

**Marine Stewardship Council**

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# **MSC Fisheries Certification Process**



**Version 3.1, 22 July 2024**

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The official language of this standard is English. The definitive version is maintained on the MSC website ([msc.org](https://www.msc.org)). Any discrepancy between copies, versions, or translations shall be resolved by reference to the definitive English version.

The MSC prohibits any modification of part or all of the contents in any form.

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## Responsibility for these requirements

The Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) is responsible for these requirements.

Readers should verify that they are using the latest copy of this and other documents. Updated documents, together with a master list of all available MSC documents, can be found on the MSC website ([msc.org](https://www.msc.org)).

## Versions published

Version no.	Date	Description of amendment
1.0	15 August 2011	First version issued for application by Conformity Assessment Bodies (CABs).
1.1	24 October 2011	Version issued incorporating revised Group Chain of Custody (CoC) requirements and correcting typos, page numbering, wrong and missing referencing, and unreadable flowcharts.
1.2	10 January 2012	Version issued incorporating Technical Advisory Board 20 agreed changes regarding reassessment, Objection Procedure, modifications to the default assessment tree to assess bivalves, implementation timeframes, and Aquaculture Stewardship Council (ASC) requirements. Minor edits, comprised correction of wrong and missing referencing, typos, and unreadable figures.
1.3	14 January 2013	Version issued incorporating Technical Advisory Board 21 and Board of Trustees agreed changes. Minor edits and clarifications were also incorporated.
2.0	1 October 2014	Version issued incorporating changes to the standard as a result of the MSC Fisheries Standard review and changes to CAB procedures as a result of the speed and cost review.
2.1	31 August 2018	Version issued incorporating changes to the assessment process regarding streamlining, harmonisation, and labour policy development topics.
2.2	25 March 2020	Version issued incorporating changes to the confirmation of scope process, defining the Unit of Assessment and Unit of Certification, conditions, and the expedited audit process. Minor edits and clarifications were also incorporated.
2.3	26 October 2022	Version issued incorporating changes to harmonisation, stakeholder input, and traceability. Minor edits and clarifications were also incorporated.
3.0	26 October 2022	Version issued incorporating changes to process related to the release of v3.0 of the MSC Fisheries Standard, removal of the Risk-Based Framework, harmonisation, stakeholder input, and traceability.
3.1	22 July 2024	Version issued incorporating changes related to the amended Fisheries Standard v3.1.

## The Marine Stewardship Council

### Vision

Our vision is of the world's oceans teeming with life, and seafood supplies safeguarded for this and future generations.

### Mission

Our mission is to use our ecolabel and fishery certification program to contribute to the health of the world's oceans by recognising and rewarding sustainable fishing practices, influencing the choices people make when buying seafood, and working with our partners to transform the seafood market to a sustainable basis.

## General introduction

### Fisheries certification

With international consultation with stakeholders, the MSC has developed standards for sustainable fishing and seafood traceability. These standards ensure that MSC labelled seafood comes from, and can be traced back to, a sustainable fishery.

MSC standards and requirements meet global best practice guidelines for certification and labelling programs.

The [MSC Fisheries Standard](#) sets out requirements that a fishery must meet to enable it to claim that its fish come from a well-managed and sustainable source.

Throughout the world, fisheries are using good management practices to safeguard jobs, secure fish stocks for the future, and help protect the marine environment. The science-based MSC environmental standard for sustainable fishing offers fisheries a way to confirm sustainability, using a credible, independent, third-party assessment process. Certification means sustainable fisheries can be recognised and rewarded in the marketplace and gives an assurance to consumers that their seafood comes from a well-managed and sustainable source.

The [MSC Fisheries Standard](#) applies to wild-capture fisheries that meet the scope requirements provided in the [MSC Fisheries Standard Section 1](#).

The [MSC Fisheries Standard](#) comprises the following core Principles:

#### Principle 1: Sustainable target fish stocks

A fishery must be conducted in a manner that does not lead to over-fishing or depletion of the exploited populations and, for those populations that are depleted, the fishery must be conducted in a manner that demonstrably leads to their recovery.

#### Principle 2: Environmental impact of fishing

Fishing operations should allow for the maintenance of the structure, productivity, function, and diversity of the ecosystem on which the fishery depends. The ecosystem includes habitat and associated dependent and ecologically related species.

#### Principle 3: Effective management

The fishery is subject to an effective management system that respects local, national, and international laws and standards, and incorporates institutional and operational frameworks that require use of the resource to be responsible and sustainable.

## Implementation timeframes

### Effective date of the Fisheries Certification Process v3.1

Publication date: 22 July 2024

Effective date: 22 July 2024

CABs shall conduct any assessment process (initial assessment, surveillance audit, scope extension, expedited audit, or reassessment) against the [MSC Fisheries Standard v3.1](#) (and subsequent versions) that is announced on or after 22 July 2024 in conformity with the Fisheries Certification Process (FCP) v3.1.

### Review

The MSC welcomes comments on the FCP. Comments will be considered as part of the next review process. Reviews will take place at least every 5 years. Please submit comments to [standards@msc.org](mailto:standards@msc.org).

More information about the MSC policy development process and MSC Standard Setting Procedure can be found on the MSC website ([msc.org](https://www.msc.org)).

## Introduction to this document

The FCP v3.1 and the annexes define the process requirements for CABs to assess fisheries against the [MSC Fisheries Standard](#).

The FCP consists of the assessment process (Sections 1–7) and process annexes (PA-PE).

## Fisheries Certification Process

The purposes of the FCP are:

To establish a defined process that enables all CABs to operate in a consistent and controlled manner.


To provide transparency to maintain credibility with stakeholders.


## The MSC Guidance to the Fisheries Certification Process

Guidance is provided in the MSC Guidance to the Fisheries Certification Process (GFCP) to help CABs interpret the FCP.

