencies for the duties and responsibilities they undertake, using the specifications in Annex 2, where applicable;
- f) formally authorize personnel for functions in the certification process;
- g) send at least one certification body representative to an annual national/regional FSC calibration meeting - if provided - with a special focus on interpretation and application of National Forest Stewardship Standards.

3.1.6 Personal attributes of auditors as described in Annex 2, Table 4 shall be taken into account for the following activities:

- a) selection of auditor candidates;
- b) auditor qualification process;
- c) monitoring of auditors;
- d) evaluation of auditor performance.

3.1.7 Qualified auditors shall be registered in the FSC Auditor and Training Registry.

3.1.8 For the monitoring and evaluation of the performance of auditors the certification body shall have, implement and maintain a documented procedure with the following requirements:

- a) regular monitoring of auditors;
- b) an evaluation at least once every three (3) years based on the monitoring results and a witness audit;
- c) the definition of monitoring and evaluation criteria shall be risk based and take into account:
 - i. a review of conformity with competence requirements as listed in Annex 2;
 - ii. an assessment of conformity with certification bodies' operational procedures and guidelines including issues with conflict of interest and confidentiality requirements;

- iii. a combination of on-site observation, review of audit reports and substantiated feedback from clients.
 - d) monitoring and evaluation results shall be considered in needs for further training;
 - e) monitoring and evaluation results shall be documented in the auditor performance appraisal report.
- 3.1.9 The certification body shall require personnel involved in the certification process to sign a contract or other documents by which they commit themselves to the following, in accordance with the requirements of Annex 1:
- a) to conform with the rules defined by the certification body, including those relating to confidentiality, anti-corruption and independence from commercial and other interests;
 - b) to declare any prior and/or present association on their own part, or on the part of their employer, with:
 - i. a supplier or designer of products, or
 - ii. provider or developer of services, or
 - iii. an operator or developer of processes to the evaluation or certification of which they are to be assigned.
 - c) to reveal any situation known to them that may present them or the certification body with a conflict of interest.
- 3.1.10 The certification body shall maintain records of all certification body personnel involved in work related to the FSC accredited certification program. The records shall include a means to confirm the competence, qualification and training status of personnel.

3.2 Outsourcing

- 3.2.1 The certification body may outsource work related to certification to a separate legal entity. In such a case the certification body shall ensure that the body that provides the outsourced service conforms with applicable requirements of this standard and other FSC normative documents.

NOTE: The use of external personnel is not considered outsourcing.

- 3.2.2 Decisions for granting, maintaining, renewing, expanding or reducing the scope of, suspending, reinstating, or withdrawing certification shall not be outsourced.
- 3.2.3 The certification body shall have a legally enforceable agreement with the legal entity that provides the outsourced service. This agreement shall include a description of the scope of outsourced activities (types of services and geographical coverage) and shall require the body that provides the outsourced service at least to:
- a) conform with applicable requirements of this standard and of other FSC normative documents, including arrangements for confidentiality and conflict of interest;
 - b) implement the outsourced services according to the procedures of the certification body;

- c) agree to the inclusion of any additional restrictions covered in the accreditation contract of the certification body;
 - d) agree to a prohibition for subsequent outsourcing of certification activities covered by the accreditation of the certification body;
 - e) use competent and qualified personnel as specified in this standard, who shall be subject to regular performance review by the body that provides the outsourced service. The certification body shall conduct a sample of on-site witness audits;
 - f) agree to periodic internal audits of the activities covered by the outsourcing agreement, conducted by a qualified and impartial representative of the certification body;
 - g) agree not to make any claims which imply that it is accredited itself;
 - h) agree to describe their services as being 'in association with [name of certification body]';
 - i) agree, that its website (where available) includes a link to the certification body's website, to provide clients access to information as specified in Clause 1.10.1;
 - j) agree to a prohibition for the use of the FSC trademarks in relation to the services offered under the outsourcing agreement without prior authorization by FSC;
 - k) agree to a prohibition to independently grant approval for the use of FSC trademarks to clients, unless having been trained by FSC.
- 3.2.4 It is at the discretion of the certification body to decide whether the body that provides the outsourced service should be entitled to use FSC trademarks. Applications for authorization shall be submitted to FSC by the certification body.
- 3.2.5 The certification body shall notify ASI within thirty (30) days of any new contracts or changes in the status of bodies providing outsourced services. ASI shall be given the following information:
- a) name of the body providing outsourced service;
 - b) contact information including: address, telephone, fax and email;
 - c) scope of the contract (geographic area, type of evaluation or other);
 - d) date of signing of the contract;
 - e) date of expiry of the contract.
- 3.2.6 The certification body shall:
- a) have documented policies, procedures and records for managing the relationship with bodies providing outsourced services according to the requirements in this standard, unless the option of outsourcing is explicitly excluded by the certification body;
 - b) ensure that the body that provides outsourced services, and its personnel undertake certification services impartially;
 - c) maintain a list of approved providers of outsourced services;

- d) implement corrective actions for any breaches of the outsourcing agreement or other requirements of which it becomes aware;
- e) inform the client in advance of outsourcing activities, in order to provide the client with an opportunity to object.

