



Accreditation and Certification Requirements for the CBs under PEFC Endorsed NCCF FM and ToF Certification Scheme

NCCF -STD- ACR- 2.0 /2025

Network for Certification and Conservation of Forests (NCCF)

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Foreword

The Network for Certification and Conservation of Forests (NCCF) is a not for profit organization registered under Societies Registration Act, 1860. NCCF is involved in developing Forest Certification scheme in the country. It is an institutional mechanism to ensure collaborative and streamlined efforts for development of National Forest Certification System and Standards. It aims to promote the implementation of improved Forest practices in the country and further the development of healthier, sustainable: economically beneficial, environmentally responsible and socially appropriate in accordance with national policies, institutional frameworks and sustainability usage norms.

The Network for Certification and Conservation of Forests (NCCF) is the National Governing Body of the National Forest Certification Scheme and Standards (NFCSS) and has overall responsibility for the smooth working/functioning of the NFCSS while maintaining its credibility.

This document describes the procedures to be followed for the accreditation and certification requirements for CBs operating the NCCF FM certification scheme.

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1. Scope

This document defines the requirements for the Certification Bodies intending to operate with the Forest Management certification standards established by Network for Certification and Conservation of Forests (NCCF).

2. Normative References

- a. *ISO/IEC 17065: 2012: Conformity assessment — Requirements for bodies certifying products, processes and services*
- b. *PEFC Annex 6: Certification and Accreditation Procedures*
- c. *PEFC ST 2003:2012: Requirements for Certification Bodies operating Certification against the PEFC International Chain of Custody Standard*
- d. *ISO 9000:2005: Quality Management systems - Fundamentals and vocabulary*
- e. *ISO 9001:2005: Auditing practices group guidance on third party auditor impartiality and conflict of interest*
- f. *ISO/IEC 17000:2004 Conformity Assessment - Vocabulary and general principles*
- g. *ISO/IEC 17024:2012-11: Conformity assessment – Requirements for bodies operating certification of persons*
- h. *ISO 19011:2011: Guidelines for auditing management systems*
- i. *ISO/IEC Guide 2:2004: Standardization and related activities – General vocabulary*
- j. *ISO/IEC Guide 60:2004: Code of good practice for conformity assessment*
- k. *PEFC ST 2001: PEFC Logo Usage Rules - Requirements (hereinafter PEFC Logo usage rules)*
- l. *NCCF –STD-LOGO-01/2017: NCCF Logo usage requirements*

3. Terms and Definitions

Accreditation Body: An accreditation body is an organisation delegated to make decisions, about the status, legitimacy or appropriateness of a CB. In case of NCCF FM certification, an accreditation body should be signatory of the IAF Multilateral Recognition Arrangement (MLA).

Affected stakeholder: A stakeholder who might experience a direct change in living and/or working conditions caused by the implementation of a standard, or a stakeholder who might be a user of a standard and therefore is subject to the requirements of the standard.

Note 1: Affected stakeholders include neighbouring communities, Indigenous people, workers, etc. However, having an interest in the subject matter of the standard (e.g., NGOs, scientific community, civil society) is not equal to being affected.

Note 2: A stakeholder who might be a user of the standard is likely to become a certified entity, e.g., a forest manager in the case of a forest management standard, or a wood processing enterprise in the case of a chain of custody standard.

Audit programme: Arrangements for a set of one or more audits planned for a specific time frame and directed towards a specific purpose (Source: definition is based on ISO 19011:2018 clause 3.4). 3.4

Audit plan: Description of the activities and arrangements for a specific audit (Source: definition is based on ISO 19011:2018 clause 3.6).

Appeal: Formal request by client to CB or NABCB for reconsideration of a decision made.

Appellant: Individual or organization filing an appeal.

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

Audit: Systematic, independent, documented process for obtaining records, statements of fact and other relevant information and assessing them objectively to determine the extent to which applicable requirements are fulfilled.

Auditor: a person competent to conduct an audit.

Audit team: is made up of one or more auditors, one of whom is appointed to be the audit team leader. When necessary, audit teams are also supported by technical experts and/or further personnel (e.g. interpreter), who assist auditors but do not themselves act as auditors.

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

CB: Third –party Conformity Assessment Body (CAB) operating certification scheme.

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

Certified Area: The forest area covered by a certificate. In case of a group forest certificate the area represents the sum of forest areas of the participants

Chain of Custody Standard: PEFC ST 2002: Chain of Custody of Forest Based Products – Requirements.

Client: Organization, including a multi-site organization, that is applying for or whose Forest Management has been certified.

Certificate: a document issued under the rules of a certification system, indicating that adequate confidence is provided that a duly identified product, process or service is in conformity with a specific standard or other normative document.

Competence: the demonstrated ability to apply knowledge, skills and personal attributes in order to achieve intended results.

Complainant: Person or organization filing a complaint.

Complaint: Written expression of dissatisfaction (other than appeal) by any person or organization presented to a CB relating to the NCCF activities of that CB and/ or the NCCF activities of their clients. In the context of NCCF, a complaint includes the name and contact information of the complainant, a clear description of the issue and evidence to support each element or aspect of the complaint.

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

Certification decision maker: A person or a group of persons (e.g., a committee) that has not been involved in the audit process and is assigned by the certification body to make the certification decision.

Corrupt practice: Corrupt practices include bribery of public officials; embezzlement, trading in influence, abuse of function, and illicit enrichment by public officials; and bribery and embezzlement in the private sector, as well as money-laundering and obstruction of justice, in alignment with by the United Nations Convention against Corruption.

Documented information: Information required to be controlled and maintained by an organisation using any format and media, from any source.

Defendant: Person or organization against whom a complaint has been filed.

Dispute: Umbrella term covering the complaints and appeals submitted to/related to NCCF.

Expired certification: The certification is not renewed after the certificate expiry date.

Group Forest Certificate: A document confirming that the group organisation complies with the requirements of the sustainable forest management standard and other applicable requirements of the forest certification scheme.

Group Forest Certification: Certification of the group organisation under one group forest certificate.

Group Organisation: A group of participants represented by the group entity for the purposes of implementation of the sustainable forest management standard and its certification.

Group certification: Certification of the group organisation under one group forest certificate.

Group entity: A legal entity that represents the participants, with overall responsibility for ensuring the conformity of forest management in the certified area to the PEFC endorsed forest management standard and other applicable requirements of the forest certification system. For this purpose, the group entity is using a group management system.

Note: The structure of the group entity should follow the operations, number of participants and other basic conditions of the group organisation. It may be represented by one person.

Information and communication technologies: Information and communication technologies, ICT, is the use of technology for gathering, storing, retrieving, processing, analysing, and transmitting information. It includes software and hardware such as smartphones, handheld devices, laptop computers, desktop computers, drones, video cameras, wearable technology, artificial intelligence, and others. The use of ICT may be appropriate for auditing/assessment both locally and remotely (Source: IAF MD4:2023).

Note: *The term “group organisation” is a specific form of a “multisite organisation”.*

Major Non-Conformity: The absence of, or failure to implement and maintain, one or more applicable requirements of the standard, that may result in a systemic risk to the function and effectiveness of the forest management and/or effects confidence in the client organization’s claims on certified raw material.

Note: *A major non-conformity may be an individual nonconformity or a number of minor but related nonconformities, that when considered in total are judged to constitute a major nonconformity.*

Minor Non-conformity: A single failure to fulfill the requirements of the standards that may result in no systemic risk to the function and effectiveness

Observation: An evaluation finding that does not warrant nonconformity but is identified by the audit team as an opportunity for improvement.

Participant: A forest owner/manager covered by the group forest certificate, who is able to implement the requirements of the forest management standard in a certified area.

Note: The term “ability to implement the requirements of the forest management standard” requires the entity to have a long-term legal right, tenure right, or traditional or customary tenure rights to manage the forest and would disqualify one-off contractors from becoming participants in group certification.

Where regional or national systems allow contractors without long-term management rights for a specific forest area to participate in group certification, the system shall ensure that these contractors can only make PEFC claims for material originating from certified areas of participants or individually certified forest owners/managers with long-term legal or tenure management rights

Special audits: Special audits are unplanned, or otherwise outside the audit programme, and may be done on short notice.

Note: Special audits may be necessary due to scope extension, or to investigate complaints or substantiated concerns.

Reviewer: A person or a group of persons (e.g., a committee) that has not been involved in the audit process and is assigned by the certification body to review all the information and results related to the audit.

Substantiated concern: Information or complaint supported by proof or evidence, indicating a serious failure to conform with the requirements of the PEFC endorsed national or regional forest certification system and/or there is a reputational risk for PEFC.

Note: Substantiated concerns can be concerns of third parties, as well as concerns of the client itself.

Suspended certification: The certification is temporarily invalidated by the certification body.

Technical expert: A person who provides specific knowledge or expertise to the audit team (Source: definition based on ISO/IEC 17021:2015, clause 3.14.).

Note: Specific knowledge or expertise is that which relates to the organisation, the process, or activity to be audited.

Terminated certification: The certification has been voluntarily cancelled by the client during the validity of the certification cycle

Note: *The definitions given in ISO 19011, ISO/IEC 17000 and PEFC ST 2003:2012 are applicable.*

Verbal forms for the expression of provisions:

“shall”: indicates requirements strictly to be followed to conform to the standard.

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

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

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

4. Role of NCCF, CB and NABCB:

Network for Certification and Conservation of Forests (NCCF): NCCF is a standard setting organisation and developed the standards for forest management certification of forest products.

Certification Body (CB): Third –party Conformity Assessment Body operating NCCF certification scheme.

The National Accreditation Board for Certification Bodies (NABCB): NABCB provides accreditation to Certification Bodies based on assessment of their competence as per the Board's criteria and in accordance with NCCF Standards and Guidelines contained herewith.

4.1 Accreditation process

A. Witnessing for grant of FM/ToF scopes

• If a CB is already ISO 17065 accredited for PEFC CoC or any other scheme, the following applies:

1. An extension of scope will be granted for both FM and ToF Certification Schemes, with one witness audit required for FM. Since FM is more complex than ToF, this audit will suffice for addition of both FM and ToF scopes.
2. If a witness audit is conducted only for ToF (among FM and ToF), FM cannot be awarded, as FM is a more complex scheme than ToF. Only ToF scope will be added.

