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**PEER REVIEW PROCESS REQUIREMENTS FOR CERTIFICATION BODIES OPERATING FOREST
MANAGEMENT CERTIFICATION (NATURAL FOREST) UNDER THE MALAYSIAN TIMBER
CERTIFICATION SCHEME**



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BACKGROUND

This document specifies certification bodies operating forest management certification (natural forest) under The Malaysian Timber Certification Scheme.

The ACB-FMC Documents were previously under the custodianship of the Department of Standards Malaysia (DSM). During the 2nd MTCC Coordination Committee (MCC) Meeting held on 12 December 2024, members agreed that ownership of the documents should be transferred to MTCC as the scheme owner to address overlaps and enable proper evaluation of their continued use. Following this decision, DSM formally transferred the ACB-FMC Documents to MTCC, thereby placing the documents under MTCC's governance for further review, alignment, and future management in line with MTCS requirements.

This document should form part of MTCS auditor training and is applicable to varying scopes and scales of audits, conducted by single auditors and large audit teams.

This document can be used as a criteria document for accreditation, peer assessment or other audit related processes.

In this document, the following verbal forms are used:

“auditor” includes “auditors”;

“shall” indicates a requirement;

“should” indicates a recommendation;

“may” indicates a permission;

“can” indicates a possibility or a capability.

“must” indicates an external constraint or obligations that is not stated as a provision in this document, e.g. legal requirements.

Section 1: Introduction

- 1.1** This document specifies the requirements for the peer review process that is necessary for evaluating the audit reports (for stage 2 or recertification audit) prepared in conjunction with an application for forest management certification, and shall be used for the purpose of accreditation of a certification body (CB) operating a natural forest management certification programme under the Malaysian Timber Certification Scheme (MTCS).
- 1.2** All CBs accredited by the Department of Standards Malaysia (STANDARDS MALAYSIA) shall comply with the requirements of this document.

Section 2: Purpose

- 2.1** The purpose of a peer review process is for the audit report prepared by the CB to be reviewed by the peer reviewers to obtain their independent expert opinions on the level of compliance of the Forest Management Unit (FMU) against the requirements of the agreed certification standard for natural forest management.

Section 3: Roles and Responsibilities

- 3.1** Two peer reviewers shall be appointed by the CB to review the audit report on the FMU audited. The audit report shall be submitted by the CB to the peer reviewers together with the comments received from the client (FMU).
- 3.2** The role of the peer reviewers is to ensure that the audit report has the necessary content to act as the basis for the recommendation to award or renew the certificate for forest management.
- 3.3** The peer reviewers shall confirm that the audit team has:
 - i. carried out an objective and professional audit of the FMU against the requirements of the certification standard for natural forest management;
 - ii. investigated all relevant data sources and avenues of enquiry;
 - iii. arrived at the appropriate conclusion and recommendation based on the available audit evidence; and
 - iv. prepared a concise and comprehensive audit report.
- 3.4** The peer reviewer shall submit the following in a report to the CB:

- i. review and comments on all the audit findings (Non-conformities and observations);
- ii. indicate areas where more information or clarification is necessary;
- iii. suggest actions that should be taken, or issues that should be considered, but have not been covered in the audit report; and
- iv. state the reviewer's view with regard to the certification recommendation.

3.5 The reports of the two peer reviewers and comments of the client (FMU) shall be considered and incorporated by the CB into the final audit report, together with the CB's response.

3.6 The peer reviewers shall be informed on the feedback by the audit team and incorporation of their reports in the final audit report.

Section 4: Competence Requirements

4.1 The peer reviewers shall meet the following competence criteria:

- i. have a minimum of five (5) years work experience in forestry or expertise related to various aspects of sustainable forest management, such as ecology, environmental sciences, biology, sociology and forest economics;
- ii. have the necessary training and work experience to assess the adequacy of the reports submitted by the auditors. In-depth knowledge on the applicable local regulations and condition of the forest areas audited, including the forest management system being implemented, would be an advantage;
- iii. have a good understanding of the certification standard for natural forest management;
- iv. have not provided any consultancy services including the preparation of the Forest Management Plan, in the three (3) years prior to the audit; for this purpose, the reviewers shall submit a list of all forestry-related consultancy projects undertaken in the past three (3) years; and
- v. have no financial, trade or business interest in the outcome of the certification decision made for the FMU audited.