The headings and numbering in the GFCP, when included, match those in the FCP exactly, with numbers prefaced with the letter “G” to indicate guidance.

The MSC recommends that CABs read the FCP in conjunction with the GFCP. Text in the FCP is not repeated in the GFCP.

Where guidance is provided that generally relates to the subject of a section, or relates to the content of a specific clause, this icon  appears at the end of the section title or clause in the FCP. These icons provide hyperlinks to the related guidance section in the GFCP.

In the GFCP, this icon  provides a hyperlink back to the corresponding section or clause in the FCP.

## The MSC Interpretations Log

The MSC occasionally provides additional guidance to CABs and assessment teams via interpretations that are posted on a public Interpretations Log. Interpretations are provided in response to questions about requirements in the FCP, the [Fisheries Standard](#), and the [General Certification Requirements](#) (GCR). Interpretations help clarify the MSC’s intent and provide additional information and guidance to explain how a requirement should be interpreted and applied. They are not new requirements.

The MSC recommends that CABs and assessment teams check the Interpretations Log on a regular basis and follow relevant interpretations.

## Auditability of the Guidance to the Fisheries Certification Process and interpretations

The guidance in the GFCP and interpretations is not directly auditable.

## Derogations

Derogations are temporary normative measures that allow for an MSC requirement to be applied differently or disregarded. Derogations are provided in response to editorial errors, force majeure, where intent is no longer fit for purpose and threatens MSC credibility, or as a provision to test a policy change or modify the implementation timeframe when publishing a revised version of the normative document. Derogations are posted on a public log. The MSC requires CABs to follow relevant derogations.

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# The MSC Fisheries Certification Process

## 1 Scope

The MSC Fisheries Certification Process (FCP) is for Conformity Assessment Body (CAB) use when assessing fisheries against the [MSC Fisheries Standard](#).

## 2 Normative documents

The documents listed below contain provisions that, through reference in this text, become part of the FCP.

For documents listed, the latest effective version of the document applies.

The documents are as follows:

- a. MSC Pre-Assessment Reporting Template.
- b. MSC Scope Declaration Template.
- c. MSC Fishery Announcement Template.
- d. MSC Client Document Checklist.
- e. MSC Fishery Assessment Scoring Worksheet (including versions for enhanced bivalves and salmon).
- f. MSC Reporting Template (including versions for enhanced bivalves and salmon).
- g. MSC Template for Initial Peer Review of MSC Fishery Assessments
- h. MSC Template for Peer Review Follow Up at PCDR Stage
- i. MSC Surveillance Announcement Template.
- j. MSC Surveillance Reporting Template.
- k. MSC Surveillance Review of Information Template.
- l. MSC Reduced Reassessment Reporting Template.
- m. MSC Database User Manual for CABs.
- n. MSC Variation Request Form – Fisheries.
- o. MSC Template for Stakeholder Input into Fishery Assessments.
- p. MSC Template for Stakeholder Input into Surveillance Audits.
- q. MSC At Sea Labour Eligibility Requirements Reporting Template
- r. MSC IPI Announcement Template.
- s. [MSC Fisheries Standard Toolbox](#).

In addition, the normative documents listed in the normative documents section of the [MSC General Certification Requirements](#) also apply to implementation of the FCP.

All MSC forms and templates can be found on the MSC website ([msc.org](https://www.msc.org)).

## 3 Terms and definitions

All definitions are in the [MSC-MSCI Vocabulary](#).

Terms or phrases used in the FCP that have multiple definitions are defined within the text where such terms or phrases appear.

The term “assessment” is used for the initial assessment and 5-yearly reassessments. The term “audit” is used for annual surveillance audits and expedited audits.


## 4 General requirements


### 4.1 Submission of reports, data, and requests to the MSC


4.1.1 The CAB shall upload to the MSC database all reports, data, and requests that are required as per the FCP and the [GCR](#).


### 4.2 Consultation requirements

4.2.1 The CAB shall hold stakeholder consultations so that the CAB becomes aware of concerns of stakeholders.

4.2.1.1 Before the announcement of each assessment or audit, the CAB shall identify and compile a list of stakeholders. 

4.2.2 The CAB shall send a consultation announcement to relevant stakeholders including a hyperlink to the relevant MSC stakeholder input template ([‘MSC Template for Stakeholder Input into Fishery Assessments’](#) or [‘MSC Template for Stakeholder Input into Surveillance Audits’](#)) no later than 4 days after the start of each consultation period. 

4.2.3 The CAB shall only accept written submissions from stakeholders on the Announcement Comment Draft Report and Public Comment Draft Report if submitted using [the ‘MSC Template for Stakeholder Input into Fishery Assessments’](#), or if raised at the assessment site visit, either in person or remotely. 


4.2.4 The CAB shall only accept written submissions from stakeholders during surveillance audits if submitted using the [‘MSC Template for Stakeholder Input into Surveillance Audits’](#), or if raised during a surveillance on-site or off-site audit, either in person or remotely. 

4.2.4.1 An exception to 4.2.4 is permitted for information collected as per 7.29.15.e.

4.2.5 The CAB shall inform stakeholders that they may raise issues with the assessment team in confidence for the assessment team to consider at the site visit, but that any confidential information cannot be used in scoring unless in compliance with confidentiality requirements, see Section 4.3.

4.2.6 Within 10 days of receipt of stakeholder input, the CAB shall inform the sender of how and when the CAB will address their comments.

4.2.7 Except where otherwise required, the CAB shall specify, in the consultation announcements, a deadline for the receipt of stakeholder input of 17:00 UTC on the last day of the consultation period.

4.2.8 The CAB shall consider a stakeholder as registered only if they provide written input on the Announcement Comment Draft Report (Section 7.13) or attend the site visit, in person or remotely (Section 7.14). 