3. If a witness audit is conducted only for FM (among FM and ToF), ToF can be awarded without a separate witness audit.
4. If FM is the only additional scope, then only the FM witness audit is required.
5. If ToF is the only additional scope, then only the ToF witness audit is required if FM is not already in scope of CB. If FM is already in scope, ToF can be added without witness with an offsite desk review.

• **If a CB is not ISO 17065 accredited for PEFC CoC or any other scheme**, and the CB applies only for FM Certification Scheme, then as per NABCB procedure, 2 witness audits are required. Similarly, if the application is only for ToF, then 2 witness audits of ToF scheme are required for the ToF scheme.

6. However, if the CB applies for both FM and ToF scopes, 2 witness audits are needed, preferably one each in FM and ToF. One FM witness audit is a must due to its higher complexity.
7. If the CB applies for both FM and ToF, and a witness audit is conducted for only ToF, then a separate witness audit for FM must be conducted for grant of FM scope.

B. Witness Audits after the Award of Accreditation Certificate:

1. NABCB procure has not specified any numbers of witness audits during accreditation cycle. However, for reaccreditation, it says the initial accreditation procedure would be followed. Since initial accreditation for ISO 17065 requires at least 2 witness audits, regardless of number of schemes, it follows that at least 2 witness audits must be done during the accreditation cycle.
2. Therefore, after the award of accreditation, within an accreditation cycle of 3-4 years, minimum two witness audits are required for both FM and ToF Certification Schemes, with preferably one audit for FM and the other for ToF. However, if CB is unable to offer any FM audit, NABCB may reaccredit for both FM and ToF with a condition that first FM audit after reaccreditation will be witnessed. OR
3. For CBs that are ISO 17065 accredited for PEFC CoC, along with FM and ToF, NABCB would expect in a three or four year accreditation cycle, one witness audit for CoC, one witness audit for FM, and one witness audit for ToF.
4. In case the risk analysis requires more witnessing than above, NABCB will seek additional witnessing and provide the reasons to the CB (as also scheme owner)

5. General Requirements

- ❖ The criteria against which the client organisation's Forest Management is evaluated are those outlined in latest version of the Forest Management Standard, Group Management Certification Standard and relevant mandatory appendices.

Note: *The latest version of the NCCF standards and their amendments are available at NCCF Website www.nccf.in.*

- ❖ **Accreditation Scope:** The CB shall conduct its certification operations according to their granted accreditation scope and in conformity with the requirements specified in this standard.
- ❖ CB shall be accredited by an accreditation body that is signatory of the IAF Multilateral Recognition Arrangement (MLA) for product certification.
- ❖ CB shall comply with the requirements of ISO/IEC 17065, and be accredited with ISO/IEC 17065.
- ❖ The CB shall inform the affected clients within 30 days after the reduction, withdrawal or suspension of their accreditation scope. The clients shall be informed to seek certification from another accredited CB within 6 months to keep their certification valid, as applicable.

5.1. Legal Requirement

Legal Responsibility: CB shall conform with the requirements of the ISO/IEC 17065 Certification

- CB Shall conform with the requirements of the ISO/IEC 17065
- The CB shall have a legally enforceable certification agreement signed by the CB and the client prior to the main evaluation. Certification agreement shall consider the responsibilities of the CB and its clients and the same shall be made available to NABCB or NCCF upon request

5.2. The CB shall ensure that its certification agreement requires the clients comply to:

- a. the client shall inform the CB within 10 working days, of changes that may affect its ability to conform with the certification requirements.

Note: *Examples of changes can include the following:*

- *the legal, commercial, organizational status or ownership,*
- *organization and management (e.g. key managerial, decision-making or technical staff),*
- *modifications to the product or the production method,*
- *contact address and production sites,*
- *major changes to the quality management system.*

- b. Regarding the obligations of the client

- i. conform with all applicable certification requirements including any conditions set by the CB for granting or maintaining certification;
 - ii. disclose current or previous application or certification with any other forestry certification schemes in the last five (5) years, if any;
 - iii. agree to the conduct of evaluations at the required intervals, including the CB's right to carry out unannounced or short notice audits; participation of the observers, if applicable.
 - iv. agree to witness audits and other surveillance activities of the accreditation body;
 - v. agree, that a complaint is first handled according to the CB's dispute resolution procedure and if not resolved, then referred to accreditation body (NABCB) and ultimately to NCCF, in case of disagreement with audit findings related to NCCF normative documents;
 - vi. making claims regarding certification consistent with the scope of certification and not making any claims of conformity (or near conformity) with NCCF certification requirements until and unless certification is granted;
 - vii. the client does not use its product certification in such a manner as to bring the CB into disrepute and does not make any statement regarding its product certification that the CB may consider misleading or unauthorized;
 - viii. the client keeps a record of all complaints made known to it relating to compliance with certification requirements and makes these records available to the CB when requested, and
 - takes appropriate action with respect to such complaints and any deficiencies found in products that affect compliance with the requirements for certification;
 - documents the actions taken;
 - ix. the client provides copies of the certification documents to others, the documents shall be reproduced in their entirety.
 - x. agree, that in case of reduction, suspension or withdrawal of the scope of CB's NCCF accreditation, the certification of the affected clients will be suspended within six (6) months after the date of reduction, suspension or withdrawal of the respective scope of NCCF accreditation;
- c. Regarding the rights of the CB, NABCB and NCCF
- i. agree, that the CB has the right to delay or postpone its decision on certification, in order to take account of new or additional information which has not already been considered in its audit report and which, in the opinion of the CB, could affect the outcome of its evaluation;

- ii. agree, that the CB shall not be obliged to grant or maintain certification, if activities of the client conflict with the obligations of the CB as specified in its accreditation contract with NABCB, or which, in the sole opinion of the CB, reflect badly on the good name of the CB;
- iii. agree, that the CB and NCCF have the right to revise the requirements of certification within the period of validity of the certification, including the revision of costs and fees; agree, that the CB, NCCF and NABCB have the right to access confidential information, examine documentation deemed necessary, and access to the relevant equipment, location(s), area(s), personnel, and bodies providing outsourced services to clients;
- iv. agree, that the CB has the right to use information which is brought to its attention, to follow up on misuses of the NCCF trademarks and of the intellectual property rights held by NCCF;
- v. acknowledge the title of the NCCF's intellectual property rights and that NCCF retains full ownership of the intellectual property rights and that nothing shall be deemed to constitute a right for the client to use or cause to be used any of the intellectual property rights;
- vi. agree, that the CB has the right to suspend and/ or withdraw its certification with immediate effect if, in the sole opinion of the CB, the client is not in conformity with the conditions specified for the maintenance of certification;

Management of Impartiality:

CB shall conform with ISO/IEC 17065:2012

The certification body shall identify risks to its impartiality on an on-going basis. This shall include those risks that arise from its activities, from its relationships, or from the relationships of its personnel. However, such relationships may not necessarily present a certification body with a risk to impartiality. If a risk to impartiality is identified, the certification body shall be able to demonstrate how it eliminates or minimizes such risk. This information shall be made available to the NCCF.

- 5.2.1. Within a period of 3 years, personnel shall not be used to review, audit or make a certification decision of clients for which they have provided consultancy or worked for

5.3. Liability and Financing

CB shall conform with ISO/IEC 17065

5.4. Non-Discriminatory Conditions

CB shall conform with ISO/IEC 17065

5.5. Confidentiality

CB shall conform with ISO/IEC 17065

5.5.1. The CB shall inform the client that it is obliged to provide information to the NCCF. To comply with this requirement, the CB shall have the written consent of the client organization for the information disclosed to the NCCF.

5.6. Publically Available Information

CB shall conform with ISO/IEC 17065

The CB shall maintain its impartiality statement, (through publications, electronic media or other means), and make available upon request.

6. Structural Requirements

6.1. Organizational structure and top management

CB shall conform with ISO/IEC 17065

6.1.1. The management of the CB shall identify the board, group of persons, or person having overall authority and responsibility for each of the following:

- complaint mechanism;
- impartiality of NCCF certification;

6.2. Mechanism for safeguarding Impartiality:

6.2.1. General Requirements

6.2.1.1. The CB shall ensure its integrity always in its verification/certification activities, and shall work in a credible, independent, non-discriminatory and transparent manner.

6.2.1.2. The CB shall act impartially and avoid any conflict of interest that may compromise its ability to make impartial decisions.

6.2.1.3. The CB shall ensure that there are no constraints that might influence its judgment or endanger its independence of judgment in relation to its verification/certification activities, inter alia, by having sufficient human resources, either through internal or external resources, and financial resources and stability.

6.2.1.4. If the CB is part of a larger organization, it shall ensure that no conflict of interest exists between its verification/certification functions and the functions of other parts of the organization.

6.2.1.5. If the CB has related bodies, the CB shall ensure that no conflict of interest exists between its verification/certification functions and the functions of the related bodies.

6.2.1.6. The CB shall ensure that it and its personnel (internal and external) have no relationship that creates threats to its impartiality.

6.2.2. Safeguarding impartiality at the Policy Level

6.2.2.1. The CB shall establish, document and implement a policy on safeguarding impartiality, demonstrating its understanding of the possible influence that can be exerted on it as an organization and/or on its personnel when performing its verification/certification functions, and stressing its commitment to fully address that issue.

6.2.2.2. The CB shall ensure that its policy on safeguarding impartiality is understood and implemented at all levels of the organization.

6.2.2.3. The CB shall ensure its impartiality at the policy level, inter alia, by:

- a. having the top management's commitment to safeguarding impartiality in the CB's verification/certification functions as evidenced through a defined institutional structure and impartiality policy and procedures, appropriate implementation of such policy and procedures and operation and conduct of its activities;
- b. having a statement that describes its understanding of the necessity of impartiality in verification/certification functions, how it manages conflict of interest and how it ensures the objectivity of verification/certification functions;
- c. taking action to respond to any threats to its impartiality arising from the actions of other parts of the organization, persons outside of the organization, outsourced entities, related bodies or other bodies or organizations;
- d. maintaining a professional environment and culture in the organization that supports behavior of all personnel that is consistent with impartiality.
- e. the CB shall make publicly available its policy for safeguarding impartiality.

