



**Textile
Exchange**

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TEXTILE EXCHANGE
STANDARDS



GENERAL CRITERIA FOR CERTIFICATION BODIES

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Contents

Document information	2
Contents	3
A. About the document	6
A1. Implementation.....	6
A2. Document references	6
A3. Document definitions	8
A4. Document interpretation and feedback	8
B. Document criteria and conformity	9
B1. Terminology.....	9
B2. Assessment body graphics.....	9
Section 1: Scope of accreditation	10
1.1. Standards scopes	10
1.2. Restriction on scope	10
1.3. Scope certificate standards	10
Section 2: General criteria	11
2.1. Legal and contractual matters: Legal responsibility	11
2.2. Legal and contractual matters: Application for accreditation	12
2.3. Legal and contractual matters: Certification agreement.....	13
2.4. Legal and contractual matters: Use of license, certificates, and marks of conformity	16
2.5. Management of impartiality	16
2.6. Liability and financing.....	18
2.7. Non-discriminatory conditions	19
2.8. Confidentiality	19
2.9. Publicly available information	20
2.10. Cooperation with Textile Exchange and other certification bodies	22
2.11. Translations	22
Section 3: Structural criteria	24
3.1. Organizational structure and top management.....	24
3.2. Mechanism for safeguarding impartiality	25
Section 4: Resource criteria	26
4.1. Certification body personnel.....	26
4.2. Certification body personnel: Management of competence.....	27
4.3. Resources for evaluation	30
Section 5: Process criteria	32
5.1. General	32

5.2. Application	32
5.3. Application review	32
5.4. Evaluation: Audit protocol	33
5.5. Evaluation: High-risk situations	35
5.6. Evaluation: Audit team	35
5.7. Evaluation: Audit resources	36
5.8. Evaluation: Nonconformity	37
5.9. Evaluation: Audit report	37
5.10. Evaluation: Audit frequency	38
5.11. Review	39
5.12. Certification decision	39
5.13. Certification documentation	40
5.14. Directory of certified products	41
5.15. Surveillance	41
5.16. Claim approvals.....	42
5.17. Changes affecting certification	44
5.18. Termination, reduction, suspension, or withdrawal of certification	44
5.19. Transfer of scope certificates	45
5.20. Transfer of claim approvals	46
5.21. Records	47
5.22. Complaints and appeals.....	48
5.23. Banned organizations	48
5.24. Exemptions to certification criteria	49
Section 6: Audit types, methods, and notice.....	50
6.1. Audit types.....	50
6.2. Transfer audits	51
6.3. Semi-announced and unannounced audits.....	52
6.4. Criteria for all audit methods.....	52
6.5. Hybrid audits.....	53
6.6. Remote audits	54
6.7. Best practices for hybrid and remote audits	55
Section 7: Management system criteria.....	58
7.1. General management system criteria	58
7.2. General management system documentation	58
7.3. Control of documents	59
7.4. Control of records	59
7.5. Management review	59
7.6. Internal audits.....	60
7.7. Corrective actions.....	60

7.8. Preventive actions	61
Section 8: Scheme owner oversight program	62
8.1. Oversight program criteria	62
Section 9: Suspension and withdrawal of accreditation	64
9.1. General criteria.....	64
9.2. Suspension and involuntary withdrawal	65
Appendix A: Nonconformities	67
1. Critical nonconformities	67
2. Major nonconformities.....	67
3. Minor nonconformities	68
4. Opportunity for improvement (OFI)	68
Appendix B: End notes	69

A. About the document

TE-TXL-POL-201 General Criteria for Certification Bodies sets out the criteria for certification bodies to achieve and maintain accreditation to perform certification to the standards owned by Textile Exchange and implement their related quality assurance systems. This document shall be considered as normative for all certification bodies working with Textile Exchange standards. Separate certification procedures for specific standards or scopes include supplementary criteria and shall also be considered as normative. Additional guidance documents (for example, user manuals) may also be provided.

A1. Implementation

The following implementation timelines apply:

A1.1.1 *TE-TXL-POL-201-V1.0 General Criteria for Certification Bodies* is effective **October 1, 2026** and may be used as of that date.

A1.1.2 *TE-TXL-POL-201-V1.0 General Criteria for Certification Bodies* is mandatory on **April 1, 2027**. From this date onward, all audits and assessments are required to be conducted using *TE-TXL-POL-201-V1.0 General Criteria for Certification Bodies*. This document supersedes the following documents, which are not to be used for audits or assessments conducted after this mandatory date:

- a. *ASR-101-V2.1 Accreditation and Certification Procedures*;
- b. *ASR-112-V2.0 Procedure for the Withdrawal of Certification Body Licensing*;
- c. *ASR-114-V1.0 Audit Methods Policy*; and
- d. *CCS-102-V3.1 CCS Certification Procedures*, Section F and other selected criteria.

A2. Document references

Textile Exchange provides additional policies, guidance documents, and templates to support the implementation of this document. All documents relevant to the standards system are available at the [Textile Exchange Knowledge Center](#). The latest version (or code) of referenced documents, including any amendments (for example, calibrations), applies.

The following documents are integral to understanding and implementing this document. This list is for reference only and is a non-exhaustive list:

A2.1.1 *TE-TXL-POL-204 Standard-Specific Details for Scope and Transaction Certificates* (TE-TXL-POL-204).

A2.1.2 All Textile Exchange standards as applicable, including the following:

- a. *TE-MM-STN-101 Materials Matter Standard* (TE-MM-STN-101);
- b. *CCS-101 Content Claim Standard* (CCS-101);
- c. *OCS-101 Organic Content Standard* (OCS-101);
- d. *GRS-101 Global Recycled Standard* (GRS-101);
- e. *RCS-101 Recycled Claim Standard* (RCS-101);
- f. *RDS-101 Responsible Down Standard* (RDS-101);
- g. *RAF-101a Responsible Wool Standard* (RAF-101a);

-
- h. *RAF-101b Responsible Mohair Standard* (RAF-101b); and
 - i. *RAF-101c Responsible Alpaca Standard* (RAF-101c).
-

- A2.1.3** The auditing criteria for certification bodies that apply for audits to the applicable standard (“standard-specific criteria for certification bodies”), including the following:
- a. *TE-MM-POL-201 Materials Matter Criteria for Certification Bodies* (TE-MM-POL-201);
 - b. *CCS-102 CCS Certification Procedures* (CCS-102);
 - c. *OCS-102 OCS Certification Procedures* (OCS-102);
 - d. *GRS-102 GRS Certification Procedures* (GRS-102);
 - e. *RCS-102 RCS Certification Procedures* (RCS-102);
 - f. *RDS-102 RDS Certification Procedures* (RDS-102); and
 - g. *RAF-102 RAF Certification Procedures* (RAF-102).
-

- A2.1.4** *ASR-214 Geographic Classification* (ASR-214).
-

- A2.1.5** *TE-TXL-TEM-201-V1.0 Application Form for Certification Bodies and Accreditation Bodies* (TE-TXL-TEM-201).
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- A2.1.6** *TE-TXL-POL-701 Certification Fee Structure* (TE-TXL-POL-701).
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- A2.1.7** *ASR-225 Certification Eligibility Policy* (ASR-225).
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- A2.1.8** *TE-TXL-LOG-225 Banned Entities Log* (TE-TXL-LOG-225).
-

- A2.1.9** The criteria for using standard-specific claims and labels (“applicable claims and labeling policy”), including the following:
- a. *TE-MM-POL-301-V1.0 Materials Matter Claims and Labeling Policy* (TE-MM-POL-301);
 - b. *TE-301 Standards Claims Policy* (TE-301); and
 - c. *TE-302 Standards Logo Use Specifications* (TE-302).
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- A2.1.10** *TE-TXL-POL-203 Policy for Scope and Transaction Certificates* (TE-TXL-POL-203).
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- A2.1.11** *ASR-401 Assurance Technical Training Policy* (ASR-401).
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- A2.1.12** *ASR-109 Policy for Auditing Under Force Majeure Conditions* (ASR-109).
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- A2.1.13** *TE-TXL-POL-206 Complaints Policy* (TE-TXL-POL-206).
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NOTE: Several International Organization for Standardization (ISO) documents are used throughout this document. For more information on any ISO reference, please refer to Appendix B.

A3. Document definitions

Refer to the [Textile Exchange Glossary](#) for definitions of terms used in this document.

NOTE: Please note that [TE-101 Terms and Definitions for Textile Exchange Standards and Related Documents](#) will not be updated going forward and will become obsolete (i.e., retired) alongside the mandatory implementation date of the *Materials Matter Standard* (TE-MM-STN-101). The Textile Exchange Glossary takes precedence in case of any contradiction or omission.

A4. Document interpretation and feedback

Points of clarification may be incorporated into supplementary and guidance documents prior to the next revision of this document, where applicable. More substantive feedback or suggested changes will be collected and assessed as part of the next review (and if applicable, revision) of this document.

Any uncertainty regarding the correct interpretation of a criterion should be resolved by the “**Notes**” and “**Examples**” sections, where possible. You may submit feedback to Textile Exchange’s standards system at any time via [this form](#) or by sending an email to standards@textileexchange.org.

B. Document criteria and conformity

B1. Terminology

- B1.1.1** In *TE-TXL-POL-201 General Criteria for Certification Bodies*, the following terms are used to indicate requirements, recommendations, permissions, and possibilities or capabilities:
- “Shall” indicates a requirement.
 - “Should” indicates a recommendation (non-binding).
 - “May” indicates a permission (non-binding). And
 - “Can” indicates a possibility or a capability.
-

B2. Assessment body graphics

Criteria are identified with an assessment body of either Textile Exchange or the accreditation body (see the applicability tag graphics below). Where no graphics are shown, an assessment body is not applicable for the criteria.

-  Textile Exchange takes responsibility for assessing the criteria with an assessment body of “**TE**” but may also assess all other criteria at its own discretion.
-  Accreditation bodies are required to assess the criteria with an assessment body of “**AB.**”

Section 1: Scope of accreditation

This section describes the scope of accreditation that may be granted to certification bodies.

1.1. Standards scopes

- 1.1.1** To work with Textile Exchange standards, certification bodies may be granted accreditation for one or more of the scopes or subscopes as described in *TE-TXL-POL-204 Standard-Specific Details for Assurance Systems*. The accreditation shall specify any details as required by TE-TXL-POL-204.

NOTE:

- 1) TE-TXL-POL-204 includes details specific to each Textile Exchange standard that are relevant for the issuance of scope and transaction certificates.
-

1.2. Restriction on scope

- 1.2.1** Accreditation should be granted for a specific list of countries/areas but may be granted for a specific geographic region (for example, subnational scope) or globally. If accreditation is not global, it shall be clearly defined based on ASR-214.

- 1.2.2** Accreditation scopes may be limited based on other factors deemed relevant by the accreditation body, such as industry or product type.
-

- 1.2.3** A certification body's scope may be restricted by Textile Exchange as defined in the terms of the signed licensing contract and in alignment with Section 9: Withdrawal and suspension of accreditation. The certification body is only permitted to operate within the scope that is allowed by both the accreditation scope and the licensing contract:
- a. Scope restrictions may be imposed by Textile Exchange as a routine practice to ensure that specific milestones are met or qualifications demonstrated (for example, authorization to work in a specific country/area) by the certification body before specific work is allowed. This may include, but is not limited to, restrictions on the number of certified sites and the geographic scope of work. And
 - b. Scope restrictions may also be imposed on certification bodies based on performance (see 8.1.2 related to possible limitations).
-

1.3. Scope certificate standards

- 1.3.1** Scope certificates shall be issued in accordance with the applicable standards-specific details as described in TE-TXL-POL-204, including for supply chain certification.
-

- 1.3.2** For organizations with secondary scopes, the certification body shall issue scope certificates in the name of the standard used for claims (for example, Materials Matter Standard or Organic Claim Standard (OCS)), rather than to the Content Claim Standard (CCS).
-

Section 2: General criteria

This section describes general criteria for certification bodies working with Textile Exchange standards.

2.1. Legal and contractual matters: Legal responsibility

2.1.1 See *ISO17065*, 4.1.1

AB

2.1.2 The structure of the certification body shall foster confidence in their certification operations. In particular, the certification body shall:

AB

- a. Have documents attesting to their status as a legal entity (for example, business license, tax registration);
- b. Have documented the rights and responsibilities relevant to their certification activities;
- c. Identify the management (body, group, or person) that has overall responsibility for the functioning of the certification body, including their finances;
- d. Have sufficient personnel and financial stability to properly, impartially, and effectively perform certification activities; and
- e. Provide a list of all sites, including those of any subcontractors, affiliates, or partners providing certification services within the scope of its accreditation.

2.1.3 The certification body shall be responsible for meeting applicable laws, including certification body registration, in the countries/areas where they operate.

AB

NOTES:

- 1) An authorized certification body may exceptionally deviate from the criteria of this document under the condition that the certification body has received approval from Textile Exchange via the exemptions process prior to such deviation, and the certification body provides documented justifications. Textile Exchange reserves the right, at its sole discretion, to not accept any deviations from its criteria.
- 2) Where a country/area requires registration to act as a certification body, that registration shall be completed (for example., CNCA registration).

2.1.4 With prior approval by Textile Exchange, a certification body may hold multiple accreditations to the same standard if the scope of each accreditation is clearly defined and does not overlap. Multiple accreditations to the same standard and scope shall not be permitted for affiliated certification bodies (see 3.1.3 for defining criteria of affiliated certification bodies).

TE

NOTE:

- 1) Affiliated certification bodies may hold separate accreditations provided that the scope of the accreditations is different in terms of standard, accreditation subscope, and/or geographic locations (country/area or state/province) of organizations and/or facilities.

2.1.5 Where affiliated certification bodies (see 2.1.4) have accreditations with different accreditation bodies, the certification bodies shall allow for their assessment reports, including nonconformities, to be shared between the related accreditation bodies.

TE

2.1.6 The certification body shall meet or fulfill the criteria of this document, including referenced documents and data submission criteria, and any further Textile Exchange criteria applicable to certification bodies.

AB

2.1.7

The certification body shall have a valid *ISO17065* accreditation issued by an IAF member accreditation body.

AB

2.2. Legal and contractual matters: Application for accreditation

2.2.1

Certification bodies applying for accreditation (including for initial accreditation or for a new office/site or scope) shall take the following steps, in the order presented:

TE

- a. Select an accreditation body from the list of authorized accreditation bodies on the Textile Exchange website: <https://textileexchange.org/accreditation/>. If the certification body elects (or is required) to work with a non-authorized accreditation body, including one that is not yet authorized for the standard/scope desired, the certification body shall obtain a letter stating that the accreditation body will provide accreditation to the standard/scope and will follow all applicable Textile Exchange criteria.
- b. Complete and submit TE-TXL-TEM-201 and the applicable fee as specified in TE-TXL-POL-701 to Textile Exchange. The form may be obtained from and shall be submitted to Textile Exchange.
- c. Obtain approval of the application from Textile Exchange (see TE-TXL-TEM-201).
- d. Sign a contract with Textile Exchange.
- e. Apply for accreditation directly with the accreditation body.
- f. Obtain approval of the application from the accreditation body, per their process and criteria.
- g. Undergo an assessment by the accreditation body. And
- h. Provide proof of accreditation, including the scope, to Textile Exchange. This shall occur prior to issuing scope certificates to any Textile Exchange standard, except where permitted (see 2.2.3 for grace period allowances).

