



M A L A Y S I A N S U S T A I N A B L E P A L M O I L

INTEGRITY ASSESSMENT PROCEDURES

LIST OF REVISION

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ACRONYM

AB	Accreditation Body
ACB	Accredited Certification Body
BOT	Board of Trustees
C	Correction
CA	Corrective Action
CAR	Corrective Action Request
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
DRC	Dispute Resolution Committee
DSM	Department of Standards Malaysia
HQ	Headquarters
LA	Lead Assessor
MSPO	Malaysian Sustainable Palm Oil
NC	Non-Conformity
OFI	Opportunity For Improvement
RCA	Root Cause Analysis

DEFINITION

Accreditation Body (AB)	The organisation that undertakes the accreditation of Certification Bodies.
Accredited Certification Body (ACB)	Certification Body that has obtained accreditation by the Accreditation Body to undertake the MSPO certification assessment and issues a certificate.
Announced Assessment	Assessment or evaluation conducted within fourteen (14) working days to the organisation being assessed.
Assessment	The process of determining whether an organisation fulfils requirements related to its technical competence.
Certificate Holder	Organisation that is officially granted a certificate by an Accredited Certification Body, signifying they have met the requisite competence standards.
Closing Meeting	A meeting held at the end of an assessment to present the team's findings and conclusions to the assessed organisation and relevant management, ensuring clarity on results and next steps.
Conflict of Interest	A situation where impartiality could be compromised by a person or organisation's relationships, interests, or obligations.
Confidentiality	Property that information is not made available or disclosed to unauthorised individuals, entities, or processes.
Correction	Action to eliminate a detected non-conformity.
Corrective Action	Action to eliminate the cause of a nonconformity and to prevent recurrence.
Dispute Resolution Committee (DRC)	An independent committee established by the Board of Trustees of the MSPO to consider and resolve any types of disputes specified under Dispute Resolution Procedure.
Impartiality	Presence of objectivity. Objectivity means decisions are based on evidence, not influenced by other interests or pressures.
Integrity Assessment	An assessment conducted by the scheme owner or its appointed technical expert to monitor the ACBs MSPO Certification audit activities based on risk-based assessment.

DEFINITION

Lead Assessor	The person appointed to lead an assessment or audit team, responsible for planning, conducting, and reporting the assessment in accordance with the applicable standard and procedures.
Non-Conformity	Non-fulfilment of a requirement.
Observer	Individuals who accompany the assessment team but do not influence or participate in the assessment activities.
Opening Meeting	A meeting held at the start of an assessment to confirm the plan, introduce the team, explain the objectives, scope, and methods, and ensure mutual understanding between the assessment team and the assessed organisation.
Opportunity For Improvement	A suggestion or recommendation identified during an assessment that could enhance the effectiveness or efficiency of a process, system, or practice, even though it currently meets requirements.
Recognition Agreement	A formal, documented agreement between MSPO (as the Scheme Owner) and the Accredited Certification Bodies (ACBs) involved in conformity assessment or certification, outlining rights, duties, and conditions that shall be fulfilled.
Risk Assessment	The overall process of risk identification, risk analysis, and risk evaluation, which includes recognising potential risks that could affect objectives, understand their nature, sources, and level, and compare risk levels against established criteria to determine acceptability.
Suspension	Putting temporary restriction in place for ACBs to conduct new certification audits (Stage 1 and Stage 2) and Recertification audits until the suspension is lifted. The ACBs shall take necessary corrective action not exceeding 180 days to lift the suspension. Failing which, the agreement will be terminated.
Unannounced Assessment	Assessment or evaluation conducted within three (3) working days to the organisation being assessed.
Withdrawal	ACB will not be allowed to conduct any further audits with immediate effect. The ACBs need to notify its clients and Accreditation Body (AB) within 2 working days from the date of termination. All certificates issued by the terminated ACB will remain valid until the next surveillance or recertification audit, whichever comes first.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Malaysian Sustainable Palm Oil (MSPO), as the scheme owner of the MSPO Certification Scheme, is responsible for ensuring the credibility, consistency, and integrity of scheme implementation. This is achieved by ensuring that all scheme operations conform to the MSPO standards, applicable national regulatory requirements, and relevant international certification principles.

Accredited Certification Bodies (ACBs) are key implementers of the MSPO Certification Scheme. To maintain confidence in certification outcomes, MSPO conducts performance monitoring activities on ACBs, including Integrity Assessments.

An Integrity Assessment is an independent evaluation conducted by MSPO or its appointed personnel to verify that certification activities performed by ACBs for MSPO certification are consistent and in conformity with applicable MSPO certification scheme requirements. The assessment focuses on the adequacy, consistency, and conformity of MSPO audit implementation.

The Integrity Assessment is separate and distinct from accreditation assessments conducted by the Department of Standards Malaysia (DSM). Accreditation assessments are conducted to determine ACB competence against ISO/IEC 17021 and/or ISO/IEC 17065, which address organisational system requirements, impartiality, and technical capability.

While accreditation assessments provide system-level assurance and international recognition, Integrity Assessments provide scheme-specific operational oversight. Both mechanisms are complementary and support MSPO's mandate to uphold the integrity, reliability, and international credibility of the MSPO Certification Scheme.

NOTE : *This procedure operationalises the requirements defined in Integrity Assessment Guidelines document published by the MSPO.*

2. OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the integrity assessment are to:

- a) Verify consistency and conformity of certification activities conducted by Accredited Certification Bodies (ACBs) with MSPO certification Scheme requirements;
- b) Safeguard the impartiality, credibility, and integrity of the MSPO certification process; and
- c) Identify opportunities for improvement in certification practices to enhance the effectiveness of scheme implementation.

3. SCOPE

This document specifies the requirements and processes for conducting Integrity Assessments of ACBs operating under the Malaysian Sustainable Palm Oil (MSPO) Certification Scheme. The Integrity Assessment is established by the Malaysian Sustainable Palm Oil (MSPO) and is limited to activities necessary to verify that certification processes performed by ACBs conform to the MSPO Certification Scheme requirements.