### 4.3 Use of confidential information in fisheries assessments

4.3.1 The CAB shall encourage stakeholders not to withhold information, including their concerns and knowledge about the fishery in question.

- 4.3.2 The CAB shall inform stakeholders that, unless covered by 4.3.3 below, any information that they cannot share with all stakeholders shall not be:

Referenced in the assessment.

Used in determining the assessment outcome.

- 4.3.3 The CAB shall ensure that information kept confidential is restricted to:
- a. Financial transactions about certification.
  - b. The financial affairs of individual companies or information that may lead to this information being made public.
  - c. Information that is the subject of relevant national privacy or data protection legislation in the client's country.

## 4.4 Access to information

- 4.4.1 The CAB shall ensure that key information necessary to properly review the logic used by the assessment team is available to stakeholders. ■

4.4.1.1 If key information referenced in a public assessment report is unpublished or not available online, the CAB shall make this information available to stakeholders. ■

4.4.1.2 The CAB shall ensure that the information is available throughout the subsequent stages of the assessment process.

## 4.5 Confidentiality agreements

- 4.5.1 The owner of information specified under 4.3.3 may require stakeholders to sign confidentiality agreements before granting access to it. In these cases, the CAB shall:

- a. Require those requesting access to information to do so in writing.
- b. Confirm signed confidentiality agreements are in place before permitting access to the confidential information.

- 4.5.2 The CAB may use the information specified under 4.3.3 in its assessment even if some or all stakeholders refuse to sign a confidentiality agreement.

## 5 Structural requirements

There are no requirements additional to ISO 17065 and the [GCR](#).

## 6 Resource requirements

There are no requirements additional to ISO 17065 and the [GCR](#).

## 7 Process requirements

### 7.1 Pre-assessment

- 7.1.1 The client may select a CAB to conduct an optional pre-assessment.

- 7.1.2 The CAB shall have objectives for the pre-assessment that include:

- a. Enabling CAB planning for a full assessment.
- b. Informing the client of the likelihood of achieving certification.
- c. Enabling client planning for the full assessment.

- 7.1.3 The CAB shall appoint an individual or team qualified in conformity with the requirements of Table PC2 and any 1 of the qualifications and competencies listed in Rows 1–5 of Table PC3 to conduct the pre-assessment evaluation.
- 7.1.4 The CAB shall ensure that any guidance given to clients during pre-assessment is in conformity with ISO 17065.
- 7.1.5 The CAB shall include the following activities as part of the pre-assessment:
- a. An in-person or remote meeting with the client.
  - b. Decisions on potential field site visits, if required.
  - c. An assessment of the extent to which the UoA is consistent with the [MSC Fisheries Standard](#) (Sections SA, SB, SC, SD, and SE).
  - d. An evaluation of the UoA's readiness for assessment.
  - e. A review of the availability of data.
    - i. The CAB shall use [MSC Fisheries Standard Toolbox Section 5.2](#) to determine whether a tool for data-deficient fisheries will be used.
  - f. Defining the options for the scope of the full assessment consistent with Section 7.4 and Section 7.5.
  - g. Describing potential obstacles or problems that may be a barrier to certification.
- 7.1.6 The CAB shall use the '[MSC Pre-Assessment Reporting Template](#)' that is effective at the time of preparation.
- 7.1.6.1 The CAB shall inform the client that some sections of the '[MSC Pre-Assessment Reporting Template](#)' are mandatory and some are optional.
- 7.1.7 The CAB shall inform the client of:
- a. The requirements for proceeding to a full assessment.
  - b. Communications that may need to take place with management agencies, conservation groups, post-harvest sectors, and relevant commercial and non-commercial fishing groups to explain the MSC assessment process and the implications (including costs and benefits) of certification.
  - c. The types and extent of data and information that the client will need to make available for a full assessment.
  - d. The location, timing, and form of any announcements to be made during full assessment.
  - e. The optional MSC training information on the assessment process for clients.
- 7.1.8 The CAB shall treat the existence, process, and outcomes of the pre-assessment as confidential to the client, the CAB, and the MSC, unless otherwise directed by the client to make the pre-assessment more widely available.


## 7.2 Client application for full assessment

- 7.2.1 The CAB shall refer to ISO 17065 and the [GCR](#) for application review requirements.

## 7.3 Client Document Checklist

- 7.3.1 Before defining the Unit of Assessment (UoA) and Unit of Certification (UoC), the CAB shall require the client to submit a completed '[MSC Client Document Checklist](#)'.