Part 4: Process requirements

4.1 Application for certification

- 4.1.1 The certification body shall provide applicants with all the necessary information on the certification process and the FSC certification requirements.
- 4.1.2 If any document developed by a certification body mixes requirements from FSC and from other sources, this shall be made explicit in the document.
- 4.1.3 When receiving an application for certification, the certification body shall obtain all the necessary information to plan and conduct the certification process in accordance with applicable FSC certification requirements.
- 4.1.4 Applications for forest management or controlled wood forest management certification shall include a definition of the scope in terms of individual management units.
- 4.1.5 Applications for chain of custody certification shall include a definition of the scope in terms of FSC product groups and sites to be evaluated.
- 4.1.6 For applicants for forest management certification except for small or low intensity managed forests, the certification body shall at minimum enter the following information in the FSC certification database (info.fsc.org) once it is available and at latest thirty (30) calendar days before the main evaluation:
 - a) forest type;
 - b) total area in ha (based on Annual Administration Fee categories);
 - c) anticipated evaluation time frame:
 - i. the proposed dates of the pre-evaluation (if applicable) and of the main evaluation;
 - ii. as long as the dates have not been agreed with the client, the entry should read "not yet scheduled".
 - d) evaluation contacts:
 - i. name of designated audit team leader;
 - ii. contact for stakeholder comments (name and e-mail address of the certification body's contact);
 - iii. link to the FSC section of the certification body's website.
- 4.1.7 The certification body shall ensure that applicants for certification obtain a 'License Agreement for the FSC Certification Scheme' before entering into a certification agreement with the certification body (see Clause 1.2.2).
- 4.1.8 The certification body shall require applicants for certification to disclose current or previous applications or certifications with FSC or other forestry certification schemes in the last five (5) years.

- 4.1.9 If applicable, the certification body shall obtain the latest available FSC audit report of the last five (5) years from the applicant and consider it in the certification process.
- 4.1.10 The certification body shall reject applications for certification of management units or sites that are already covered by a valid or suspended FSC certification, except where a certification transfer process according to *FSC-PRO-20-003* is ongoing.

4.2 Application review

- 4.2.1 The certification body shall review the information obtained from the applicant (see Section 4.1) to ensure that:
- a) the information about the applicant and the processes is sufficient for planning and conducting the certification process;
 - b) any known differences in understanding between the certification body and the applicant is resolved, including agreements on the applicable normative requirements;
 - c) the scope of certification is defined;
 - d) the certification body has the competence, capability and resources to perform the required certification activities.

4.3 Audit

- 4.3.1 The processes and products of a client shall be audited against the applicable requirements specified in the FSC normative documents. All interpretations of FSC requirements are at the sole discretion of the FSC International Center.
- 4.3.2 The certification body shall conduct audits for forest management certification in accordance with *FSC-STD-20-007* and related normative documents. In countries that are lacking a National Forest Stewardship Standard or an Interim National Standard, the certification body shall participate in the process of developing an Interim National Standard as specified in *FSC-STD-20-002*.
- 4.3.3 The certification body shall conduct audits for chain of custody certification in accordance with *FSC-STD-20-011* and related normative documents.
- 4.3.4 The certification body shall conduct audits for controlled wood certification in forest management organizations in accordance with *FSC-STD-20-012* and related normative documents.
- 4.3.5 The certification body shall have an audit plan and shall share it with the client before the audit.
- 4.3.6 The certification body shall assign an audit team in conformity with the requirements specified in Annex 3. The requirements also apply in the case of outsourced audit tasks.
- 4.3.7 For forest management audits the following auditor rotation requirements shall be applied based on number of certificate holders per certification body and country:
- a) with more than twenty (20) certificate holders no auditor shall serve as a member of the audit team for more than three (3) consecutive audits of the same client;

- b) with eleven (11) to twenty (20) certificate holders no auditor should serve as a member of the audit team for more than three (3) consecutive audits of the same client. Where a client is audited by the same auditor on more than (3) consecutive audits, the certification body shall provide a justification why it was not possible, or feasible to rotate the auditor and shall demonstrate how an impartial and objective evidence based audit is ensured;
 - c) with less than ten (10) certificate holders auditor rotation after three (3) consecutive audits is recommended.
- 4.3.8 For all other types of audits the certification body should ensure that no client is audited by the same auditor on more than three (3) consecutive audits. Where a client is audited by the same auditor on more than (3) consecutive audits, the certification body shall provide a justification why it was not possible, or feasible to rotate the auditor and shall demonstrate how an impartial and objective evidence based audit is ensured.
- 4.3.9 The certification body shall provide all auditors with an up-to-date 'audit handbook' or equivalent which includes all the guidance necessary for the auditors to complete audits in accordance with the certification body's documented procedures. The audit handbook shall include instructions for auditors regarding at least:
- a) the implementation of any checklists, guidance documents and interpretations of FSC normative documents;
 - b) detecting, analyzing, grading, and addressing nonconformities;
 - c) writing reports in accordance with applicable FSC requirements and certification body's procedures;
 - d) procedures for the audit of trademark uses in conformity with FSC trademark requirements for on-product and promotional uses.
- 4.3.10 The certification body shall consider *ISO 19011* for incorporation into the audit handbook and shall at minimum include requirements for opening meetings, closing meetings and communication of audit findings in accordance with *ISO 19011*, where appropriate.