The assessment is conducted against the relevant requirements of the MSPO Certification Scheme, with the objective of evaluating conformity with MSPO requirements. Applicable standards and MSPO scheme requirements are applied as the reference framework for assessing the performance and competence of ACBs. This assessment is intended to complement, and not replace, the accreditation assessments conducted by the DSM.

3.1 Integrity Assessment Scope

MSPO, as the scheme owner of the Malaysian Sustainable Palm Oil (MSPO) Certification Scheme, shall define and implement the scope of Integrity Assessments to provide confidence in the competence, consistency, and integrity of certification activities carried out under the scheme.

3.2 Applicable Standards and Scheme Requirements

The Integrity Assessment shall evaluate certification activities of ACBs against:

- a) Applicable requirements of ISO/IEC 17021 and/or ISO/IEC 17065 relevant to certification of management systems and/or product.
- b) Applicable MSPO Certification Scheme documents, MSPO guidelines, procedures and guidance documents, requirements via MSPO official circulars, emails, memos or notices.

NOTE : *ISO/IEC 17011 is applied as the reference framework for the development and implementation of the Integrity Assessment procedures and does not constitute an accreditation assessment.*

3.3 Review of Certification Records

The assessment shall include review of relevant records, including

- a) Past MSPO detailed audit reports covering full certification cycle, including initial certification up to recertification, and any special audits, follow-up audits, or additional assessments conducted during the cycle, where applicable.
- b) Certification decision and related justification
- c) Certification files and records applicable to the selected certificate holder(s).

3.4 Subjects of Integrity Assessment

- 3.4.1 The Integrity Assessment shall be conducted for all Accredited Certification Bodies (ACBs) operating under the MSPO Certification Scheme.
- 3.4.2 Findings identified during the Integrity Assessment shall be attributed to the ACB, as the ACB is responsible for planning, conducting, and making certification decisions for MSPO certification audits. Findings shall not be attributed to the certificate holder.
- 3.4.3 The Integrity Assessment shall assess the ACB's conformity with MSPO certification scheme requirements by verifying:
- a) The implementation and effectiveness of the ACBS's audit processes and certification decision-making, including impartiality.
 - b) The consistency and traceability between audit evidence, audit conclusion, and certification decisions
 - c) The overall conformity of the ACB's certification activities with MSPO certification scheme requirements i.e., certification planning and preparation on-site audit execution, audit reporting, use of MSPO logo and certification mark, and complaint handling.

3.5 Integrity Assessment Methodology

3.5.1 General

- 3.5.1.1 The Integrity Assessment shall focus on the ACB's certification activities i.e., audit planning, audit conduct, audit reporting, and certification decision-making, and shall not constitute an accreditation or accreditation-related decision.
- 3.5.1.2 Unless determined otherwise through a risk-based assessment, the Integrity Assessment shall be conducted on-site at the MSPO certificate holder's premises.

3.5.2 Assessment Scope and Evidence Collection

The Integrity Assessment shall include, at a minimum:

- a) Verification of audit activities performed by the ACB, including how audit evidence supports audit conclusions;
- b) Review relevant documents and records, such as audit plans, audit reports, non-conformity records, corrective action evaluations, and certification decisions; and
- c) Interviews with relevant personnel, where necessary to confirm consistency between documented information, audit implementation, and certification outcomes.

3.5.3 Announced Integrity Assessment and Risk-based Approach

- 3.5.3.1 An announced integrity assessment may be conducted where prior notification is appropriate to ensure availability of personnel, records, or facilities for the assessment.
- 3.5.3.2 The Accredited Certification Body (ACB) and the Certificate Holder shall be notified at least fourteen (14) working days prior to the commencement of the assessment.
- 3.5.3.3 The scope, depth, and sampling of the assessment shall be determined using risk-based approach specified in Clause 5 of the Risk Classification and Sampling Methodology.

3.5.4 Unannounced Integrity Assessment

- 3.5.4.1 MSPO may conduct an Unannounced Integrity Assessment where additional assurance is required based on risk or emerging concerns such as serious incidents or adverse events (e.g. environmental, social, product integrity, traceability issues etc.)
- 3.5.4.2 The assessment shall be conducted without prior notice to the certificate holder.
- 3.5.4.3 For logistical and access purposes, the Accredited Certification Body (ACB) may be notified up to forty-eight (48) hours or without prior notice. Such notification shall not be considered advance notice and shall not compromise the unannounced nature of the assessment.

3.6 Stakeholder Consultation Process

3.6.1 General

As part of the Integrity Assessment, MSPO may conduct stakeholder consultation, where appropriate, to verify the consistency, credibility, and integrity of certification activities performed by Accredited Certification Bodies (ACBs). Stakeholder consultation shall be conducted in accordance with the scope and objectives of the assessment.

3.6.2 Conduct of Stakeholder Consultation (If necessary)

Stakeholder consultation may include, but is not limited to:

- a) MSPO certificate holders under assessment;
- b) Complainants, appellants, or other parties providing feedback relevant to the MSPO certificate holder(s);
- c) Regulatory authorities or accreditation-related bodies, where relevant;
- d) Stakeholders previously consulted or sampled by the ACB during MSPO certification audits;
- e) Relevant government departments or agencies involved in land administration, environmental management, labour, or oil palm-related operations at national, regional, or MSPO certificate holder level;
- f) Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) active in social or environmental matters relevant to the MSPO certificate holder(s), where applicable
- g) Representatives of indigenous peoples and local communities residing in or around the vicinity of the MSPO certificate holder's operations, where applicable;
- h) Neighbouring landowners adjacent to the MSPO certificate holder's operations;
- i) Labour organisations, workers' representatives, or plantation workers' unions relevant to the MSPO certificate holder(s); and
- j) Contractors or service providers engaged in the operations of the MSPO certificate holder(s), where relevant.

3.6.3 Requirements for Stakeholder Information

Information obtained through stakeholder consultation shall:

- a) Be evaluated objectively;
- b) Be used as supporting information for verification activities and assessment conclusions; and
- c) Be handled in accordance with MSPO confidentiality and impartiality requirements.

4. GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

4.1 Confidentiality

Personnel involved in the Integrity Assessment shall maintain confidentiality to ensure that all information obtained during the assessment is protected from unauthorised disclosure. This shall apply to MSPO personnel, appointed assessors, ACBs representatives, certificate holders and any parties involved in the assessment process.

4.1.1 Confidentiality Obligations of Assessment Personal

Personnel involved in the Integrity assessment appointed by MSPO shall:

- 4.1.1.1 Treat all information obtained or generated during the Integrity Assessment as confidential;
- 4.1.1.2 Not disclose confidential information to any unauthorised party without prior written authorisation from MSPO;
- 4.1.1.3 Use confidential information solely for the purpose of conducting the Integrity Assessment; and
- 4.1.1.4 Ensure that records, notes, and assessment reports are securely handled, stored, and transmitted in accordance with MSPO confidentiality requirements.

4.1.2 Exceptions to Confidentiality

Confidential information obtained or generated during Integrity Assessment activities may be disclosed only under the following conditions:

- 4.1.2.1 When disclosure is required by applicable laws or regulatory authorities, and such disclosure is approved or directed by MSPO as the scheme owner, where applicable.
- 4.1.2.2 In cases where serious legal non-compliance related to MSPO Scheme requirements is identified, and disclosure is necessary to relevant competent authorities in accordance with applicable laws and MSPO procedures.
- 4.1.2.3 Assessors appointed by MSPO may take photographs and copy of documents as part of assessment evidence collection, unless such activities are restricted by legal, security, or confidentiality requirements of the certificate holder, or applicable laws.

NOTE : Any disclosure under this clause shall be limited to the extent necessary and handled in accordance with MSPO confidentiality and impartiality requirements.

4.2 Impartiality and Conflict of Interest

Personnel involved in the Integrity assessment appointed by MSPO shall:

- 4.2.1 Declare any actual, potential, or perceived conflict of interest prior to acceptance of an assessment assignment;
- 4.2.2 Not participate in an Integrity Assessment where their impartiality could be compromised;
- 4.2.3 Not have been involved in certification or consultancy activities related to the ACB or MSPO certificate holder being assessed, within a period of six (6) to two (2) years shall be observed, depending on the outcome of the risk assessments conducted by MSPO; and
- 4.2.4 Sign a declaration of impartiality and conflict of interest prior to undertaking any assessment activities.

4.3 Transparency

Subject to confidentiality requirements, MSPO may disclose information related to Integrity Assessments for transparency purposes, including:

- a) The status of Integrity Assessments conducted;
- b) Information on assessment outcomes; and
- c) Actions taken in relation to scheme oversight and improvement.

4.4 Disclosure to Relevant Parties

Integrity Assessment findings and reports may be disclosed:

- a) To the ACBs concerned;
- b) To the AB, for accreditation related consideration;
- c) To statutory or regulatory authorities, where required by law or where serious legal non-compliance is identified; and
- d) To other parties, where such disclosure is authorised by MSPO and consistent with scheme rules.

4.5 Publicly Available Information

MSPO may make publicly available, where appropriate:

- a) Information on recognised ACBs;
- b) Information on suspension, termination, or other scheme level actions resulting from Integrity Assessments, including scope and effective dates.
- c) Any publicly disclosed information shall be factual, accurate, and limited to what is necessary to maintain transparency and confidence in the MSPO Certification Scheme.

4.6 Resources Requirements

Personnel involved in Integrity Assessment activities demonstrate appropriate competence, impartiality, and adherence to confidentiality requirements. Roles and responsibilities described in this section are to support consistency, transparency, and credibility of Integrity Assessments conducted under the MSPO Certification Scheme.

4.6.1 Responsible Personnel Assignment

4.6.1.1 Lead Assessor

For each Integrity Assessment, MSPO appoints a Lead Assessor to coordinate and lead the assessment activities in accordance with this guidance to:

- a) Plan and coordinate Integrity Assessment activities in line with the approved scope and methodology
- b) Lead and manage the assessment team, including assessors, technical experts, and observers, where applicable;
- c) Ensure assessment activities are carried out consistently with MSPO Scheme requirements and applicable ISO/IEC principles;
- d) Manage risks related to impartiality and conflict of interest within the assessment team;
- e) Chair opening and closing meetings;
- f) Consolidate assessment findings; and
- g) Prepare and submit the Integrity Assessment report to MSPO.

4.6.1.2 Observer

The integrity assessment shall be observed by a representative of the MSPO officers and ACBs representative, subject to the scheme owner approval.

- a) Observe assessment activities without influencing or interfering;
- b) Refrain from participating in assessment decision making; and
- c) Comply with confidentiality and impartiality requirements.

4.6.1.3 Technical Expert

The integrity assessment shall involve by a one or more Technical Experts where necessary, subject to the scheme owner approval.

- a) Provide technical input within their area of competence;
- b) Perform their role under the direction of the Lead Assessor;
- c) Refrain from making independent assessment decisions or raising findings; and
- d) Comply with confidentiality and conflict of interest requirements.

4.6.1.4 Technical Reviewer

MSPO may designate a Technical Reviewer to provide an independent review of Integrity Assessment reports.

- a) Review reports for completeness, technical consistency, and clarity;
- b) Verify that findings are supported by objective evidence; and
- c) Ensure alignment with MSPO Scheme requirements.
- d) Review nonconformities for appropriateness and consistency;
- e) Confirm alignment with MSPO Scheme requirements; and
- f) Provide feedback to MSPO, where necessary.

4.6.1.5 Program Manager

The Scheme Owner shall designate a Program Manager to oversee the overall management, governance, and decision making related to the Integrity Assessment process.

- a) Review and approve the final Integrity Assessment report prior to issuance;
- b) Make decisions related to suspension, continuation, or escalation actions arising from Integrity Assessment findings;
- c) Approve and oversee budget allocation related to Integrity Assessment activities, where applicable;
- d) Serve as the authorised signatory for final Integrity Assessment reports and related official decisions; and
- e) Provide direction and oversight to ensure alignment with MSPO Scheme requirements and organisational governance.