6.2.3. Safeguarding impartiality at the Organization Level

- 6.2.3.1. A CB shall have a documented structure that safeguards impartiality of its operations.
- 6.2.3.2. The CB shall have a committee (optional) that safeguards the CB's impartiality in its verification/certification functions and ensures that the policy on safeguarding impartiality and related procedures and other systems are effectively implemented.
- 6.2.3.3. The impartiality committee (if exist) shall:
- a. be independent from all verification/certification operations of the CB, and shall report directly to the CB's top management;
 - b. have in its composition the participation of key interested parties with a balanced representation of each of them;
 - c. have a chairman who shall be a person independent from the activities of the certification program;
 - d. have documented terms of reference. This committee shall meet regularly, at least once a year, and a complete record of its proceedings shall be maintained;
 - e. approve the conflict of interest analysis and the mitigation measures as well as monitor and review the implementation of the systems to safeguard the CB's impartiality (conflict of interest analysis, procedures and mitigation strategies and actions);
 - f. have access to all verification/certification files or records and be able to review them, if needed. This committee need not intervene in or review each verification/certification activity, but may need to review them to fulfill its mandate;
 - g. prepare an annual synthesis report of its activities, which shall be included in the CB's annual report to the Board to be submitted in accordance with the NCCF accreditation procedure. This report shall be presented to the NABCB upon request.
- 6.2.3.4. In cases where the impartiality committee identifies issues through the monitoring or review of the implementation of the CB's systems to safeguard impartiality, it shall report the instance to the CB's top management. If the top management does not follow the advice of the impartiality committee, this committee shall have the right to report the instance to the Board through the NCCF secretariat.
- 6.2.3.5. The CB shall enable a NCCF assessment team, upon request, to observe meetings of the impartiality committee, as part of the CB's accreditation process.

6.2.4. Safeguarding impartiality at the Operational Level

6.2.4.1. Analysis of threats against Impartiality:

- a. The CB shall establish, document, implement and maintain a procedure for analyzing potential threats against impartiality.
- b. CB are required to carry out a conflict of interest analysis at least once a year and whenever a significant change occurs in the CB activities, such as changes in the organizational structure or of the legal status and mergers with or acquisitions of other organizations.
- c. In the conflict of interest analysis, the following activities of the CB or its related bodies, but not limited to those activities, shall be considered as threats to impartiality:
 - Consultancy related to Certification activities;
 - Providing training on NCCF FM activities;
 - Offering/payment of commissions for promotion or new business;
 - Other organizational considerations such as performance targets in financial terms or in terms of a specific number of NCCF certification scheme.
- d. While carrying out the conflict of interest analysis, the CB shall:
 - i. Identify and document its actual/proposed involvement in NCCF certification activities other than verification/certification and carry out and document an analysis of actual and potential risk to impartiality;
 - ii. Identify and document all related bodies and identify actual/potential risks to impartiality, including potential conflicts arising from any such relationships;
 - iii. Disclose and document, in a transparent and comprehensive manner, the following information, as a minimum: the general types of activities carried out by the CB, its parent organization, related bodies, and personnel. The disclosure and documentation shall be detailed for all organizations and personnel listed above with regard to activities related to CB project activities;
 - iv. Clearly define the functions of its related bodies and their relationships with the CB when describing its organizational structure. Mitigation of threats against Impartiality.

- 6.2.4.2. The CB shall establish, document, implement and maintain a procedure for the mitigation of threats against its impartiality.
- 6.2.4.3. The procedure referred to in above clause shall describe which mitigation strategies and actions are to be taken and how they will be implemented and shall include the review of the mitigation strategies and actions whenever a change in the conflict of interest analysis has occurred. The mitigation actions may be through, inter alia:
- a. Prohibitions - certain defined activities shall not be carried out;
 - b. Restrictions - certain defined activities may be carried out, but in a restricted manner with clearly defined control points to ensure mitigation;
 - c. Disclosures.
- 6.2.4.4. The procedure for mitigation shall ensure the following, at a minimum:
- a. The CB shall not conduct the certification of a NCCF scheme if the parent organization, an outsourced entity or a related body has been engaged in any function that has been identified as a threat to impartiality, such as those listed in conflict of interest analysis, relating to the NCCF certification Project activity;
 - b. The CB shall not outsource any function to an outsourced entity that is engaged in the verification/certification of NCCF certification activity;
 - c. The CB's activities shall not be marketed or offered as linked with the activities of an organization that provides services in respect of development, financial assistance and consultancy for NCCF certification activities. The CB shall not state or imply that the verification/certification of a NCCF FM project activity would be simpler, easier, faster or less expensive if a specified consultancy/financing organization is used;
 - d. The CB shall require its personnel, internal and external, to reveal any potential conflict of interest known to them. The CB shall use this information as input to identify threats to impartiality raised by the activities of such personnel or by the organizations that employ them, and shall not use such personnel, internal or external, unless any potential conflict of interests has been addressed and the measures taken to address these potential conflicts have been documented and implemented. If during the course of a verification/certification, such instances become known, the personnel concerned shall be removed from the verification/certification immediately;
 - e. The CB shall require its personnel, internal and external, to report any situation of influence or pressure from project participants that may threaten their independence during the verification/certification of NCCF Standards. Based on such report, the CB shall take appropriate actions to ensure its independence in its verification/certification activities;

- f. The conditions in the CB's contracts with project participants shall not link the CB's payments to the final outcome of the verification/certification activities;
- g. The CB's personnel involved in verification/certification activities shall be bound by the CB's impartiality policy and act impartially in their work through contractual or employment conditions and assignment conditions for each verification/certification;

6.3. Review of Effectiveness

6.3.1. The CB shall analyze and review, at least once a year, all data and information relevant to impartiality, such as the conflict of interest analysis, the mitigation strategies and actions undertaken, any non-conformity raised regarding impartiality and the corrective actions implemented to correct the non-conformities.

6.3.2. Based on the data/information referred to above, the CB shall carry out, once a year, an analysis of the process to safeguard impartiality and a review of its effectiveness.

6.3.3. The recommendations of actions resulting from the review of the process of safeguarding impartiality shall be reported to the CB's top management. The CB shall keep a record of this review.

7. Resource Requirements

7.1. General Considerations

CB shall conform with ISO/IEC 17065

7.1.1. The CB shall ensure that all personnel carrying out the key activities, such as technical review, auditing, granting of certification, monitoring of auditors, etc. have the relevant and appropriate competencies corresponding to these activities.

7.1.2. The certification body should ensure a workplace that is safe, provides equal opportunities, is non-discriminatory, promotes gender equality, and is free from workplace intimidation and harassment. Appropriate training and internal policies should be implemented.

7.2 Auditors

7.2.1 General

The certification body shall have a documented process to ensure that auditors have personal attributes, knowledge, and skills in accordance with the requirements of the PEFC endorsed certification system.

7.2.3 Education

7.2.3.1 The certification body shall ensure that auditors have the knowledge corresponding to at least a tertiary education in forestry.

7.2.4 Working experience

7.2.4.1 The certification body shall ensure that auditors have a minimum of three years of full-time professional experience in a relevant discipline (e.g., forestry and trees outside the forest,).

7.2.4.2 The number of years of total work experience may be reduced by one year if the auditor has completed a tertiary education in forestry.

Note: Tertiary education, also referred to as third stage, third level, and post-secondary education, is the educational level following the completion of a school providing a secondary education. Tertiary education can be obtained, among others, at universities, technical schools, or colleges.

7.2.5 PEFC forest management training

The certification body shall ensure that new auditors have received and successfully completed initial training recognised by the PEFC Council on the PEFC endorsed certification system or systems for the country/countries where they conduct audits before they start their auditing activities. Note: The PEFC website provides further information on training options

7.2.6 Audit training

The certification body shall ensure that auditors have successfully completed training in audit techniques based on ISO 19011.

7.2.7 Audit experience

For the first qualification of an auditor, the certification body shall ensure that the auditor has performed, as auditor-in-training, at least 5 man-days of forest management or equivalent audits (e.g., trees outside the forest, ISO 9001, 14001 or 45001 auditing experience in the forestry or related sector) under the leadership of a qualified audit team leader within the last year.

Note: The 5 man-days period as auditor-in-training should cover different types of audits (initial, surveillance and recertification).

7.2.8 Competencies

7.2.8.1 The certification body shall ensure that auditors demonstrate the ability to apply knowledge and skills in the following areas:

- a) Principles, objectives, requirements, criteria, and indicators of the PEFC forest management standard Benchmarks, PEFC ST 1003, Sustainable Forest Management - Requirements and PEFC ST 1002, Group Forest Management - Requirements as implemented by the PEFC endorsed certification system, as applicable.
- b) Audit principles, procedures, and techniques, and how to apply them appropriately to different audits while ensuring that audits are conducted in a consistent and systematic manner.
- c) Managing an organisation, including organisational size, structure, functions and relationships, general business processes, risk management and cultural and social aspects.
- d) Appropriate knowledge of the socio-demographics, sustainability issues, cultural issues (including gender equality), indigenous interests and values and indigenous treaties, where applicable, and industrial relations in the region of application of the forest management requirements.
- e) Knowledge of legislation, regulations, or other relevant requirements, including:
 - i. Contracts and agreements and/or collective bargaining agreements (as applicable).
 - ii. Forest governance and law enforcement system of the country, including those covering social, workers and trade union rights and occupational safety and health of workers.
 - iii. International conventions relating to worker rights (ILO core conventions).
 - iv. International treaties and conventions relating to forestry, forest trade, and tree-based products.
- f) The principles of forest management based on techniques, including: inventory, planning, protection, management of forest ecosystems, identification and management of ecologically important forest areas, carbon stocks and biodiversity, as well as technical aspects of forest operations, and their potential impacts.
- g) Understanding of and ability to interpret Geographic Information Systems (GIS) as it applies to forest monitoring and management.
- h) Management and control of online documents, data and records, confidential data, data privacy and protection; and
- i) Application of risk assessment techniques.

7.2.8.2 The certification body shall ensure that the audit team consists of individuals who collectively have all the required competencies for the scope of the audit.