Audit results

- 4.3.11 The certification body shall evaluate each nonconformity identified in the audit to determine whether it constitutes a minor or major nonconformity.
- 4.3.12 The auditor may also identify the early stages of a problem which does not yet constitute a nonconformity, but which the auditor considers may lead to a future nonconformity if not addressed by the client. Such observations should be recorded in the audit report as 'observations' for the benefit of the client.
- 4.3.13 Nonconformities shall be graded as follows:
- a) a nonconformity shall be considered minor if:
 - i. it is a temporary lapse, or
 - ii. it is unusual/non-systematic, or
 - iii. the impacts of the nonconformity are limited in their temporal and organizational scale, and
 - iv. it does not result in a fundamental failure to achieve the objective of the relevant requirement.

- b) a nonconformity shall be considered major if, either alone or in combination with further nonconformities, it results in, or is likely to result in a fundamental failure to achieve the objective of the relevant requirement within the scope of the evaluation. Such fundamental failures may be indicated by nonconformities which:
 - i. continue over a long period of time, or
 - ii. are systematic, or
 - iii. affect a wide range of the production, or
 - iv. affect the integrity of the FSC system, or
 - v. are not corrected or adequately addressed by the client once they have been identified.
- 4.3.14 Nonconformities shall be transformed into corrective action requests that at minimum include a description of the nonconformity, the objective evidence on which the nonconformity is based and a timeline within which the nonconformity shall be corrected by the client.
- 4.3.15 The auditors should present the nonconformities during the audit closing meeting and the certification body shall at latest inform the client of the final wording and grading of all nonconformities with the submission of the finalized audit report to the client after the certification decision has been taken.
- 4.3.16 The corrective action request timelines commence from the moment when they are formally presented to the client and no later than three (3) months from the audit closing date. Corrective action requests shall have the following timeframes:
- a) minor nonconformity shall be corrected within the maximum period of one (1) year (under exceptional and justified circumstances the timeline may be extended to two (2) years);
 - b) major nonconformity shall be corrected within three (3) months (under exceptional and justified circumstances within six (6) months).
- NOTE: Action(s) taken to correct a major nonconformity may continue over a period of time which is longer than three (3) months. However, action must be taken within the specified period which is sufficient to prevent new instances of nonconformity within the scope of the certification.
- 4.3.17 The absence of a valid 'License Agreement for the FSC Certification Scheme' shall be treated as a major nonconformity which has to be corrected in a period of maximum two (2) weeks. Failure in closing this major nonconformity shall lead to the suspension of certification.
- 4.3.18 The certification body shall determine whether corrective action requests have been appropriately implemented within their timeframes. If the action taken is not considered adequate, then:
- a) minor nonconformity shall become major nonconformity and shall be corrected within a maximum period of three (3) months (or in exceptional and justified circumstances six (6) months);
 - b) major nonconformity shall lead to immediate suspension of certification.
- 4.3.19 Major nonconformities shall not be downgraded to minor nonconformities.

- 4.3.20 The certification body shall inform the client if an additional on-site audit is required to verify that nonconformities have been corrected.

Reporting

- 4.3.21 The certification body shall document the findings and conclusions of all audit activities prior to review and decision making in a certification report in conformity with the report writing requirements specified in:

- a) *FSC-STD-20-007a* for forest management certification reports;
- b) *FSC-STD-20-007b* for forest management public summary certification reports;
- c) *FSC-STD-20-011* for chain of custody certification reports;
- d) *FSC-STD-20-012* for controlled wood forest management certification reports.

4.4 Audit review

- 4.4.1 The certification body shall assign at least one (1) person to review all information and results related to the audit. The review shall be carried out by person(s) who have not been involved in the audit process.
- 4.4.2 Recommendations for a certification decision based on the review shall be documented, unless the review and the certification decision are completed concurrently by the same person.
- 4.4.3 Draft forest management certification reports of main evaluations shall be submitted to a formal peer review process unless the management unit under evaluation meets the specification as a small or low intensity management unit or small or low intensity group (see *FSC-STD-01-003*) in the country in which the evaluation takes place.
- 4.4.4 The formal peer review process for draft forest management certification reports shall include the following requirements:
- a) the report shall be reviewed by at least one (1) independent peer reviewer with the experience and technical knowledge necessary to evaluate the adequacy of the report and the validity of the proposed certification decision and should be reviewed by additional peer reviewers with specialist knowledge (e.g. concerning Indigenous Peoples rights or high conservation values), where necessary;
 - b) in the case of evaluated management units that meet the eligibility criteria for mandatory pre-evaluations as defined in *FSC-STD-20-007* the report shall be reviewed by a second peer reviewer, who shall be selected according to the knowledge related to the eligibility category of *FSC-STD-20-007*, i.e. knowledge about plantation management, boreal or tropical forest management, or high conservation values (as applicable);
 - c) the peer reviewer(s) shall operate according to clear terms of reference, which include the requirement to comment explicitly on:
 - i. the adequacy of the field work as the basis for making a certification decision;
 - ii. the clarity of presentation of the observations as the basis for a certification decision;