4.6.1.6 Dispute Resolution Committee (DRC)

- a) The Dispute Resolution Committee (DRC) is an independent body established by the MSPO Board of Trustees to review and resolve disputes submitted under the MSPO Dispute Resolution Procedure (MSPODRP03).
- b) The DRC reviews disputes involving MSPO's roles as Scheme Owner, disputes related to the MSPO Certification Scheme, and disputes arising from Integrity Assessment outcomes.
- c) The Committee operates independently of the activities under dispute and ensures impartial, evidence-based decision making.
- d) Key functions include:
 - i. Operate independently of the assessment activities under dispute;
 - ii. Review dispute submissions objectively and based on documented evidence;
 - iii. Provide recommendations or decisions in accordance with MSPO procedures; and
 - iv. Support a fair, transparent, and documented dispute resolution process.
- e) For full requirements, processes, timelines, and detailed procedural steps, all matters related to the DRC shall be referred to the official MSPO Dispute Resolution Procedure (MSPODRP03).

4.6.2 Competence Requirement of Lead Assessor

The integrity assessment shall be conducted by a Lead Assessor who shall demonstrate competence in auditing management systems, certification processes, and applicable certification requirements. The Lead Assessor shall possess knowledge of the MSPO Standards and MSPO Certification Scheme documents and shall meet the following requirements:

4.6.2.1 Education : Post-secondary education, college or university diploma OR degree in one of the following: Agriculture; Science & Technology (e.g. Environmental Sciences, Life Sciences, Geological Sciences, Natural Sciences); Engineering, Process Technology; Energy Management, Quality Management; Social Sciences and/or Anthropology; Business Management; or other relevant fields.

4.6.2.2 Work experience : At least ten (10) years of auditing experience in oil palm sectors

4.6.2.3 Training : Successfully completed the scheme owner endorsed awareness training on MS 2530 series and ongoing participation in training and calibration sessions to maintain competency.

NOTE : *The scheme owner endorsed awareness training certificate shall be valid for a period of five (5) years. Lead Assessors shall re-attend the awareness training prior to the expiry of the certificate, or whenever there are revisions or changes to the MSPO Standard, in order to maintain competence.*

4.6.2.4 Specific Qualification for Auditing Environment, HCV, GHG, OSH or Social Elements : Minimum 5 years of auditing experience in the elements of Environment, HCV, GHG, OSH or social AND attended related awareness training endorsed by the scheme owner.

5. RISK CLASSIFICATION AND SAMPLING METHODOLOGY

Risk Category	Risk Criteria
1 - Low Risk	• Less than 100 MSPO Certificates issued • ACBs with other sustainability certification scheme accreditation • Experienced permanent auditors (more than 7 years of auditing experience) • Having clear operational and management segmentation to avoid impartiality • Consist of more freelance auditors
2 - Medium Risk	• Less than 200 MSPO Certificates issued • ACBs only operate MSPO certification scheme • Consist of more freelance auditors • Vague separation in certification decision-making process and other operations
3 - High Risk	• More than 200 MSPO Certificates issued • New ACB's (less than 3 years in operation) • New auditors (less than 2 years of auditing experience) • Impartiality concerns: Certification decision-maker involving in marketing and/or other conflicting activities with the organisation • Complaint from stakeholders

Low Risk : An Integrity Assessment may be deferred within a given year based on documented risk justification.

Medium Risk : An Integrity Assessment may be conducted within the year, based on the identified risks.

High Risk : An Integrity Assessment shall be conducted or may be triggered at any time within the year, based on the identified risks

NOTE :

1. Risk classification assessment is subject to MSPO annual review of the ACBs performance.

2. The ACB shall be classified with the higher risk category if the risk classification criteria fall under two different categories.

5.1 Identification of Risk Criteria

In identifying ACBs for integrity assessment, MSPO may consider one or more of the following:

5.1.1 Risk Profile : Which refers to the ACB's overall risk rating established through MSPO monitoring activities, including identified integrity risk factors.

5.1.2 Audit Performance : Including the consistency and adequacy of audit findings, the alignment between objective evidence, non-conformities, and audit conclusions, as well as the consistency of certification decisions across similar certification scopes.

5.1.3 Compliance History : Including any past compliance concerns or recurring issues related to the conduct of MSPO audits.

5.1.4 Certification Impact : Including the number of active MSPO certifications held by the ACB and its involvement in group certification or complex certification scopes.

5.1.5 Operational Complexity : Including the presence of multiple operational locations or branches, reliance on freelance or contract auditors, and the complexity of audit review and certification decision-making structures.

5.1.6 Change Factors : Including certification transfer activities, expansion of MSPO certification operations, or changes in key technical, review, or decision-making personnel.

5.1.7 Operational Readiness : Including active accreditation status, active MSPO certification activities, and the ACB's readiness to support integrity assessment activities.

5.2 Application of Risk Criteria for Integrity Assessment Coverage

MSPO shall apply a risk-based approach, using the risk criteria identified in Clause 5.1, to determine:

- a) Whether an ACB is subject to an Integrity Assessment;
- b) The frequency and scope of the assessment; and
- c) Whether the assessment is conducted on an announced or unannounced basis.

NOTE : *The selection of an announced or unannounced approach shall be proportionate to the identified risk and applied in a manner that maintains the objectivity, effectiveness, and integrity of the assessment process.*

5.3 Determination Integrity Assessment Man-day

5.3.1 Assessment Team Composition

The Integrity Assessment shall be conducted by a Lead Assessor appointed by MSPO. Where necessary, the assessment team may include Technical Expert(s) appointed by MSPO. MSPO shall also assign observer(s) to the assessment.

5.3.2 Determination of Man-days

The duration and allocation of man-days for the Integrity Assessment shall be determined in accordance with the minimum man-day requirements specified in the applicable MSPO Scheme documents, taking into account the scope, complexity, and objectives of the assessment.