NOTES:

- 1) The application process may be completed simultaneously for multiple Textile Exchange standards/scopes.
- 2) If a certification body wishes to move their accreditation to a different office, the accreditation body must first determine if this may be accepted as a simple update of contact information or if a new accreditation is required before proceeding with the application process.
- 3) The application process shall only proceed upon successful authorization of the selected accreditation body and a signed agreement between Textile Exchange and the accreditation body.
- 4) Textile Exchange may waive fees for applications from certification bodies for the transfer of their accreditation from one office/site to another.
- 5) The certification body shall undergo a technical assessment by Textile Exchange based on the criteria of this document and competencies in the proposed scope of accreditation prior to being approved.
- 6) Textile Exchange has the right to deny accreditation applications for any reason, including those by certification bodies whose accreditation was previously withdrawn, or based on market conditions in the intended geographical scope.
- 7) Textile Exchange will provide the contract for signature prior to the accreditation assessment, but the assessment process may begin before a contract is fully executed. Having a signed contract and a valid license with Textile Exchange is a condition for initial and continued accreditation.
- 8) Modification to *ASR-208 Certification Body Contract* is not permitted unless this is required for legal or legislative reasons. Textile Exchange may charge a fee for contract modifications.

2.2.2

Certification bodies applying to change their accreditation to another accreditation body shall first seek approval from Textile Exchange and meet the following criteria:

TE

- a. The certification body shall have completed any assessment that may have been started by the preceding accreditation body.
- b. The certification body shall have a positive accreditation decision from the last assessment with the preceding accreditation body (i.e., there is no suspension or withdrawal of part or all of the scope of accreditation) and no active complaint case/investigation(s) from the preceding accreditation body.

-
- c. The certification body shall be up to date with all required submissions to Textile Exchange, including site fees and data submissions, and shall not be under sanction from Textile Exchange. And
 - d. The certification body shall submit an updated copy of *TE-TXL-TEM-201* and undergo the application process as described in 2.2.1.
-

NOTES:

- 1) A certification body that is undergoing suspension or withdrawal proceedings with an accreditation body is not eligible to change accreditation bodies during the course of suspension or withdrawal proceedings.
 - 2) The certification body shall ensure the succeeding accreditation body receives all recent accreditation assessment reports, including all nonconformities, from the preceding accreditation body in review of the application.
-

2.2.3

AB

The applicant certification body shall perform one audit per standard/scope of a representative organization for witness by the accreditation body as part of their accreditation assessment (see 2.2.1.g):

- a. The scope certificate shall only be issued once the certification body achieves accreditation.
 - i. For the accreditation assessment audit(s) conducted by the applicant certification body of an organization, the scope certificate shall be issued after the certification body has achieved accreditation, which may be more than the time allowed from the audit date as described in 5.12.8. And
 - b. The applicant certification body shall inform the applicant organization that certificate issuance is contingent on certification body accreditation and that the timing of their next audit will be based on the date of their certification audit, not the date of certification.
-

NOTES:

- 1) A representative organization shall be an applicant or certified organization with a certification scope to the same specified standard as the certification body's accreditation scope being assessed.
 - 2) Licensing contracts with Textile Exchange may permit the issuance of scope certificates during a defined "grace period" before the certification body has achieved accreditation provided that the certification body:
 - Has sufficient legal, staffing, and financial infrastructure to provide certification within the proposed scope;
 - Has personnel with sufficient experience with the industry(ies) and region(s) of the proposed scope;
 - Has adequate procedures and documents to initiate certification to the standard(s)/scope(s);
 - Received ten or fewer major nonconformities as a result of the document review; and
 - Did not receive any major nonconformities to the topics identified above as a result of the document review.
 Textile Exchange will consult with the responsible accreditation body when making its decision regarding a grace period.
-

2.3. Legal and contractual matters: Certification agreement

2.3.1

AB

See *ISO17065*, 4.1.2.1

2.3.2

AB

See *ISO17065*, 4.1.2.2

2.3.3

AB

Certification agreements between a certification body and organizations shall be in the form of legally enforceable written contracts and shall be fully executed (i.e., signed by both parties) prior to commencement of the initial audit.

2.3.4

AB

Prior to signing a certification agreement, the certification body shall confirm that the applicant:

- a. Does not currently hold a valid scope certificate for the standard/scope, or the certificate transfer procedures shall be followed (see 5.19);
- b. Is not on Textile Exchange's TE-TXL-LOG-225 (see 5.23);
- c. Is located within the geographic scope of the certification body's accreditation, including all sites, subcontractors, distribution facilities, reclaimed material suppliers, and any other locations that may need to be audited; and
- d. Has provided a complete and accurate application and all required information or documentation (see 5.2.2 for criteria required for the application).

NOTES:

- 1) Organizations are restricted from holding separate valid certifications for Textile Exchange standards with different certification bodies. This does not restrict an organization from changing their scope certificate from one certification body to another.

2.3.5

AB

Certification agreements with organizations shall include the following:

- a. The duration of the certification agreement should cover at least the duration of the certificate to be issued to the organization.
- b. The certification agreement shall include a description of the services the certification body will provide and all associated costs.
- c. The certification body may stop the audit process in the event the organization does not collaborate with the audit as required by the standard and standard-specific criteria for certification bodies.
- d. The certification body shall provide the organization with at least 90 calendar days' prior written notice before voluntarily ceasing from offering certification services for one or more Textile Exchange standard(s).
- e. The certification body shall not require more than 60 calendar days' prior written notice from the organization to terminate the certification agreement. And
- f. The certification agreement may be terminated in the event of the certification body's suspension or withdrawal of accreditation.

2.3.6

AB

Certification agreements shall specify that the organization shall:

- a. Allow the certification body to share necessary information with Textile Exchange, the accreditation body, and other certification bodies on a confidential basis.
- b. Disclose all information about any Textile Exchange standard certification-related activity and those of their subcontractor(s) with other certification bodies in a timely manner, upon request.
- c. Confirm that they are not currently engaged, nor will they engage, with another certification body to certify them to the same Textile Exchange standard(s) at the same time.
- d. Inform the certification body about any other certifications and certification body relationships that share a closely related scope as the Textile Exchange standard(s) (for example, other organic/sustainable cotton certifications if the organization has an OCS scope certificate).
- e. Make all necessary arrangements for:
 - i. The conduct of audits by the certification body, the accreditation body, and/or Textile Exchange, including providing complete, current, and accurate documentation and records, and access to all parts of the physical site (i.e., facilities, equipment, location(s), area(s)), documents and records related to conformity with the standard, and personnel (without restriction or observation by management representatives), and equivalent access to all sites and associated subcontractors included in the scope certificate; and
 - ii. The investigation of complaints or other stakeholder comments.
- f. Only make claims regarding their certification that are consistent with the scope of certification and only after the issuance of the scope certificate.
- g. Conform with the applicable claims and labeling policy (for example, TE-MM-POL-301), and any other criteria specified by Textile Exchange when referencing their certification or using marks of

conformance in communication media such as documents, brochures, or advertising (for example, website, email signatures).

- h. Notify the certification body in writing within 48 hours of any fundamental departure from its systems and procedures, or of any changes to its management, structure, or ownership, or of any other information that could affect the certificate holder's conformance with the applicable standards or compliance with applicable law, including but not limited to changes in any of the following:
 - i. Legal, commercial, organizational status, or ownership;
 - ii. Organization and management (for example, key managerial, decision-making, or technical staff);
 - iii. Contact address;
 - iv. Scope of operations;
 - v. Major changes to the management system and processes; or
 - vi. The environmental and social impact of the certified organization caused by incidents or events (if applicable to the audit scope).
- i. Acknowledge Textile Exchange's right to change the standard and certification criteria and that certification is conditional on conforming to a new or revised version of the applicable standard and new or revised certification criteria within the time frames established by Textile Exchange.
- j. Accept that the certification body may conduct semi-announced audits, unannounced audits, and/or confirmation visits, for the purpose of monitoring the organization's conformance.
- k. Accept that the accreditation body and Textile Exchange have the right to participate in audits conducted by the certification body.
- l. Accept that the accreditation body and Textile Exchange have the right to monitor the performance of the certification body by witnessing and/or conducting a formal assessment, including on site, with or without the certification body's presence.
- m. Accept that the accreditation body and Textile Exchange also have the right to conduct audits of the organization, including semi-announced audits, unannounced audits, and confirmation visits, for the purpose of monitoring certification body conformance with Textile Exchange criteria.
- n. Agree to cooperate with any investigations and accept that the accreditation body and Textile Exchange may become engaged if a complaint or appeal escalates beyond the certification body's authority, which may include observing any assessment related to the investigation.
- o. Agree that Textile Exchange is given access to organizational data.
- p. Agree to adhere to all data submission criteria and to obtain the same agreement from all sites to be included in the scope of certification.
- q. Accept that the official source to authenticate scope and transaction certificates is the Textile Exchange website (or other tools provided by Textile Exchange), and any physical or digital certificates issued to the organization by their certification body shall not be shared with others as evidence of certification status.
- r. Discontinue their use of all advertising material that contains any reference to or claims regarding Textile Exchange certification and the Standard upon suspension, withdrawal, or expiry of certification.
- s. Agree to obtain and maintain a valid TE-ID for each facility included in the scope of certification.
- t. Agree to not use the name, certification mark, logos, or other trademarks of Textile Exchange except as permitted by Textile Exchange, and to fully cooperate with Textile Exchange and the certification body with respect to any unauthorized use, infringement, or dilution of trademarks or other intellectual property rights of Textile Exchange. And
- u. Upon suspension or withdrawal of certification, immediately cease to make any use of any trademark of the Textile Exchange to sell any previously labeled product unless such trademark is removed, and/or to make any claims that such product or certificate holder conforms to the applicable standards.

NOTES:

- 1) Organizational data Textile Exchange receives as owner of the standard(s) includes all data obtained or created regarding the certified organization—including subcontractors, facilities, and group members—by the certification body or otherwise during the course of its certification related activities to Textile Exchange standards.

-
- 2) See Section 6 for further description of audit types, methods, and notice.
3) See Section 8 for information related to performance monitoring procedure.
-

2.3.7 The certification body shall provide a signed copy of the certification agreement to the organization prior to the initial audit.

AB

2.3.8 Textile Exchange has the right to request and review certification agreement templates or certification agreements at any time. The certification body shall provide the relevant agreement within seven calendar days of the date of the request.

AB

2.3.9 The certification body shall be responsible for updating their certification agreement content to reflect changes in this document and any other applicable certification system documents.

AB

2.4. Legal and contractual matters: Use of license, certificates, and marks of conformity

2.4.1 See *ISO17065*, 4.1.3.1

AB

2.4.2 See *ISO17065*, 4.1.3.2

AB

2.4.3 The certification body shall meet the criteria of the applicable claims and labeling policy for any claims made publicly (for example, on the certification body's website) about Textile Exchange and Textile Exchange standards.

AB

2.5. Management of impartiality

2.5.1 See *ISO17065*, 4.2.1

AB

2.5.2 See *ISO17065*, 4.2.2

AB

2.5.3 See *ISO17065*, 4.2.3

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2.5.4 See *ISO17065*, 4.2.4

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2.5.5 See *ISO17065*, 4.2.5

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2.5.6 See *ISO17065*, 4.2.6

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2.5.7 See *ISO17065*, 4.2.7

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2.5.8 See *ISO17065*, 4.2.8

AB

2.5.9 See *ISO17065*, 4.2.9

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2.5.10 See *ISO17065*, 4.2.10

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2.5.11 See *ISO17065*, 4.2.11

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2.5.12 See *ISO17065*, 4.2.12

AB

2.5.13 The certification body shall establish rules and procedures to prevent or minimize threats of conflict of interest. A conflict of interest is any actual or perceived interest in an action that results in, or has the appearance of resulting in, personal, organizational, or professional gain. In particular, procedures shall include the following:

AB

- a. The certification body shall require personnel, committee, and board members to declare existing or prior association with an organization subject to certification. Where such an association threatens impartiality, the certification body shall exclude the person concerned from work, discussion, and decisions at all stages of the certification process related to the potential conflict of interest.
- b. If a conflict of interest between certification personnel and an organization is identified after an audit has occurred, the certification body shall assign independent and impartial personnel to determine where the conflict has affected, or could reasonably be perceived to have affected, the objectivity or validity of the certification process. Where any influence is confirmed or cannot be ruled out, the certification body shall repeat the affected portions of the audit.
- c. An individual auditor shall not audit the same site for more than three consecutive years. And
- d. Personnel shall not perform, review, or make certification decisions on any activities in which they have been directly involved or that may constitute an assessment of their own work.

NOTES:

- 1) Textile Exchange reserves the right to identify a conflict of interest where the certification body has not.
 - 2) Where this criterion references auditors, it applies to all auditors on the audit team.
-

2.5.14

AB

The certification body shall not provide any other products or services that could compromise the confidentiality, objectivity, or impartiality of their certification process and decisions. If the certification body performs other activities, in addition to certification, they shall ensure that the confidentiality, objectivity, and impartiality of their certifications are not affected by these other activities. In particular, the certification body shall not:

- a. Produce or supply products of the type they certify;
- b. Give advice or provide consultancy services to an organization related to the standard/scope being audited or to any nonconformities identified; or
- c. Produce their own standard or certification that substantially copies text or procedures from a Textile Exchange standard without prior written permission from Textile Exchange, or audit to such a standard that has been produced by another body (for example, a brand-owned protocol).

NOTE:

- 1) Explanation of certification criteria or the certification body's quality assurance system is not considered to be advice or consultancy. Providing information or training to organizations is acceptable as long as the information/training is general (not client-specific), and this service is offered to all organizations in a non-discriminatory manner.

2.5.15

AB

During the course of the audit, the auditor may provide information to the auditee about Textile Exchange standards and the Textile Exchange assurance program. This may include information about the interpretation of standards, approved guidance issued by Textile Exchange (for example, standards, assurance criteria, exemptions), and any publicly available Textile Exchange policies and procedures. The auditor shall ensure that:

- a. All information provided to the organization is consistent with the most current and up-to-date information about the Textile Exchange program. And
- b. No information is provided to auditees that is of a confidential nature or that poses a real, perceived, or potential conflict of interest.

NOTE:

- 1) The auditor shall not provide any consulting or advice on how to conform with the standard or corrective actions needed to address nonconformities, beyond what is provided by Textile Exchange and available to all certified organizations, nor shall the auditor suggest strategies to circumvent or undermine the intent of the standard.

2.6. Liability and financing

2.6.1See *ISO17065*, 4.3.1

AB

2.6.2See *ISO17065*, 4.3.2

AB

NOTE:

- 1) As outlined in the signed contract, certification bodies are required to pay fees to Textile Exchange, in accordance with the current TE-TXL-POL-701, to maintain their license.

2.7. Non-discriminatory conditions

2.7.1 See *ISO17065*, 4.4.1

AB

2.7.2 See *ISO17065*, 4.4.2

AB

2.7.3 See *ISO17065*, 4.4.3

AB

2.7.4 See *ISO17065*, 4.4.4

AB

2.7.5 The certification body shall provide certification services to applicant and certified organizations as required by the applicable standard and standard-specific criteria for certification bodies, including issuing transaction certificates, throughout the validity of the organization's scope certificate (for example, until its expiry or withdrawal, as applicable).

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2.8. Confidentiality

2.8.1 See *ISO17065*, 4.5.1

AB

2.8.2 See *ISO17065*, 4.5.2

AB

2.8.3 See *ISO17065*, 4.5.3

AB

2.8.4 The certification body shall ensure that necessary information is shared with Textile Exchange, the accreditation body, and other certification bodies on a confidential basis, as specified in the applicable standard-specific criteria for certification bodies.

AB

NOTE:

1) TE-501 will no longer be in use with the publication of this document. Updated document references will be provided.