- iii. whether the proposed certification decision is justified by the observations presented.
- d) peer reviewer(s) shall not be full or part-time employees of the certification body, and shall be subject to the same requirements relating to independence and confidentiality as other personnel with input into the certification decision;
- e) the reviewer(s) shall take account of the local and national context with regards to forest management, and shall consider environmental, social and economic perspectives;
- f) the comments of the peer reviewer(s) shall be attributed and documented;
- g) the certification body shall respond in writing to the peer reviewer(s)' comments, and provide the peer reviewers with a copy of its response;
- h) the certification body shall finalize the audit report taking the comments of the peer reviewer(s) into account.

4.5 Certification decision

- 4.5.1 The certification body shall be responsible for, and shall retain authority for, its decisions relating to certification.
- 4.5.2 The certification body shall assign a certification decision making entity to make the certification decision based on all information related to the audit, its review, and any other relevant information. The person(s) of the certification decision making entity shall not have been involved in the audit process.
- 4.5.3 The certification decision making entity shall:
 - a) have clear rules for membership, including requirements for qualification, experience and impartiality;
 - b) consist of one or more individuals, where none of these individuals have any conflicts of interest, in particular financial or other commercial interest in the outcome of the certification decision;

NOTE: This does not refer to a regularly paid salary of an employee who is member of the certification body's decision making entity.

- c) not include individuals who have taken part in the audit as audit team leaders, auditors or technical experts.
- 4.5.4 The person(s) of the certification decision making entity shall be employed by, or shall be under contract with the certification body (see Section 3.1).
- 4.5.5 The certification body shall make and communicate certification decisions to the client after the main evaluation according the following maximum timelines and requirements:
 - a) six (6) months in the case of chain of custody evaluations;
 - b) twelve (12) months in the case of forest management and controlled wood forest management evaluations, *or*
 - c) up to eighteen (18) months in exceptional and justified cases for forest management evaluations, where due to major nonconformities a positive certification decision cannot be made within twelve (12) months. Between

twelve (12) months and (18) months an on-site audit shall be required to verify the validity of the main evaluation findings and to evaluate any changes to the management system.

- 4.5.6 When communicating a negative certification decision the certification body shall provide the reasons for this decision.

4.6 Registering of certification status and issuing of certificate

- 4.6.1 The certification body shall register the certification status in the FSC certification database (info.fsc.org) after the certification decision making entity has granted certification. The registration requires the entry of all specified data, together with an electronic copy of the public summary certification report (as applicable).
- 4.6.2 In the case of FSC announcing a malfunction of the on-line registration service, the certification body shall inform ASI and FSC that certification or recertification has been granted within ten (10) days of the certification decision.
- 4.6.3 Certification bodies are responsible for keeping their data entries and public summary certification reports accurate and up-to-date.
- 4.6.4 A certificate shall only be issued after a positive certification decision has been taken by the certification decision making entity and after it has been registered in the FSC certification database, together with the public summary certification report.
- 4.6.5 All forest management and chain of custody certificates issued by the certification body within the scope of its FSC accreditation shall include:
- a) the FSC logo, which shall be no smaller than the logo of the certification body;
 - b) the name and address of the certification body;
 - c) the legal name and registered address of the client;
 - d) a description of the scope of certification, including a reference to the type of certificate (single, group or multi-site), general description of the type of products covered by the certification according to *FSC-STD-40-004a* and a reference to the specific normative document that the client has been evaluated against, as defined by *FSC-STD-20-007* and *FSC-STD-20-011* accordingly. In the case of project certificates, the scope of certification shall include the specification of whether partial or full project certification has been awarded;
 - e) a reference to the FSC certification database (info.fsc.org) for the full list of product groups covered by the certification;
 - f) a clear statement to the effect that the certificate shall remain the property of the certification body that issued it, and that the certificate and all copies or reproductions of the certificate shall be returned or destroyed if requested by the certification body;
 - g) the date of issue of the certification;
 - h) the date of expiry of the certification together with the disclaimer “The validity of this certification shall be verified on (info.fsc.org)”;

NOTE 1: The expiry date requirement does not apply for project chain of custody certification.