5.3.3 Adjustment of Man-days

Any reduction or increase from the prescribed minimum man-day requirements shall be supported by documented justification from the Lead Assessor and shall be subject to review and approval by MSPO prior to the conduct of the assessment.

6. CONDUCT OF INTEGRITY ASSESSMENT

6.1 Initiation of Assessment

6.1.1 *Assessment Programme and Notification*

- 6.1.1.1 The ACB shall inform the certificate holder, obtain consent, and make necessary arrangements for the assessment.
- 6.1.1.2 Any concerns regarding the proposed assessment shall be promptly communicated to MSPO for evaluation. MSPO may, where justified, amend or reschedule the assessment.

6.1.2 *Documentation and Access*

- 6.1.2.1 Assessors may request all relevant documentation related to MSPO audits from the ACB i.e., audit reports, stakeholder list, audit plan, auditors competency
- 6.1.2.2 MSPO or appointed assessors shall be provided full access to audit-related information, including sites, documents, systems, and personnel.
- 6.1.2.3 Failure to provide required access or documentation may constitute a formal warning letter or sanction.

6.2 Preparation for Assessment

6.2.1 *Assessment Plan*

- a) An assessment plan shall be issued to the Accredited Certification Body (ACB) and the relevant certificate holder, detailing the scope of the integrity assessment, assessment agenda, personnel involved, assessment methodology, and planned duration.
- b) The ACB shall accept and cooperate with the implementation of the assessment plan. Failure or refusal to do so may be subject to action in accordance with applicable MSPO procedures and relevant accreditation requirements.

6.2.2 *Fees and Logistical Arrangements*

- a) No fees shall be charged to the Accredited Certification Body (ACB) or the Certificate Holder for the conduct of Integrity Assessments. MSPO reserves the right to introduce applicable fees in the future; any such fees shall be communicated to the ACBs in advance.
- b) Where additional assessment activities are required as a result of non-conformities attributable to the ACB, including on-site verification, all associated costs shall be borne by the ACB.
- c) The certificate holder may, where necessary, assist in facilitating logistical arrangements, including transportation or access to field locations.

6.3 Assessment Execution

6.3.1 Opening Meeting

An opening meeting shall be conducted prior to the commencement of the MSPO Integrity Assessment.

6.3.1.1 Purpose of the Opening Meeting

The purpose of the opening meeting is to:

- a) Confirm agreement of all participants on the assessment plan, including timing, scope, and assessment activities.
- b) Introduce the assessment team members i.e., appointed personnel, MSPO observers, ACB representative(s), and clarify their respective roles and responsibilities.
- c) Ensure that all planned assessment activities can be effectively performed.

6.3.1.2 Participants

- a) The opening meeting shall be held with the ACB's representatives and, where appropriate, personnel responsible for the functions or process being assessed.
- b) Other participants such as observers, guides, or interpreters may attend, where applicable and their roles shall be explained.
- c) All relevant participants, excluding the certificate holder's staff and management team, shall be notified in advance of the MSPO assessment team composition prior to the commencement of the assessment.

6.3.1.3 Conduct of the Meeting

- a) The opening meeting shall be chaired by the Lead Assessor.
- b) The level of detail provided during the meeting shall be appropriate to the ACB's familiarity with the MSPO Integrity Assessment process.
- c) For formal assessments, attendance records shall be maintained.

6.3.1.4 Information to be confirmed

Prior to the commencement of the integrity assessment, the assessment team shall confirm the following with the ACB, as applicable:

- a) The assessment objectives, scope, assessment criteria, and applicable normative references.
- b) The assessment agenda, including the arrangement of interim meetings (where applicable), closing meeting, and any agreed changes to the planned schedule.
- c) The formal communication channels to be used between the assessment team and the ACB during the assessment.
- d) The language to be used for the conduct of the assessment and related communications.
- e) The arrangements for keeping the ACB informed of assessment progress throughout the assessment activities.
- f) The availability of necessary resources, including access to relevant documents, sites, systems, and personnel.
- g) Confidentiality and information security requirements applicable to the assessment.
- h) Health, safety, security, and emergency arrangements relevant to the assessment team.
- i) Any on-site or operational activities that may affect the conduct or timing of the assessment.
- j) The method of reporting assessment findings, including the classification of non-conformities as Major or Minor.
- k) The conditions under which the assessment may be suspended or terminated, including force majeure circumstances.
- l) The mechanisms available for feedback, complaints, or appeals related to the assessment findings or conclusions.

6.3.1.5 Opportunity for Clarification

The ACB shall be given the opportunity to seek clarification or raise questions related to the assessment process during the opening meeting.

6.3.2 Closing Meeting

The integrity assessment shall conclude with a closing meeting, conducted as follows, where applicable:

- 6.3.2.1 A closing meeting shall be held with the Accredited Certification Body (ACB) without the participation of the certificate holder, prior to any closing remarks with the certificate holder.
- 6.3.2.2 The assessment team shall present the assessment conclusions, explain the findings with reference to objective evidence, and advise on any required follow-up actions.
- 6.3.2.3 The ACB may seek clarification; however, the closing meeting shall not be used to debate or negotiate the assessment conclusions. Any closing remarks involving the certificate holder shall exclude ACB- related findings.

6.3.3 Termination of Assessment

An integrity assessment may be terminated, in whole or in part, under the following circumstances

6.3.3.1 Non-compliance with applicable policies.

Where there is significant non-compliance with MSPO requirements, assessment procedures, or applicable policies that compromise the integrity or validity of the assessment

6.3.3.2 Threat to Safety and Security

Where conditions pose a threat to personal security, health, or safety of the assessment team, certificate holder, or relevant parties.

6.3.3.3 Unresolved disputes

Where serious disagreements or disputes arise that cannot be resolved through appropriate channels and materially affect the conduct of the assessment or the achievement of its objectives.

6.3.3.4 Unavoidable Assessor Unavailability

Where assessors are unable to continue the assessment due to compassionate leave, medical reasons, or other unavoidable emergencies.