## 7.4 Confirmation that the UoA is within scope of the MSC Fisheries Standard

- 7.4.1 Prior to announcing a fishery assessment, the CAB shall confirm that the UoA meets the scope requirements in the [MSC Fisheries Standard Section 1](#).
- 7.4.1.1 The CAB shall require the client to complete and submit a Scope Declaration using the '[MSC Scope Declaration Template](#)'.
- a. The CAB shall verify that the client has provided a full and relevant response to each section of the '[MSC Scope Declaration Template](#)'.
  - b. The CAB shall verify that the Scope Declaration covers all vessels included within the UoA.
- 7.4.1.2 The CAB shall verify that the Scope Declaration states that the UoA meets each of the scope requirements set out in the [MSC Fisheries Standard Section 1](#).
- 7.4.1.3 The CAB shall verify the information examined by the client or client group to support their conclusion that the UoA meets each of the scope requirements set out in the [MSC Fisheries Standard Section 1](#).
- 7.4.2 If the scope requirements are not met, the CAB shall not proceed with the fishery assessment.
- 7.4.3 The CAB shall upload the Scope Declaration, once completed by the client or client group, to the MSC Database at the same time as the Announcement Comment Draft Report.
- 7.4.4 If, during the assessment, the UoA no longer conforms to the scope requirements, the CAB shall not proceed with the fishery assessment.
- 7.4.4.1 The CAB shall publish a stakeholder announcement to inform stakeholders that the assessment has stopped.
- 7.4.5 The CAB shall verify continued conformity to the scope requirements at each surveillance audit.
- 7.4.5.1 The CAB shall require the client to review and, if there are any changes, update the '[MSC Scope Declaration Template](#)' at each surveillance audit.
- 7.4.5.2 If the UoC no longer meets the scope requirements in the [MSC Fisheries Standard Section 1](#), the CAB shall suspend the certificate as per the suspension or withdrawal of certification requirements of the [GCR](#), unless the [MSC Fisheries Standard 1.1.5.1](#) or [1.1.6.1](#) are met.
- 7.4.6 If, at any time outside of a scheduled surveillance audit, the CAB obtains or receives credible information that a UoC does not meet the scope requirements in [MSC Fisheries Standard Section 1](#), the CAB shall conduct an expedited audit (Section 7.30).
- 7.4.6.1 The CAB shall apply 7.4.5.2.
- 7.4.7 If the client or client group excludes a vessel under [MSC Fisheries Standard 1.1.5.1](#) or [1.1.6.1](#) outside of the processes in 7.4.4 and 7.4.5, the CAB shall conduct an expedited audit (Section 7.30). 
- 7.4.7.1 The CAB may conduct the expedited audit with 1 assessment team member who meets the following:
- a. The personnel requirements of the [GCR](#).
  - b. The fishery team leader qualification and competency criteria in Table PC1.
  - c. Is competent to review the relevant information.
- 7.4.7.2 The CAB shall verify that the vessel is excluded.
- 7.4.7.3 The CAB shall update relevant certification documents.

## 7.5 Scope of assessment: defining the UoA and UoC

- 7.5.1 The CAB shall use all available information in the '[MSC Client Document Checklist](#)' and pre-assessment reports about the fishery to determine the UoA and the UoC.
- 7.5.2 The CAB shall determine the proposed UoA (i.e. what is to be assessed) to include:
- The target stock(s).
  - The fishing gear type(s) and, if relevant, vessel type(s).
  - The fishing fleets or groups of vessels, or individual fishing operators pursuing that stock, including any other eligible fishers that are outside the proposed UoC.
- 7.5.3 The CAB shall determine the proposed UoC (i.e. what is to be covered by the certificate) to include:
- The target stock(s).
  - The fishing gear type(s) and, if relevant, vessel type(s).
  - The fishing fleets or groups of vessels or individual fishing operators pursuing that stock including entities initially intended to be covered by the certificate.
- 7.5.4 The CAB shall not define the UoA and UoC by a subset of activities undertaken with the stock(s) and gear(s) combination.
- 7.5.5 The CAB shall not define the UoA and UoC based on the species caught as determined at the time of fishing, where the objective is simply to exclude certain hauls from the assessment.
- 7.5.6 The CAB shall define the geographical area in which the UoA and UoC operate.
- 7.5.7 The CAB shall determine the proposed Principle 1 and Principle 2 species using the [MSC Fisheries Standard Figure SA3](#).

### Changes to UoAs/UoCs and withdrawal of UoAs and proposed UoCs during the assessment

- 7.5.8 The CAB shall not change a UoA and proposed UoC during the assessment unless the UoA is announced provisionally in the initial announcement and confirmed later in conformity with 7.15.3.
- 7.5.9 If the fishery client decides to withdraw a UoA and proposed UoC during the assessment, the CAB shall:
- Publish an announcement informing stakeholders that the UoA and proposed UoC have been withdrawn from assessment.
  - Update the MSC database to remove the UoA and proposed UoC from assessment.
  - Include the changes in the next assessment report.
- 7.5.9.1 If there is more than one UoA and proposed UoC the CAB shall:
- Review and update the key traceability factors and associated risks (7.5.10).
  - Confirm that traceability risks are managed and mitigated (Section 7.17).

### Traceability factors

- 7.5.10 The CAB shall conduct an initial review of key traceability factors and document whether any of the following risks are applicable:
- The possibility of non-certified gears being used within the UoC.
  - The possibility of vessels from the UoC fishing outside the UoC or in different geographical areas (on the same trips or different trips).
  - The possibility of vessels from outside the UoC or client group fishing the same stock.



- d. Any other risks of substitution between fish from the UoC and fish from outside the UoC.
- 7.5.10.1 The CAB shall inform the client of its obligations to meet traceability requirements before it sells fish or fish products from the UoC as MSC certified or under assessment, including that: ■
- a. Systems are in place to ensure that fish and fish products from the UoC are traceable back to the UoC.
  - b. Systems are in place to ensure that fish and fish products from the UoC are segregated from fish or fish products not included in the UoC.

### Other eligible fishers and entities and certificate sharing

- 7.5.11 The CAB shall determine whether there are other eligible fishers or other entities that may share the certificate as client group members. ■
- 7.5.11.1 Fishers or other entities that are not identified as part of the UoA or as part of the client group membership shall not be eligible to gain access to the certification later, unless they conform to the requirements of Section 7.27.
- 7.5.11.2 If there are other eligible fishers or other entities that may share the certificate as client group members within the UoA, the CAB shall require the client to:
- a. In the '[MSC Fishery Announcement Template](#)', prepare a statement for the CAB to upload to the MSC database for publication on the MSC website of the client's understanding and willingness for reasonable certificate-sharing arrangements.
  - b. Inform other eligible fishers and/or other entities of the public statement and of the opportunity to share the certificate, during relevant interactions with the eligible fishers and other entities as is practicable.