- i) an issue number (for re-issued or renewed certificates);
- j) the signature of the individual(s) of the certification body assigned such responsibility;
- k) a disclaimer stating: "This certificate itself does not constitute evidence that a particular product supplied by the certificate holder is FSC certified [or FSC Controlled Wood]. Products offered, shipped or sold by the certificate holder can only be considered covered by the scope of this certificate when the required FSC claim is clearly stated on sales and delivery documents";
- l) the certification registration code issued by the certification body and of the form (see Table 1 below):

Table 1: Certification registration codes for the different types of certifications (normative)	
Type of certification	Certification registration code
Forest management certification	XXX-FM-#####-***
NOTE 2: This type of certification is issued to applicants that solely include ecosystem services in their certification scope and that do not intent to sell any forest products according to their management objectives, e.g. in the case of National Parks, conservation areas, water protection areas.	
Joint forest management and chain of custody certification	XXX-FM/COC-#####-***
Chain of custody certification	XXX-COC-#####-***
Controlled wood chain of custody certification (<i>against FSC-STD-40-005</i>)	XXX-CW-#####-***
Controlled wood forest management certification (<i>against FSC-STD-30-010</i>)	XXX-CW/FM-#####
NOTE 3: The controlled wood code issued within a chain of custody certification shall have the same 6 digits as the chain of custody code.	
Project chain of custody certification	XXX-PRO-#####-***
NOTE 4: XXX are the initials of the certification body agreed with ASI, ##### is a unique six digit number or combination of numbers and letters, and *** is a sub-certification code issued only to the members of group or multi-site certification and may be numbers, or upper case letters or a combination of numbers and upper case letters.	
NOTE 5: If certification is withdrawn and later re-granted to the same legal entity the original certification registration code may be used.	

- 4.6.6 For reasons of clarity the certification body shall not use the same code number for valid certifications granted to different legal entities (i.e. the certification body would not grant a chain of custody certification XXX- COC-123456 to company A, and an FM certification XXX-FM-123456 to company B).
- 4.6.7 For each certification only one (1) group or multi-site certificate shall be issued to the central office / group entity with a list of all Participating Sites either on the certificate itself or in an appendix or as otherwise referred to in the certificate.

- 4.6.8 The scope specified on the group or multi-site certificate shall make clear that the covered products and processes/ activities are performed by the network of Participating Sites, and not necessarily by each of them.
- 4.6.9 Any wording, including the claim of conformity, to be included on certificates in addition to the information as required in Clause 4.6.5 is subject to prior written approval by FSC.

4.7 Surveillance

- 4.7.1 Surveillance evaluations of FSC clients shall take place at least once per calendar year and additionally for chain of custody audits not later than fifteen (15) months after the last audit and may be more frequent depending on factors such as:
- a) the scale of the operation (e.g. the area of an management unit, the quantity of production in the case of a manufacturer, or the value and/or volume turnover in the case of a trader);
 - b) the intensity of resource management in the case of a management unit (e.g. the frequency and level of timber harvest);
 - c) the complexity of the management system (e.g. the chain of custody control system);
 - d) results of risk assessment in the case of group certification;
 - e) the ecological or social sensitivity of the resource base to management intervention;
 - f) the experience and track record of the operators involved (managers and personnel, contractors);
 - g) the number and nature of any nonconformities identified by the certification body;
 - h) the number and nature of any complaints submitted by stakeholders.

NOTE: FSC and ASI reserve the right to request higher surveillance frequencies from certification bodies for certain geographical areas or certification services that are deemed “*challenging*” or are linked to “*high*” or “*specified risk*” as the result of an internal risk assessment.

- 4.7.2 The certification body shall assign one (1) or more person(s) to make the certification decision to continue, suspend or withdraw certification based on information collected from surveillance activities and their review.
- 4.7.3 The occurrence of five (5) or more major nonconformities in a surveillance audit shall be considered as a breakdown of the clients’ management system and certification shall be suspended within ten (10) days of the certification decision being taken.
- 4.7.4 The certification body shall suspend certification at latest three (3) months after the closing meeting of a surveillance audit, if a certification decision to maintain the certification cannot be taken due to circumstances beyond the control of the certification body.

NOTE: Circumstances beyond the control of the certification body may include, but are not limited to, the client or other parties preventing the use of audit findings and/ or the delayed or declined acceptance of audit findings or the audit report by the client.

- 4.7.5 The maximum period that certification may remain suspended is twelve (12) months (upon justification and at the discretion of the certification body the timeline may be increased to eighteen (18) months to allow the client to correct nonconformities). After this period, the certification shall be withdrawn, unless all major nonconformities have been successfully corrected and a surveillance audit was conducted in case the timeline of suspension exceeded twelve (12) months.
- 4.7.6 The certification body shall record the certification decision to maintain certification for each surveillance evaluation.

