



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS _ IMPLEMENTATION OF FSC-STD-20-001 V5-0

FAQ-STD-20-001 V1-0



Title:	Frequently Asked Questions _ Implementation of FSC-STD-20-001 V5-0	
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Confidential?	☐ Yes	☒ No
Intended audience	☐ Internal (FSC)	☒ External
Personal data included?	☐ Yes	☒ No

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INTRODUCTION

FSC has revised its <[FSC-STD-20-001 General requirements for certification bodies](#)> and published Version 5-0 on 1 April 2025. The transition period for implementing the revised standard runs until 31 March 2027. The standard requires all certification bodies (CBs) to manage FSC certification activities in a competent, consistent, impartial, transparent, rigorous, reliable, and credible manner.

This document provides answers to frequently asked questions and clarifies the requirements for the implementation of <[FSC-STD-20-001 General requirements for certification bodies](#)>. This FAQ is intended as a guidance document and is not normative. In the event of any inconsistency or discrepancy, the requirements of FSC-STD-20-001 General Requirements for Certification Bodies and any related FSC normative documents, including interpretations, advice notes, and directives, shall prevail.

1. ACCREDITATION PROCESS (INCLUDING TRANSITION)

Q1.1 When can a certification body start the transition process, and does it require an additional assessment by ASI?

Certification bodies have until 31 March 2027 to update their systems, processes, and procedures to meet the requirements of the revised standard. Regarding ASI assessments, ASI is following its established transition process and is communicating the applicable requirements and timelines directly with all certification bodies.

2. ACCREDITATION SCOPE

Q2.1 Is inclusion of Controlled Wood (CW) within the Chain of Custody (CoC) accreditation scope required only under FSC-STD-20-001 V5-0?

No. Certification bodies that already have Controlled Wood included in their Chain of Custody accreditation scope under [FSC-STD-20-001 V4-0](#) may continue to offer Controlled Wood certification in accordance with [INT-STD-20-001 51](#). Certification bodies that do not currently have Controlled Wood in their accreditation scope must add it as part of the transition to [FSC-STD-20-001 V5-0](#). No certification body may complete the transition to V5-0 without Controlled Wood being included in its Chain of Custody accreditation scope. The transition deadline is 31 March 2027.

Q2.2 How can certification bodies that do not have Controlled Wood (CW) in their accreditation scope add it?

A certification body may initiate the process by submitting an application for scope extension to Assurance Services International (ASI). ASI will conduct a desk review to verify readiness for Controlled Wood certification. This review may be conducted either together with the [FSC-STD-20-001 V5-0](#) transition review or as a separate review before the transition assessment. Controlled Wood may be added to the accreditation scope even without active CW clients; subject to ASI's review of the certification body's first CW audit.

Q2.3 When must a Chain of Custody (CoC) certification body have access to a Forest Management (FM) auditor to obtain and maintain Controlled Wood (CW) CoC accreditation scope?

A CoC certification body is required to use a qualified FM auditor only when conducting a forest-level Controlled Wood audit. If the certification body has no Controlled Wood clients requiring forest-level audits, access to FM auditors is not mandatory. See [INT-STD-20-001 51](#).

Q2.4 Can a CoC certification body qualify or maintain the qualification of Forest Management (FM) auditors?

No. A CoC certification body cannot qualify or maintain the qualification of FM auditors. However, it must have documented procedures to verify the initial and ongoing qualifications of FM auditors, including training, professional experience, performance evaluations, and related records. See [INT-STD-20-001 51](#).

Q2.5 Can a CoC certification body use Forest Management (FM) auditors qualified by another accredited certification body?

Yes. A CoC certification body may contract FM auditors who have been qualified by an FM-accredited certification body, provided it verifies that all qualification requirements are met and maintains the relevant documentation. See [INT-STD-20-001 51](#).

Q2.6 Can a forest-level Controlled Wood audit be conducted by an FM expert instead of an FM auditor?

No. Only a qualified Forest Management auditor can conduct forest-level Controlled Wood audits.

Q2.7 Can a CoC certification body include CW in its accreditation scope without having CW clients?

Yes. A certification body may include Controlled Wood in its accreditation scope even if it currently has no Controlled Wood clients at either the supply-chain or forest level. This remains subject to ASI requirements for obtaining and maintaining the accreditation scope.

Q2.8 Can a certification body without CW clients still offer the FSC Regulatory Module?

Yes. A certification body may offer the FSC Regulatory Module if Controlled Wood is included in its accreditation scope and all module-specific requirements are met. Having Controlled Wood clients is not a prerequisite for extending the accreditation scope to include the FSC Regulatory Module.