2.8.5 The certification body shall upload the following information to Textile Exchange's Trackit™ system or other information technology systems as applicable for each applicant and certified organization, which Textile Exchange shall treat as confidential:

TE

a. Audit data including full audit checklists detailing the organization's degree of conformance to each applicable criterion, if required by TE-TXL-POL-204; and

- b. Data relating to scope certificates and transaction certificates, volume adjustments, and noncertified inputs as required by TE-TXL-POL-203 using templates provided by Textile Exchange where applicable (see TE-TXL-POL-204).

 NOTE:

- 1) Confidentiality may vary for data relating to scope certificates and transaction certificates (see 2.9 Publicly available information).

2.8.6

TE

On request, the certification body shall provide the following additional information to Textile Exchange for each applicant and certified organization, which Textile Exchange shall treat as confidential:

- a. Copies of audit reports and checklists (if not uploaded in Textile Exchange's Trackit system or other information technology system, per 2.8.5.a), including full details of organization's degree of conformance to each applicable criterion and any nonconformities identified, issued, reviewed, upgraded, and closed;
- b. Copies of application forms; and
- c. Supporting documentation for transaction certificates and audit findings.

2.8.7

TE

The certification body shall provide the following information to Textile Exchange, which Textile Exchange may share with accreditation bodies and certification bodies. The certification body shall treat this information as confidential when received about organizations that are certified with other certification bodies:

- a. Requests for exemptions to or deviations from the applicable Textile Exchange standard and other criteria; and
- b. Copies of transaction certificates, which may be shared with the responsible certification bodies of organizations (i.e., buyer and seller) named on the transaction certificate.

 NOTES:

- 1) For transparency, granted, renewed, and expired exemptions, and denied exemption requests will be made public, including the names of the related certification body and applicant/certified organization. Public information will exclude any details of confidential information (for example, specific transaction certificate numbers).
- 2) Requests are made using the Certification Body Exemption Request form by certification bodies on behalf of themselves and/or organizations.
- 3) Organizations may provide permission for further data sharing.

2.8.8

TE

The certification body shall provide all information and data from certification processes to Textile Exchange as requested in Trackit or other information technology systems as applicable, as part of assurance processes and as stipulated here and other certification system criteria.

2.8.9

AB

The certification body shall comply with any and all data protection laws applicable to the certification body.

2.9. Publicly available information

2.9.1

AB

See *ISO17065*, 4.6

2.9.2

The certification body shall make available on request current copies of the standard(s) for which they are accredited, supporting documents, and links to any vital information on the Textile Exchange

AB

website, and shall ensure that applicant and certified organizations are aware of the relevant documents.

2.9.3

TE

The following general information shall be provided to Textile Exchange, which may be made publicly available:

- a. The name and address of each of the certification body's regional or national offices that offer services for each applicable standard, and that have at least one fully qualified auditor (see 4.2.3) based in the region;
- b. Information about applicant certification bodies, including name and address, and the applicable standard/scope(s) and status;
- c. Information about the certification body's procedures for handling identified nonconformities issued to the applicable standard(s); and
- d. Information related to certification body performance.

NOTE:

- 1) The intention of this criterion is that Textile Exchange is aware of the legal and operating names of all relevant certification body offices and subcontractors that are part of the same legal entity/common ownership/certification body group.

2.9.4

TE

All information that appears on the scope certificate shall be provided to Textile Exchange. This will be considered to be public information, with the following exceptions:

- a. Names and addresses of farms, provided that the farm is not the certified organization; and
- b. Identities of the certified organization's subcontractors.

NOTES:

- 1) Textile Exchange may share scope certificate information with other certification bodies, who will treat confidential information as such where specified.
- 2) Scope certificate data is publicly available for all entities, including suspended, expired, and withdrawn status.
- 3) Subcontractors may be publicly listed but not in association with the certified organization(s) they subcontract for.

2.9.5

TE

All information that appears on the transaction certificate shall be provided to Textile Exchange. The following information may be shared publicly based on transaction certificates related to products sold by an organization:

- a. For each specific transaction certificate:
 - i. Transaction certificate number;
 - ii. Issuing certification body;
 - iii. Date of issue;
 - iv. Date updated;
 - v. Status (for example, valid, amended, invalidated); and
 - vi. Standard(s). And
- b. Product information in aggregate for all transaction certificates issued to a specific seller, associated with that seller's identity. Product information is as follows:
 - i. Product category;
 - ii. Product detail;
 - iii. Material composition, including percentages;
 - iv. Any user specific terms; and
 - v. Calendar year of sale.

NOTE:

- 1) This does not include sharing information identifying weights, buyers, or number of transactions.

2.10. Cooperation with Textile Exchange and other certification bodies

2.10.1

TE

The certification body shall provide requested information in a timely manner, within the time frames specified by Textile Exchange. This shall include updates to Textile Exchange's Trackit system or other information technology systems as applicable, or other inquiries.

NOTE:

- 1) See TE-TXL-POL-203 for further criteria for scope certificates and transaction certificates.
-

2.10.2

TE

When coordinated and requested by Textile Exchange, the certification body shall cooperate with all other accredited certification bodies in order to ensure equal application of the applicable standard(s) and related documents, including these procedures.

2.10.3

TE

The certification body shall accept scope certificates and transaction certificates issued by other accredited certification bodies as equivalent to their own certificates with respect to claimed material purchased by organizations that they certify, unless:

- a. The certification body has reason to believe that the certificate is fraudulent (i.e., not genuinely issued by an accredited certification body), in which case the certificate shall be forwarded to the certification body referenced on the scope certificate and to Textile Exchange for review; or
 - b. The certification body believes that there is a legitimate reason that the certificate should not be accepted, in which case a complaint against the issuing certification body shall be filed with Textile Exchange.
-

2.10.4

TE

The certification body shall cooperate with Textile Exchange to schedule and participate in monitoring activities, including witnessing or conducting assessments for a sample of its Textile Exchange accreditation assessments or certification audits. An assessment may include any or all of the following, conducted by a representative of Textile Exchange:

- a. Observation of an office assessment of the certification body (conducted by the accreditation body);
 - b. Observation of an audit by the certification body (with or without the accreditation body's presence); and
 - c. Document review of the certification body's audit report, checklist, and related documentation.
-

NOTES:

- 1) Review of the certification body's latest audit report and certification decision may include an on-site visit to the organization to verify information, with or without the certification body's presence (i.e., review assessment).
 - 2) Representatives of Textile Exchange may include third-party oversight providers.
-

2.10.5

AB

When an organization transfers to another certification body, the preceding certification body shall fully cooperate with the succeeding certification body to provide all necessary information (see 5.19 Transfer of scope certificates).

2.11. Translations

2.11.1

AB

Upon request from Textile Exchange, the certification body shall translate any of their documents and records into English, at the certification body's expense. All regular reporting by the certification body shall be submitted in English.

2.11.2

AB

The certification body may publish their own translations of Textile Exchange standards and other documents, provided the following conditions are met:

- a. Textile Exchange has not published an official translation of the document in the target language. Any certification body translations shall be discontinued if Textile Exchange publishes an official translation.
- b. A copy of the translated document shall be provided to Textile Exchange by email to assurance@textileexchange.org.
- c. Documents shall not copy any photos used in the original Textile Exchange document. Explanatory graphics may be copied.
- d. Documents shall include the text “Unofficial translation prepared by [Certification Body Name(s)].” This text shall appear in English on the first page and in the target language on every page.
- e. Certification bodies working in the same region or language should make an effort to collaborate on translations to improve consistency. And
- f. Where Textile Exchange provides a glossary of translated terms in the target language, the provided terms shall be used.

NOTE:

- 1) Textile Exchange may allow for publication of the document without accepting it as an official translation.

2.11.3

AB

The certification body shall meet the following criteria related to the language skills of their personnel:

- a. Certification body primary and secondary contacts shall be able to communicate effectively with Textile Exchange in English and be able to understand training materials provided in English. (See 4.1.6.a and 4.1.6.b below for definitions of primary and secondary contacts.)
 - b. Certification body key personnel (i.e., auditors, certification decision-makers for scope certificates and transaction certificates, claim approvers, and database administrators) shall be able to complete the required trainings from Textile Exchange in one of the supported languages (see ASR-401).
 - c. Certification body auditors shall be able to work with the audit checklist(s) in one of the supported languages. And
 - d. Claim approvers shall be proficient in English and in the language(s) of the claim they are approving.
-

Section 3: Structural criteria

This section describes the structure and general operations criteria for certification bodies.

3.1. Organizational structure and top management

3.1.1 See *ISO17065*, 5.1.1

AB

3.1.2 See *ISO17065*, 5.1.2

AB

3.1.3 The certification body shall document and disclose the identities of any affiliated certification bodies involved with Textile Exchange standards (i.e., applying for accreditation, holding accreditation, or acting as a subcontractor for another certification body), as well as membership in any certification body corporate groups to Textile Exchange and to the accreditation body. This includes but is not limited to any affiliated entity (different office, subsidiary, or sister company) that meets any of the following criteria:

AB

- a. The certification body has documents attesting to its status as a one legal entity that includes multiple divisions, offices, and/or locations.
- b. The certification body management, reporting, or operations (for example, the company's strategy or business processes) are controlled or centralized under a single management structure (for example, different corporations or LLCs).
- c. The certification body has substantial shared ownership (for example, at least 30% owned within the same ownership structure).
- d. The certification body's financials are consolidated within another company's for reporting and/or tax purposes. Or
- e. The certification body operates under a substantial shared system (see example 1).

EXAMPLE:

- 1) Using the same email domain for multiple divisions, offices, and/or locations, including when different subdomains are used for different offices, is an example of a shared system.

3.1.4 The certification body shall identify critical offices for Textile Exchange standards and shall provide an updated list to Textile Exchange and to the accreditation body. All offices other than the headquarters/main office that do any of the following shall be designated as critical offices:

AB

- a. Participation in certification decision-making;
- b. Issuance of scope certificates or transaction certificates;
- c. Management of certification for 500 or more organizations, meaning the office exercises operational responsibility and oversight over certification activities, including audit planning and scheduling, review and certification decision-making, issuance of scope and transaction certificates, maintenance of certification records, and implementation of internal quality controls to ensure conformance with Textile Exchange standards and procedures; or
- d. Any other function that directly affects the integrity or outcome of the certification process and/or Textile Exchange scheme management.

NOTE:

- 1) Textile Exchange and the accreditation body may each choose to treat offices as critical even if the certification body has not identified them as critical offices.

2) If all offices in a country/area manage certification services for 500+ organizations in total, they should be treated as individual critical offices.

3.1.5 See *ISO17065*, 5.1.3

AB

3.1.6 See *ISO17065*, 5.1.4

AB

3.2. Mechanism for safeguarding impartiality

3.2.1 See *ISO17065*, 5.2.1

3.2.2 The mechanism for safeguarding impartiality shall be a committee.

3.2.3 See *ISO17065*, 5.2.2

3.2.4 See *ISO17065*, 5.2.3

3.2.5 See *ISO17065*, 5.2.4

Section 4: Resource criteria

This section details resourcing criteria for certification bodies including personnel and their qualifications.

4.1. Certification body personnel

4.1.1 See *ISO17065*, 6.1.1.1

AB

4.1.2 See *ISO17065*, 6.1.1.2

AB

4.1.3 See *ISO17065*, 6.1.1.3

AB

4.1.4 The certification body shall employ, or demonstrate documented access to, at least one subject-matter expert with a tertiary qualification in a discipline directly relevant to the accredited scope. In the absence of such a qualification, a minimum of five years of verifiable professional experience in each applicable sector within the accreditation scope (for example, garment manufacturing, textile processing, or animal fiber scouring) shall be required. This individual shall be actively involved in technical oversight and evaluation of assessments within those sectors.

AB

NOTES:

- 1) Subject-matter experts support the certification processes in specific subject areas of the applicable sector. See the standard-specific criteria for certification bodies for further specifications, where relevant.
- 2) Certification bodies managing a high volume of scope certificates may require multiple personnel who meet the qualifications specified in this criterion.

4.1.5 All auditors and certification decision-makers shall have access to consult with a certification body staff member qualified under 4.1.4 for complex or unusual situations to ensure that all applicable criteria are met and shall demonstrate awareness of who they are to consult with.

AB

4.1.6 The certification body shall assign employed or contracted personnel to each of the following key roles (as applicable):

TE

- a. Primary contact: The main contact person between the certification body and Textile Exchange, for one or more standards/scopes.
 - b. Secondary contact: The alternate contact person who shall be available when the primary contact is absent.
 - c. Auditor: Personnel who are qualified and approved to conduct audits.
 - d. Certification decision-maker (for scope certificates and transaction certificates): Personnel who are qualified and approved to make certification decisions based on relevant criteria.
 - e. Data integrity manager: The person responsible for ensuring that the required data provided to Textile Exchange's information technology systems is timely, accurate, and complete.
 - f. Claim approver(s): The person(s) responsible for reviewing claim approval requests and either granting or denying authorization based on conformance with relevant criteria. And
 - g. Interpreter: Any person with responsibility for language interpretation between the auditor and organization and/or others involved in the audit (for example, stakeholders). The interpreter shall be independent of the organization.
-

NOTES:

- 1) Personnel may be assigned to more than one role.
- 2) Interpreters are required where the certification body auditor cannot communicate with the organization and/or relevant stakeholders (for example, workers).

4.2. Certification body personnel: Management of competence

4.2.1 See *ISO17065*, 6.1.2.1

AB

4.2.2

TE

The certification body shall ensure that at least one representative participates in required harmonization training (see ASR-401). The representative(s) is responsible for ensuring that the information from the training is disseminated to all relevant certification body personnel such that they are aware of current policies, procedures, and other criteria that pertain to their role(s).

NOTE:

- 1) For applicant certification bodies, participation is required if their application was accepted 180 calendar days or more before the harmonization training begins and may be allowed at Textile Exchange's discretion if the application is accepted fewer than 180 days before the harmonization training begins.

4.2.3

AB

Auditors shall meet the following minimum qualifications:

- a. One of the following options for professional experience:
 - i. Tertiary education (college/university qualification) in a relevant discipline (for example, sustainability, agriculture, social, environmental, textile engineering) and two years of relevant professional experience; or
 - ii. Secondary education (high-school diploma) and four years of relevant professional experience (for example, sustainability, agriculture, social, environmental work).
- b. Successful completion of an accredited training course on auditing techniques consistent with the principles and guidelines of ISO 19011.
- c. Demonstrated and maintained knowledge of the applicable Textile Exchange standard(s), including but not limited to successful completion of all required training modules, as specified in ASR-401.
- d. Demonstrated comprehensive knowledge of:
 - i. The certification body's documented procedures, audit methodologies, and reporting requirements;
 - ii. The general production methods, processing activities, and supply chain operations applicable to the organizations to be audited;
 - iii. The goals and critical issues addressed by the standard;
 - iv. Integrity, environmental, and social risks specific to the sectors and countries/areas of the organizations to be audited; and
 - v. The preparation of written audit reports that are objective, evidence-based, and written with sufficient detail and accuracy to substantiate audit findings to the applicable Textile Exchange standard(s) and related normative documents.
- e. Participation in a minimum of three audits to the standard/scope, led by a qualified auditor. Participation may include observing the audit or conducting audit tasks. A maximum of two audits may be substituted with auditing experience in a relevant sector (for example, supply chain auditing experience for CCS).
- f. Completion of a minimum of one audit to the standard/scope where the auditor candidate is witnessed and evaluated by a qualified auditor. The qualified auditor shall prepare a report of the witness audit that recommends whether the auditor candidate is qualified to audit the standard/scope. And

- g. Any additional auditor qualifications specified in the standard-specific criteria for certification bodies or related normative document from Textile Exchange.

