



Frequently asked questions (informative)

General requirements for FSC accredited certification bodies

FSC-STD-20-001 V4-0 D2-0

Date: May 2015

By when will certification bodies have to transition to the new version of the standard?

The tentative transition plan as discussed and agreed at Working Group level is the following:

Publication of the new version on 01 January 2016

Effective date of the new version on 01 April 2016

From 01 April 2016 onwards the accreditation body may issue observations against new requirements. By 01 April 2017 the accreditation body starts to issue nonconformities against new requirements.

From the effective date onwards (re-)accreditations need to be based on the new version.

What happens with the requirements of ISO/IEC Guide 65 when this document expires on September 15th, 2015?

There will be a time gap between formal expiry of the ISO/IEC Guide 65 and effective date of the new standard version. Even though ISO/IEC Guide 65 will not be a valid ISO standard anymore, FSC will continue to require conformity with requirements of this standard until the new version of FSC-STD-20-001 replaces the old one.

Why did FSC decide to de-link from ISO/IEC 17065 when the revised draft is developed to ensure compatibility with ISO/IEC 17065? Why are also other ISO standards referenced and used to create the revised FSC-STD-20-001?

The main reason for FSC to de-link from ISO/IEC 17065 was that FSC prefers to be independent from developments in ISO standards and to create a set of FSC specific requirements, which are owned and maintained by FSC. However this does not mean that FSC moves away from the content of ISO/IEC 17065 standard.

FSC aims to ensure compatibility with ISO/IEC 17065 requirements, also in line with the ISEAL Assurance Code, which requires FSC requirements to conform to or be equivalent to ISO/IEC



17065 (or ISO 17021). ISO/IEC 17065 requirements have been included in the revised draft, with permission from ISO (DIN).

Some complementary requirements of other ISO standards, mainly of ISO/IEC 17021, have also been included in the revised standard.

Does the standard require conformity with ISO 19011?

ISO 19011, the guideline for auditing management systems, continues to be considered as the basis for conducting professional audits and is included as reference in the standard. This does not mean that FSC expects conformity with the entire ISO 19011. Only direct references in the actual standard text are relevant for conformity, within the scope of the requirements. E.g. draft Clause 4.3.10 requires that ISO 19011 contents related to opening meetings, closing meetings and communication of audit findings are considered and incorporated in the audit handbook, where appropriate.

Why is not a separate standard created to capture the new requirements for the FSC training program (Annexes 4 and 5)?

The auditor qualification requirements have been revised and concretized in the draft and new Annexes are created to provide the framework for operating an FSC training program, implementing GA 2014 Motion 52 on training and qualification requirements for FSC audit teams. All contents are currently contained in the revised draft FSC-STD-20-001, as they are developed as part of the revision process. It is acknowledged that this considerably increases the size of the document and connects revisions of the training program to revisions of the entire standard. The FSC Board will be asked to approve separation of the FSC training program requirements from FSC-STD-20-001.

What happens with the complaints register?

The revised standard requires certification bodies to register their complaints with FSC. FSC plans to use the certificate database for registration of complaints, however the system for registration will not be developed in 2015. Therefore the requirement in FSC-STD-20-001 is kept rather general. Details will be developed by the Quality Assurance Unit and consulted with stakeholders.



Do we expect all auditors to be registered in the auditor registry when the standard becomes effective?

It is planned that on the effective date the registry system is ready for registration, however it is acknowledged that it will take some time to have all auditors to become registered. Details will be developed by the accreditation body and consulted with stakeholders.

Does the revised standard allow certification bodies to provide consultancy services to clients?

No, the revised standard continues to disallow certification bodies to provide consultancy services to clients, in line with ISO/IEC 17065 and ISO/IEC 17021. General stakeholder feedback was gathered on this topic as part of the first round of public consultation, but it is not within the scope of this revision process to make such a fundamental shift (see [Consultation Report FSC-STD-20-001 D1-0](#), p. 4).

Why has the timeline to consider conflicts of interest lapsed increased from two to three years?

The increase of the timeline was discussed and agreed at Working Group level as a precautionary approach, because it was argued that the current timeline of two years is not sufficient for auditors, personnel involved in the certification decision-making process and for personnel handling complaints and appeals.

How is GA 2014 Motion 66 on auditor rotation implemented in the revised standard?

Motion 66 requires that in forest management audits no auditor shall serve as a member of the audit team for more than three consecutive audits of the same certificate holder, but allows that exemptions are possible for regions where there are very few certificate holders. The Motion is implemented in the revised draft with small wording changes. The draft includes a proposal on how to implement exemptions for regions with very few certificates.

The Clause for chain of custody (COC) and controlled wood (CW) audits is kept without change, requiring that auditors should be rotated after three years. The draft includes a clarification on what “should” means in the context of this Clause.

Some stakeholders requested alignment of the timeline for auditor rotation to the certification cycle, which would mean having a five year auditor rotation cycle, or to even eliminate the thresh-



old. The principle approach of having a maximum three year auditor rotation cycle is kept, to address the risk of over-familiarity of the auditor.

Why do requirements for outsourcing apply to subsidiaries/sister companies/ affiliates?

The accreditation scope defines which entity is accredited to operate an FSC certification program. All bodies that are not FSC accredited need to conform to the outsourcing requirements, whether they are external bodies or under control of the certification body.

Practically it will make a difference where bodies providing outsourced services are affiliates, as conformity with FSC requirements should be easier to be achieved and demonstrated.

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