7.2.9 Maintenance of the qualification as an auditor

7.2.9.1 PEFC (NCCF) forest management training

7.2.9.1.1 To maintain the auditor qualification, the certification body shall ensure that qualified auditors participate in a PEFC (NCCF) forest management refresher training recognised by the PEFC Council whenever a new version of the forest management standard(s) they are qualified to audit, or the standards with requirements for SFM certification bodies, is published.

7.2.9.1.2 The certification body shall ensure that such refresher training is successfully completed before conducting audits against the revised standard

7.2.9.2 Audit experience

7.2.9.2.1 To maintain the auditor qualification, the certification body shall ensure that the auditor has performed a minimum of 5 man-days of forest management or equivalent audits (e.g. trees outside the forest, ISO 9001, 14001 or 45001 auditing experience in the forestry or related sector,) per year.

7.2.9.2.2 In exceptional circumstances, such as statutory leave, long-term illness, or lack of opportunities to provide certification services, auditors unable to comply with 7.2.9.2.1 shall perform 20 hours of forest management audits under the supervision of a qualified auditor within two years, or undergo a formal evaluation of competencies by the certification body prior to the auditor taking back auditing activities.

7.3 Audit team

7.3.1 General requirements

7.3.1.1 The audit team shall comprise auditor(s) fulfilling the requirements defined in 7.2.8.

7.3.1.2 The certification body shall have documented procedures for selecting and appointing the audit team, including the audit team leader.

7.3.1.3 The certification body shall consider gender balance within the audit team.

7.3.2 Technical experts

7.3.2.1 The certification body may engage technical experts to support the audit team. Technical experts shall be independent of the client, and their names, qualifications and affiliations shall be included in the audit report.

7.3.2.2 The certification body shall ensure that any potential conflict of interest is declared and managed.

7.3.2.3 The certification body shall ensure that technical experts report to the audit team leader, only operate under their scope, do not make certification decisions, and do not create findings.

7.3.3 Translators and interpreters

7.3.3.1 Translators and interpreters used in the audit shall be independent of the client.

7.3.3.2 In cases where independent translators and/or interpreters are not available, the names of the translators and their links with the client shall be included in the audit report.

7.3.3.3 The certification body shall make sure that any potential conflict of interest is managed.

7.4 Reviewers and certification decision makers

7.4.1 General

7.4.1.1 The certification body shall be responsible for and shall retain authority of its decisions relating to certification.

7.4.1.2 The certification body shall ensure that the reviewer and certification decision maker are independent of the audit team and the client.

7.4.1.3 The certification body shall ensure that the personnel involved in the reviewing and decision making process have a legally binding relationship with the certification body that covers personnel's compliance with the requirements in this standard.

Note: The reviewer and the certification decision maker may be the same individual.

7.4.2 Education

7.4.2.1 The certification body shall ensure that the reviewer and certification decision maker have the knowledge corresponding to at least a tertiary education in forestry.

7.4.3 Working experience

7.4.3.1 The certification body shall ensure that the reviewer and certification decision maker have relevant experience according to the type of audits to be reviewed.

7.4.3.2 The certification body shall ensure that the reviewer and certification decision maker have a minimum of three years of full-time experience in conformity assessment.

7.4.3.3 The number of years of total work experience may be reduced by one year if the reviewer and certification decision maker have completed tertiary education in a relevant discipline (e.g., forestry, trees outside the forest).

Note: Tertiary education, also referred to as third stage, third level, and post-secondary education, is the educational level following the completion of a school providing a secondary education. Tertiary education can be obtained, among others, at universities, technical schools, or colleges.

7.4.3.4 A qualified PEFC forest management auditor is considered as already meeting the minimum working experience required.

7.4.4 Audit training

The certification body shall ensure that the reviewer and certification decision maker have successfully completed training in audit techniques based on ISO 19011.

7.4.5 Audit experience

For the first qualification of a reviewer or certification decision maker, the certification body shall ensure that the reviewer or the certification decision maker has participated as an observer in forest management or equivalent audits (e.g., trees outside the forest, ISO 9001, 14001 or 45001 auditing experience in the forestry or related sector) covering at least eight hours. The observation shall include the opening meeting, part of the office assessment, part of the field assessment, and the closing meeting.

7.4.6 Competencies

7.4.6.1 The certification body shall ensure that the reviewer or certification decision maker demonstrates the ability to apply knowledge and skills in the following areas:

a) Principles, objectives, requirements, criteria, and indicators of the PEFC forest management standard Benchmarks, PEFC ST 1003, Sustainable Forest Management - Requirements and PEFC ST 1002, Group Forest Management - Requirements as implemented by the PEFC endorsed certification system, as applicable.

b) Knowledge of the socio-demographics, sustainability issues, and cultural issues (including gender equality), indigenous interests and values and indigenous treaties, where applicable, and industrial relations in the region of application of the forest management requirements.

c) General knowledge of legislation, regulation, or other relevant requirements pertaining to forest management, labour issues, and data privacy and protection.

- d) The principles of forest management.
- e) Management and control of online documents, data and records, confidential data, data privacy and protection; and
- f) Application of risk assessment techniques.

7.4.6.2 The certification body shall ensure that the team of reviewers and certification decision makers consists of individuals who collectively have all the required competencies for the scope of the audit.

7.4.7 Maintenance of the qualification as a reviewer or certification decision maker

7.4.7.1 PEFC forest management training

7.4.7.1.1 To maintain the reviewer or certification decision maker qualification, the certification body shall ensure that the qualified reviewer or certification decision maker participates in a PEFC forest management refresher training recognised by the PEFC Council whenever a new version of the PEFC forest management standard(s) they are qualified to conduct their corresponding certification activities against, or the standards with requirements for SFM certification bodies, is published.

7.4.7.1.2 The certification body shall ensure that such refresher training is successfully completed before the reviewer or certification decision maker conducts their certification activities against the revised standard.

7.4.7.2 Audit experience

To maintain the reviewer or certification decision maker qualification, the certification body shall ensure that the qualified reviewer or certification decision maker has participated as an observer in forest management or equivalent audits (e.g. trees outside the forest, ISO 9001, 14001 or 45001 auditing experience in the forestry or related sector) covering at least 16 hours every two years, and includes part office assessment, part field assessment, and a closing meeting.

Note: The observation may take place remotely using ICT.

7.5 Personnel records and annual monitoring

7.5.1 The certification body shall maintain records of personnel's compliance with the requirements of this chapter.

Note: Records can be available in digital format.

7.5.2 The certification body shall monitor the performance of forest management auditors annually, applying methods such as reviewing audit reports or clients' feedback, etc., based on the frequency with which they conduct audits and the level of risk linked to their activities.

7.5.3 As part of the monitoring, the certification body shall conduct an observation of each forest management auditor at least every five years.

7.5.4 The certification body shall maintain documented information on the performance of forest management auditors.

7.5.5 The certification body shall use the monitoring of auditor performance and observations to identify training needs.

Table1: Overview of qualification requirements

	Auditor	Reviewer and certification decision maker
Education	- For Forest Management(FM)Standard: Tertiary education(college or university qualification) in forestry. - For ToF Standard: Educational qualification (college/university degree) in forestry/ agriculture/ agroforestry/ life sciences/ environmental science.	
Working experience	- Minimum of three years of full-time professional experience in a relevant discipline (e.g., forestry, trees outside the forest,). - May be reduced by one year if the auditor has completed a tertiary education in forestry,	- Relevant experience according to the type of the audits to be reviewed. - Minimum of three years of full-time experience in conformity assessment. - May be reduced by one year if the reviewer and certification decision maker have completed a tertiary education in a relevant discipline (e.g., forestry, trees outside the forest,). - A qualified PEFC forest management auditor is considered as already meeting the minimum working experience required.
Training	- Successful completion of IRCA-registered or equivalent (e.g. QCI registered) “ISO management standard auditor course” ISO 9001:2015 and trained in ISO 19011 course on auditing techniques ensuring that the auditor satisfies and fulfills the requirements of both the standards. - Successful completion of NCCF auditor training.	
Audit experience	The auditor has performed, as auditor- in-training, at least 5 man-days of forest management or equivalent audits under the leadership of a qualified audit team leader within the last year.	The reviewer or the certification decision maker has participated as an observer in forest management or equivalent audits covering at least eight hours. The observation shall include the opening meeting, part of the office assessment, part of the field assessment, and the closing meeting.
Competencies	See requirement 7.2.8	See requirement 7.4.6
Maintenance of the qualification		
Training	- Refresher training recognised by the PEFC Council whenever a new version of the PEFC forest management standard(s) they are qualified to conduct their corresponding certification activities against, or the standards with requirements for SFM certification bodies, is published. - Refresher training is successfully completed before conducting certification activities against the revised standard.	

Audit experience	• Minimum of 5 man-days of forest management or equivalent audits per year. • In exceptional circumstances such as statutory leave, long-term illness or inability of opportunities to provide certification services, auditors unable to comply with 7.2.9.2.1 shall perform 20 hours of forest management audits under the supervision of a qualified auditor within two years, or a formal evaluation of competencies by the certification body prior to the auditor taking back auditing activities.	• Participate as an observer in forest management or equivalent audits covering at least 16 hours every two years, and includes part office assessment, part field assessment, and a closing meeting.
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8. Management System Requirements

8.1. General Requirements

8.1.1. The certification body shall establish and maintain a management system that can achieve the consistent fulfillment of the requirements of this standard.

8.1.2. The management system of the certification body shall address the following:

- general management system documentation (e.g. manual, policies, definition of responsibilities) (see 8.2);
- control of documents (see 8.3);
- control of records (see 8.4);
- management review (see 8.5);
- internal audit (see 8.6);
- corrective actions (see 8.7);
- preventive actions (see 8.8).