 NOTES:

- 1) The following notes apply for auditor qualifications:
 - The certification body should refer to ISO17021-1 Annex D for guidance on the qualities and behaviors of good auditors and in assessing auditors during the hiring process.
 - Courses on the standard(s) may currently be run in-house by certification bodies. Textile Exchange may offer courses directly, which may become mandatory for auditors.
 - ISO19011-based courses include ISO9001:LA, ISO14001:LA, ISO45001:LA, and accredited training courses for other certification systems (for example, FSC), which include ISO19011 content.
- 2) Auditor qualification scopes are intended to mirror accreditation scopes. Any audit that includes the CCS (all except farms) may meet the witness audit requirement for CCS auditor qualification. A Materials Matter Standard audit may not be used to complete OCS qualification, for example, or vice versa.

4.2.4 Auditors shall meet the following criteria in order to maintain their qualifications:

AB

- a. Receive ongoing training on updates to the applicable standard(s) and related criteria (see ASR-401);
- b. Conduct at least three audits to Textile Exchange standards every 12 months. Audits shall include at least one audit per applicable standard/scope, and three farm audits as applicable. Relevant qualification scopes include:
 - i. Animal fiber farm;
 - ii. Down farm;
 - iii. Recycler;
 - iv. Other primary processor;
 - v. OCS primary processor; and
 - vi. Content claim site or organization. And
- c. Undergo a witness audit at least once every three years for each standard/scope where the auditor is evaluated by another qualified auditor. The qualified auditor shall prepare a report of the witness audit that recommends that the auditor retain their qualification.

 NOTES:

- 1) Auditor qualification scopes are intended to mirror accreditation scopes.
- 2) A maximum of one audit required to be conducted may be replaced by two certification decisions made.
- 3) A CCS audit may be covered by any audit that includes evaluation to the CCS.
- 4) An RCS audit shall only be used as qualification for an auditor who is also not qualified for GRS or Materials Matter Standard recycler scopes.
- 5) Evaluation by an accreditation body or Textile Exchange assessor does not meet witness audit requirements specified by these criteria.

4.2.5 If a certification body wishes to qualify an auditor whose qualification had expired or who had been qualified by another certification body, the certification body shall ensure that criteria 4.2.3.a to 4.2.3.e and 4.2.4.g have been previously met and shall complete criterion 4.2.3.f directly.

AB

4.2.6 Certification decision-makers shall meet the following minimum qualifications:

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- a. Either:
 - i. Current auditor qualification for the standard (preferred option); or
 - ii. Meets criteria 4.2.3.a, .c, .d, and .e, and any additional qualification criteria specified in the standard-specific criteria for certification bodies.
 - b. Knowledge of:
 - i. The certification body's procedures for certification decision-making; and
 - ii. The standard and all relevant related documents, interpretations, and guidance.
-

- c. Be an employee of the certification body or one of their fully- or majority-owned subsidiaries. And
- d. Completion of a minimum of three certification decisions under the supervision of a qualified certification decision-maker per standard/scope.

4.2.7

AB

If the certification decision is made based on the report of a reviewer (i.e., the certification decision-maker does not themselves review all information related to the evaluation), the report reviewer shall be a qualified certification decision-maker (see 4.2.6).

4.2.8

AB

Witness auditors (auditors evaluating other auditors) shall be qualified auditors who are independent of the organization being audited, shall not be involved in the certification decision for the audit, and shall not be family members of the auditor being evaluated.

NOTE:

- 1) The witness auditor may take over the conduct of an audit if it is determined to be necessary for the successful completion of the audit. In this case, the auditor being evaluated has not met the requirement for a witness audit.

4.2.9

AB

The certification body shall conduct annual performance reviews of auditors, certification decision-makers, and other personnel involved in the certification process. Organizations shall be provided the opportunity to comment on auditors' performance, which, when provided, shall be used in the evaluation of auditors. However, organization comments on auditor performance shall not be considered as impartial and shall form only a portion of the auditor evaluation.

4.2.10

AB

The certification body shall review each witness audit report and take appropriate actions to correct auditor performance and monitor for improvement where necessary.

4.2.11

AB

The certification body shall have a program for the ongoing training and calibration of auditors and other certification personnel, in addition to training provided by Textile Exchange.

4.2.12

TE

The certification body shall ensure that certification body personnel with key roles (per 4.1.6) have completed all mandatory trainings in accordance with their role(s), as communicated by Textile Exchange. See also ASR-401.

4.2.13

AB

The certification body shall be solely responsible for the selection, contracting, and performance oversight of technical experts (where assigned), and verify and document the following for each technical expert:

- a. Demonstrated knowledge of the applicable Textile Exchange standard(s) and standard-specific criteria for certification bodies;
- b. Demonstrated and current expertise in the specific technical area relevant to the certification scope;
- c. Qualifications and professional experience substantiating their role as a technical expert; and
- d. No financial, professional, or personal interests that could compromise impartiality.

NOTE:

- 1) Knowledge of Textile Exchange standard(s) may be demonstrated through training provided by Textile Exchange or by the certification body.

4.2.14

AB

If a certification body cannot qualify new auditors and/or certification decision-makers using the above criteria (for example, due to being newly in the accreditation process, or due to the departure of key personnel), the certification body shall prepare a documented plan to qualify initial personnel and shall

receive approval from the accreditation body prior to qualifying the personnel. Use of this alternative methodology is limited to one auditor and one decision-maker per standard/scope.

NOTE:

- 1) Demonstration of required knowledge and completion of mandatory training shall always be met as described in the above qualification criteria for auditors and/or certification decision-makers.

4.2.15

Hybrid and remote audits may be used in the qualification of auditors as follows:

AB

- a. Hybrid audits may be counted toward audit participation, provided that the auditor candidate is present on site. The auditor candidate may also act as the on-site representative where the criteria of 6.5 are met.
- b. Remote audits and hybrid audits where the auditor candidate is not present on site may be counted toward audit participation provided that the auditor candidate is present on site for at least one audit to meet this criterion.
- c. Hybrid audits may be counted as witness audits, provided that the auditor or auditor candidate conducting the audit is present on site, and the fully qualified witness auditor is able to observe the auditor's work sufficiently to evaluate their performance. And
- d. Hybrid or remote audits used for qualification purposes shall meet the eligibility criteria for hybrid or remote audits (see 6.5 and 6.6).

4.2.16

The certification body shall meet the following criteria related to language skills of their personnel:

AB

- a. Certification body primary and secondary contacts shall be able to communicate effectively with Textile Exchange in English and be able to understand training materials provided in English (see 4.1.6.a and 4.1.6.b below for definitions of primary and secondary contacts).
- b. Certification body key personnel (i.e., auditors, certification decision-makers for scope certificates and transaction certificates, claim approvers, and database administrators) shall be able to complete the required trainings from Textile Exchange in one of the supported languages (see ASR-401).
- c. Certification body auditors shall be able to work with the audit checklist(s) in one of the supported languages. And
- d. Claim approvers shall be proficient in English and in the language(s) of the claim they are approving.

4.2.17

See *ISO17065*, 6.1.2.2

AB

4.2.18

See *ISO17065*, 6.1.3

AB

4.3. Resources for evaluation

4.3.1

See *ISO17065*, 6.2.1

AB

4.3.2

See *ISO17065*, 6.2.2.1

AB

NOTE:

- 1) Subcontracting includes the outsourcing of certification activities such as client management, marketing, auditor recruitment/assignment/training, and national registration to a person or legal entity that is separate from the certification body. The operation of the certification body through a network of legal entities that are fully- or majority-owned subsidiaries of the certification body is not considered to be subcontracting. The use of freelancers is also not considered to be subcontracting.

4.3.3

The certification body shall ensure that all core functions of the certification body operations are only conducted by certification bodies or their subcontractors, not freelancers or other parties.

AB

NOTE:

- 1) Core functions of certification body operations include management of auditors, including hiring and selecting auditors for specific audits; planning of audit activities; review of audit reports (separate from final certification decisions); review and granting of claim approvals; processing of transaction certificate applications; maintaining legally required registrations on behalf of the certification body (including CNCA registration for operations in China); client management activities including client communications; direct client recruitment; client invoicing; and contracting with clients including certification agreements.

4.3.4

The certification body shall not subcontract to non-independent bodies (i.e., bodies that are not independent from the organization being audited). See *ISO17065*, 6.2.2.2.

AB

4.3.5

See *ISO17065*, 6.2.2.3

AB

4.3.6

See *ISO17065*, 6.2.2.4

AB

4.3.7

The certification body shall:

AB

- a. Keep final responsibility for the issuing, maintaining, reissuing, suspending, and withdrawing of scope and transaction certificates. Delegation of certification decisions to subcontractors or freelancers is not permitted.
- b. Take responsibility for ensuring that training and qualification criteria are met for all subcontracted auditors unless the subcontractor is an accredited certification body for the applicable standard/scope.
- c. Ensure that the subcontractor is:
 - i. Competent to perform the subcontracted work consistent with the criteria set out in these procedures for the certification body and their personnel;
 - ii. Not involved with the operation, process, or product that is subject to certification in any way that may compromise impartiality; and
 - iii. Committed to the policies and procedures as defined by the certification body.
- d. Monitor the subcontractor's performance, including a minimum annual evaluation and ongoing monitoring of work (for example, through the certification decision process).
- e. Ensure that business interests do not interfere with the impartiality of audits if the subcontractor is responsible for both auditing and client recruitment or management. And
- f. Only use subcontractors who have a valid accreditation to *ISO17065*, issued by an IAF-member accreditation body.

NOTE:

- 1) Certification decisions and the issuance of scope and transaction certificates are required to be conducted by the certification body directly and not by a subcontractor or freelancer.

Section 5: Process criteria

This section details the process criteria to be met for certification bodies through their audit cycle.

5.1. General

5.1.1 See *ISO17065, 7.1.1*

AB

5.1.2 See *ISO17065, 7.1.2*

AB

5.1.3 See *ISO17065, 7.1.3*

AB

5.2. Application

5.2.1 See *ISO17065, 7.2*

AB

5.2.2 The certification body shall also obtain the following information from applicants:

AB

- a. A completed application form;
- b. Information required in order to prepare an accurate estimate of resources (for example, time, competencies) for the audit;
- c. Any information or documentation required by the applicable standard-specific criteria for certification bodies;
- d. Information about any past certifications, audits, or signed agreements with other certification bodies for the standard; and
- e. A copy of the most recent audit report and checklist, if the applicant was previously audited or certified for the standard within the previous two years, including at minimum any/all nonconformities and the date(s) and location(s) of the audit.

NOTE:

- 1) The review of audit records is applicable to previously audited or certified organizations. Where available, previous audit records, including any/all nonconformities, should be considered if the applicant is or was an associated subcontractor of a previously audited or certified organization.
-

5.3. Application review

5.3.1 See *ISO17065, 7.3.1*

AB

5.3.2 See *ISO17065, 7.3.2*

AB

5.3.3 See *ISO17065, 7.3.3*

AB

5.3.4 See *ISO17065, 7.3.4*

AB

5.3.5 See *ISO17065, 7.3.5*

AB

5.3.6 The certification body shall prepare a proposal for each applicant so that the applicant may review and select the best certification body to meet their needs, unless the certification body chooses to decline the application and to not provide services to the applicant.

AB

5.3.7 The certification body shall provide organizations with an up-to-date description of their procedures for conducting certification, including:

AB

- a. Contractual conditions, including fees and possible contractual penalties;
- b. General information on additional fees that will or may apply to the organization (for example, fees to close nonconformities or issue transaction certificates);
- c. The organization's rights and duties, including the appeals procedure;
- d. The current version of the standard and corresponding relevant documents released by Textile Exchange;
- e. Relevant program changes, including regular updates of procedures and standards;
- f. Audit procedures applied by the certification body in the course of certification; and
- g. Documentation to be maintained by the organization to enable verification of conformance with the standard by the certification body.

5.3.8 The certification body shall follow the risk and sampling criteria for each standard, as defined in the standard-specific criteria for certification bodies.

AB

5.4. Evaluation: Audit protocol

5.4.1 See *ISO17065, 7.4.1*

AB

5.4.2 The certification body shall carry out audits in order to collect and verify information and conformance with certification criteria applicable to the organization. The certification body shall follow a set protocol to facilitate a non-discriminatory and objective audit.

AB

5.4.3 The audit protocol shall, at the very minimum, include the following, as applicable to the organization:

AB

-
- a. Auditing of the organization's sites and associated subcontractors, which may also include visits to noncertified areas if there is reason for doing so;
 - b. Review of records and accounts in order to verify flow of claimed materials and other similar materials (input/output reconciliation and the tracing back);
 - c. Review of all claims made by the organization, following the criteria of 5.4.7 to 5.4.8;
 - d. If the previous audit was conducted by another certification body and within two years prior to the audit, a full evaluation of any nonconformities that were issued in the previous audit report, whether or not they were previously closed;
 - e. Identification of areas of risk to product integrity;
 - f. Verification that changes to the standards and to related criteria have been effectively implemented; and
 - g. Verification that corrective actions have been taken, with special focus on corrective actions for nonconformities that have been closed since the previous audit.
-

NOTE:

- 1) More detailed criteria on audit protocol (including sampling and interviews with workers and management, where applicable) are provided in the standard-specific criteria for certification bodies.
-

5.4.4 Audits shall be carried out on site unless one of the following applies:

AB

- a. The audit is an additional audit for the evaluation of nonconformities that do not require on-site review for credible evaluation (see Appendix A);
 - b. The organization meets standard-specific criteria that permit a hybrid or remote audit to be conducted; or
 - c. The audit is conducted as a transfer audit (see 6.2).
-

NOTE:

- 1) The certification body may require an on-site audit even when a remote or hybrid audit is permitted (see Section 6 for further criteria related to audit types and methods).
-

5.4.5 Each audit shall be conducted over a long enough duration to ensure that all applicable criteria are fully audited. Any minimum audit duration provided in the standard-specific criteria for certification bodies shall be interpreted as the least amount of time estimated to audit the simplest example of each site type, and it does not include auditor travel or report writing.

AB

NOTE:

- 1) The minimum audit duration will not be sufficient for the vast majority of audits. The certification body should plan accordingly. Further guidance and criteria are provided in the standard-specific criteria for certification bodies.
-

5.4.6 When multiple sites and/or associated subcontractors are included in a scope certificate, each site shall be evaluated during each audit unless an alternative approach is specifically defined in the standard-specific criteria for certification bodies.

AB

5.4.7 The certification body shall review all claims being made by the organization to ensure that:

AB

- a. A valid claim approval is in place from a certification body for all assured claims;
 - b. Only eligible products are labeled, and each label corresponds with the product in terms of label grade and material composition as indicated in the applicable claims policy; and
 - c. If an informational statement is made in relation to or near a product-related claim (for example, on a hangtag or on a product page), the statement is accurate and aligns with the allowed language in the applicable claims policy.
-

5.4.8

AB

The certification body shall check consistency between approved artwork claims and the corresponding transaction certificate(s), using the following sampling methodology:

- a. Sampling for brands shall be based on the number of incoming transaction certificates, as follows:
 - i. One to four transaction certificates: all shall be reviewed;
 - ii. Five to 100 transaction certificates: at least five shall be reviewed;
 - iii. 101 to 1000 transaction certificates: at least 10 shall be reviewed; and
 - iv. 1001+ transaction certificates: at least 15 shall be reviewed. And
- b. Sampling for organizations that are not brands and that apply on-product claims shall be based on the number of approval requests, as follows:
 - i. One to four approved artwork claims: all shall be reviewed;
 - ii. Five to 100 approved artwork claims: at least five shall be reviewed;
 - iii. 101 to 1000 approved artwork claims: at least 10 shall be reviewed; and
 - iv. 1001+ approved artwork claims: at least 15 shall be reviewed.