### Inseparable or practicably inseparable catches

- 7.5.12 The CAB shall determine whether there are catches of non-target (Principle 2) stock(s) that are inseparable or practicably inseparable (IPI) from target (Principle 1) stock(s). ■
- 7.5.12.1 The CAB shall only recognise stock(s) as being an IPI stock where the inseparability arises because either:
- a. The non-target catch is practicably indistinguishable during normal fishing operations (i.e. the catch is from a stock of the same species or a closely related species), or
  - b. When distinguishable, it is not commercially feasible to separate due to the practical operation of the UoA that would require significant modification to existing harvesting and processing methods.
- And:
- c. The total combined proportion of catches from the IPI stock(s) does not exceed 15% by weight of the total combined catches of target and IPI stock(s) for the UoA.
  - d. The IPI stock(s) are not endangered, threatened or protected, or out-of-scope (ETP/OOS) species.
  - e. The IPI stock(s) are not certified separately.
- 7.5.13 If the CAB identifies IPI stock(s) as per 7.5.12.1, the CAB shall:
- a. Apply Annex PA.
  - b. Upload an announcement to the MSC database for publication on the MSC website, using the '[MSC IPI Announcement Template](#)', to inform stakeholders and the MSC of the identification of IPI stock(s).



- 7.5.14 In the '[MSC IPI Announcement Template](#)', the CAB shall follow either 7.5.14.1 or 7.5.14.2 below.
- 7.5.14.1 The CAB shall confirm that fish or fish products considered as coming from IPI stock(s) may enter into chains of custody subject to Annex PA.
- a. The CAB shall include a detailed and substantiated justification for how the catches under consideration fulfil the requirements of 7.5.12.1 above.
- 7.5.14.2 The CAB shall confirm that fish or fish products considered as coming from IPI stock(s) may enter chains of custody, with an exemption to the additional assessment requirements for IPI stock(s) given in PA1.4.2.
- a. The CAB shall include a detailed and substantiated justification showing that:
- i. The catches under consideration fulfil the requirements of 7.5.12.1 above.
- ii. The catch proportion of IPI stock(s) calculated in 7.5.12.1.c is less than or equal to 2%, and the total catch of IPI stock(s) by the UoA does not have a significant impact on the IPI stock(s) as a whole.
- iii. The CAB shall assess significant impact on the basis of the status of the IPI stock(s), and the risk that the IPI catch poses to the health of the IPI stock(s).
- 7.5.15 The CAB shall upload the IPI announcement as early as practicable in the assessment process, and no later than the date of issue of the Client and Peer Review Draft Report to the client and to the Peer Review College.

## 7.6 Team selection

- 7.6.1 The CAB shall form an assessment team (hereafter "team") for a fishery assessment, comprising a team leader and a minimum of 1 additional team member, that meets the qualifications and competency requirements specified in Table PC1, Table PC2, and Table PC3 and in line with the personnel requirements in the [GCR](#).
- 7.6.2 If events outside the CAB's control mean that team membership needs to change during an assessment, the CAB shall announce the new team members to stakeholders.

## 7.7 Preparing for the Announcement Comment Draft Report

### UoA with enhanced stock

- 7.7.1 If the UoA contains an enhanced fishery that is not covered in the [MSC Fisheries Standard Section SB](#) or [Section SC](#):
- 7.7.1.1 The CAB shall review and, if necessary, modify the default assessment tree, taking into account the Performance Indicators (PIs) required to assess the enhancements to achieve, at a minimum, the same level of sustainability performance as the default assessment tree.
- 7.7.1.2 The CAB shall assess:
- a. Enhancement activities against the impacts on the natural reproductive component of the associated wild stock.
- b. The extent of translocation against:
- i. The effect on the natural genetic characteristics of the stock.
- ii. The environmental impacts of translocation.
- c. Environmental modification activities under the Principle 2 assessment for their impacts on other species and the surrounding environment, including:

- i. Feed augmentation. If feeding or disease prevention are used in hatch and catch (HAC) systems, or where other interventions are used in catch and grow (CAG) systems, the team shall confirm that these activities do not have serious negative impacts on other species and the surrounding environment. ☐
      - ii. The use of medicines or other chemical compounds.
      - iii. Fertilisation to enhance natural food availability.
      - iv. Removal of predators or competitors.
    - d. The impacts of habitat modification under the habitats and ecosystems components in Principle 2, including: ☐
      - i. Whether serious or irreversible harm may be caused to the natural ecosystem's structure and function, including the natural food chains of predator and/or prey species.
      - ii. The types and extent of habitat modifications and the possibility of these causing serious or irreversible harm.
- 7.7.1.3 The CAB shall consult with other CABs developing modified assessment trees for similar fisheries.
- 7.7.1.4 If the CAB's proposed modifications to the default assessment tree for an enhanced fishery are later found by the MSC to produce a determination and/or conditions that do not conform to MSC requirements:
  - a. The CAB shall review and, if necessary, revise its assessment and scoring to conform to the default assessment tree.
  - b. The timing of the review and revisions shall be at the MSC's discretion and may include a requirement for an expedited audit.
  - c. The process shall be sufficient to ensure the continued validity of the determination, in conformity with the FCP.
- 7.7.1.5 If the CAB decides that the default assessment tree requires modification, the CAB shall follow 7.10.5.

### Harmonisation of overlapping UoAs


- 7.7.2 The CAB shall determine whether any proposed UoAs overlap with any certified or in-assessment fisheries.
  - 7.7.2.1 If any proposed UoAs overlap, the CAB shall follow the steps for harmonisation in Annex PB.

