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



Malaysian Timber Certification Council
C-08-05, Block C, Megan Avenue II
No.12, Jalan Yap Kwan Seng 50450
Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
Tel: +(6) 03 2161 2298, Fax: +(6) 03 2161 2293
E-mail: info@mtcc.com.my, Web: www.mtcc.com.my

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Primary Contact Details: Email	fm@mtcc.com.my
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BACKGROUND

This document specifies the requirement Peer Review Process Requirements for Bodies Operating Forest Management Certification (Forest Plantations) 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.

1. This document provides guidance to certification bodies operating forest management certification programme for forest plantations regarding the requirements for the peer review process that is necessary for evaluating the audit report (for stage 2 or recertification audit) prepared in conjunction with an application for forest plantation management certification under the Malaysian Timber Certification Scheme (MTCS).
2. This document shall be used for the purpose of accreditation of a CB operating a forest plantation management certification programme under the MTCS. All CBs accredited by the Department of Standards Malaysia (STANDARDS MALAYSIA) shall comply with the requirements of this document.
3. The aim of a peer review process is for the audit report prepared by a certification body to be reviewed by independent experts to obtain a second opinion on the level of compliance of the Forest Plantation Management Unit (FPMU) concerned against the requirements of the agreed standard for forest plantation management certification.
4. Two peer reviewers will be involved in one audit and they will be appointed by the CB, based on the issues associated with the FPMU being audited. The review shall be carried out on the audit report which is submitted to the peer reviewers together with the comments and action plans received from the client (FPMU) by the CB.
5. The role of the peer reviewers is to ensure that the audit report has the necessary content to act as the foundation for the award of a certificate and to confirm that:
 - i. the audit has been conducted by auditors with the appropriate qualification and experience;
 - ii. the audit has been conducted in accordance with the requirements for audit duration as stipulated in the document ACB-FMC 2-2;
 - iii. the audit team has carried out an objective and professional audit of the FPMU for certification against the requirements of the standard for forest plantation management certification;
 - iv. the audit team has investigated adequate and relevant data sources and avenues of enquiry;
 - v. the audit team has arrived at an appropriate conclusion based on the evidence presented to it; and
 - vi. the audit team has prepared a concise and comprehensive report that will stand up to public scrutiny.

6. The CB shall request the individual peer reviewer to submit the following in a report to the CB:
 - i. state whether the audit has been conducted by auditors with the appropriate qualification and experience;
 - ii. state whether the audit has been conducted in accordance with the requirements for audit duration as stipulated in the document ACB-FMC 2-2;
 - iii. indicate which findings and Corrective Action Requests (CARs) by the audit team, and comments and action plans received from the client (FPMU) by the CB the reviewer disagrees with, and why;
 - iv. indicate areas where the reviewer feels more information or clarification is necessary;
 - v. state whether the reviewer agrees/disagrees with the certification recommendation of the auditors; and
 - vi. suggest actions for improvement that the reviewer feels should be taken, or issues that should be considered relevant to the scope of the audit.
7. The reports of the two peer reviewers and the comments of the client (FPMU) shall be considered and incorporated by the CB into the final audit report, together with the CB's response. The response on the reports of the two peer reviewers shall be made available to them by the CB.
8. The CB must ensure that the individuals who are appointed as peer reviewers meet the following criteria:
 - i. have a minimum of ten years experience in forestry or expertise related to various aspects of forest/forest plantation management such as ecology, environmental sciences, botany, zoology, sociology, agriculture, forest/agriculture engineering and forest/agriculture economics;
 - ii. have the necessary knowledge and work experience to assess the adequacy of the audit reports submitted by the auditors. In-depth knowledge on applicable local rules and regulations, and the condition of the forest plantation areas audited including the forest plantation management system being implemented would be an advantage;
 - iii. have a good understanding of the certification process under the MTCS and the standard for forest plantation management certification used and its related auditing procedures;
 - iv. to avoid any conflict of interest, individuals to be considered as peer reviewers by the CB shall not have provided consultancy or similar services to the FPMU concerned in the three years prior to the audit;
 - v. for this purpose, the individual shall have submitted a list of all the forestry related consultancy projects undertaken in the past three years; and have no financial,

trade or business interest in the outcome of the certification decision in any FPMU being audited or likely to be audited by the CB.