8.2. General management system documentation

CB shall conform with ISO/IEC 17065

8.3. Control of documents

CB shall conform with ISO/IEC 17065

8.4. Control of Records

CB shall conform with ISO/IEC 17065

8.5. Directory of certified clients

CB shall conform with ISO/IEC 17065

8.6. Management Review

CB shall conform with ISO/IEC 17065

8.7. Internal Audits

CB shall conform with ISO/IEC 17065

8.8. Corrective Actions

CB shall conform with ISO/IEC 17065

8.9. Preventive Actions

CB shall conform with ISO/IEC 17065

8.10. Records

CB shall conform with ISO/IEC 17065

8.11. Complaints and Appeals

CB shall conform with ISO/IEC 17065

9. Supplementary Requirements:

9.1. The CB shall comply with the additional requirements of NABCB for the Accreditation, such as therequirements for using logo and text of accreditation body

10. Process Requirements

10.1. General Requirements:

10.1.1. Application:

CB shall conform with ISO/IEC 17065

For application, the CB shall obtain all the necessary information to complete the certification process in accordance with the relevant NCCF certification scheme.

Application review:

CB shall conform with ISO/IEC 17065

10.1.2. Audit team selection and assignment

10.1.2.1. The CB shall have documented procedures for selecting and appointing the audit team, including audit team leader. The translators used in the audit shall be independent from the client organization. In cases non-independent translators are not available the names of translators and their links with the client organization shall be included in the audit report.

10.1.2.2. The certification body shall have a process for selecting and appointing the audit team, considering the competence needed to achieve the objectives of the audit.

10.1.2.3. An audit team shall always include at minimum a qualified Lead auditor, technical expert, social and local expert (if required)

Note: *The 'team' may consist of a single qualified auditor who is then also the leader of the 'team'.*

10.1.2.4. At least one (1) audit team member shall be:

- a. familiar with the local language of the area in which the audit takes place;
- b. resident of India.
- c. a designated independent interpreter (if required), who is not an employee or consultant of the client under evaluation; or
- d. fluent in the corporate language, if the client provides a written declaration that confirms that all of the following criteria are met:
 - i. all relevant records and procedures relating to FM requirements are written and understood in the corporate language; and
 - ii. all management staff and those with FM responsibilities can communicate fluently in the corporate language.

10.1.2.5. A forest management audit team shall include auditor(s) and/ or technical experts with the experience and qualifications to audit all aspects of the NCCF Principles and Criteria, taking account of the scale and complexity of the area to be assessed. Key considerations for the selection of auditors and technical experts for an audit shall include experience and qualifications in relation to relevant forest management, social, environmental and economic issues, as described in 7.4.1 of this document.

10.1.2.6. The competence of an audit team may be supplemented by that of technical expert(s). In this case the following requirements shall apply:

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

10.1.3. Determination of audit time by a CB

- The CB shall have documented procedures for determining audit time, and for each client organisation the CB shall determine, with input from the auditor and / or technical expert, the time needed to plan and accomplish a complete and effective audit of the client organisation's forest management. The audit time determined by the CB, and the justification for the determination, shall be recorded.
- In determining the audit time, the CB should consider among other things, the following aspects:
 - a) the requirements of the forest management standard(s),
 - b) size and complexity of the client organisation's operation, geographical and natural conditions
 - c) any outsourcing of any activities included in the scope of forest management standard,

- d) the results of any prior audits, including those of client organisation's management systems,
- e) number of sites and multi-site considerations,
- f) quality/ level of confidence of the internal monitoring programme.

Table 2: Number of Audit days on-site as per Forest Area

Forest Area	Number of audit days On-site
< 1000 ha	1 to 2
1,001 – 5,000 ha	2 to 4
5,001- 10,000 ha	4 to 8
10,001 – 25,000 ha	8 to 12
25,001 – 75,000 ha	12 to 16
75,001- 150,000 ha	16 to 18
1,50,001 – 3,00,000 ha	18 to 22
3,00,001 – 6,00,000 ha	22 to 26
6,00,001-10,00,000 ha	26 to 32
>10,00,000 ha	32 to 40

The above is an indicative table with the range of on-site audit days for calculating audit days on field. It is most probable that the calculated on-site audit days by individual CBs will be within the mentioned range, however, CBs can modify the audit days, if required, with a proper justification. The audit days can only be decreased on in the following cases –

- a. The site is very small to the number of personnel (for e.g. forest complex only)
- b. Mature Management system and no outstanding Major and Minor non-conformities from previous year audit.
- c. Pre-assessments or pre-preparedness audits
- d. Single generic activities

10.1.4. **Audit plan:** The standard requires that the CB shall have documented procedures to ensure that an audit plan is established for each audit to provide basis for agreement regarding the conduct and scheduling of the audit activities. The audit plan shall be communicated, and the dates of the audit shall be agreed upon, in advance with the client organization.

10.1.5. Information Requirements

10.1.5.1. Public Information

- ❖ The CB shall inform the NCCF about upcoming scheduled Evaluation, Re-Evaluation and Surveillance audits of Forest Management before 1 month of main evaluation. NCCF will make this information publicly available via NCCF website.
- ❖ The CB shall inform and provide the information about certificate issued to NCCF within 7 working days from the date of issuance of the certificate
- ❖ The CB shall make a summary of FM Audit Report which shall be made publicly available by NCCF within 90 days from the date of audit. Confidential data can be excluded. The summary shall include at least the following:
 - Information about the certificate holder
 - Name and contact information, Scope of Certificate (area details, Certificate type, management units), Group members, Production Forest details, Conservation areas details, etc.
 - Audit scope and objectives
 - Audit plan (dates and locations, activities, etc.)
 - Audit team (Name, Qualification and brief experience)
 - Audit results (weaknesses and strengths found, corrective action requests)
 - Stakeholder comments (if any)
 - Use of pesticides and other chemicals used; Certificate Decision

10.1.6. Evaluation

Stage 1 Audit – Pre-Assessment

The stage 1 audit has the function of a “Readiness Review for the main evaluation”. The scope of this audit comprises:

- i. to confirm scope and objective of the certification audit
- ii. to audit the client’s forest management documentation
- iii. to evaluate forest management area specific conditions
- iv. to carry out analysis and description of the forest management units proposed for inclusion within the scope of the evaluation in conformity with the requirements of the standard.
- v. to evaluate procedures for internal audits and management system integrity and the effectiveness of their implementation.
- vi. determine the conformity of the client organisation with the PEFC/NCCF logo usage rules and its effective implementation
- vii. to prepare a written report on the pre-evaluation, which should be made available to the applicant. A summary of the main results shall be included in the main evaluation report.
- viii. to finalize the audit plan for stage 2 audit.

Note: *Pre-assessments are not required in the case of re-evaluation.*

10.1.7. Preparation for main evaluation

- ❖ The CB shall use the results of pre-evaluations in the preparation of a subsequent main evaluation.
- ❖ Preparation for main evaluation shall include:
 - The CB shall inform NCCF at least 45 days prior to the onsite visit of main-evaluation. The NCCF shall release a 30 days stakeholder announcement via NCCF Website which states the client's intention to pursue the NCCF Certification. The stakeholder announcement shall invite stakeholders to meet with audit team, or to submit written submission if preferred.
 - Stakeholders comments/response pertaining to the client's operations and certifications shall be addressed by the CB as a part of main evaluation report.
 - For stakeholder announcement, the CB shall provide the following information to NCCF:
 - a. Name of client;
 - b. Name and Contact Details of CB;
 - c. Name and address of sites to be audited;
 - d. Description of evaluation area;
 - e. Type of forest Area;
 - f. HCV area (if declared/disclosed)
 - g. A brief outline of the process that stakeholders should follow to meet the audit team or submission of comments.
 - an explicit analysis of the overall responsibility for full compliance with the applicable NCCF forest management requirements (e.g. by land owner, resource manager) as well as of the delegated responsibilities for the implementation of selected requirements (e.g. by contractors).
 - Documents and records: The CB shall collect copies of key documents or records that may be used in preparation for the main evaluation, such as management plans, inventory results, management system documentation, maps, legal documents, etc.
 - National legislation and guidance: The CB shall identify and obtain copies of relevant national and local laws and administrative requirements which apply in the country or region in which the evaluation is to take place.

- Potential main evaluation team members: The CB may contact, interview and/or brief potential personnel for a subsequent main evaluation.

10.1.8. Planning of Audits

10.1.8.1. Determining audit objectives, scope and criteria

- i. Audit scope determined by the CB shall describe the extent and boundaries of the audit, such as sites, organizational units, activities and processes to be audited.
- ii. CB shall plan the tools and technologies which will be used to gather evidence. It shall be clearly defined for which purpose the tools and technologies are used and which requirements are covered, if applicable.
- iii. The standard requires that the CB when defining the scope shall consider the following criteria:
 - a. Representation: the client's operations and processes shall be randomly but representatively considered.
 - b. Protection: Areas with high impact on the archived objectives of the managementsystem shall be considered.
 - c. Correction: difficult and areas with previously identified nonconformities shall beconsidered.
 - d. Prevention: The client organization shall not be able to fully predict the chosen areas.

Stage 2 Audit: Main Evaluation

- ❖ Stage 2 shall take place at the office and the area of the client organisation. The audit plan for the stage 2 audit is adapted based on the findings of the stage 1 audit and shall be submitted to the client at least three weeks before the onsite audit.
- ❖ The CB shall conduct an explicit analysis of the area included in the scope of the evaluation in term of forest management units and the structure and system in place. This will form thebasis for the subsequent evaluation of the management and for sampling of the population of forest management units.
- ❖ The CB shall assess the documentation and records applicable at each level of the management and display conformance to the standard requirements (Refer Annex 3 for the suggestive list of documents).
- ❖ The CB shall evaluate the tracking and tracing of forest products within the scope of the certification from the forest area up to the forest gate and the procedure for the identification of products

- ❖ The CB shall select the forest management units (FMUs) for the evaluations as followings –
 - Classify the FMUs in the scope of evaluation as sets of ‘like’ FMUs for sampling, based on the forest type, management type, natural vs. plantations, etc.
 - For each set of ‘like’ FMUs, the CB shall select a minimum number of units ‘S’ for evaluation by applying the following formula –

Table 3. Sample Category and number of management units to be evaluated

Sample category	Size Class (ha)- (X)	Main evaluation	Surveillance	Re-evaluation
Category (A) Management Units (State Government Forest/ JFMCs/VFCs)	>15,000	$S = X$	$S = 0.7 * X$	$S = 0.7 * X$
	1,000-15,000	$S = 0.4 * X$	$S = 0.2 * X$	$S = 0.3 * X$
Category (B) Management Units (Farmers/Individuals/ Community)	100-1,000	$S = 0.8 * \sqrt{X}$	$S = 0.6 * \sqrt{X}$	$S = 0.6 * \sqrt{X}$
	Less than 100	$S = 0.6 * \sqrt{X}$	$S = 0.3 * \sqrt{X}$	$S = 0.4 * \sqrt{X}$

- S is the management units that must be evaluated and must be rounded to the upper whole number to determine the number of units to be sampled.
- X is the total number of the management units in a set of categories.
- ❖ The auditors shall visit a sufficient variety and number of sites within each FMU selected for evaluation as to make direct, factual observations as to conformity with the requirements of the NCCF standard. Examples of sites that may be assessed are listed in Annexure 4.
- ❖ Auditors shall also select sites for inspection based on the critical areas of risks, high intensity managed forests, etc.
- ❖ Stage 2 shall assess the effectiveness of the implementation of the forest management standard on the defined forest management area.