4.8 Changes affecting certification

- 4.8.1 The certification body shall inform all affected clients of changes to FSC certification requirements or its own procedures affecting certification requirements, within thirty (30) calendar days that such changes are approved by the approval body.
- 4.8.2 Clients that were certified prior to the effective date of approval of a new or revised applicable FSC normative document shall be audited against the requirements of the new or revised document in accordance with the applicable transition requirements.
- 4.8.3 The certification body shall consider other changes and circumstances affecting certification, including changes initiated by the client, and shall decide upon the appropriate action in accordance with the requirements of this standard and other applicable FSC requirements. This includes evaluation (see Sections 4.3, 4.4, 4.5) and the issuance of revised certificates (see 4.6) to extend or reduce the scope of certification;
- These actions shall be completed in accordance with applicable parts of Sections 4.3, 4.4, 4.5, 4.6 and 4.8. Records (see Section 2.4) shall include the rationale for excluding any of the above activities.

NOTE: Circumstances affecting certification are e.g. armed conflicts or epidemics that hinder a certification body in implementing their FSC accredited certification program in order to confirm the validity of certification.

Annex 1 Avoidance of conflict of interest

- 1.1 The certification body is allowed to explain its findings and/or clarify the requirements of normative documents, but shall not give prescriptive advice or consultancy as part of an audit or training.
- 1.2 The following conditions shall be met for each of the categories:
- a) Training:
 - i. where the training relates to FSC requirements, it may only cover generic information that is freely available in the public domain;
 - ii. the training does not provide company-specific solutions and is not conducted one-on-one with the certification client.
 - b) Templates:
 - i. are publicly available;
 - ii. do not provide company specific solutions;
 - iii. include a disclaimer, specifying that the template is no guarantee for conformity with FSC requirements. It is the responsibility of the client to conform with FSC requirements;
 - iv. the use is voluntary.

NOTE: Such templates may include sample procedures, which can be created for specific industry sectors or types of clients, as long as they only contain generic information and fictional examples. The development of company specific procedures, manuals and handbooks is not allowed.

Box 1: Informative guidance on managing conflicts of interest

(adapted from: ISEAL (2013), Managing conflict of interest in standards and assurance; ISO 9001 (2005), Auditing practices group guidance on third party auditor impartiality and conflict of interest)

General

That an individual or organization possesses an interest does not necessarily mean that the interest will result in a conflict, or that it is beyond management.

It is only when a conflict of interest, either at an institutional or individual level, is not acknowledged and managed that it runs the risk of compromising the integrity of decisions and of the organization.

Identifying where potential conflicts of interest are likely to arise and managing for these conflicts before they arise can help to strengthen the organization as a whole.

Threats to impartiality

The following types of threats to impartiality can occur at the level of the certification body and/ or certification body personnel:

- a) self-interest/personal benefit (such as financial or other personal self interests): threats that arise from acting in one's own interest;
- b) institutional benefit
- c) self review/assessing one's own work: threats that arise from reviewing own work or work done by colleagues;
- d) over-familiarity of parties involved in audits/personal loyalty: threats that arise e.g. from auditors being influenced by a close relationship with an auditee;
- e) intimidation: threats that arise from e.g. auditors being (or believing that they

- are being), openly or secretly coerced by auditees or by other interested parties;
- f) advocacy: a body or its personnel acting in support or in opposition of an auditee, which is at the same time its customer in e.g. the resolution of a dispute;
 - g) competition: e.g. between auditee and contracted auditor.

Safeguards to auditor impartiality

The certification body should have in place safeguards that mitigate or eliminate threats to auditor impartiality:

- Prohibitions, restrictions, disclosures, policies, procedures, practices, standards, rules, institutional arrangements, and environmental conditions. These should be regularly reviewed to ensure their continuing applicability.
- Preventive safeguards, for example, an induction program for newly hired auditors that emphasizes the importance of impartiality;
- Safeguards that relate to threats arising in specific circumstances — for example, prohibitions against certain employment relationships between auditors' family members and the certification body's clients and;
- Safeguards whose effects are to deter violations of other safeguards by punishing violators;

Safeguards for self review threat:

- Staff abide by a conflict of interest procedure that defines when they are required to excuse themselves from discussions or decision-making;
- The procedure includes criteria on the time period, if allowed, between involvement with a client and participating in an audit or decision affecting the client;
- Conflict of interest declarations list relevant employment history, including unsuccessful job applications, when this may be a source of contention;
- Declarations of interest and the decision taken for managing them (removal of individual from discussion and/or decision) are included in meeting minutes;
- Clients have the ability and right to object to a member of the audit or decision team.