6.3.3.5 Force Majeure Events

Where natural disasters or extreme weather conditions e.g. floods, earthquakes, or prolonged heavy rainfall preventing the assessment from being conducted effectively.

6.3.3.6 Unethical Conduct or Fraud

Where there is objective evidence of unethical conduct or fraud, including intentional concealment of information, falsification or manipulation of records or evidence, or obstruction of the assessment process, which shall result in the immediate suspension of the Recognition Agreement.

NOTE : *Any termination of an integrity assessment shall be documented, justified, and communicated to the relevant parties, including the reasons for termination and any subsequent actions to be taken.*

6.4 Findings and Non-Conformance (NC)

The integrity assessment may result in one or more of the following findings. Findings shall be classified and graded based on their severity, nature, and impact on the integrity, credibility, and reliability of the MSPO Certification Scheme.

6.4.1 Major Non-Conformity (Major NC)

Major Non-Conformity is a significant failure to comply with MSPO integrity requirements that adversely affects, or has the potential to adversely affect, the integrity, credibility, or reliability of the certification process. A Major NC shall result in the suspension and/or termination of the ACB's Recognition Agreement and shall be raised where one or more of the following conditions apply:

- 6.4.1.1 Systemic failure in the implementation of MSPO requirements, including repeated non-conformities against the same normative reference for the same subject across assessments, or persistence of a non-conformity despite previously implemented corrective actions.
- 6.4.1.2 Significant impact on the integrity of the certification scheme, including but not limited to infringement of human rights, significant environmental damage (including substantial ecosystem impact), breach of impartiality, or breakdown in the supply chain.
- 6.4.1.3 The identification of five (5) or more instances of non-compliance within the same Principle indicates a significant failure of the ACB's auditing system and shall necessitate escalation to a Major Non-Conformity (NC).

- 6.4.1.4 Compromise of audit integrity or certification decision-making, including actions or deficiencies that may affect the validity or reliability of assessment outcomes.
- 6.4.1.5 A repeated or recurrent Non Conformity (NC) refers to an NC raised against the same normative reference or relating to the same specific subject matter as a previously raised NC, regardless of whether the previous NC was open or closed.
- 6.4.1.6 Failure to close a Minor NC within the prescribed timeframe shall result in its escalation to a Major NC.

6.4.2 Minor Non-Conformity (Minor NC)

Minor non-conformity is an isolated or non-systemic lapse or deviation from MSPO Scheme requirements that does not significantly affect the integrity of the certification scheme but requires corrective action. A Minor NC shall be raised where one or more of the following conditions apply:

- 6.4.2.1 Isolated or non-systemic failure in implementation of MSPO scheme requirements with limited impact on scheme integrity.
- 6.4.2.2 Non-conformity with contained impact that does not pose a material risk to the credibility or certification outcomes.
- 6.4.2.3 Minor deviation that can be corrected through localised corrective action without affecting overall system performance.

6.4.3 Opportunity for Improvement (OFI)

An opportunity for Improvement is a finding where the requirement is met, but the Integrity Assessment team identifies opportunities to strengthen the effectiveness or robustness of implementation based on professional judgement.

- 6.4.3.1 Improvement could enhance the effectiveness, efficiency, or robustness of the ACB's processes.
- 6.4.3.2 Existing practices are acceptable but could be strengthened through improved documentation, clearer procedures, or enhanced controls.
- 6.4.3.3 Proactive improvement may prevent potential non-conformities or reduce the risk of recurrence.

- 6.4.3.4 Recommendations are identified based on the professional judgement, experience, and knowledge of the Integrity Assessment team to support continual improvement and alignment with MSPO integrity expectations.
- 6.4.3.5 An observation may be raised based on conditions identified during the Integrity Assessment that did not occur during the ACB audit. This type of observation shall be treated as an Opportunity for Improvement (OFI) and shall be followed up by the ACB.

6.4.4 Suspension and Termination of Accredited Certification Body (ACB)

6.4.4.1 Suspension

- a) An Accredited Certification Body (ACB) under suspension shall not conduct any new certification audits (Stage 1 or Stage 2) or recertification audits until the suspension is lifted.
- b) The suspension status will be publicly announced on the MSPO website, in accordance with MSPO transparency requirements, once the suspension notification has been formally issued to the ACB.
- c) The ACB shall notify its clients and its Accreditation Body (AB) of the suspension decision within two (2) working days from the date the suspension notice is issued by MSPO.
- d) The ACB shall complete and close all major corrective actions within a maximum of 180 days from the date of suspension. Failure to do so shall result in termination of the Recognition Agreement.

6.4.4.2 Termination

An ACB subject to termination shall cease all certification activities immediately.

- a) The termination status will be publicly announced on the MSPO website, in accordance with MSPO transparency requirements, once the termination notification has been formally issued to the ACB.
- b) The ACB shall notify its clients and Accreditation Body (AB) within two (2) working days of the termination decision.
- c) Certificates issued by the terminated ACB shall remain valid until the next scheduled surveillance or recertification audit, whichever occurs first.
- d) A cooling-off period of two (2) years shall apply, subject to MSPO's risk assessment, before an ACB may be considered for reinstatement.

6.4.5 ACB Response and Corrective Action

The ACB shall submit a written response within 90 days from the report submission date. Failure to meet this timeline may result in escalation of a Minor Non-Conformity to a Major Non-Conformity or recommendation for suspension in the case of a Major Non-Conformity.

6.4.5.1 Corrective Action Plan

The ACB shall submit a Corrective Action Plan that includes:

- a) Root cause analysis for each finding
- b) Correction of the finding
- c) Corrective actions shall be implemented

6.4.5.2 Submission of Evidence

The ACB shall submit supporting evidence to demonstrate the implementation of corrective actions. Evidence may include documents, records, revised procedures, screenshots, etc.

6.4.6 Extension of Corrective Action

In exceptional circumstances where the ACB is unable to complete corrective actions for a Major NC within the specified timeframe, the ACB may request for an extension. The request shall be submitted in writing and must include:

6.4.6.1 Justification of Extension

Valid reasons why the corrective actions cannot be completed on time, including supporting evidence where applicable.