10.1.9. Audit Report

- Report on the Stage 1 audit along with findings shall be presented to the organization prior to the Stage 2 audit.
- The content of all reports on Stage 2 audits, surveillance audits and reassessment audits shall:
 - i. include a recommendation on certification by the audit team to the CB;
 - ii. be sufficient for the CB to make an informed decision on certification;

- iii. allow for traceability of the objective evidence upon which the evaluation was based to establish conformance or non-conformance with the requirements of the forest management standard;
 - iv. include a summary of the most important observations, positive as well as negative, regarding the implementation and effectiveness of the forest management system;
 - v. where possible, include suggestions for continuous improvement;
 - vi. support the conclusions reached by the audit team.
- Additionally, the report shall contain a summary of the certified forest area and the audit results(i.e. a Summary Report).
- CB shall submit the draft report to client within 45 days of audit for review of findings and factual correction. Client must submit their confirmation to CB on Draft Report within 30 days of submission.
- CB shall submit the Final Report to client within 75 days of date of audit.
- Where applicable, reports (e.g. of surveillance and recertification audits) shall document the clearing of each nonconformity revealed previously.

10.1.10. Technical Review of Audit Report

CB shall conform with ISO/IEC 17065

- a. The CB shall ensure that the reviewer is competent to review the documents and taking final decision.

10.1.11. Certification Decision

CB shall conform with ISO/IEC 17065

- a. The certification cycle is no longer than 5 years.

10.1.12. Identifying and recording audit findings

CB shall conform with ISO/IEC 17065

- a. The CB shall inform the client of all nonconformities.

- b. Audit findings shall be classified as Major Nonconformities, Minor Nonconformities and Observations. Definitions of Major, Minor or Observations shall be followed while grading the non-conformities.
- c. If Major Non-Compliances are issued in Evaluation Audit or Re-certification Audit, CB shall not issue the Certificate until unless Major Non-compliances are satisfactorily closed. If the client doesn't address the Major Non-conformity within 6 months of detection, then another on-site evaluation shall be required.
- d. Major and minor nonconformities identified in the surveillance audits shall result in corrective action(s) by the client organisation resolving the nonconformities. The corrective action plan, including a timeframe shall be reviewed and accepted by the CB. The time period for completion of the corrective action(s) for major nonconformities identified in surveillance audits and their verification by the CB shall follow the rules of the CB but not exceed 3 months. Corrective action(s) for minor nonconformities shall be verified in 12 months or next audit whichever is earlier. If Minor Non-Compliance(s) is not closed within 12 months, then CB shall upgrade the Minor Non-compliance into Major Non-compliance with 3 months' time.
- e. Corrective action(s) for all nonconformities identified in audits shall be verified by the CB by site visit or other appropriate forms of verification.
- f. The standard requires that if specific natural conditions do not allow the implementation of corrective actions of Major non-conformities within the timeframes, the CB can give an exemption. The maximum time-period is 6 months and the justification shall be documented.
- g. The audit evidence to determine the conformity with the forest management standard shall include relevant information from external parties (e.g. government agencies, community groups, conservations organizations, etc.) as appropriate.
- h. If 5 or more Major Non-compliances are issued in surveillance audit, then CB shall suspend the Certificate of client and it'll be reinstated only after successful closure of all Major-Non- Compliances.

10.1.13. Certification documentation

CB shall conform with ISO/IEC 17065

- a. The CB shall provide the client with formal certification documentation that clearly conveys, or permits identification of the following:
 - i. the name and address of the CB;
 - ii. the date certification is granted (the date shall not precede the date on which the certification decision was completed);
 - iii. the name and address (s) of the client;

- iv. product(s);
- v. the scope of certification;
- vi. validity of certificate
- vii. normative standards reference
- viii. signature or other defined authorization of the person(s) of the CB assigned such responsibility.

10.2. Maintaining certification

10.2.1. Surveillance activities:

- a. The CB has to organize an annual surveillance of the client's organization. The CB shall carry out a surveillance evaluation to monitor the certificate holder's continued conformity with applicable certification requirements at least annually.
- b. For a certificate having 5 years duration, at least four surveillance evaluations shall take place before the certificate expires.
- c. The surveillance activities must be planned in a way that representative areas and functions of the client's organization are covered.
- d. At each surveillance audit at least, the following aspects shall be included:
 - i. Compliance with legislation and regulations relevant in the areas and functions selected for the particular surveillance audit
 - ii. Review and follow up on all non-conformities raised during previous audit.
 - iii. Review of progress of planned activities
 - iv. Sample of forest management activities in the field.
- e. Surveillance audits shall be conducted at least once a year. The date of the first surveillance audit following initial certification shall not be more than 12 months from the last day of the stage 2 audit. 3 months extension can be given to the client for completing annual audit after justification and CB shall document it.

10.2.2. Re-certification

10.2.2.1. The CB may re-issue a certificate that has expired, based on the re-evaluation of the certificate holder's conformity with all aspects of the applicable NCCF and additional (e.g. contractual) certification requirements.

10.2.2.2. Re-evaluation shall follow the same procedures as for the main evaluation.

10.2.2.3. The revaluation shall be completed, and decision taken before expiry to avoid the Termination.

10.2.2.4. CBs can request NCCF (subject to request acceptance) to extend the validity of the certificate for one month if the audit is fixed. If certificate is not renewed within extended 30 days then Certificate will be terminated.

10.2.3. Special Audits

10.2.3.1. CB shall carry out short-notice and unannounced audits, if required, in case of any complaint received, Accreditation Body requirement, NCCF's compliance visit, etc.

10.3. Suspending, withdrawing or reducing the scope of certification

CB shall conform with ISO/IEC 17065

10.3.1. The CB shall advise the NCCF in writing, within 2 business days if there is any changes in the validity and scope of the certification, certification is suspended or withdrawn, or where there are any changes in decisions relating to the status of certification of an organization, and the reasons for those decisions. When a nonconformity with certification requirements is substantiated, either as a result of surveillance or otherwise, the CB shall consider and decide upon the appropriate action.

10.3.2. If client has not resolved the cause of suspension within 12 months, then CB shall terminate the certificate.

10.4. Changes affecting certification

CB shall conform with ISO/IEC 17065

10.4.1. When NCCF introduces new or revised requirements that affect the client, the CB shall ensure these changes are communicated to all clients. The CB shall verify the implementation of the changes by its clients and shall take actions.

10.5. Information exchange between a CB and its clients

10.5.1. **Certificate Transfer:** In case of the transfer of a certification to a new CB, existing CB shall ensure that its clients provide information on any other CB they are enrolled with for forest management certification.

10.5.1.1. CBs shall have documented procedures to handle certificate transfers including:

- the outbound transfer of their own clients to a different CB; and
- the inbound transfer of clients from a different CB.

10.5.1.2. Should a client opt to change CBs at any point after certification (i.e., transfer of certificate during surveillance) the client shall:

- notify NCCF in writing of the details of the certificate transfer, including the reason for the transfer;
- provide the current CB with a notice of NCCF certificate transfer, identifying the new CB; and
- provide the new CB with a copy of their last assessment report.

10.5.1.3. Prior to accepting a client transfer, the new CB shall review all available information regarding previous conformity assessments.

10.5.1.4. Where the new CB has doubts or concerns about the status of non-conformities that were raised in audits by the previous CB, or any other material aspect of previous conformity assessments, the client shall authorize the previous CB to share additional audit history information with the new CB to ensure that all outstanding non-conformities are resolved.

Note: *The new CB may determine, after having completed a desk-based review of the information, that it is necessary to perform a surveillance audit or conformity assessment of the transferring client before issuing a certificate.*

10.5.2. Considering the requirements on impartiality, the CB may provide advice or knowledge to the client in case that information originates NCCF, such as FAQ's, guidance documents, etc.

10.5.3. The CB informs its clients about the conditions which result in short notice or unannounced audits.

11. Abbreviations

1. CoC: Chain of Custody
2. FM: Forest Management
3. CB: Certification Body
4. NCCF: Network for Certification and Conservation of Forests
5. NABCB: National Accreditation Board for Certification Bodies

Annexes

Annexes to this document provide requirements for or guidance on issues that are not enforced through the accreditation process.

Annex 1 – Accreditations accepted by the NCCF

- a. NCCF requires that forest management and trees outside forests certification shall be carried out by certification bodies who are accredited by Accreditation Body, a member signatory of the IAF Multilateral Recognition Arrangement (MLA) for product certification. The scope of the accreditation shall explicitly cover the NCCF FM and/or ToF standard in its valid version and/or with reference to any future changes and amendments adopted by the NCCF and presented at the NCCF official website (www.nccf.in) . The scope of accreditation shall also explicitly state ISO/IEC 17065, this document and other requirements against which the certification body has been assessed
- b. The F M and/or ToF certificates issued by the accredited Certification Body (and its affiliates) shall bear the accreditation body logo/symbol.

Annex 2 – Notification of certification bodies

- a. For performing the certifications against NCCF FM and ToF certifications, the Certification Bodies shall be notified by the NCCF and its certificates, recognised by the NCCF.
- b. The NCCF notification requires the CB to pay PEFC Notification Fee and PEFC Logo Fee (to be collected from Certificate holder) as specified by the NCCF. Fee Policy is available at NCCF Website.