Annex 2: Qualification requirements for Forest Management and Chain of Custody auditor candidates and auditors

The following tables provide specifications to requirements set for auditors and auditor candidates under Clause 3.1

Table 2: Qualification requirements for Forest Management (FM) auditor candidates and auditors (normative)	
<i>1.1 Initial qualification requirements for auditor candidates</i>	
Education and professional experience:	1. Tertiary education (college or university qualification) in a relevant discipline (e.g. ecology, forestry, sociology, economics, anthropology); and 2. Five (5) years of professional experience (e.g. forest management, consultancy, research) in a relevant discipline (e.g. ecology, forestry, sociology, economics, anthropology); OR 1. Secondary education (high school certificate); and 2. Ten (10) years professional experience (e.g. forest management, consultancy, research) in a relevant discipline (e.g. ecology, forestry, sociology, economics, anthropology).
Auditor and FSC training:	3. Successful completion (with certificate) of an IRCA¹ registered “ISO management standard auditor course” or an ISO 19011 course on auditing techniques as described in <i>FSC-PRO-20-004</i>; 4. Successful completion (certificate) of a FM auditor training as specified in <i>FSC-PRO-20-004</i>; 5. Attendance as an auditor in training in at least four (4) complete third-party FM audits in a three (3) year period, whereas: • at least one (1) shall be a main or re-evaluation; • at least one (1) shall be a surveillance audit; • at least two (2) shall be as an active member of the audit team with one of these two as audit team leader – if the auditor candidate is expected to perform such a role in the future; • two (2) may be as an observer. During all four (4) audits a supervising qualified auditor shall attend and an overall supervision report including a recommendation written by the supervising auditor shall be available.
<i>1.2 Continuous qualification requirements for auditors</i>	
FSC training:	1. Successful completion of annual ongoing training dependent on: • changes in the FSC system relevant to the respective scope due to new or revised normative documents, or other relevant amendments such as interpretations;

¹ IRCA - the International Register of Certificated Auditors (www.irca.org) – is an auditor registration scheme.

	• results of the individual monitoring, client feedback and/or evaluation process;
(Continuous) professional experience:	2. At least three (3) on site audit days every year;
Auditor performance evaluation:	3. Witness audit: one (1) witness audit every three (3) years, with a supervision report including a recommendation written by the supervising auditor.
NOTE: For maintaining their qualification, auditors involved in certification decision making may replace the above listed requirements for (continuous) professional experience and for the auditor performance evaluation by the attendance of at least one (1) on-site audit as an observer every year.	

Table 3:
Qualification requirements for Chain of Custody (CoC) auditor candidates and auditors (normative)

2.1 Initial qualification requirements for auditor candidates

Education and professional experience:	1. Tertiary education (college or university qualification); and 2. Two (2) years of professional experience in the forest products sector. OR 1. Secondary education (high school certificate); and 2. Four (4) years of professional experience in the forest products sector. NOTE: Maximum one (1) year of full time work experience may be replaced by four (4) additional supervised audits – as listed below.
Auditor and FSC training:	3. Successful completion (certificate) of an IRCA registered “ISO management standard auditor course” or an ISO 19011 course on auditing techniques as described in FSC-PRO-20-004; 4. Successful completion (certificate) of a CoC auditor training as specified in FSC-PRO-20-004; 5. Attendance as an auditor in training in at least four (4) complete third-party CoC audits in a three (3) year period, whereas: • at least one (1) shall be a main or re-evaluation; • at least one (1) shall be a surveillance audit; • at least two (2) shall be as an active member of the audit team with one of these two as audit team leader – if the auditor candidate is expected to perform such a role in the future; • two (2) may be as observer. During all four (4) audits a supervising qualified auditor shall attend and an overall supervision report including a recommendation written by the supervising auditor shall be available.

2.2 Continuous qualification requirements for auditors

FSC training:	1. Annual ongoing FSC training dependent on:
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	• changes in the FSC system relevant to the respective scope due to new or revised documents, or other relevant amendments such as interpretations; • results of the individual monitoring, client feedback and/or evaluation process;
(Continuous) professional experience:	2. At least three (3) on-site audit days every year;
Auditor performance evaluation:	3. Witness audit: one (1) witness audit every three (3) years, with a supervision report including a recommendation written by the supervising auditor.
NOTE: For maintaining their qualification, auditors involved in certification decision making may replace the above listed requirements for (continuous) professional experience and for the auditor performance evaluation by the attendance of at least one (1) on-site audit as an observer every year.	

Table 4: Personal attributes for Forest Management and Chain of Custody auditor candidates and auditors (normative) NOTE: Personal attributes are characteristics that affect an individual's ability to perform specific functions. Knowledge about personal attributes of individuals enables a certification body to take advantage of their strengths and to minimize the impact of their weaknesses. Appropriate means for the assessment of personal attributes are personal interviews, assessment centers, psychometric tests and/or witnessing/supervision of personnel. Most of the personal attributes as listed below were identified by ISEAL as being relevant for personnel involved in certification activities (see ISEAL Code "<i>Assuring Compliance with Social and Environmental Standards. Code of Good Practice</i>"). They should be considered in the assessment of personal attributes. • ethical, i.e. fair, truthful, sincere, honest and discreet; • open-minded, i.e. willing to consider alternative ideas or points of view; • diplomatic, i.e. tactful in dealing with people; • collaborative, i.e. effectively interacts with others; • observant, i.e. actively aware of physical surroundings and activities; • perceptive, i.e. instinctively aware of and able to understand situations; • versatile, i.e. adjusts readily to different situations; • tenacious, i.e. persistent and focused on achieving objectives; • decisive, i.e. reaches timely conclusions based on logical reasoning and analysis; • self-reliant, i.e. acts and functions independently; • professional, i.e. exhibits a courteous, conscientious and generally business-like demeanour in the workplace; • morally courageous, i.e. willing to act responsibly and ethically even though these actions may not always be popular and may sometimes result in disagreement or confrontation; • culturally sensitive – i.e. able to understand behaviour rooted in cultural differences; • organised, i.e. exhibits effective time management, prioritisation, planning, and efficiency.