### Use of the MSC Fisheries Standard Toolbox

- 7.7.3 The CAB shall use the [MSC Fisheries Standard Toolbox](#) to determine whether a tool is applicable to the fishery assessment.
  - 7.7.3.1 If a non-CAB entity has applied the [MSC Fisheries Standard Toolbox](#) prior to the CAB, the team shall:
    - a. Confirm that the UoA defined by the non-CAB entity is equivalent to the UoA defined by the CAB as per 7.5.2.
    - b. Review the non-CAB entity's application of the [MSC Fisheries Standard Toolbox](#).
    - c. Verify that the outputs are within the period of validity as per the [MSC Fisheries Standard Toolbox](#).
  - 7.7.3.2 The team shall apply a tool as per the [MSC Fisheries Standard Toolbox](#) if the team determines that:
    - a. The non-CAB entity did not apply a tool when they should have or vice versa.


- b. The non-CAB entity applied the appropriate tool for the situation but applied it incorrectly.
- c. The outputs are outside their period of validity as per the [MSC Fisheries Standard Toolbox](#).

## 7.8 Announcement Comment Draft Report

7.8.1 The team shall prepare and complete an Announcement Comment Draft Report using, but not limited to, the information provided in the '[MSC Client Document Checklist](#)'. 

7.8.1.1 The team may use any outputs of the optional pre-assessment stage and previous Fisheries Improvement Projects, if completed.

7.8.2 The team shall include the following in the Announcement Comment Draft Report:

- a. Confirmation that the UoA is in scope ([MSC Fisheries Standard Section 1](#))
- b. Confirmation of the assessment tree used to assess the UoA.
- c. The proposed UoA(s).
- d. The proposed UoC(s).
- e. The proposed Principle 1 and Principle 2 scoring elements.
- f. A list of any overlapping UoAs.
- g. Draft scoring ranges (<60, 60–79, ≥80) for each PI.
  - i. Where there are overlapping UoAs, the team shall base draft scoring ranges on existing harmonised scores as per PB1.3.1. 
  - ii. If limited information is available to score a draft scoring range for the relevant PI, the team shall assign a draft scoring range no higher than 60–79.
    - A. The team shall highlight the information gap (7.8.2.j).
  - iii. If no information is available to score a draft scoring range for the relevant PI, the team shall assign a draft scoring range of < 60.
    - A. The team shall state in the draft rationale that there is no information.
    - B. The team shall highlight the information gap (7.8.2.j).
  - iv. If the team has determined that a risk-based framework (RBF) methodology will be used, but has not yet been applied, the team shall assign a draft scoring range for the relevant PI of < 60.
    - A. The team shall state in the draft rationale that the RBF will be conducted during the assessment and that there is no information at this time.
    - B. The team shall highlight the information gap (7.8.2.j) including the information needed to conduct the RBF.
- h. A draft rationale for each PI and Scoring Issue (SI).
- i. A reference list.
- j. An indication of the availability of information used to score each PI, highlighting potential information gaps.
- k. An initial review of traceability risks identified in the '[MSC Client Document Checklist](#)'.
- l. The proposed point of change of ownership of product to any party not covered by the fishery certificate.
- m. The proposed point from which subsequent Chain of Custody (CoC) certification is required.
- n. A plan to review traceability systems at the site visit.

- o. If the UoA is an enhanced fishery and is found to be within scope, an assessment of each enhancement activity conducted by the UoA and a documented justification for the determination that the UoA is within scope.
  - p. Identification and justification of any IPI stock(s).
  - q. Summary of key issues for further investigation.
  - r. A plan for RBF activities that the team will conduct at the site visit (as per the [MSC Fisheries Standard Toolbox](#)).
- 7.8.3 The team shall use the default assessment tree as set out in the [MSC Fisheries Standard Section SA](#) in all assessments, with the following exceptions.
  - 7.8.3.1 For enhanced bivalve fisheries, the team shall score the UoA according to the requirements set out in the [MSC Fisheries Standard Section SB](#).
  - 7.8.3.2 For salmon fisheries, the team shall score the UoA according to the requirements set out in the [MSC Fisheries Standard Section SC](#).
  - 7.8.3.3 For introduced species based fisheries, the team shall score the UoA according to the requirements set out in the [MSC Fisheries Standard Section SD](#).
  - 7.8.3.4 For Principle 1 stocks managed by Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMOs), the team shall score the UoA according to the requirements set out in the [MSC Fisheries Standard Section SE](#).
  - 7.8.3.5 If the UoA is an enhanced fishery for a species other than bivalves or salmon, the CAB shall apply 7.7.1.
  - 7.8.3.6 If the CAB judges that the default assessment trees referenced in 7.8.3.1–5 are inappropriate for the UoA and require modification, the CAB shall follow 7.10.5.
- 7.8.4 The CAB shall use the '[MSC Reporting Template](#)' to create the Announcement Comment Draft Report.

## **7.9 Decision to proceed to announcement by client**

- 7.9.1 The CAB shall provide the Announcement Comment Draft Report to the client.
- 7.9.2 The CAB shall ensure that any information given to the client during the Announcement Comment Draft Report stage is in conformity with ISO 17065.
- 7.9.3 If the client has a concern that insufficient information is available to support the team's decisions or that a decision has been made in error, the CAB shall give the client an opportunity to question the team and have an issue re-examined.
  - 7.9.3.1 The CAB shall require the client to provide objective evidence in support of any additional claims or any claimed errors of fact.
  - 7.9.3.2 If the CAB accepts client requests for changes in the report, the CAB shall provide justifications for these changes.
  - 7.9.3.3 The CAB shall provide responses to client comments.
- 7.9.4 The CAB shall inform the client that it is the client's decision to either proceed to announcement of assessment or delay announcement of assessment.
- 7.9.5 The CAB may make changes to the Announcement Comment Draft Report, based on information provided by the client, at any time before the announcement of the fishery assessment.

## **7.10 Announcement of fishery assessment**

- 7.10.1 The CAB shall formally announce the fishery assessment by completing and uploading the '[MSC Fishery Announcement Template](#)' and Announcement Comment Draft Report to the MSC database for publication on the MSC website.