Q2.9 Does a CoC certification body need a procedure for qualifying FM auditors?

No. A CoC certification body only needs documented procedures to verify the qualifications of FM auditors. It is not required to have procedures for qualifying FM auditors. See [INT-STD-20-001 51](#).

Q2.10 How should a CoC certification body confirm the ongoing qualifications of FM auditors contracted from another certification body or working as freelancers?

The CoC certification body must confirm that the ongoing qualification activities have been performed by the FM-accredited certification body and maintain supporting records. A CoC certification body cannot independently perform ongoing qualification activities without the necessary accreditation scope. See [INT-STD-20-001 51](#).

Q2.11 What happens if a certification body's CW client subsequently requires a forest-level audit?

If a forest-level audit becomes necessary, the certification body can only perform such audit with a qualified FM auditor in the audit team as required.

3. CONFORMITY WITH ISO 17065:2012

Q3.1 Does the revised FSC-STD-20-001 V5-0 require certification bodies to obtain separate accreditation against ISO/IEC 17065:2012?

No. FSC requires certification bodies to demonstrate conformity with both [FSC-STD-20-001 V5-0](#) and ISO/IEC 17065:2012. However, a separate ISO/IEC 17065 accreditation is not mandatory. ASI may accept an existing ISO/IEC 17065 accreditation as evidence of conformity or may assess conformity directly during the FSC accreditation process.

4. GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

Q4.1 The revised certification body standard introduces changes to certification agreement requirements between certificate holders and certification bodies. When must these agreements be updated?

Certification agreements should be updated after the certification body has transitioned to the revised standard and before the certificate holder's next evaluation, ensuring that all relevant revised requirements are reflected in the agreement.

Q4.2 The revised standard (V5-0) clarifies the language in which complaints and appeals procedures must be made publicly available. Does the requirement to make these procedures available in the same language as the public summary certification report also apply to CoC accredited certification bodies?

Yes. For CoC accredited certification bodies, the requirement to make complaints and appeals procedures publicly available in the same language as the public summary certification report applies only when FSC Controlled Wood evaluations are conducted under [FSC-STD-40-005](#) and a public summary certification report has been published.

5. STRUCTURAL REQUIREMENTS

No related FAQs

6. RESOURCE REQUIREMENTS

Q6.1 How can an auditor who has been suspended due to not completing the required three on-site audit days per calendar year have the suspension lifted, given that suspended auditors cannot conduct audits?

To lift the suspension, the auditor is required to be witnessed in accordance with Clause 6.1.2.9 of FSC-STD-20-001 V5-0.

Q6.2 Is there a notification mechanism, or must certification bodies identify changes to auditor qualification status directly through the registry?

ASI receives an automatic notification if a CB changes the status of an auditor qualification to suspended. If the reason for suspension is fraud/corruption/bribery and the auditor is registered with other CBs, all relevant CBs will be notified. If another CB subsequently attempts to register the auditor, ASI declines the registration.

If suspension is related to other qualification requirements, ASI takes no further action to notify other CBs. ASI may consider this for sampling with other CBs qualifications if the same auditor is working elsewhere (for freelance auditor).

Q6.3 Are auditors able to view their own qualification status in the ASI Auditor Registry, and how should auditor candidates or qualified auditors communicate their qualification status to other certification bodies?

Auditors who have access to the ASI CAB Portal can view their qualification status in the Auditor Registry. The FSC requirement specified in Clause 1.1, Annex 2 of FSC-STD-20-001 V5-0 does not address access to auditor records or qualification status within the Auditor Registry. The intent of this requirement is to ensure that certification bodies obtain and review information regarding an auditor's previous qualifications and approvals as part of their evaluation process when hiring or contracting auditors.

Q6.4 Can a certification body view the qualification status of auditors affiliated with other certification bodies, and how is a certification body expected to verify the qualifications of auditors approved by another certification body?

Certification bodies may not have access to the records or qualification status of auditors affiliated with another certification body. However, when an auditor is registered in the Auditor Registry, a unique identification number is assigned to that auditor.

If a certification body needs to verify an auditor's qualifications or has any related concerns, it may contact ASI and provide the auditor's unique identification number to obtain the necessary information for verification purposes.

Q6.5 If an auditor's qualification has been suspended, can the auditor leave the current certification body and begin working as an FSC auditor for another certification body?

An auditor may move to another certification body at any time. However, before resuming FSC auditing activities, the auditor must resolve the issue(s) that led to the suspension of the qualification. The suspension remains applicable until the underlying issue has been satisfactorily addressed.