6.4.6.2 MSPO Review and Approval

MSPO shall review the extension request and decide whether to approve or reject the extension based on the justification, risk impact, and the ACB's history of compliance. The decision shall be communicated in writing.

6.5 Complaint Submission

Complaints related to integrity matters under the MSPO Certification Scheme shall be submitted to MSPO through the e-MSPO system under complaint portal. Complaints may be lodged by stakeholders, including but not limited to certificate holders, ACBs, or other interested parties, and must be supported by relevant and verifiable information.

6.5.1 Pre-assessment activities, such as application processing, auditor assignment, impartiality concern, or preparation activities that may compromise the integrity of the assessment process.

6.5.2 During assessment activities, including assessment conduct, adherence to assessment procedures, objectivity of findings, evidence handling, or decision-making processes.

6.5.3 Post-assessment activities, including certification decisions, reporting, follow-up actions, handling of non-conformities, or any actions that may affect the credibility of certification outcomes.

6.6 Appeal and Final Recommendations

6.6.1 Submission of Appeals

6.6.1.1 An ACB that does not agree with the Integrity Assessment outcome or any decision issued by MSPO may submit an appeal within Fourteen (14) days after the report is submitted. The appeal submission shall include, at minimum:

- a) Justification for the appeal,
- b) Supporting evidence, and
- c) Any additional information relevant to the appeal

6.6.1.2 Appeals submitted without adequate information may be returned to the ACB for completion prior to review.

6.6.2 Appeal Types and Responsible Authority

Appeals shall be categorised and addressed in accordance with the nature of the decision being contested.

6.6.2.1 Appeal Against Non-Conformity (NC)

Appeals against NCs shall be handled by the designated MSPO personnel. During the appeal process, the findings timeline shall be placed on hold.

6.6.2.2 Appeal Against DRC Decision

Appeals against decisions of the Dispute Resolution Committee (DRC), including sanction or suspension, shall be handled by the DRC.

6.6.3 Scope of Appeal

6.6.3.1 Appealable Decisions

An appeal may be submitted against a decision that materially affects the recognition status or enforcement actions applied to an Accredited Certification Body (ACB). Appealable decisions include, but are not limited to:

- a) Suspension or termination of ACB's Recognition Agreement;
- b) Restrictions, sanctions, or other enforcement actions imposed on an ACB or its personnel;
- c) Decisions based on identified procedural or governance non-conformities in the conduct of the integrity assessment; and
- d) Any integrity assessment decision where non-compliance with MSPO scheme requirements is alleged.

6.6.3.2 Non-Appealable Matters

Matters that are not subject to appeal include findings and conclusions that are supported by objective and verifiable evidence, as well as determinations involving fraud or falsification, where such findings have a direct impact on the integrity and credibility of the MSPO Certification Scheme.

6.6.4 Appeal Review Process

Only one (1) appeal is permitted for each Integrity Assessment decision. The appeal shall be reviewed by the Dispute Resolution Committee (DRC), ensuring impartiality and independence from the integrity assessment team. The review shall include:

- a) Evaluation of the appeal submission
- b) Review of the original assessment evidence
- c) Consideration of any new evidence submitted
- d) The appeal shall be reviewed within a maximum of 90 days

6.6.5 Final Determination by the Dispute Resolution Committee (DRC)

Following the appeal review, the Dispute Resolution Committee (DRC) shall provide the final recommendation on the matter. The DRC's recommendation shall be based on:

- a) Conformity to MSPO integrity requirements
- b) Evidence and factual findings
- c) The impact of findings on scheme credibility

APPENDIX 1 : INTEGRITY ASSESSMENT WORKFLOW

01

Risk Identification and Sample Selection

MSPO evaluates ACBs annually based on performance, compliance history, risk factors, operational complexity, etc.

02

Initiation and Notification

MSPO notifies ACB within forty-eight (48) hours for unannounced assessment or not less than fourteen (14) working days for announced assessment prior to assessment.

03

Preparation Phase

Preparation of necessary documentation, stakeholders' consultations where applicable, issues the assessment plan, and finalises logistical arrangement.

04

Conducting Integrity Assessment

On-site verification to conform conformity with MSPO Certification Scheme and Standards requirements

05

Reporting Phase

The appointed Lead Assessor prepares the Integrity Assessment report based on verified findings.

06

Review and Approval Phase

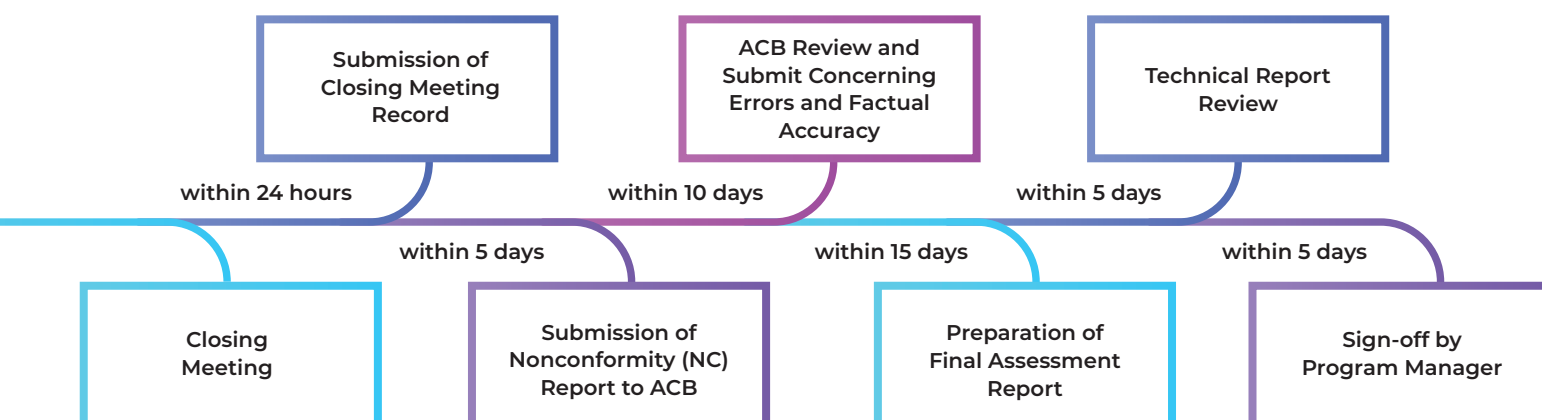
MSPO reviews and approves the report to ensure completeness, accuracy, and conformity with assessment requirements.