Annex 3 Audit teams

- 1.1 The certification body shall have a process for selecting and appointing the audit team, taking into account the competence needed to achieve the objectives of the audit.
- 1.2 An audit team shall always include a qualified auditor and audit team leader.
NOTE: The 'team' may consist of a single qualified auditor who is then also the leader of the 'team'.
- 1.3 At least one (1) audit team member shall be:
 - a) fluent in the main language of the area in which the audit takes place; or
 - b) a designated independent interpreter, who is not an employee or consultant of the client under evaluation; or
 - c) fluent in the corporate language, if the client provides a written declaration that confirms that all of the following criteria are met:
 - i. all relevant records and procedures relating to FSC requirements are written and understood in the corporate language; and
 - ii. all management staff and those with FSC responsibilities can communicate fluently in the corporate language.
- 1.4 For forest management audits: additionally, a forest management audit team shall include auditor(s) and/ or technical experts with the experience and qualifications to audit all aspects of the FSC Principles and Criteria, taking account of the scale and complexity of the area to be assessed. Key considerations for the selection of auditors and technical experts for an audit shall include experience and qualifications in relation to relevant forest management, social, environmental and economic issues (see Box 1 below for further details).
- 1.5 For forest management audits and controlled wood audits at forest level: at least one (1) team member shall be a resident in the country in which the audit takes place or in a nearby country with similar forest conditions.
NOTE: Controlled wood audits at forest level may relate to FSC-STD-30-010 or to FSC-STD-40-005.
- 1.6 For controlled wood audits at forest level:
 - a) at least one (1) team member with the experience and qualifications to audit relevant aspects of the controlled wood standard taking account of the scale and complexity of the area to be assessed. Key considerations for the selection of auditors for an audit shall include experience and qualifications in relation to the controlled wood categories being audited;
 - b) at least one (1) team member shall be a qualified forest management auditor.
- 1.7 For chain of custody audits: at least one (1) team member who has knowledge of the critical characteristics of the operational processes under evaluation.
- 1.8 The competence of an audit team may be supplemented by that of technical expert(s). In this case the following requirements shall apply:
 - a) the time spent by technical experts shall be specified separately in the audit plan;

- b) their participation in the audit shall be limited to the task they are requested to do and each technical expert shall be assigned to the responsibility of a specific auditor in the audit team;
- c) the technical expert(s) should be accompanied by the auditor to whom they are assigned;
- d) if deemed necessary, the technical expert(s) may be allowed to perform interviews and other specified tasks unaccompanied, as instructed by the audit team leader;
- e) technical expert(s) shall neither make conclusions on the conformity with certification requirements nor communicate them to the client.

Box 2: Key considerations for selection of audit team members for forest management audits (refers to auditors and technical experts) (normative)

Forest management issues:

The audit team shall include members with experience in forest management of the size and complexity under evaluation. For example, if a large plantation is being audited, the team should include members who have themselves managed operations of a similar type or who have professional experience, for example as paid consultants or advisors to similar kinds of operations.

Social issues:

If it is likely that forest management has significant interactions with neighboring communities, raising questions related to indigenous or community rights and tenure issues, or has social high conservation values (HCV), then the team shall include expert(s) who have knowledge of these issues, appropriate language/dialect, and experience of interacting with indigenous peoples and communities in the region concerned. The team shall include members with knowledge and capacity to evaluate workers' rights such as health and safety aspects and application of employment legislation in the region.

Environmental issues:

The audit team shall include members with the experience and knowledge to audit the forest management organization's process for identifying HCVs and interviewing stakeholders on the presence of ecological HCVs in the area to be evaluated, as well other environmental issues that are likely to be of importance during the audit. Qualification or professional experience in the area of forest ecology for the forest ecosystems under evaluation (whether natural or planted) is likely to be of key importance. General knowledge of the management of rare or endangered species that are likely to be present in the forest area, or knowledge about key environmental impacts such as those on hydrology or soils may also be required.

Economic issues:

The audit team shall include members with knowledge of the economic implications of forest management decisions in the country concerned (e.g., the economic implications of changes to silvicultural systems, set aside areas, etc.). Additionally, the audit team shall include members with knowledge in evaluating aspects relating to the economic performance of the client (e.g. understanding budgets, financial planning and financial reports) and have the ability to assess the economic viability of the forestry operation.



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