Q6.6 Who is responsible for resolving a suspended auditor qualification: the previous certification body, the new certification body, or the auditor?

It is mainly the responsibility of the auditor to work with the related certification body to resolve the issue that has led to suspension. The auditor and the relevant certification body (or certification bodies, as applicable) must work together to address and resolve the underlying issue before the auditor can resume auditing activities.

Q6.7 Clause 6.1.2.5 of FSC-STD-20-001 V5-0 specifies that performance reviews and regular monitoring apply to freelance auditors. Do these requirements also apply to freelance auditors working for outsourced service providers engaged by a certification body?

The outsourced service provider conducts performance reviews of its auditors in accordance with Clause 6.1.2.6 of FSC-STD-20-001V5-0. The certification body retains responsibility for the outsourced activities and conducts sampled on-site witness audits of the provider's auditors in accordance with Clause 6.1.2.7 of FSC-STD-20-001V5-0.

7. PROCESS REQUIREMENTS

Q7.1 What if additional nonconformities are identified, or the grading of nonconformities changes during the review process?

According to Clause 7.4.9 of FSC-STD-20-001 V5-0, auditors present audit findings during the closing meeting. Subsequently, as required by Clause 7.4.19 of FSC-STD-20-001 V5-0, the certification body shall provide the organization with a preliminary evaluation report within ninety (90) days of the audit closing meeting. This report shall include all identified nonconformities and their final grading. If the grading of a nonconformity changes during the review or certification decision process, the certification body informs the organization in writing. The organization may address the revised nonconformity up to the point of the certification decision. The revision of the nonconformity grading does not trigger or extend the timeframe for nonconformity closure.

Q7.2 Are certification bodies required to conduct two reviews: one before issuing the preliminary evaluation report and another when

reviewing the evaluation results and evidence of nonconformity closure?

No. FSC does not explicitly require certification bodies to review the preliminary evaluation report before sharing it with the organization. While an internal review at this stage may reduce the likelihood of subsequent changes in nonconformity grading, it is separate from the review required under Clause 7.5 of FSC-STD-20-001 V5-0 and ISO/IEC 17065:2012. FSC allows certification bodies the flexibility to manage any preliminary review according to their own procedures.

Q7.3 Is it mandatory to conduct a root cause analysis when implementing corrective actions? Are there normative requirements governing how root cause analysis should be conducted and evaluated?

The concept of root cause analysis is inherent in the requirement for corrective action, which aims to prevent the recurrence of a nonconformity. However, the methodology and depth of the root cause analysis depend on the nature and significance of the nonconformity. The standard does not prescribe a specific methodology and leaves this to the discretion of the organization and certification body.

Q7.4 Why has the threshold of five or more major nonconformities leading to immediate suspension not changed?

In the revised standard, even a single unresolved nonconformity may result in suspension if it remains open at the certification decision stage. Rather than changing the threshold of five major nonconformities, FSC introduced a shorter timeline requiring certification bodies to make a certification decision and suspend certification within thirty (30) days of the audit closing meeting when five or more major nonconformities are identified.

Q7.5 What happens if five major nonconformities are identified at the audit closing meeting, but one of them is addressed before the certification decision deadline of thirty (30) days? Does the thirty-day timeline still apply?

Yes. When five or more major nonconformities are identified during the evaluation, the requirement to make a certification decision within thirty (30) days remains applicable, regardless of whether one or more nonconformities have been addressed during that period.

Q7.6 What happens if three major nonconformities are identified during the audit and two additional major nonconformities result from the escalation of open corrective actions from the previous evaluation in accordance with Clause 7.4.15 of FSC-STD-20-001 V5-0?

The thirty (30)-day certification decision timeline applies. As soon as five major nonconformities are confirmed and presented at the audit closing meeting, the requirement to make a certification decision within thirty (30) days is triggered. This applies regardless of whether all five major nonconformities were identified during the current evaluation or whether some resulted from the escalation of previously open corrective action for the minor nonconformities in accordance with Clause 7.4.15 of FSC-STD-20-001 V5-0.

Q7.7 What happens to open nonconformities identified under Version 4-0 of FSC-STD-20-001 when a certification body transitions to Version 5-0? Is the organization required to close all open nonconformities before transitioning?

No. The timelines applicable to nonconformities are determined by the version of the standard under which they were identified. Open nonconformities identified under FSC-STD-20-001 V4-0 shall continue to follow the closure timelines specified in Version 4-0.

Q7.8 What level of assurance is required when accepting corrections and corrective actions for requirements, particularly social requirements, where evidence of implementation may be less tangible?