5.5. Evaluation: High-risk situations

5.5.1

AB

The certification body shall adapt their typical audit plan to address higher risks found in certain situations specific to the audit scope (see the standard-specific criteria for certification bodies for more information). Examples of potential high-risk situations and related measures include the following:

- a. Parallel processing of certified and noncertified products: In order to prevent comingling or confusion of certified products with other products that do not meet the criteria, the certification body shall verify whether handling and documentation regarding processing, storage, and sales are well managed through trained personnel and clear distinctions between certified and noncertified products. In cases where products are not visibly distinguishable, specified auditing measures shall be applied to assess the risk.
- b. Where an organization is certified for a standard that shares the same scope, the certification body ensures that material is not double-counted and that it is tracked appropriately. If the other scope certificate is with a different certification body, the two certification bodies should seek information exchange to prevent misuse of certificates. And
- c. If an organization is certified to another standard (including both Textile Exchange and non-Textile Exchange standards) where there is a risk of over-claiming material volume, the certification body shall include all standards that recognize similar content (for example, organic cotton for OCS) in its review of the volume reconciliation, and shall evaluate the claims made regarding the other standard and any other necessary records to ensure that volumes are not being over-claimed.

5.6. Evaluation: Audit team

5.6.1

See *ISO17065*, 7.4.2

AB

5.6.2

AB

The audit team may consist of one or more of the following roles, proportionate to certification body needs and the scale of the audit:

- a. One or more auditors (required). If more than one auditor is part of the team, one auditor shall be designated the lead auditor and shall take overall responsibility for ensuring that the audit is complete.
- b. One or more auditors in training.

- c. A witness auditor, if the audit is part of an auditor's evaluation.
- d. One or more interpreters, if needed.
- e. One or more technical experts who are not qualified auditors, if needed. And
- f. A claim approver may assist the auditor with claims review and should be involved in case there is any question on whether a claim meets all applicable criteria.

 NOTE:

- 1) Accreditation body assessors, Textile Exchange representatives, and other outside observers are not considered to be part of the audit team.

5.6.3

AB

If an auditor is not fluent in the operating language of the auditee, they shall be accompanied by an interpreter. An interpreter is needed for worker interviews if the auditor and workers do not share a common language, even if management staff are able to communicate directly with the auditor. An auditor candidate or a technical expert may also act as an interpreter.

5.6.4

AB

When interpreters are engaged in the conduct of audits, they shall be entirely independent of the organization being audited. Interpreters shall not be selected, contracted, or remunerated by the organization being audited under any circumstances. The certification body shall be solely responsible for the selection, contracting, and oversight of interpreters, ensuring impartiality, confidentiality, and technical competence in the applicable language(s). The interpreter's full name and organizational affiliation shall be recorded in the audit report and maintained in the certification body's records.

5.6.5

AB

When technical experts are engaged in the conduct of audits, they shall be fully independent of the organization being audited. Technical experts shall not be selected, contracted, or remunerated by the organization being audited under any circumstances. The name, qualifications, professional background, and organizational affiliation of each technical expert shall be recorded in the audit report and retained in the certification body's records.

 NOTE:

- 1) A technical expert is an individual with academic and/or professional qualifications and expertise to provide specific knowledge and technical support to the audit team.

5.7. Evaluation: Audit resources

5.7.1

 See *ISO17065, 7.4.3*

AB

5.7.2

 See *ISO17065, 7.4.4*

AB

5.7.3

 See *ISO17065, 7.4.5*

AB

5.8. Evaluation: Nonconformity

5.8.1

AB

When a nonconformity is identified, the certification body shall classify the nonconformity as described in Appendix A and in accordance with the following criteria:

- a. Each nonconformity or observation shall be issued to a single criterion.
- b. Where a criterion is assigned a nonconformity level in the Textile Exchange standard, the certification body shall issue any nonconformity for the criterion in accordance with the indicated level, at a minimum. For all other criteria, the certification body shall assign a level based on the criteria in Appendix A.
- c. The certification body shall apply the timeline specified in Appendix A for each nonconformity, or a shorter timeline when warranted.

NOTES:

- 1) Where additional criteria related to the classification and issuance of nonconformities are required, the standard-specific criteria for certification bodies shall be followed in addition to Appendix A.
 - 2) The grouping of findings for different criteria is not allowed.
-

5.8.2

See *ISO17065*, 7.4.6

5.8.3

See *ISO17065*, 7.4.7

AB

5.8.4

See *ISO17065*, 7.4.8

AB

5.8.5

AB

If the certification body identifies a nonconformity outside of the regular audit process (for example, during a transaction certificate application), that nonconformity shall be issued to the organization.

5.8.6

AB

The certification body shall verify that proposed corrections or corrective actions by the organization have been taken and have been effective in addressing the nonconformity and its root cause through a review of documentary evidence or by follow-up evaluation (on site or remote) in order to close identified nonconformities.

EXAMPLE:

- 1) See Appendix A for applicable timelines for closure of nonconformities.
-

5.9. Evaluation: Audit report

5.9.1

See *ISO17065*, 7.4.9

AB

5.9.2

AB

The certification body shall report all evaluation findings according to documented reporting procedures, which shall include the following elements:

- a. Audit reports shall follow a format appropriate to the type of operation inspected, and facilitate a non-discriminatory, objective, and comprehensive analysis of the respective processing system.
- b. The audit report shall cover all relevant aspects of the applicable standard(s) and adequately validate the information provided by the organization. It shall include:
 - i. A statement of any observations relating to degree of conformance with the certification criteria;
 - ii. Clear identification of any nonconformities issued, including the timeline for correction (see Appendix A);
 - iii. Date and duration of the inspection, if audit was on site, hybrid, or remote, persons interviewed, facilities visited;
 - iv. Type of documents reviewed; and
 - v. Explanation of auditor's rationale for their choice of samples taken.
- c. An audit checklist (provided by Textile Exchange where applicable) showing detailed findings for each applicable criterion shall be prepared. The checklist should be included in the audit report.
- d. The auditor(s) shall provide a brief summary report to the organization at the end of the closing meeting, which includes the following elements:
 - i. General information about the audit (for example, scope, participants);
 - ii. Identified potential nonconformities; and
 - iii. Timelines for corrections and corrective actions.
- e. The auditor(s) shall submit the audit report and supporting documentation promptly to the certification body within seven calendar days of the audit closing meeting, providing sufficient time for review and the final certification decision to be made.
- f. Final reports, including audit checklist(s), shall be provided to the organization. And
- g. The certification body shall document measures applied to verify the effectiveness of corrective actions taken by the organization and/or site(s) to meet the criteria.

NOTES:

- 1) A certification body may produce a combined checklist or report template intended to address both a Textile Exchange standard and another standard, provided that all required elements for the Textile Exchange standard are included. No special approval is needed, though the checklist or template shall be evaluated by the accreditation body during the next office assessment. This is only permitted when Textile Exchange does not provide a mandatory checklist or report template for the applicable standard.
- 2) Data and reporting criteria are specified in the relevant standard-specific criteria for certification bodies.
- 3) See TE-TXL-POL-204 for further information related to applicable Textile Exchange audit report templates.
- 4) The summary of nonconformities is subject to change after technical review by the certification body.

5.10. Evaluation: Audit frequency

5.10.1

Audits shall be conducted annually for each certified organization, in accordance with the following:

AB

- a. Surveillance audits should be conducted within approximately 60 days of the annual date of certification unless otherwise indicated in the standard-specific criteria for certification bodies. And
- b. Recertification audits should be completed not more than 90 days prior to the scope certificate expiration date (see 5.12.10 for associated timelines).

NOTE:

- 1) See Section 6 for further detail related to audit types.

5.11. Review

5.11.1 See *ISO17065*, 7.5.1

AB

5.11.2 See *ISO17065*, 7.5.2

AB

5.11.3 The review shall include a review of the report by a qualified certification decision-maker (see 4.2.6).

AB

5.12. Certification decision

5.12.1 See *ISO17065*, 7.6.1

AB

5.12.2 See *ISO17065*, 7.6.2

AB

5.12.3 A qualified certification decision-maker (see 4.1.12) shall make the certification decision.

AB

5.12.4 See *ISO17065*, 7.6.3

AB

5.12.5 See *ISO17065*, 7.6.4

AB

5.12.6 See *ISO17065*, 7.6.5

AB

5.12.7 See *ISO17065*, 7.6.6

AB

5.12.8 Certification decisions shall be made and a scope certificate issued to the organization within 75 calendar days of the audit. If a scope certificate is not issued by this date, a new audit shall be conducted following all applicable criteria of this procedure.

AB

NOTE:

-
- 1) All nonconformities with mandatory criteria shall be closed within 60 calendar days of the audit. This criterion allows for the evaluation of the closure of nonconformities to inform the certification decision.
-

5.12.9

AB

Within the 75 days allowed for finalization, the certification body shall not delay the certification decision unnecessarily in order to avoid suspension of a scope certificate (for example, by delaying all certification decisions until all nonconformities have been closed).

5.12.10

AB

The total time between the date of the audit closing meeting and scope certificate validity date shall be no more than 90 days. If the recertification audit is conducted more than 90 calendar days before the expiry of the previous scope certificate, or if an early recertification is requested by the certified organization, the new scope certificate shall be issued prior to the expiry of the previous scope certificate, and the previous scope certificate withdrawn.

NOTE:

- 1) See TE-TXL-POL-203 for detail related to the issuance of scope certificates.
-

5.13. Certification documentation

5.13.1

AB

See *ISO17065, 7.7.1*

5.13.2

AB

Certification documentation shall take the form of a scope certificate that meets the criteria of TE-TXL-POL-203.

5.13.3

AB

An organization or site shall only be listed on one scope certificate for Textile Exchange standards except as noted for farms in 5.13.4. Where the organization or site is certified to more than one applicable standard, a multi-standard scope certificate shall be issued.

NOTE:

- 1) A facility may be included as a subcontractor in multiple scope certificates.
-

5.13.4

AB

An animal fiber farm may be part of one individual farm scope certificate, one small-scale farmer group, or up to two farm groups. If the farm is part of two different farm groups, the farm shall not be listed as the main site for either one.

5.13.5

AB

Scope certificates shall have clearly defined scopes, including all data required for scope certificates by TE-TXL-POL-203.

5.13.6

AB

The scope certificate shall either be a one-year scope certificate or a multi-year scope certificate, as specified for the scope in TE-TXL-POL-204. Where this varies between scopes included in the scope certificate, the longest validity period for any included scope shall apply.

NOTE:

- 1) See TE-TXL-POL-203 for further detail related to scope certificates.
-

5.13.7 Scope certificate validity shall only be extended with approval from Textile Exchange for reasons that are outside of the certification body's and the organization's control. For force majeure, see ASR-109.

AB

5.13.8 See *ISO17065, 7.7.2*

AB

5.13.9 See *ISO17065, 7.7.3*

AB

5.13.10 When requested by a certified organization, transaction certificates shall be issued in accordance with TE-TXL-POL-203.

AB

5.13.11 Sites that are part of the same legal entity shall be certified under the same scope certificate; subsidiaries may be certified on separate scope certificates. When sites under common ownership but part of separate legal entities are in the same country/area, they should be certified by the same certification body.

AB

NOTE:

- 1) Transaction certificates are required for sales of material between sites that are certified under separate scope certificates, even when those sites are under common ownership.

5.14. Directory of certified products

5.14.1 See *ISO17065, 7.8*

AB

5.15. Surveillance

5.15.1 See *ISO17065, 7.9.1*

AB

5.15.2 See *ISO17065, 7.9.2*

AB

5.15.3 See *ISO17065, 7.9.3*

AB

5.15.4 See *ISO17065, 7.9.4*

AB

5.15.5

AB

The certification body shall respond to all reports and complaints concerning false, misleading, inaccurate, or otherwise incorrect claims, including any misrepresentations regarding certified products or services, in accordance with their documented complaints process (see 5.22). If fraud or other misrepresentation is found to exist, the certification body shall take appropriate action (see 5.18).

NOTE:

- 1) Misrepresentation may include claims' misuse by certified organizations.

5.15.6

TE

If the certification body identifies any claims' misuse by an organization that is not currently certified or in the application process with the same certification body, the certification body shall report these claims to Textile Exchange by filing a complaint with Textile Exchange through the online complaint form as per TE-TXL-POL-206.

5.16. Claim approvals

5.16.1

AB

Claim approvals shall only be issued by a qualified claim approver.

5.16.2

AB

The certification body shall provide training to claim approvers that is sufficient to ensure that claim approvals are only issued when all applicable criteria are met, and shall ensure that claim approvers successfully complete Textile Exchange claim approval training (where available).

5.16.3

AB

The certification body shall only issue claim approvals to:

- a. An organization that holds a valid scope certificate with the same certification body for claims within the scope of certification;
- b. A retailer who is certified with the same certification body and selling another certified brand's products; or
- c. A noncertified retailer selling a certified brand's products.

5.16.4

AB

The certification body shall provide a system (for example, application form) or use the formal approval system provided by Textile Exchange, where available, for claim approval to certified organizations and any noncertified retailers to whom the certification body has agreed to issue claim approvals that includes all elements specified by Textile Exchange in the applicable claim approval form or guide.

- a. The certification body may pre-fill information about the organization on the form.

EXAMPLE:

- 1) Databases could potentially be used to pre-fill forms.

5.16.5

AB

Upon receipt of a complete claim approval application, a claim approver shall review the proposed claims and artwork to ensure that the criteria of the applicable claims and labeling policy are met.

NOTE:

- 1) The certification body may accept claim approval applications from another party, such as a design agency or certified supplier who is authorized by the certified organization to submit claim approval applications on the certified organization's behalf.

5.16.6

If an informational statement appears next to or near a product claim, a claim approver shall ensure the language matches the language in the applicable claims policy.

AB

NOTE:

- 1) If the claim maker wishes to alter the information statement in non-product-related uses, the certification body shall review the statement for accuracy. The certification body may contact Textile Exchange directly if clarification or assistance with altered language is required.

5.16.7

The certification body shall provide a response to each new and updated claim approval application within seven calendar days informing whether the claim approval request has been approved or rejected, or if more information is needed.

AB

NOTE:

- 1) Timely reviews of new and updated claims support organizations' conformance with claims criteria and provide good customer service.

5.16.8

Once a claim approval application is determined to be correct and complete by a claim approver, the certification body shall provide formal approval to the organization.

AB

5.16.9

The certification body shall approve claims following the formal claim approval process outlined in the relevant guidance or normative procedures.

AB

5.16.10

The certification body may issue a single approval for a controlled template that can be used by the certified organization thereafter without requesting separate approvals for each use.

AB

NOTE:

- 1) See the applicable claims and labeling policy or claims approval guide for greater detail on approvals.

5.16.11

As part of the claim approval process, the certification body should review any on-product claim approval applications that are made with the license code of a certified organization that is not a brand (for example, scope certificate does not list PRO035) to ensure that final products are not labeled without the brand being certified.

AB

5.16.12

The certification body may review claim approval applications from brands prior to the initial certification and may issue a pre-approval. A final approval shall not be issued prior to certification.

AB

5.16.13

When issuing pre-approvals, the certification body shall ensure that the brand does not make any public facing claims prior to receiving a final approval.

AB

5.16.14

A copy of each claim approval shall be emailed to Textile Exchange at approvals@textileexchange.org or submitted through alternative formats that may be made available by Textile Exchange.