In order to ensure the independence of certification bodies, NCCF notification conditions decided by the NCCF shall only cover:

- a. administrative conditions (e.g. communication of the CB with the NCCF Council, transfer of information, etc.)
- b. financial conditions (fees imposed on certified entities),
- c. compliance with requirements for certification bodies verified through accreditation as described in this standard.

The NCCF notification conditions shall not discriminate against certification bodies or create trade obstacles.

Note: -- For the issuance of PEFC chain of custody Certificates, CBs are required to refer PEFC 2003:2020. NCCF does not set additional, scheme specific requirements for CBs intending to operate in CoC certification.

Annex 3 – Examples of Documentation and Records

Note: *This not a complete list nor is the certification body required to inspect all documents listed here. Document review process may vary from forest and management type*

- Copies of applicable laws
- Management plan / working plan
- Concession agreements
- Documentation showing tenure and land use rights
- Land/forest map
- Work instruction
- SOPs for contractor; contractor contract
- Agreement with communities
- SOPs for silvicultural activities
- Wildlife management and evaluation plan
- Environmental impact assessment
- Social impact assessment
- Harvesting and production records
- Chemical use records
- Communications with stakeholders
- Purchasing and sales documentation

Annex 4 – Examples of Sites

Note: *This not a complete list nor is the certification body required to select all the sites listed here surveillance. Sites selection may depend on various factors including - forest type, silvicultural operations, management type, etc.*

- Harvested sites
- Areas under harvesting
- Working coups
- Seed orchards
- Nurseries
- Protected areas
- Areas with high conservation area
- Workmen facilities – accommodation, amenities, drinking water
- Areas used by communities/forest dwellers/ scheduled tribes within or near the forest area
- Water catchment – within the forest boundaries
- Sites where chemicals – pesticides or fertilizers have been used and storage area
- Monitoring sites
- Trial plots
- Areas jointly managed by communities and forest department
- Production forest areas in a sufficient variety of conditions including slopes, different silviculturalsystems including areas of:
 - a. Marked for thinning
 - b. Recently thinned
 - c. Marked for harvesting
 - d. One/five/ten after harvesting

Appendix 5 (normative): Supplementary requirements for certification bodies providing certification against ToF (Trees outside Forests) requirements

Forest Management	Trees outside Forests
5.1.2.2 Education 5.1.2.2.1 The certification body shall ensure that auditors have the knowledge corresponding to at least a tertiary education. Note: Tertiary education, also referred to as third stage, third level, and post-secondary education, is the educational level following the completion of a school providing a secondary education. Tertiary education can be obtained, among others, at universities, technical schools, or colleges. 5.1.2.2.2 The certification body shall ensure that auditors have taken formal forestry related courses. 5.1.2.2.3 The specific education relating to forestry (requirement 5.1.2.2.2) can be substituted by working experience in this sector if the certification body can demonstrate it is equivalent to the required education.	5.1.2.2 Education 5.1.2.2.1 The certification body shall ensure that auditors have the knowledge corresponding to at least a tertiary education. Note: Tertiary education, also referred to as third stage, third level, and post-secondary education, is the educational level following the completion of a school providing a secondary education. Tertiary education can be obtained, among others, at universities, technical schools, or colleges. 5.1.2.2.2 The certification body shall ensure that auditors have taken formal forestry related courses and/or courses related to disciplines directly connected to the complementary land use covered by TOF certification 5.1.2.2.3 The specific education relating to forestry or TOF (requirement 5.1.2.2.2) can be substituted by working experience in this sector if the certification body can demonstrate it is equivalent to the required education.
5.1.2.3 Working experience 5.1.2.3.1 The certification body shall ensure that auditors have a minimum of three years of full-time professional experience in a relevant discipline (e.g., forestry, trees outside the forest). 5.1.2.3.2 The number of years of total work experience may be reduced by one year if the auditor has completed a tertiary education in forestry, biodiversity, or natural resources management.	5.1.2.3 Working experience 5.1.2.3.1 The certification body shall ensure that auditors have a minimum of three years of full-time professional experience in a relevant discipline (e.g., forestry, trees outside the forest, biodiversity, natural resources management). 5.1.2.3.2 The number of years of total work experience may be reduced by one year if the auditor has completed a tertiary education in forestry/agriculture/agroforestry/life sciences/environmental science,

Note: Tertiary education, also referred to as third stage, third level, and post-secondary education, is the educational level following the completion of a school providing a secondary education. Tertiary education can be obtained, among others, at universities, technical schools, or colleges.	Note: Tertiary education, also referred to as third stage, third level, and post-secondary education, is the educational level following the completion of a school providing a secondary education. Tertiary education can be obtained, among others, at universities, technical schools, or colleges.
5.1.2.4 PEFC endorsed NCCF forest management training The certification body shall ensure that new auditors have received and successfully completed initial training PEFC endorsed certification system or systems for the country/countries where they conduct audits before they start their auditing activities. Note: The PEFC website provides further information on training options.	5.1.2.4 PEFC endorsed ToF training The certification body shall ensure that new auditors have received and successfully completed initial training PEFC endorsed certification system or systems, including a specific module on PEFC TOF certification, for the country/countries where they conduct audits before they start their auditing activities. Note 1: National or regional forest certification systems may have separate training for SFM auditors and for TOF auditors.
5.1.2.6 Audit experience For the first qualification of an auditor, the certification body shall ensure that the auditor has performed, as auditor-in-training, at least 40 hours of forest management or equivalent audits (e.g., trees outside the forest, ISO 9001, 14001 or 45001 auditing experience in the forestry or related sector, biodiversity, natural resources management) under the leadership of a qualified audit team leader within the last year. Note: The 40-hour period as auditor-in-training should cover different types of audits (initial, surveillance and recertification).	5.1.2.6 Audit experience For the first qualification of an auditor, the certification body shall ensure that the auditor has performed, as auditor-in-training, at least 40 hours of management audits in disciplines directly connected to the complementary land use covered by TOF or equivalent audits (e.g., forest management, ISO 9001, 14001 or 45001 auditing experience in the forestry, TOF, or related sector, biodiversity, natural resources management) under the leadership of a qualified audit team leader within the last year. Note: The 40-hour period as auditor-in-training should cover different types of audits (initial, surveillance and recertification).
5.1.2.7 Competencies 5.1.2.7.1 The certification body shall ensure that auditors demonstrate the ability to apply knowledge and skills in the following areas: a) Principles, objectives, requirements, criteria, and indicators of the PEFC forest management standard Benchmarks, PEFC ST 1003, Sustainable Forest Management -	5.1.2.7 Competencies 5.1.2.7.1 The certification body shall ensure that auditors demonstrate the ability to apply knowledge and skills in the following areas: a) Principles, objectives, requirements, criteria, and indicators of the PEFC forest management standard Benchmarks, PEFC ST 1003, Sustainable Forest Management -

Requirements and PEFC ST 1002, Group Forest Management - Requirements as implemented by the PEFC endorsed certification system, as applicable. b) Audit principles, procedures, and techniques, and how to apply them appropriately to different audits while ensuring that audits are conducted in a consistent and systematic manner. c) Managing an organisation, including organisational size, structure, functions and relationships, general business processes, risk management and cultural and social aspects. d) Appropriate knowledge of the socio-demographics, sustainability issues, cultural issues (including gender equality), indigenous interests and values and indigenous treaties, where applicable, and industrial relations in the region of application of the forest management requirements. e) Knowledge of legislation, regulations, or other relevant requirements, including: i. Contracts and agreements and/or collective bargaining agreements (as applicable). ii. Forest governance and law enforcement system of the country, including those covering social, workers and trade union rights and occupational safety and health of workers. iii. International conventions relating to worker rights (ILO core conventions). iv. International treaties and conventions relating to forestry, forest trade, and tree- based products.	Requirements and PEFC ST 1002, Group Forest Management - Requirements as implemented by the PEFC endorsed certification system, as applicable. b) Audit principles, procedures, and techniques, and how to apply them appropriately to different audits while ensuring that audits are conducted in a consistent and systematic manner. c) Managing an organisation, including organisational size, structure, functions and relationships, general business processes, risk management and cultural and social aspects. d) Appropriate knowledge of the socio-demographics, sustainability issues, cultural issues (including gender equality), indigenous interests and values and indigenous treaties, where applicable, and industrial relations in the region of application of TOF management requirements e) Knowledge of legislation, regulations, or other relevant requirements, including: i. Contracts and agreements and/or collective bargaining agreements (as applicable). ii. Forest and/or TOF (as applicable) governance and law enforcement system of the country, including those covering social, workers and trade union rights and occupational safety and health of workers. iii. International conventions relating to worker rights (ILO core conventions). iv. International treaties and conventions relating to forestry and/or disciplines directly connected to the complementary land use covered by TOF, forest and/or TOF trade, and tree-based products
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f) The principles of forest management based on techniques, including: inventory, planning, protection, management of forest ecosystems, identification and management of ecologically important forest areas, carbon stocks and biodiversity, as well as technical aspects of forest operations, and their potential impacts. g) Understanding of and ability to interpret Geographic Information Systems (GIS) as it applies to forest monitoring and management. h) Management and control of online documents, data and records, confidential data, data privacy and protection; and i) Application of risk assessment techniques. 5.1.2.7.2 The certification body shall ensure that the audit team consists of individuals who collectively have all the required competencies for the scope of the audit.	f) The principles of forest and/or disciplines directly connected to the complementary land use covered by TOF management based on techniques, including: inventory, planning, protection, management of forest ecosystems and/or TOF ecosystems (as applicable, according to the disciplines directly connected to the complementary land use covered by TOF certification), identification and management of ecologically important forest areas and ecologically important non-forest areas, carbon stocks and biodiversity, as well as technical aspects of forest operations, and their potential impacts. g) Understanding of and ability to interpret Geographic Information Systems (GIS) as it applies to TOF monitoring and management. h) Management and control of online documents, data and records, confidential data, data privacy and protection; and i) Application of risk assessment techniques. 5.1.2.7.2 The certification body shall ensure that the audit team consists of individuals who collectively have all the required competencies for the scope of the audit.
5.1.2.8 Maintenance of the qualification as an auditor 5.1.2.8.1. PEFC endorsed NCCF forest management training 5.1.2.8.1.1 To maintain the auditor qualification, the certification body shall ensure that qualified auditors participate in a PEFC endorsed forest management refresher training whenever a new version of the forest management standard(s) they are qualified to audit, or the standards with requirements for SFM certification bodies, is published.	5.1.2.8 Maintenance of the qualification as an auditor 5.1.2.8.1 PEFC endorsed NCCF ToF training 5.1.2.8.1.1 To maintain the auditor qualification, the certification body shall ensure that qualified auditors participate in a PEFC endorsed NCCF ToF refresher training that includes a TOF module Council whenever a new version of the forest management standard(s) and/or TOF requirements they are qualified to audit, or the standards with requirements for TOF certification bodies, is published.