- 7.10.1.1 The CAB shall follow the timeline for stakeholder input as detailed in 7.13.1.
- 7.10.2 The CAB shall include the following information in the '[MSC Fishery Announcement Template](#)':
- a. Confirmation that the fishery is within scope of the [MSC Fisheries Standard](#).
  - b. The statement on certificate sharing described in 7.5.11.2.a, if applicable.
  - c. Summaries of CVs of the team and team leader, including an explanation of how they meet the personnel requirements in the [GCR](#) and the qualifications and competencies in Annex PC, as well as confirmation that the team has no conflicts of interest in relation to the UoA under assessment.
  - d. The assessment tree being used to score the UoA.
  - e. Details of the site visit, including:
    - i. Dates of the site visit.
      - A. The CAB shall ensure the site visit commences after the deadline for stakeholder input on the Announcement Comment Draft Report, as per Section 7.13.
    - ii. Location of the site visit.
  - f. An invitation for stakeholder participation in the assessment process.
    - i. The CAB shall ensure that stakeholders identified in the Pre-Assessment Report and/or Announcement Comment Draft Report are invited to participate in the assessment process.
  - g. Details of the opportunities and input methods for stakeholders to participate during the assessment process.
    - i. The CAB shall make it clear that all members of the team are available to meet with stakeholders in person or remotely.
  - h. The deadline for stakeholder input on the Announcement Comment Draft Report, as per Section 7.13.
  - i. The hyperlink to the '[MSC Template for Stakeholder Input into Fishery Assessments](#)'.
  - j. Details of overlapping UoAs, if applicable.
- 7.10.3 If the CAB proposes to use the RBF, the CAB shall follow the [MSC Fisheries Standard Toolbox A2.1](#) and [A2.2](#).
- 7.10.4 At the same time as uploading the documents required in 7.10.1 to the MSC database for publication on the MSC website, the CAB shall upload the following documents to the MSC database:
- a. A copy of the '[MSC Client Document Checklist](#)'.
  - b. A copy of any Pre-Assessment Report(s) the CAB has written for the UoA. ■
    - i. If the CAB is aware of any other pre-assessment report(s) written by other parties, the CAB shall inform the MSC of the report's author.
  - c. A copy of the Scope Declaration, see 7.4.3.

### Modified assessment trees

- 7.10.5 If the CAB decides that any of the assessment trees need modification, the CAB shall:
- a. Before preparing the Announcement Comment Draft Report, apply for and obtain from the MSC a variation to 7.8.3.
  - b. At the time of formally announcing the fishery assessment, inform stakeholders in the '[MSC Fishery Announcement Template](#)' about the draft assessment tree and the reasons for modifications.

- c. Announce the site visit, as per 7.10.2.e.
  - d. Upload the draft assessment tree to the MSC database for publication on the MSC website.
  - e. Allow stakeholder input on the draft modified assessment tree and weighting during the same stakeholder input period for the Announcement Comment Draft Report.
  - f. Consider all stakeholder input, recording why comments have been accepted or rejected.
  - g. Review the decision to modify the assessment tree, considering stakeholder input.
  - h. Upload the final assessment tree to be used to the MSC database for publication on the MSC website, within 10 days of the consultation period closing.
  - i. Include the changes to the assessment tree in the subsequent fishery assessment reports.
- 7.10.5.1 The CAB shall draft PIs in a way that facilitates appropriate drafting of conditions as per 7.16.2. ▣

## 7.11 Assessment timelines

- 7.11.1 The CAB's indicative assessment timeline, uploaded to the MSC database with the fishery assessment announcement, shall form the basis for tracking the assessment process by stakeholders.
- 7.11.1.1 If the CAB determines that the publication date of the next public report will be 30 or more days before or after the date stated in the indicative timeline, the CAB shall upload a revised timeline to the MSC database for publication on the MSC website.

## 7.12 Peer Review College ▣

- 7.12.1 Upon announcement of the fishery assessment, the CAB shall send the Peer Review College a notification that the announcement of the fishery assessment and the assessment timeline have been published on the MSC website.
- 7.12.1.1 The CAB shall confirm the anticipated date that the Client and Peer Review Draft Report will become available.
- 7.12.1.2 The CAB shall inform the Peer Review College if changes are made to the assessment timeline that will affect the peer review process.
- 7.12.2 The CAB shall obtain from the Peer Review College:
- a. The names of the peer reviewers who have been proposed to conduct the peer review and details of their qualifications and competencies.
  - b. Confirmation that the peer reviewers meet the required competencies.
  - c. Confirmation of the availability of the peer reviewers within the timeline nominated by the CAB.
- 7.12.3 Following the site visit, the CAB shall either:
- a. Provide the Peer Review College with the contact details of all the stakeholders to enable the College to conduct the stakeholder consultation on potential conflicts of interest of the peer reviewers proposed, or
  - b. Request stakeholders to inform the Peer Review College regarding any potential conflicts of interest of the peer reviewers proposed, using the consultation form provided by the Peer Review College. ▣
- 7.12.4 The CAB shall obtain from the Peer Review College confirmation that the peer reviewers have no conflicts of interest in relation to the UoA under assessment.

- 7.12.5 The Peer Review College's decision on the choice of peer reviewers is final. ■
- 7.12.6 The CAB shall include the information in 7.12.2.a and 7.12.2.b in the Public Comment Draft Report and subsequent reports.