TE

5.17. Changes affecting certification

5.17.1 See *ISO17065*, 7.10.1

AB

5.17.2 The following criteria apply when there is an updated standard or new criteria affecting certified or applicant organizations:

AB

- a. The certified organization shall be in conformance with updated standards or criteria as of the mandatory implementation date.
- b. The certification body shall check conformance to the updated standard or criteria as of the next regularly scheduled audit. And
- c. The certification body shall inform organizations of the mandatory implementation date for applicable new standards or criteria.

5.17.3 See *ISO17065*, 7.10.2

AB

5.17.4 The certification body shall require each organization to provide timely updates about changes to information included on the application form and/or the scope certificate. Upon receipt of updates, the certification body shall:

AB

- a. Determine whether the announced changes require any further auditing or document review, and inform the organization of this;
- b. Conduct any required auditing or document review prior to approving the change in certification scope; and
- c. Issue an updated scope certificate reflecting the change in scope, if the change relates to information included on the scope certificate.

5.17.5 See *ISO17065*, 7.10.3

AB

5.18. Termination, reduction, suspension, or withdrawal of certification

5.18.1 See *ISO17065*, 7.11.1

AB

NOTE:

- 1) The classification and procedures for how nonconformities shall be issued and evaluated are described in Appendix A (see also 5.8.1).

5.18.2 The certification body shall have the right to suspend or withdraw an organization's certificate if any false, misleading, inaccurate, or otherwise incorrect information, including any misrepresentations related to certified product or service, is confirmed; Textile Exchange shall respectively have the right to ban an organization.

AB

NOTE:

- 1) The certified organization shall be required to immediately remedy nonconformities or trademark misuses upon discovery and as directed by the certification body.
-

5.18.3 The certification body shall immediately withdraw the certificate(s) of any organization that has been banned by Textile Exchange, upon notification from Textile Exchange. (See TE-TXL-LOG-225)

AB

5.18.4 See *ISO17065*, 7.11.2

AB

5.18.5 See *ISO17065*, 7.11.3

AB

5.18.6 See *ISO17065*, 7.11.4

AB

5.18.7 See *ISO17065*, 7.11.5

AB

5.18.8 See *ISO17065*, 7.11.6

AB

5.18.9 The certification body shall withdraw any scope certificate that has been suspended for 180 days without resolution.

AB

NOTE:

- 1) The suspended scope certificate will expire if the expiry date is reached without resolution.

5.19. Transfer of scope certificates

5.19.1 The following criteria apply when a certified or applicant organization voluntarily chooses to change its certification body:

AB

- a. Transfer requests shall be provided to the preceding certification body and Textile Exchange at assurance@textileexchange.org or submitted through alternative formats that may be made available by Textile Exchange.
- b. The succeeding certification body shall obtain the organization's TE-ID from the Textile Exchange database.
- c. Upon request, the preceding certification body shall provide complete documentation about the certified organization, including audit reports and records of nonconformities or critical practices, to the succeeding certification body within seven calendar days of:
 - i. The request from the organization or from the succeeding certification body; or
 - ii. When the account is settled, if an organization has an outstanding balance relating to the relevant standard of at least USD100.
- d. The succeeding certification body shall conduct an audit that also considers past conformance with the standard before certifying the organization.
- e. The succeeding certification body shall only carry out audits after receiving the required documentation from the preceding certification body.

-
- f. If the organization holds a current scope certificate to Textile Exchange standards when a different (succeeding) certification body issues a new scope certificate, the succeeding certification body should notify the preceding certification body within one calendar day. And
 - g. If the organization becomes recertified with another certification body while the previous scope certificate is still valid, the preceding certification body shall immediately withdraw the scope certificate and shall backdate the withdrawal to the day before the succeeding certification body's scope certificate became valid (see Note 3).
-

NOTE:

- 1) See Section 6.2 for audit guidance when the request to transfer a scope certificate is due to suspension or withdrawal of the certification body.
 - 2) If the succeeding certification body is unable to obtain the relevant documentation from the preceding certification body, a formal complaint may be submitted to Textile Exchange.
 - 3) An organization shall not be certified at the same time under two scope certificates.
-

5.20. Transfer of claim approvals

Transfers of claim approvals from one certification body to another may occur when a scope certificate is transferred or when a brand obtains certification per *CCS-101 Content Claim Standard* and requests to transfer their claims to their succeeding certification body.

5.20.1

AB

If the succeeding certification body is to issue the transaction certificate covering products produced under the old scope certificate, then the succeeding certification body shall perform a documentation review covering those products' inputs, production, and volume reconciliation. A transfer of approved claims shall be conducted by the succeeding certification body as follows:

- a. The succeeding certification body shall obtain all relevant claim approvals and any associated artwork for each claim approval from the preceding certification body. And
 - b. The certification body shall conduct a review of a minimum of 10% of the claim approvals and artwork to ensure conformance with the criteria set out in the applicable claims and labeling policy.
-

NOTE:

- 1) The preceding certification body may object to the transfer of a claim approval based on the grounds of risk to product integrity.
-

5.20.2

AB

If any irregularities are found in the review of approved claims issued by the preceding certification body, the succeeding certification body shall:

- a. Review another 10% of the claim approvals and artwork for requested claims transfers to ensure conformance with the criteria set out in the applicable claims and labeling policy. And
 - b. Notify Textile Exchange at assurance@textileexchange.org to determine next steps, which will be based on the severity of the irregularities and their impacts on the veracity of the relevant (assured) claims in the market.
-

5.20.3

AB

If no nonconformities are found in existing claim approvals, the succeeding certification body shall inform the organization of the following instructions when using the assured claims previously approved by the preceding certification body:

- a. Any hangtags or other physically attached claims may be used until the stock is depleted.
 - b. Previously approved claims may be used alongside newly approved claims if there is still stock remaining using the previously approved claim (for example, in the case of mixed season sales).
And
-

-
- c. A new claim approval application form with updated relevant claim information (for instance, certification number) shall be submitted by the organization for review and reapproval by the certification body if any of the following occur:
- i. A new audit is conducted;
 - ii. Stock carrying the previously approved claim is depleted; and/or
 - iii. The artwork related to the claim is changed or updated.
-

5.21. Records

5.21.1 See *ISO17065*, 7.12.1

AB

5.21.2 See *ISO17065*, 7.12.2

AB

5.21.3 See *ISO17065*, 7.12.3

AB

5.21.4 The certification body shall maintain a system of records (either electronic or paper documents) to demonstrate that the procedures have been effectively fulfilled, particularly with respect to application forms, audit reports, and other documents relating to granting, maintaining, renewing, extending, suspending, and withdrawing certification.

AB

5.21.5 Records shall be identified, managed, and disposed of in such a way as to ensure the integrity of the process and the confidentiality of the information.

AB

5.21.6 The certification body shall keep the following records on file for each certified organization and for each organization that was formerly certified by the certification body:

AB

- a. Scope certificate data, including records of past scope certificates, date of original certification, and changes to the scope of certification;
 - b. Transaction certificate data, including all past transaction certificates issued with supporting documents;
 - c. Copies of all incoming and outgoing transaction certificates;
 - d. Volume reconciliation records used for issuing transaction certificates, including records of the material used per incoming transaction certificate;
 - e. Evidence of the occurrence of on-site audits, including for semi-announced and unannounced audits; and
 - f. Claim approval records.
-

5.21.7 Records shall be kept on exemptions granted, appeals, and subsequent actions.

AB

5.21.8 Records shall be kept for at least five years, or the legal minimum, whichever is longer, in order to be able to demonstrate how procedures have been applied.

AB

5.22. Complaints and appeals

5.22.1 See *ISO17065*, 7.13.1

AB

5.22.2 See *ISO17065*, 7.13.2

AB

5.22.3 See *ISO17065*, 7.13.3

AB

5.22.4 See *ISO17065*, 7.13.4

AB

5.22.5 See *ISO17065*, 7.13.5

AB

5.22.6 See *ISO17065*, 7.13.6

AB

5.22.7 See *ISO17065*, 7.13.7

AB

5.22.8 See *ISO17065*, 7.13.8

AB

5.22.9 See *ISO17065*, 7.13.9

AB

5.23. Banned organizations

5.23.1 In accordance with ASR-225 and TE-TXL-LOG-225, the following criteria shall be met:

AB

- a. Prior to any certification agreement being signed with the organization or certified organization renewing certification, the certification body shall review whether the organization, their farms, sites, and their associated subcontractors are eligible for certification, including whether they are prohibited from becoming certified.
 - b. Prior to adding a site or associated subcontractor to a scope certificate, the certification body shall review whether the facility is eligible for certification, including whether they are prohibited from becoming certified. And
 - c. The certification body shall proactively monitor to ensure that all organizations certified by the certification body along with their farms, sites, and associated subcontractors do not become prohibited from being certified, or otherwise that actions specified in 5.23.2 are taken.
-

NOTE:

- 1) Textile Exchange will notify the certification body upon becoming aware of an organization, site, or associated subcontractor who is prohibited from being certified. However, identifying this remains the certification body's responsibility.

5.23.2

AB

If a previously certified organization, product, shipment, or site is identified as ineligible for certification based on the criteria of ASR-225, the certification body shall:

- a. Immediately notify Textile Exchange and withdraw the related scope certificate(s) of such ineligible entity(ies);
- b. Cease all related certification activities within the prescribed timeline provided by Textile Exchange;
- c. Notify the certification body of any buyer of the identified ineligibility and any resulting withdrawal if any related transaction certificate(s) has been issued during the validity period of the scope certificate;
- d. Not issue transaction certificates for products at the primary processor that have become ineligible for certification immediately upon becoming ineligible. For products already certified prior to becoming ineligible, the certification body may consider them certified unless specifically identified by Textile Exchange as considered ineligible immediately; and
- e. Not issue transaction certificates for ineligible products after six months of becoming ineligible.

NOTE:

- 1) Criterion 5.23.2.d applies only to outputs of any process that is not the primary processor.

5.23.3

AB

If a previously licensed certification body is identified as ineligible for licensing based on the criteria of ASR-225, the certification body shall be subject to withdrawal of licensing by Textile Exchange, which may be considered an involuntary withdrawal. See Section 9: Suspension and withdrawal of accreditation.

5.24. Exemptions to certification criteria

5.24.1

AB

The certification body shall have clear procedures for requesting exemptions to criteria for certification, including a process to internally assess the validity of the exemption request to ensure there is a reasonable basis for Textile Exchange to grant the exemption.

5.24.2

AB

The certification body shall receive prior approval from Textile Exchange for each exemption. Exemptions shall be of limited duration and shall be submitted for reapproval, as necessary, based on their expiration date.

5.24.3

AB

Where Textile Exchange has issued a general exemption (i.e., the exemption is for a specified region and/or type of organization, not to a specific organization), the certification body may approve the application of the exemption for their applicable organization and make a record of this in their audit report.

NOTE:

- 1) Criteria within a standard that are not applicable to a particular site or organization are not considered exemptions. Criteria that may be deemed not applicable are those where the subject of the criterion does not exist or is not practiced by the site or organization, or their subcontractor(s). Where there is a contradictory law or the activity is outsourced, this does not qualify as "not applicable."

Section 6: Audit types, methods, and notice

Textile Exchange enables certification using a range of audit methods that include hybrid and remote audits as well as the typical on-site audits. This section outlines core criteria for conducting all audit types that are part of the assurance process. It also outlines the criteria and suggested best practices to be followed by certification bodies for audit methods that depend on technology and digital data transfer, namely hybrid and remote audits. These audits require broader considerations for effective assurance including additional planning, technology accessibility and selection, consent, and data privacy and governance. This section was developed considering guidance in *Remote Auditing Good Practices, ISEAL Guidance v1.0*, June 2021.

6.1. Audit types

6.1.1

AB

An audit shall be considered to be an initial audit if:

- a. The organization has not previously been audited to the standard by a certification body.
- b. The organization has been certified to the standard in the past but has not had a valid scope certificate for the standard in the last 180 calendar days or more prior to the start of the audit, including any time when the organization's scope certificate was suspended.
- c. The audit is conducted because a scope certificate was not issued within the required time frame of an initial audit (see 5.12.8). Or
- d. The organization is voluntarily changing certification bodies, excluding transfer audits, due to voluntary or involuntary withdrawal of the certification body's accreditation for the applicable scope of certification.

6.1.2

AB

An audit shall be considered to be a recertification audit if it is conducted to renew the certification of a certified organization, with no more than a 180-calendar day gap in certification prior to the start of the audit.

- a. Recertification audits should be completed no later than 60 calendar days prior to the expiry of a scope certificate (see 5.12.8). And
- b. Recertification audits may be conducted up to 90 calendar days before the expiry of the previous scope certificate (see 5.12.10).

6.1.3

AB

An audit shall be considered to be a surveillance audit if it is conducted to ensure that an organization or facility is audited annually, outside of initial and recertification audits. The relevant standard-specific criteria for certification bodies shall be met regarding surveillance audits.

NOTE:

- 1) Surveillance audits are only applicable to organizations with scope certificates issued with a multi-year validity. Scope certificates may be issued for one or more years, depending on the scope of certification (see TE-TXL-POL-204). Where scope certificates are issued for one year, there are only recertification audits following the initial audit, unless an additional or transfer audit applies.

6.1.4

AB

An audit shall be considered to be an additional audit if it is conducted for other purposes such as, but not limited to, expanding the scope of certification or meeting criteria regarding semi-announced or unannounced audits (excluding farm confirmation visits).

6.1.5

AB

A confirmation visit is an additional on-site evaluation of an organization where the auditor limits the evaluation to a visual check for specified criteria only. A confirmation visit shall not be considered to be an audit.

6.1.6

AB

An evaluation done by the certification body to ensure that nonconformities are addressed within the specified timelines may be conducted as part of an audit or separately from an audit. This type of

evaluation may be conducted as an on-site, hybrid, or remote audit at the certification body's discretion, except where otherwise specified in criteria.

6.2. Transfer audits

6.2.1

AB

An audit shall be considered to be a transfer audit when a certified organization is changing certification bodies due to a suspension or withdrawal of the preceding certification body's accreditation.

NOTE:

- 1) The certification body may conduct an initial audit of the applicant organization instead of a transfer audit.
-

6.2.2

AB

The following criteria are applicable for transfer audits:

- a. A transfer audit is only permitted when the certification body has been voluntarily or involuntarily withdrawn, not in cases where an organization chooses to change its certification body.
- b. The certification body shall conduct a full audit of the organization, which may be conducted remotely.
- c. The certification body may rely on the preceding certification body's findings to address criteria related to visual inspection or to documentation that has not changed since the audit, except where this relates to a nonconformity issued during the last audit.
- d. The certification body shall issue a transferred scope certificate, which maintains the expiry date of the previous scope certificate issued by the preceding certification body. And
- e. The certification body shall conduct a recertification audit for the organization's next scheduled audit.

NOTE:

- 1) See Section 5.19 for criteria related to the transfer of scope certificate(s).
-

6.2.3

AB

Upon written notification from a certified organization requesting to change certification bodies as a result of certification body accreditation withdrawal, the preceding certification body shall coordinate and cooperate directly with the succeeding certification body and meet the following criteria:

- a. Maintain an active scope certificate for the organization until the scope certificate expires or until the succeeding certification body issues a scope certificate, whichever occurs first, unless the organization, accreditation body, or Textile Exchange requires an earlier withdrawal of the certificate;
- b. Communicate with the succeeding certification body within seven calendar days of the written transfer request notification from the organization or the succeeding certification body;
- c. Submit to the succeeding certification body and Textile Exchange all requested data and documentation related to the organization within seven calendar days of the written transfer request notification from the organization or succeeding certification body;
- d. Not withhold information from the succeeding certification body for any reason, including unpaid fee balances of the organization; and
- e. Within seven calendar days of receipt of the transfer request, communicate with the organization the deadlines to submit transaction certificate applications in order for the preceding certification body to issue transaction certificates.