07

Submission of Report to ACB

MSPO submits approved Integrity Assessment report to the respective ACB.

APPENDIX II: ASSESSMENT REPORT PROCESS FLOW



A.1 Closing Meeting Record

Lead Assessor (LA) shall submit the Closing Meeting Record within Twenty-four (24) hours after the closing meeting.

A.2 Issuance of Nonconformities (NCs)

Nonconformities shall be issued to the ACB within five (5) working days from the closing meeting.

A.3 Appeal of Nonconformities

The ACB shall be allowed ten (10) working days to review the Nonconformities and, if necessary, submit any factual corrections or preliminary challenges for review.

A.4 Assessment Report Preparation

The Assessment Report shall be finalised within fifteen (15) working days following the NC appeal period.

A.5 Technical Report Review

The Technical Reviewer shall complete the review within five (5) working days.

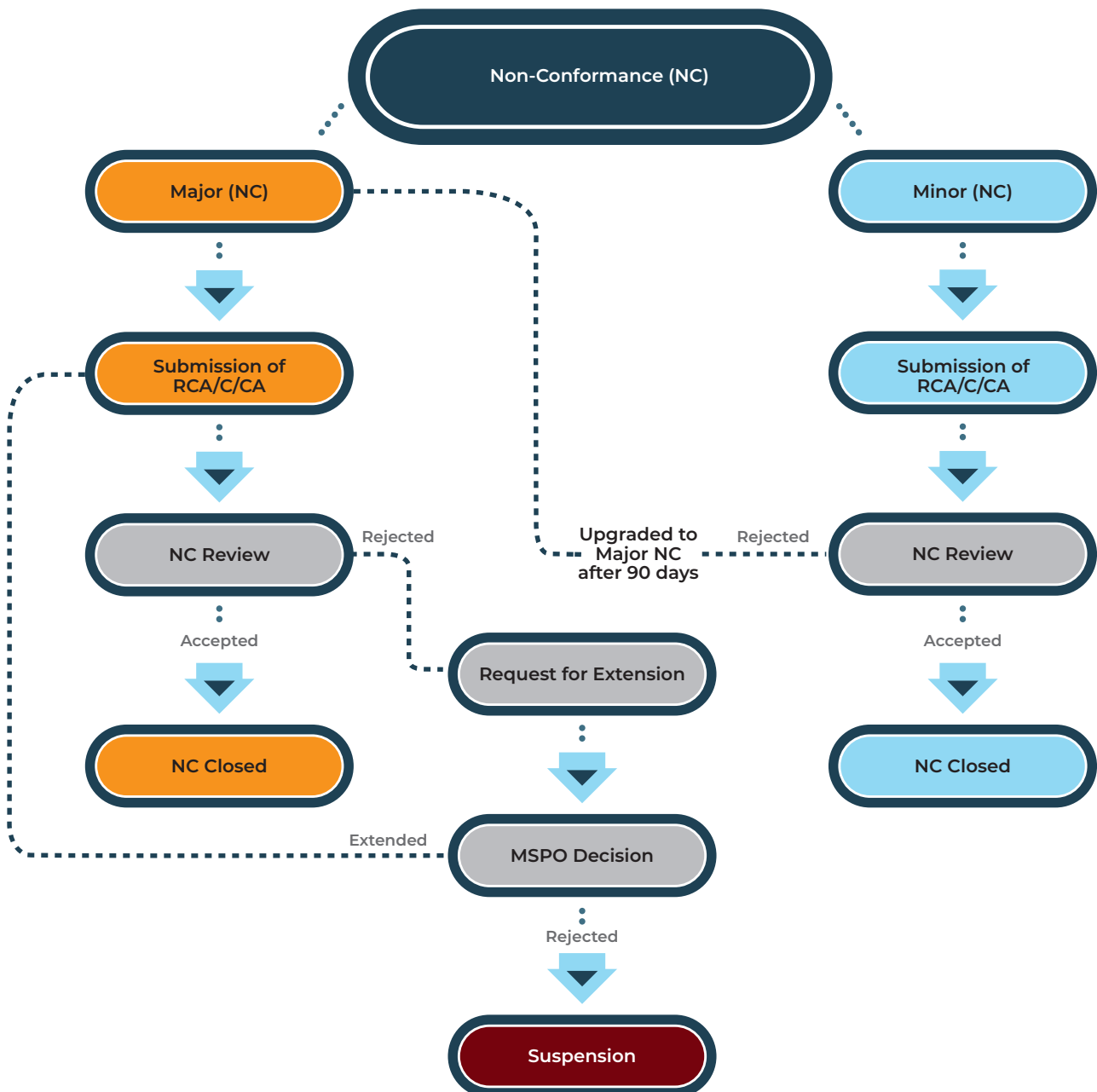
A.6 Approval and Sign-off

The Program Manager shall complete the final sign-off within five (5) working days upon completion of the technical report review.

B. Immediate Suspension in Case of Fraud

Where evidence of fraud, deliberate misrepresentation, or serious integrity breach is identified, the Lead Assessor may recommend immediate suspension of the ACB's to the Program Manager. The Program Manager shall make a decision on suspension within seven (7) working days from the date of report sign-off.

APPENDIX III: NONCONFORMITY (NC) HANDLING



ACBs Obligation:

The ACB shall submit a written response within 90 days of the CAR submission date, including root cause analysis, corrective action, and evidence of implementation.

The submission and review of Corrective Action Requests (CAR) may occur multiple times within the 90 day timeframe.

APPENDIX IV: LIFTING OF SUSPENSION