5.1.2.8.1.2 The certification body shall ensure that such refresher training is successfully completed before conducting audits against the revised standard.	5.1.2.8.1.2 The certification body shall ensure that such refresher training is successfully completed before conducting audits against the revised standard. <i>Note:</i> National or regional forest certification systems may have separate training for SFM auditors and for TOF auditors.
5.1.2.8.2 Audit experience 5.1.2.8.2.1 To maintain the auditor qualification, the certification body shall ensure that the auditor has performed a minimum of 40 hours of forest management or equivalent audits (e.g. trees outside the forest, ISO 9001, 14001 or 45001 auditing experience in the forestry or related sector, biodiversity, natural resources management) per year. 5.1.2.8.2.2 In exceptional circumstances, such as statutory leave, long-term illness, or lack of opportunities to provide certification services, auditors unable to comply with 5.1.2.8.2.1 shall perform 20 hours of forest management audits under the supervision of a qualified auditor within two years, or undergo a formal evaluation of competencies by the certification body prior to the auditor taking back auditing activities.	5.1.2.8.2 Audit experience 5.1.2.8.2.1 To maintain the auditor qualification, the certification body shall ensure that the auditor has performed a minimum of 40 hours of audits of disciplines directly connected to the complementary land use covered by TOF certification management or equivalent audits (e.g., forest management, ISO 9001, 14001 or 45001 auditing experience in the forestry or TOF related sector, forestry, biodiversity, natural resources management) per year. 5.1.2.8.2.2 In exceptional circumstances, such as statutory leave, long-term illness, or lack of opportunities to provide certification services, auditors unable to comply with 5.1.2.8.2.1 shall perform 20 hours of forest management audits and/or audits against disciplines directly connected to the complementary land use covered by TOF certification under the supervision of a qualified auditor within two years, or undergo a formal evaluation of competencies by the certification body prior to the auditor taking back auditing activities.
5.1.4 Reviewer and certification decision maker 5.1.4.2 Education 5.1.4.2.1 The certification body shall ensure that the reviewer and certification decision maker have the knowledge corresponding to at least a tertiary education. Note: Tertiary education, also referred to as third stage, third level, and post-secondary education, is the educational level following the completion of a school providing a secondary education. Tertiary education can be obtained, among others, at	5.1.4 Reviewer and certification decision maker 5.1.4.2 Education 5.1.4.2.1 The certification body shall ensure that the reviewer and certification decision maker have the knowledge corresponding to at least a tertiary education. Note: Tertiary education, also referred to as third stage, third level, and post-secondary education, is the educational level following the completion of a school providing a secondary education. Tertiary education can be obtained, among others, at

universities, technical schools, or colleges.	universities, technical schools, or colleges.
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5.1.4.2.2 The certification body shall ensure that reviewers and certification decision makers have taken formal courses in forestry. 5.1.4.2.3 The specific education relating to forestry (requirement 5.1.4.2.2) can be substituted by working experience in this sector if the certification body can demonstrate it is equivalent to the required education.	5.1.4.2.2 The certification body shall ensure that reviewers and certification decision makers have taken formal courses in forestry and/or disciplines directly connected to the complementary land use covered by TOF certification. 5.1.4.2.3 The specific education relating to forestry and/or disciplines directly connected to the complementary land use covered by TOF certification (requirement 5.1.4.2.2) can be substituted by working experience in this sector if the certification body can demonstrate it is equivalent to the required education.
5.1.4.4 PEFC endorsed NCCF forest management training 5.1.4.4.1 The certification body shall ensure that new reviewers and certification decision makers have received initial training on the PEFC endorsed certification system or systems for the country/countries where they conduct their certification activities. 5.1.4.4.2 The certification body shall ensure that new reviewers and certification decision makers have successfully completed the training before they start their certification activities. Note: The PEFC website provides further information on training options.	5.1.4.4 PEFC endorsed NCCF ToF training 5.1.4.4.1 The certification body shall ensure that new reviewers and certification decision makers have received initial training on the PEFC endorsed certification system or systems, including a specific module on PEFC TOF certification, for the country/countries where they conduct their certification activities. 5.1.4.4.2 The certification body shall ensure that new reviewers and certification decision makers have successfully completed the training before they start their certification activities. Note 1: The PEFC website provides further information on training options.

5.1.4.7 Competencies 5.1.4.7.1 The certification body shall ensure that the reviewer or certification decision maker demonstrates the ability to apply knowledge and skills in the following areas: a) Principles, objectives, requirements, criteria, and indicators of the PEFC forest management standard Benchmarks, PEFC ST 1003, <i>Sustainable Forest Management - Requirements</i> and PEFC ST 1002, <i>Group Forest Management - Requirements</i> as implemented by the PEFC endorsed certification system, as applicable.	5.1.4.7 Competencies 5.1.4.7.1 The certification body shall ensure that the reviewer or certification decision maker demonstrates the ability to apply knowledge and skills in the following areas: a) Principles, objectives, requirements, criteria, and indicators of the PEFC ToF standard Benchmarks, PEFC ST 1003, <i>Sustainable Forest Management - Requirements</i> and PEFC ST 1002, <i>Group Forest Management - Requirements</i> as implemented by the PEFC endorsed certification system, as applicable.
b) Knowledge of the socio-demographics, sustainability issues, and cultural issues (including gender equality), indigenous interests and values and indigenous treaties, where applicable, and industrial relations in the region of application of the forest management requirements. c) General knowledge of legislation, regulation, or other relevant requirements pertaining to forest management, labour issues, and data privacy and protection. d) The principles of forest management. e) Management and control of online documents, data and records, confidential data, data privacy and protection; and f) Application of risk assessment techniques.	b) Knowledge of the socio-demographics, sustainability issues, and cultural issues (including gender equality), indigenous interests and values and indigenous treaties, where applicable, and industrial relations in the region of application of the TOF management requirements. c) General knowledge of legislation, regulation, or other relevant requirements pertaining to forest management and/or disciplines directly connected to the complementary land use cover by TOF certification, labour issues, and data privacy and protection. d) The principles of forest management and/or disciplines directly connected to the complementary land use covered by TOF certification. e) Management and control of online documents, data and records, confidential data, data privacy and protection; and f) Application of risk assessment techniques.
5.1.4.7.2 The certification body shall ensure that the team of reviewers and certification decision makers consists of individuals who collectively have all the required competencies for the scope of the audit.	5.1.4.7.2 The certification body shall ensure that the team of reviewers and certification decision makers consists of individuals who collectively have all the required competencies for the scope of the audit.

5.1.4.8 Maintenance of the qualification as a reviewer or certification decision maker 5.1.4.8.1.1 PEFC endorsed NCCF FM training 5.1.4.8.1.1 To maintain the reviewer or certification decision maker qualification, the certification body shall ensure that the qualified reviewer or certification decision maker participates in a PEFC forest management refresher training whenever a new version of the PEFC forest management standard(s) they are qualified to conduct their corresponding certification activities against, or the standards with requirements for SFM certification bodies, is published.	5.1.4.8 Maintenance of the qualification as a reviewer or certification decision maker 5.1.4.8.1 PEFC endorsed ToF training 5.1.4.8.1.1 To maintain the reviewer or certification decision maker qualification, the certification body shall ensure that the qualified reviewer or certification decision maker participates in a PEFC endorsed NCCF ToF refresher training that includes a TOF module whenever a new version of the PEFC forest management standard(s) and/or TOF requirements they are qualified to conduct their corresponding certification activities against, or the standards with requirements for SFM certification bodies, is published.
5.1.4.8.1.2 The certification body shall ensure that such refresher training is successfully completed before the reviewer or certification decision maker conducts their certification activities against the revised standard.	5.1.4.8.1.2 The certification body shall ensure that such refresher training is successfully completed before the reviewer or certification decision maker conducts their certification activities against the revised standard.
5.1.4.8.2 Audit experience To maintain the reviewer or certification decision maker qualification, the certification body shall ensure that the qualified reviewer or certification decision maker has participated as an observer in forest management or equivalent audits (e.g. trees outside the forest, ISO 9001, 14001 or 45001 auditing experience in the forestry or related sector, biodiversity, natural resources management) covering at least 16 hours every two years, which includes part office assessment and part field assessment and a closing meeting. Note: The observation may take place remotely using ICT.	5.1.4.8.2 Audit experience To maintain the reviewer or certification decision maker qualification, the certification body shall ensure that the qualified reviewer or certification decision maker has participated as an observer in audits against disciplines directly connected to the complementary land use covered by TOF certification or equivalent audits covering at least 16 hours every two years, which includes part office assessment and part field assessment and a closing meeting. Note: The observation may take place remotely using ICT.

Bilbography

- a. *FSC-STD-20-001 V4-0 EN: General Requirement for FSC® Accredited Certification Bodies*
- b. *VRIKSH EPCH-VRSH-STD-02: General Requirements for Certification Bodies operating “VRIKSH” Scheme for Timber and Timber Products*
- c. *AWS Certification Requirements version 1.0*
- d. *CDM Accreditation Standard CDM-EB46-A02-STAN Version 06.0*
- e. *PEFC ITALY Annex 6 ITA 1003-1: SFM and SPM Accreditation Minimum Requirements*
- f. *ISEAL Code of Good Practice for Assuring Compliance with Social and Environmental StandardsV1-0*
- g. *ISEAL, Managing conflict of interest in standards and assurance, 2013*
- h. *ISO/IEC 17021-1:2015-07 Conformity assessment - Requirements for bodies providing audit andcertification of management systems*