NOTE:

- 1) An organization shall not be certified at the same time under two scope certificates.
-

6.3. Semi-announced and unannounced audits

Semi-announced and unannounced audits are on-site audits with specific planning and sampling criteria. These levels of audit notice are used to augment assurance integrity risk management at points of high risk in the certification process or during specific material processing scenarios.

6.3.1

AB

The following levels of audit notice shall apply for audits and confirmation visits:

- a. Announced, where the organization and facility are aware in advance of when the audit will be conducted;
- b. Semi-announced, where the organization and facility receive up to 72 hours' notice of the audit, to ensure that the facility is open, and the correct people are available; and
- c. Unannounced, where the organization and facility receive less than one hour's notice of the auditor's arrival.

6.3.2

AB

Semi-announced and unannounced audits shall always be conducted on site.

6.3.3

AB

Semi-announced and unannounced audits should occur during a period where there is the greatest risk to the integrity of assurance (for example, peak production period).

6.3.4

AB

Semi-announced and unannounced audits shall be conducted in addition to initial and recertification audits and shall not be used in place of the recertification audit.

NOTE:

- 1) Sampling rates and other criteria for when semi-announced and unannounced audits shall be conducted are found in the applicable standard-specific criteria for certification bodies.

6.3.5

AB

The certification body shall conduct semi-announced or unannounced audits of specific sites when asked to do so by Textile Exchange or by the accreditation body. These audits may be counted toward the total number of required audits.

NOTE:

- 1) 6.3.4 continues to apply when a specific semi-announced or unannounced audit is requested by Textile Exchange or the accreditation body.

6.4. Criteria for all audit methods

6.4.1

AB

The following audit methods shall be applied, as applicable to audits conducted by the certification body:

- a. On-site audits, where the entire audit team is present at the facility being audited;
- b. Hybrid audits, where the site is evaluated through a combination of remote and on-site evaluation; and
- c. Remote audits, where no certification body personnel were present on site for any part of the audit. Remote audits may include offline (for example, document review) or real-time virtual (for example, video calls) approaches, or combinations thereof.

6.4.2

AB

Portions of an audit may be conducted remotely even when an on-site or hybrid audit is required, provided that this is limited to a review of documents and records, it is technically feasible to do so, and does not affect the integrity of the sampling process (for example, by allowing the organization time to correct errors on documents before evaluation). This includes evaluation of any functions performed at an office facility with no physical possession of certified materials and evaluation of group management functions.

6.4.3

AB

The certification body may replace a hybrid or remote audit with an on-site audit or may replace a remote audit with a hybrid audit.

6.5. Hybrid audits

6.5.1

AB

In advance of a planned hybrid audit, the certification body shall conduct a review to assess whether there is sufficient internet connectivity available to conduct remote portions of a hybrid audit and whether any other barriers to a hybrid audit are present. This review shall be conducted far enough in advance of the audit that there is sufficient time to reschedule as an on-site audit if necessary, without disruption to the organization's certification.

6.5.2

AB

Hybrid audits shall be conducted jointly by a qualified lead auditor who is working remotely, and by an on-site audit facilitator who represents the certification body.

6.5.3

AB

The lead auditor shall be present remotely for the entire audit and shall maintain responsibility for conformity to hybrid audit criteria.

6.5.4

AB

The audit facilitator in a hybrid audit:

- a. Shall either be a qualified auditor with the certification body (for any standard), or an auditor candidate for the standard who has completed the criteria of 4.2.3. a, b, c, and d;
- b. Shall ensure that audit procedures are followed under the lead auditor's direction (for example, areas of the facility are not missed on the site tour, management representatives are not present for worker interviews);
- c. Shall be independent of the organization being audited;
- d. Shall, at a minimum, have received training on general auditing practice, impartiality, and any technology that is used to conduct the audit;
- e. May also act as a language interpreter for the lead auditor;
- f. May conduct auditing tasks under the lead auditor's supervision, if appropriate to their qualifications; and
- g. Shall be responsible for managing the technology for capturing video of the audit (managing the video recording device).

6.5.5

AB

A live video, including a full video tour of the site, shall be used by the audit facilitator throughout the hybrid audit (i.e., video calling or a similar technology). For farm audits, a live video tour of the site may be replaced with a video recording of the farm that is taken by the audit facilitator during the audit, and where the lead auditor reviews the video and has the opportunity to request additional footage before the closing meeting.

6.6. Remote audits

6.6.1

AB

The certification body shall ensure that sufficient planning and preparation time is factored into its audit plan.

NOTE:

- 1) Remote audits require additional planning and preparation time. Auditors will require more flexibility and adaptability in audit plans because of a greater risk of misunderstanding through virtual communication tools (particularly considering language interpretation factors when applicable). Audit participants may be affected by using digital tools for extended periods, and this may impact the number of breaks needed during the audit.

6.6.2

AB

For processing facilities, the remote audit shall be conducted by an auditor who has visited the site in the past, where possible. Where this is not possible, the auditor shall be briefed in advance by an auditor who has visited the site in the past. If neither of these options are possible, the audit shall be conducted as a hybrid or on-site audit.

6.6.3

AB

In advance of a planned remote audit, the certification body shall carry out the following remote audit planning and preparation activities:

- a. Review technical and operational capacity to assess whether both the certified organization and the certification body have the necessary resources and available technology to conduct a remote audit at the planned audit location(s).
- b. Confirm the availability of key staff for the audit and request that the organization identify the people to be audited and ensure their availability at defined times.
- c. Define and become familiar with the types of information and communication technology that will be used to conduct the audit.
- d. Identify the different sources of data needed for the audit and consider data privacy, reliability of data, how information will be transmitted, and how its privacy or security will be protected.
- e. Assess the level of data accessibility for the audit before the remote audit is accepted, and agree on a secure and confidential data transmission method.
- f. Define the agenda for the audit including the below information, and share it with the organization at least five calendar days before the audit:
 - i. Roles and responsibilities of audit participants;
 - ii. A list of the planned activities, documents, and records that will be requested;
 - iii. Indication of the secure document storage software to be used; and
 - iv. A request to confirm appropriate platforms for communication.
- g. Conduct an initial call to test internet and other connectivity needed for digital audit tools (for example, video recording) and to ensure audit participants know how to use the tools. And
- h. Define a contingency plan for the audit should the technology or connectivity plans fail during the scheduled audit time.

NOTE:

- 1) See 6.7.4 and 6.7.5 for best practices in data management during remote and hybrid audits.

6.6.4

AB

For facilities with physical possession of claimed material, a live video, including a full video tour of the site, shall be used throughout the remote audit (i.e., video calling). For farm audits, a live video tour of the site may be replaced with a video recording of the farm that is taken during the audit, and where the lead auditor reviews the video and has the opportunity to request additional footage before the closing meeting.

6.7. Best practices for hybrid and remote audits

The information in this section details best practices for conducting audits. These practices are highly recommended, but not mandatory. The criteria in this section do not replace the certification body's responsibility to comply with applicable laws, such as for data privacy. The word "audit" in this section refers to any audit that is conducted partially or fully as a hybrid or remote audit, unless "an on-site audit" is stated.

6.7.1

AB

The certification body should notify the organization of the following at least ten calendar days in advance of the audit:

- a. A list of documents to be provided by the organization in advance of the audit; and
- b. A summary of sampling methods, date by which information is needed, and facilities to be audited.

6.7.2

AB

The certification body should consider the below audit duration and schedule guidelines in planning hybrid and remote audits:

- a. The certification body should allocate the audit effort (hours) differently, focusing more on the preparatory steps, and enabling more focused interaction with the organization.
- b. If an audit requires much more time than an on-site audit, the certification body should consider this in initial risk assessments on the feasibility of a hybrid or remote auditing approach.
- c. The certification body should consider time zone differences with the organization being audited and consider whether the audit may have to be split into two or more parts. And
- d. The certification body may consider a variation in the time frame to conduct the audit and fragmentation of activities spread over the course of a longer period of time (for example, four hours per day for three days).

NOTE:

- 1) The distribution of time spent on hybrid and remote audit activities will differ from on-site audits, with more time on audit planning and potentially longer duration overall for the remote audit. It is typical that remote audit preparation activities can take up to 30% of total audit time.
- 2) See standard-specific criteria for certification bodies for risk and sampling criteria.

6.7.3

AB

The certification body should undertake the following activities to select the most appropriate technology for conducting the remote audit:

- a. The certification body should inform the organization and their audit personnel about the chosen technology for the remote audit and ensure their understanding of how the chosen technology will be used and of the competence required to use the technology.
- b. The certification body should include considerations around data collection (consent), storage (personal data), and use (privacy, security) when choosing a technology for the remote audit. And
- c. The certification body may use advanced technologies that provide a better view of the site than a simple camera (for example, a 360° camera) where these are available and feasible.

NOTE:

- 1) Making the right choice of which online conferencing tool to use may depend less on certification body preferences and more on what works best for the organization. This can depend on which platform the organization has access to, geographical context, digital bandwidth, and connectivity. There is a chance that cultural contexts and remoteness of location will also play a factor. Auditors should not assume that everyone will have the same comfort level with being recorded on camera.

6.7.4

AB

The certification body should undertake the following activities to ensure data accessibility measures are taken into consideration for conducting the remote audit:

- a. The certification body should regularly review contract or agreement templates to determine if these need to be revised to accommodate new data-sharing requests and data formats needed for remote audits.

- b. The certification body should ensure that they capture recordings of audit evidence in line with contractual agreements to respect information confidentiality and proprietary rights of the organization.
- c. When the organization does not want to send records or documents in advance of the audit or the certification body does not want them to, these documents may be reviewed during the audit via screen sharing to reduce the amount of data and information that must be transferred between the certification body and the organization.
- d. Screenshots and recordings during the audit should only occur upon explicit consent of the auditee.
- e. Where real-time streaming or recording occurs, the certification body should require the auditee to sign consent forms available in the local language(s) in advance of the audit.
- f. While the audit is taking place, the auditor should request that documents are submitted within a two-hour time frame.
- g. The certification body auditor should make efforts to confirm what was heard, stated, and read throughout the audit. And
- h. The certification body should only take photos during the audit upon receiving consent from the auditee and any other relevant involved parties. Similarly, recording of videos or audio material should only be done upon receiving consent from the parties involved.

 NOTE:

- 1) The reality of remote audits expands the nature and type of information gathered from organizations in the certification process. As a result, the certification body should ensure that the organization is aware and prepared to provide the information necessary to conduct the audit process.

6.7.5

AB

The certification body should undertake the following activities to ensure data privacy and consent measures are taken in consideration for conducting the audit, including complying with the EU Regulation 2016/679 General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and other applicable laws on data protection and sharing:

- a. Minimizing the collection and use of personal data (often referred to as data that could identify an individual or natural person);
- b. Requesting consent from individuals for the specific uses of information they are collecting from those individuals; and
- c. Conducting due diligence to identify and assess the personal data the certification body processes, while only collecting personal data that is required for execution of essential activities.

6.7.6

AB

The certification body should undertake the following activities to ensure data security measures are taken in consideration for conducting the remote audit:

- a. The certification body should take measures to ensure that interviews for social criteria are conducted without the presence or observation of the organization’s management. And
- b. The certification body should ensure that anyone handling (collecting, storing, analyzing) data related to the audit process has adequate security practices in place to maintain the integrity, access permissions, and confidentiality of the data in accordance with their data governance policy and with the data governance practices of the organization.

6.7.7

AB

The certification body should undertake the following activities to ensure remote audit reporting provides the required data and information for effective certification decision-making:

- a. The certification body should consider how the audit report format needs to change for remote audits and what additional information is required to be included to ensure assurance integrity according to Textile Exchange criteria.
- b. The certification body may include an “unable to rate” option in certification decision-making in the case that insufficient data is available to make a certification decision. In this case, no certification may be granted without additional auditing.
- c. The certification body should record information in the remote audit report on the following:

-
- i. Which methodologies and tools were used to collect evidence during the remote audit; and
 - ii. Which standard criteria (if any) indicators were not evaluated.
 - d. The certification body should capture the time and geo-reference links of any interview locations in the remote audit report.
 - e. Once the audit is complete, the auditor should delete any documented information or records that do not need to be retained.
 - f. The certification body should have procedures in place for how to gather information from remote locations where internet or cellular access may be limited. And
 - g. The certification body should consider whether any new system criteria limit accessibility to their program, particularly from vulnerable individuals. Considerations regarding accessibility may include:
 - i. Carefully evaluating the conditions of using hybrid or remote audits (based on stakeholder group);
 - ii. Evaluating entry barriers like technology accessibility and cost; and
 - iii. Evaluating inherent discrimination from client risk assessments (for example, whether risk profiles are potentially discriminating against specific countries or stakeholder groups).

NOTE:

- 1) Since the nature and format of data and information collected through the audit are likely to be quite different from the on-site audit process, consideration should be given to how additional information will be captured and reported, and any implications for data privacy and confidentiality.
-

Section 7: Management system criteria

This section details management system criteria to be met by certification bodies.

7.1. General management system criteria

- 7.1.1** The certification body shall establish and maintain a management system that is capable of achieving the consistent fulfillment of the management system criteria, as defined in this procedure (See *ISO17065*, 8.1).

AB

NOTE:

- 1) The certification body may use a management system based on ISO9001 to demonstrate fulfillment of ISO17065 management system clause criteria 8.2 to 8.8.
-

7.2. General management system documentation

- 7.2.1** See *ISO17065*, 8.2.1

AB

- 7.2.2** The certification body shall maintain documented procedures that address work in relation to Textile Exchange standards and are appropriate for the type, range, and volume of work performed, and considering the number of personnel involved in the process. Procedures shall include at least procedures for the following elements:

AB

- a. Performing certification, including issuing, maintaining, reissuing, suspending, and withdrawing of scope certificates;
- b. The recruitment, selection, training, and assignment of personnel;
- c. Reviewing quality (for example, internal audits, management review);
- d. Ensuring that the Textile Exchange standards are applied consistently by all of their personnel; and
- e. The conduct of audits, including initial, annual, and recertification audits; hybrid and remote audits; semi-announced and unannounced audits; and transfer audits.

NOTE:

- 1) The certification body shall advise the accreditation body and Textile Exchange of any material changes to its documented procedures that affect activities related to Textile Exchange standard(s).
-

- 7.2.3** The certification body shall ensure that the documented procedures and relevant associated documents are accessible to all relevant personnel.

AB

- 7.2.4** See *ISO17065*, 8.2.2

AB

- 7.2.5** See *ISO17065*, 8.2.3

AB

7.2.6 See *ISO17065*, 8.2.4

AB

7.2.7 See *ISO17065*, 8.2.5

AB

7.3. Control of documents

7.3.1 See *ISO17065*, 8.3.1

AB

7.3.2 See *ISO17065*, 8.3.2

AB

7.3.3 The certification body shall provide updated versions of the Textile Exchange standards and related documents (as applicable) to the certification body's key personnel and certified and applicant organizations.

AB

7.4. Control of records

7.4.1 See *ISO17065*, 8.4.1

AB

7.4.2 See *ISO17065*, 8.4.2

AB

7.5. Management review

7.5.1 See *ISO17065*, 8.5.1.1

AB

7.5.2 See *ISO17065*, 8.5.1.2

AB

7.5.3 See *ISO17065*, 8.5.2

AB

7.5.4 See *ISO17065*, 8.5.3

AB

7.5.5 The certification body shall include in its annual management review, review of any performance monitoring report prepared by Textile Exchange (see also Section 8).

TE

7.6. Internal audits

7.6.1 See *ISO17065*, 8.6.1

AB

7.6.2 See *ISO17065*, 8.6.2

AB

7.6.3 The internal audit program shall include all Textile Exchange standards and scopes for which the certification body is accredited or has applied for accreditation with Textile Exchange.