It is the responsibility of the certification body to assess the adequacy and effectiveness of implemented corrections and corrective actions before deciding whether a nonconformity can be closed, as required by Clauses 7.4.12 and 7.4.14.

Q7.9 Is a plan to implement a correction for a minor nonconformity sufficient to support a positive certification decision?

No. A correction must be effectively implemented before it can be considered complete. Since implementation of the correction is required to close a minor nonconformity, a positive certification decision cannot be made until the correction has been implemented (see Clause 7.4.12b FSC-STD-20-001).

Q7.10 Is a plan to implement corrective action for a minor nonconformity sufficient to support a positive certification decision?

Yes. Corrective actions for minor nonconformities may be implemented up to the next evaluation. Therefore, a plan for corrective action is sufficient at the certification decision stage. However, if the corrective action is not effectively implemented by the next evaluation, it shall be escalated to a major nonconformity (see Clauses 7.4.14b and 7.4.15 FSC-STD-20-001 V5-0).

Q7.11 Is a plan to implement both correction and corrective action for a major nonconformity sufficient to support a positive certification decision?

No. Both the correction and the corrective action must be effectively implemented before a positive certification decision can be made. Since implementation of both actions is required to close a major nonconformity, certification cannot be granted until both have been completed (see Clauses 7.4.12 and 7.4.14 FSC-STD-20-001 V5-0).

Q7.12 What happens if a certificate holder (CH) does not provide a formal root cause analysis (e.g., using the 5 Whys method or a Fishbone Diagram), but the proposed correction and corrective action are adequate?

FSC requires the implementation of appropriate corrections and corrective actions to address identified nonconformities. However, conducting a formal root cause analysis using specific methodologies, such

as the 5 Whys or a Fishbone Diagram, is not mandatory. It is at the discretion of the certification body to assess whether the proposed corrections and corrective actions are sufficient to effectively address the nonconformity and support its closure.

Q7.13 Can a minor nonconformity be escalated to a major nonconformity?

Yes. A minor nonconformity requires implementation of a correction before the certification decision and implementation of corrective action by the next evaluation. If the correction is not implemented before the certification decision, certification shall be suspended. If the corrective action is not implemented by the next evaluation, it shall be escalated to a major nonconformity (see Clauses 7.4.14 and 7.4.15 FSC-STD-20-001 V5-0).

Q7.14 Are there any changes to auditor responsibilities resulting from the revised requirements for nonconformity closure?

No. The revised requirements do not fundamentally change the auditor's role. Auditors remain responsible for collecting evidence of conformity and nonconformity and for verifying the implementation of required actions. An additional requirement is the submission of the preliminary evaluation report within ninety (90) days of the audit closing meeting. How this responsibility is assigned within the certification body remains at the certification body's discretion.

Q7.15 Why does FSC require the timeline for the preliminary report? What is the rationale for ninety (90) days?

The ninety (90)-day timeframe for issuing the preliminary report is intended to ensure that any identified nonconformities are communicated in a timely and consistent manner, while allowing the certification body sufficient time to review the audit findings and complete the necessary quality assurance activities within its management system. However, ninety (90) days represents the maximum allowable timeframe. Where the preliminary report is finalized earlier, it may be issued before the 90-day deadline.

Q7.16 In case of main evaluation, how should a certification body proceed if the certification decision timeline has passed and the organization has not closed all nonconformities? Is a new evaluation required?

Yes. For Chain of Custody (CoC) certification, the evaluation results remain valid for a maximum of six (6) months from the audit closing meeting. For Forest Management (FM) certification, the evaluation results remain valid for a maximum of twelve (12) months. If the organization has not closed all nonconformities within the applicable timeframe, the evaluation results expire and can no longer be used as the basis for a certification decision. In such cases, a new evaluation is required.

8. MANAGEMENT SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS

Q8.1 The revised standard (V5-0) no longer contains the annual internal audit requirement as per FSC-STD-20-001 V4-0 Clause 2.5.4. Does this mean internal audits are no longer required?

Yes. Internal audits remain mandatory through compliance with ISO/IEC 17065:2012. FSC-STD-20-001 V5-0 no longer includes a standalone requirement for internal audits, certification bodies are required to

comply with ISO/IEC 17065, which includes internal audit requirements. Internal audits are also expected to cover applicable FSC requirements and outsourced service providers.

9. ANNEX 1 AVOIDANCE OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST

No related FAQs

10. ANNEX 2

To be added soon

11. ANNEX 3

To be added soon

12. ANNEX 4

Q12.1 Unannounced evaluations can be challenging due to the availability of relevant personnel. How can a certification body ensure that responsible personnel are available during such evaluations?