AB

7.6.4 See *ISO17065*, 8.6.3

AB

7.6.5 See *ISO17065*, 8.6.4

AB

7.6.6 Internal audit results relating to Textile Exchange standards, including any findings (i.e., nonconformities) that were identified and how they have been addressed, shall be provided to Textile Exchange for review on an annual basis.

TE

7.7. Corrective actions

7.7.1 See *ISO17065*, 8.7.1

AB

7.7.2 See *ISO17065*, 8.7.2

AB

7.7.3 See *ISO17065*, 8.7.3

AB

7.7.4 See *ISO17065*, 8.7.4

AB

7.7.5 Nonconformities and corrective actions shall be documented and included in internal audit results.

TE

7.8. Preventive actions

7.8.1 See *ISO17065*, 8.8.1

AB

7.8.2 See *ISO17065*, 8.8.2

AB

7.8.3 See *ISO17065*, 8.8.3

AB

Section 8: Scheme owner oversight program

Textile Exchange conducts monitoring activities to observe and evaluate the accreditation and certification process. Textile Exchange takes responsibility for providing oversight of certification body performance not covered by accreditation audits, which are focused on assessing competence based on ISO 17065. Performance monitoring is important for effective implementation of Textile Exchange’s next-generation assurance, in support of the Materials Matter Standard system.

8.1. Oversight program criteria

8.1.1

TE

The certification body shall, through its management system design and implementation, strive to continually meet all key performance indicators (KPIs) established and communicated by Textile Exchange.

NOTE:

- 1) KPIs cover performance criteria that have been highlighted for specific attention from Textile Exchange. KPIs are identified based on normative criteria or expectations included in the certification body licensing contract with Textile Exchange but may not represent full conformance with normative criteria.

8.1.2

TE

A certification body found to be out of alignment with key performance indicators may be issued one of the following by Textile Exchange:

- a. Formal warning: A notice is issued to the certification body outlining the performance gap(s) and/or misconduct identified. The certification body may continue to offer its full suite of certification services, per the scope of its accreditation and license agreement.
- b. Sanction(s): The certification body’s license is limited as appropriate to protect the integrity of the system based on the identified performance gap(s) and/or misconduct. Possible limitations include, but are not limited to:
 - i. No new applicant organizations;
 - ii. No expansions of scope for specific organizations; and/or
 - iii. Limits on the issuance of transaction certificates. And
- c. Withdrawal of licensing: The certification body’s license contract with Textile Exchange is withdrawn, which disqualifies the certification body from accreditation.

NOTE:

- 1) Textile Exchange typically issues notices in a progressive manner, though the notice will depend on the severity of the identified performance gap(s) and/or misconduct, for example, a certification body’s license may be suspended without a formal warning or withdrawn without being preceded by a suspension.
- 2) Textile Exchange will copy the relevant accreditation body on notifications sent to an affected certification body.

8.1.3

TE

In response to a warning or suspension, the certification body shall take immediate action to correct its behavior, activity, or performance, and shall demonstrate/provide evidence of its alignment with the key performance indicators by the deadline stated in the communication from Textile Exchange.

8.1.4

TE

Textile Exchange may provide written notice based on the terms of the certification body’s licensing agreement that the agreement will be either withdrawn or will not be renewed in any of the following situations:

- a. Suspension or withdrawal of accreditation by the accreditation body;
- b. The certification body grace period for meeting accreditation criteria has expired and the certification body has not achieved accreditation;
- c. Identification of substantial issues by the accreditation body in the course of an assessment;

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- d. Identification of issues by Textile Exchange that the certification body cannot or will not address (for example, inability for the certification body to meet Textile Exchange data criteria);
 - e. Non-payment of fees owed to Textile Exchange (see TE-TXL-POL-701); and/or
 - f. Contract non-renewal or termination decision (not related to conformance issues) by either or both parties as permitted by the licensing contract.
-

Section 9: Suspension and withdrawal of accreditation

This section outlines the process and criteria to be followed when a certification body ceases to be licensed or accredited for Textile Exchange standards, whether that withdrawal is voluntary (i.e., the certification body's choice) or involuntary (i.e., imposed by either Textile Exchange or the accreditation body).

NOTE: Where the certification body's suspension or withdrawal of accreditation is limited (for example, to a specific standard or geographic scope), the criteria of this section apply to the affected scope of accreditation.

9.1. General criteria

9.1.1

AB

Within 14 calendar days of the date of receipt of a suspension or withdrawal notification from the accreditation body or Textile Exchange, the certification body shall inform all its affected parties (for example, subcontractors, affiliates, partners, and applicant and certified organizations) in writing of its accreditation status (i.e., suspension or pending withdrawal of accreditation), including the following information:

- a. The conditions and timelines of the suspension/withdrawal according to the official notification by the accreditation body or Textile Exchange (as applicable), including the anticipated reinstatement of certification services for suspensions only;
- b. Changes to the certification body's certification services and implications for the recipient of the suspension or withdrawal (for example, existing scope certificates shall not be expanded or renewed); and
- c. For applicant and certified organizations, available options for the transfer of scope certificates.

NOTE:

- 1) This criterion applies where the suspension or withdrawal is imposed by either the accreditation body or Textile Exchange.
- 2) Textile Exchange may approve a phase-out period to allow sufficient time for affected certified organizations to transfer their scope certificates to another accredited certification body. See 9.1.8.

9.1.2

TE

The certification body should include information about the organization's scope certificate and transaction certificate validity dates in its communication to certified organizations, where these are affected due to the certification body's suspension or withdrawal (see TE-TXL-POL-203).

9.1.3

TE

The certification body may make an arrangement with another certification body to recommend that organizations be transferred to the other certification body. Regardless of such an arrangement, the certification body shall accept each organization's choice of succeeding certification body.

NOTE:

- 1) See 5.19 for relevant criteria for the transfer of scope certificates.

9.1.4

TE

The certification body shall retain records of its communications with its affected parties (per 9.1.1) and shall share requested records with its accreditation body and/or Textile Exchange upon request.

9.1.5

TE

The certification body shall provide a copy of any public communication about its withdrawal to Textile Exchange for review prior to it being published or shared externally to ensure alignment of messaging.

9.1.6

The certification body whose accreditation has been withdrawn shall not issue or reissue scope certificates or extend the scope of a certificate in any way that requires additional auditing.

TE

9.1.7

TE

If a phase-out period is approved by Textile Exchange, the certification body shall continue to offer client management services during the agreed period, as permitted by the conditions of the withdrawal, including but not limited to issuing transaction certificates, authentication of certificates, unannounced audits, and investigation of complaints for all remaining active scope certificates.

NOTES:

- 1) A phase-out period is intended to reduce the impact of a certification withdrawal on certified organizations. The typical length of a phase-out period is 90 calendar days for an involuntary withdrawal and one year for a voluntary withdrawal. The certification body is expected to transfer all active scope certificates in cooperation with the certified organization and the succeeding certification body. Scope certificates that have not been successfully transferred within the phase-out period will be withdrawn.
- 2) A certification body in a phase-out period is typically permitted to issue transaction certificates only while it holds a valid accreditation.

9.1.8

TE

After the end of the phase-out period, the certification body shall immediately cease and desist from any inference that it is accredited to the Textile Exchange standard(s) from which its accreditation was withdrawn (voluntarily or involuntarily). Letterheads, website pages, email signatures, and all other promotional materials that refer to the certification body's accreditation must be immediately withdrawn or modified to accurately reflect the certification body's active scope of accreditation.

NOTE:

- 1) Textile Exchange may post a statement on the Textile Exchange website (<https://textileexchange.org/>) regarding the certification body's withdrawal. Textile Exchange will remove the certification body from our online certification body listing, or modify it as appropriate, and communicate general information about the certification body's withdrawal to all Textile Exchange certification bodies and to others upon request.

9.1.9

TE

Any Textile Exchange membership benefits provided to the certification body shall be revoked on the contract expiry or phase-out period end date (whichever comes first).

9.1.10

AB

Prior to reissuing a scope certificate previously issued by a certification body whose accreditation was withdrawn, the succeeding certification body shall either conduct a full audit of the organization and issue a new scope certificate with a new expiry date or conduct a transfer audit per 6.2 Transfer audits.

9.2. Suspension and involuntary withdrawal

The following criteria apply in the case of a suspension or involuntary withdrawal by the responsible accreditation body or by Textile Exchange, for one or more Textile Exchange standards and/or one or more specific geographic scopes (for example, specific countries), even if the suspension or withdrawal is under appeal.

NOTE: Where the certification body's suspension or withdrawal of accreditation is limited (for example, to a specific standard or geographic scope), the criteria of 9.2 apply to the affected scope of accreditation.

9.2.1

TE

A certification body undergoing suspension or withdrawal proceedings shall provide certification services according to the specific suspension or withdrawal conditions and timelines communicated by the accreditation body and/or Textile Exchange, which may include the inability to issue transaction certificates.

9.2.2

TE

The certification body shall not issue any new scope certificates (i.e., initial certification to a new organization), unless the certification decision was made prior to the notice of suspension or withdrawal.

9.2.3

AB

All requirements imposed by the accreditation body shall be met and should be discussed with the accreditation body directly. If there is any contradiction between the criteria of the accreditation body and those of Textile Exchange, those of the accreditation body shall take precedence and should be clarified with both the accreditation body and Textile Exchange.

9.2.4

AB

A suspended certification body shall only issue new scope certificates to existing organization(s) in the following cases, unless the terms of the suspension specify otherwise:

- a. For recertification (i.e., renewal for an existing organization);
 - b. To add products to a scope certificate where no additional auditing is required by the certification body or according to the relevant Textile Exchange normative document; and
 - c. To add independently certified subcontractors.
-

9.2.5

TE

A certification body whose accreditation has been involuntarily withdrawn may reapply for accreditation no less than 24 months following the official notice of withdrawal.

NOTE:

- 1) A certification body may reapply for licensing to become an authorized certification body by following the required application criteria (see 2.2.1).
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Appendix A: Nonconformities

This appendix describes the classification and management of nonconformities (NCs).

1. Critical nonconformities

Initial audit		Non-initial audit	
Timeline	Consequence if not closed	Timeline	Consequence if not closed
Prior to certification	Scope certificate shall not be issued	Immediate	Scope certificate shall be suspended
<p>Definition: Critical nonconformities represent serious failures to meet the fundamental principles of the standard, often involving illegal activities, fraud, or systemic failure.</p> <p>Requirements:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Critical nonconformities shall be reserved for criteria identified as critical in the standard or for intentional misrepresentation of certified claims or services. The auditor shall notify the certification body immediately when a critical nonconformity is identified. When a critical nonconformity is identified for a certified organization, the certification body shall take immediate action to suspend the scope certificate. In all cases, the suspension shall be enacted within a maximum of seven calendar days from the day the critical nonconformity was identified, even if the entire audit has not yet been completed. When a scope certificate includes multiple sites (including groups), and a site receives a critical nonconformity, the site may be suspended from the certificate to avoid suspension of the entire scope certificate. <p>NOTE: This criterion does not apply to critical nonconformities issued to a group management system.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> The certification body shall immediately notify Textile Exchange of all issued critical nonconformities, including details of the nonconformity. Details include scope certificate identification, the criterion, the date of the nonconformity, and a summary of findings, in addition to the farm name and region if applicable. The certification body shall notify the scope certificate holder, if held by another entity. An inaccurate claim or misrepresentation, by deliberate alteration of information, shall be issued as a critical nonconformity. Depending on the nature and severity of the nonconformity, the certification body may recommend that Textile Exchange issue a ban of the organization from certification to Textile Exchange standards. 			

2. Major nonconformities

Initial audit		Non-initial audit	
Timeline	Consequence if not closed	Timeline	Consequence if not closed
30 days from the audit (closing meeting) and prior to certification	Scope certificate shall not be issued	30 days from the audit (closing meeting) and prior to recertification	Scope certificate shall be suspended; for recertifications, scope certificate shall not be reissued
<p>Definition: Major nonconformities occur if, either alone or in combination with further nonconformities relating to other criteria, they could compromise the effectiveness of the system or lead to negative impacts if not addressed.</p> <p>Requirements:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Major nonconformities shall be issued for criteria that are indicated as major criteria in the standard; or Major nonconformities shall be issued where, either alone or in combination with further nonconformities, the nonconformity results in or may result in a fundamental or systematic failure to meet the objectives of the standard. This may be indicated by nonconformities that: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Continue over a long period of time; Are repeated or systematic; Affect a wide area; Affect the integrity of the product or the standard; or Are not corrected or adequately addressed once they are identified. 			

3. Minor nonconformities

Initial audit		Non-initial audit	
Timeline	Consequence if not closed	Timeline	Consequence if not closed
60 days from the audit (closing meeting)	Scope certificate shall not be issued or shall be suspended, as applicable	60 days from the audit (closing meeting)	Scope certificate shall be suspended; for recertifications, scope certificate shall not be reissued
<p>Definition: Minor nonconformities are limited or isolated deviations that do not pose an immediate risk.</p>			
<p>Requirements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Minor nonconformities shall be issued in the following circumstances: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. For criteria that are indicated as minor or contextual in the applicable standard, unless the certification body determines that the nonconformity is major based on the criteria above; or ii. Where the nonconformity is a temporary lapse, nonsystemic, limited in scale, or does not represent a fundamental failure to achieve the objectives of the standard. And b. Minor nonconformities should be closed with a correction before the certification decision, and corrective actions (if applicable) may be evaluated at the next surveillance audit. 			

4. Opportunity for improvement (OFI)

Initial audit		Non-initial audit	
Timeline	Consequence if not closed	Timeline	Consequence if not closed
None	None	None	None
<p>Definition: Opportunities for improvement (OFIs) relate to non-mandatory criteria that represent beneficial outcomes when followed.</p>			
<p>Requirements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. OFIs shall be issued for any non-mandatory criteria that are not met and that have been evaluated. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. This includes criteria identified in the standard as relating to leadership, where the organization has voluntarily elected to be evaluated. b. OFIs shall be issued using “should” language. c. The certification body is not required to follow up on OFIs. And d. The certification body shall ensure that OFIs do not represent consultancy (see ISO17065 3.2). 			

Appendix B: End notes

The procedures in this document were developed based on the ISEAL Code of Good Practice for Sustainability Systems.

The following referenced documents are indispensable for the application of this document and are to be used in conjunction as binding requirements wherever applicable. It is understood that any updated versions of these documents released from the relevant body will replace these references throughout these procedures, and the relevant certification and accreditation bodies shall conform and follow these updated versions in accordance with the timeline established by the relevant body. References to individual criteria within these documents refer to the version noted in this section.

NOTE: ISO/IEC standards are referred to with ISO followed by the number (for example, ISO17065) throughout this document.

- ISO/IEC 17011:2017: Conformity Assessment—General requirements for accreditation bodies accrediting conformity assessment bodies
- ISO/IEC 17065:2012: Conformity Assessment—Requirements for bodies certifying products, processes and services
- ISO/IEC 17021-1:2015: Conformity Assessment—Requirements for bodies providing audit and certification of management systems—Part 1: Requirements
- ISO 9001:2015: Quality Management Systems—Requirements
- ISO 19011:2018: Guidelines for Auditing Management Systems
- IAF MD 12:2016: Accreditation Assessment of Conformity Assessment Bodies with Activities in Multiple Countries
- The applicable Textile Exchange standard (for example, Organic Content Standard or Recycled Content Standard), its certification procedures, and its guidance documents (for instance, User Manual)
- Remote Auditing Good Practices, ISEAL Guidance v1.0, June 2021