The certification agreement requires the organization to accept unannounced evaluations and provide access to relevant personnel, records, locations, and other evidence. Where specific personnel are unavailable, the certification body assesses whether the evaluation objective can be achieved through alternative competent personnel and objective evidence.

Unannounced evaluations may be conducted as either full evaluations or targeted evaluations, depending on the audit objective and associated risks. This flexibility allows certification bodies to focus evaluation activities on areas of concern while maintaining the effectiveness of the unannounced approach.

Q12.2 In cases of high integrity risk, certification bodies are required to apply additional due diligence measures prior to granting certification, approving scope extensions, or approving outsourcing to subcontractors that are not FSC CoC certified. However, the referenced guidance on additional due diligence refers specifically to Ukraine. Can certification bodies adopt or use this guidance in other regions?

Yes. The referenced document is intended as guidance and does not constitute a normative requirement. Certification bodies may adopt and apply the due diligence measures described in the guidance in other regions, where appropriate. Alternatively, certification bodies may develop and implement their own procedures for conducting the additional due diligence required under the standard, provided these procedures adequately address the identified integrity risks.

13. ANNEX 5

No related FAQs

14. ANNEX 6

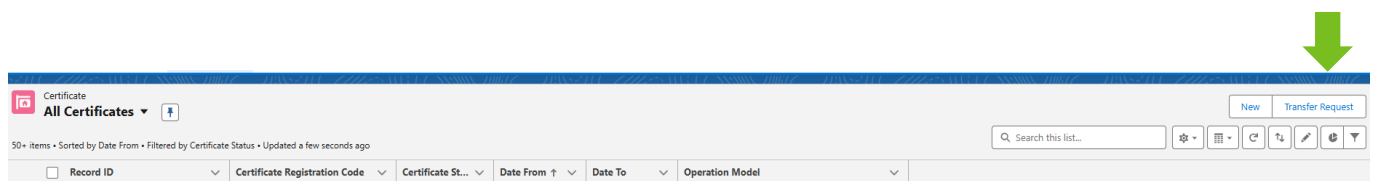
To be added soon

Q14.1 How can a certification body access the new certification transfer form in Salesforce?

Certification bodies can access the new certification transfer form in the Salesforce Lightning interface. There are two ways to access the form:

- a) By opening any existing certification record in Salesforce Lightning; or
- b) By selecting the transfer form option from the top-right corner of the Salesforce Lightning interface.

Please refer to the screenshots below for illustration.



Q14.2 Can a certification be transferred with an open nonconformity?

No, a certification cannot be transferred if there is an open nonconformity, unless the transfer is classified as a non-voluntary transfer. However, a certification may be transferred with open corrective actions related to a minor nonconformity, provided that the correction has been implemented. In such cases, the correction is considered sufficient to close the minor nonconformity.

Q14.3 What happens if a certification has already been transferred once during the current certification cycle and another transfer is requested at recertification?

A transfer conducted during recertification is counted against the transfer limit for the next certification cycle. Therefore, the certification can still be transferred in this scenario, even if it has already been transferred once during the current certification cycle. Please refer to the transfer scenarios below for further details.

Informative guidance: Transfer once within the five (5) year period of a certification cycle

Scenario	1 st certification cycle					2 nd certification cycle				
Years	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5
Evaluations	Main	S1	S2	S3	S4	Re-eva	S1	S2	S3	S4
Scenario 1	CB 1		CB 2			CB 3			CB 4	
	Certification cycle starts		Allowable limit is used			Transfer at recertification: counted as an allowable limit in new cycle			 Allowable limit is used. Another transfer is only possible at recertification. To move to another certification body a new certification process shall start by terminating the certification with issuing certification body (CB3)	
Scenario 2	CB 1					CB 2			CB 3	
	No transfer of certification in a cycle					Transfer at recertification: counted as an allowable limit in new cycle			 Allowable limit is used. See Scenario 1	
Scenario 3	CB 1				CB 2		CB 3		CB 4	
	Certification cycle starts				Allowable limit is used	New certification cycle starts so that the new limit to transfer once per certification cycle apply.		Allowable limit is used		 Allowable limit is used. See Scenario 1

Q14.4 How can a certification body accept a client whose certification has already been transferred during the current certification cycle?

Where a certification has already been transferred during the current certification cycle, the existing certification would need to be terminated before a new certification cycle can begin with another certification body. In such cases, the accepting certification body may submit a data migration request to facilitate the transfer of certification data. The License Code cannot be migrated to the new certification record as part of the data migration process and is therefore not transferred to the new certification cycle.



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