### **7.13 Stakeholder input on the Announcement Comment Draft Report**

- 7.13.1 The CAB shall publish the Announcement Comment Draft Report for stakeholder input.
  - 7.13.1.1 If an initial assessment, the CAB shall allow 60 days for stakeholder input.
  - 7.13.1.2 If a reassessment, the CAB shall allow 30 days for stakeholder input.
- 7.13.2 The CAB shall provide the hyperlink to the '[MSC Template for Stakeholder Input into Fishery Assessments](#)'.
- 7.13.3 The CAB shall inform stakeholders that they are required to provide objective evidence and references in support of any claims or any claimed errors of fact.
- 7.13.4 Before the site visit commences, the CAB shall upload all written submissions from stakeholders received from the stakeholder consultation on the Announcement Comment Draft Report to the MSC database for publication on the MSC website. ■
  - 7.13.4.1 The CAB shall inform stakeholders that 7.13.4 has been completed.

### **7.14 Site visits, stakeholder input, and information collection**

- 7.14.1 The team shall conduct the site visit as planned. ■
  - 7.14.1.1 The full team shall attend all meetings at the site visit.
- 7.14.2 The team shall:
  - a. Conduct interviews to make sure that the team is aware of any concerns or information that participants may have.
  - b. Allow private interviews with the team for participants on request.
  - c. Use any information provided in private in conformity with confidentiality requirements, see Section 4.3.

### **7.15 Scoring the UoA ■**

- 7.15.1 After the team has compiled and analysed all relevant information (including technical, written and anecdotal sources), the team shall score the UoA(s) against the Performance Indicator Scoring Guideposts (PISGs) in the final tree. ■
  - 7.15.1.1 The team shall only use information that was available (in accordance with Sections 4.3, 4.4, and 4.5) on or before the last day of the site visit.
    - a. If the CAB and any participant at the site visit agree in writing that information will be made available after the site visit, the CAB shall accept this information up to 30 days after the last day of the site visit.
- 7.15.2 The team shall: ■
  - a. Discuss evidence together.
  - b. Weigh up the balance of evidence.
  - c. Use its judgement to agree a final score following the processes below.
- 7.15.3 Following the site visit, the team may change the target stock(s) listed for assessment under Principle 1.



- 7.15.3.1 The team shall assess any stock or species initially proposed for assessment under Principle 1, that will no longer be assessed under Principle 1, against the relevant Principle 2 PIs.
- 7.15.3.2 The team shall not assess any stock or species not originally proposed for assessment under Principle 1.
- 7.15.4 The team shall apply the requirements in the SGs as follows:
  - a. In order to achieve an 80 score, all the SG60s and all the SG80s shall be met.
  - b. In order to achieve a 100 score, all the SG60s, all the SG80s, and all the SG100s shall be met.
- 7.15.4.1 The team shall justify each SI by including supporting rationale.
- 7.15.5 The team should assign scores for individual PIs in increments of 5 points.
  - 7.15.5.1 If scores are assigned in divisions of less than 5 points, the team shall provide justification for this in the report. ■
  - 7.15.5.2 The team shall apply an exception if the score is automated from the RBF worksheet.
    - a. The team shall include the worksheet score without rounding up or down.
- 7.15.6 The team shall report scores for each of the 3 Principles to the nearest 1 decimal place.
- 7.15.7 The team shall score individual PIs.
  - 7.15.7.1 The team shall not award certification for any UoA for which 1 or more required PIs is not scored.
  - 7.15.7.2 The team shall assess the PI against each of the SIs at the SG60 level.
    - a. If any of the SG60 SIs are not met, the team shall fail the UoA, and no further scoring is required for the PI.
      - i. The team shall not assign a numeric score of less than 60 for a PI, and instead record in narrative form its rationale for determining that the PI scores less than 60.
  - 7.15.7.3 If all the SG60 SIs are met, the team shall assign at least a 60 score, and the team shall assess each of the SIs at the SG80 level. ■
    - a. If any of the SG80 SIs are not met, the team shall assign an intermediate score (65, 70, or 75) reflecting overall performance against the different SG80 SIs:
      - i. The team shall assign 65 when performance against the SIs is slightly above SG60 (a few SIs are fully met, but most are not fully met).
      - ii. The team shall assign 70 where performance against the SIs is mid-way between SG60 and SG80 (some SIs are fully met, and some are not fully met).
      - iii. The team shall assign 75 when performance against the SIs is almost at SG80 (most SIs are fully met, but a few are not fully met).
    - b. If 1 or more of the SG80 SIs is not met, the team shall set 1 or more conditions.
  - 7.15.7.4 If all the SG80 SIs are met, the team shall assign at least an 80 score, and the team shall assess each of the SIs at the SG100 level.
    - a. If any of the SG100 SIs are not met, the team shall assign an intermediate score (85, 90, or 95) reflecting overall performance against the different SG100 SIs.
      - i. The team shall assign 85 when performance against the SIs is slightly above SG80 (a few SIs are fully met, but most are not fully met).




- ii. The team shall assign 90 where performance against the SIs is mid-way between SG80 and SG100 (some SIs are fully met, and some are not fully met).
  - iii. The team shall assign 95 when performance against the SIs is almost at SG100 (most SIs are fully met, but a few are not fully met).
- 7.15.7.5 If all the SG100 SIs are met, the team shall assign a 100 score.
- 7.15.8 The team shall use the default weighting in the '[MSC Fishery Assessment Scoring Worksheet](#)' when scoring the default assessment tree. ■
- 7.15.8.1 Where necessary, the team shall make changes to the default weighting if they propose modifications to the default assessment tree.
  - a. The team shall ensure that weighting in each level of the final tree (i.e. Principle, component or PI) adds up to a total of 1.
  - b. The team shall give equal weighting to each PI within a component of the tree, and to each component within a Principle of the tree.
- 7.15.9 The team shall use the revised weighting in [the 'MSC Fishery Assessment Scoring Worksheet'](#) when scoring salmon fisheries ([MSC Fisheries Standard Section SC](#)). ■
- 7.15.10 To contribute to the scoring of any PI, the team shall verify that each SI is fully and unambiguously met.
  - a. The team shall present a rationale to support the team's conclusion. ■
- 7.15.10.2 The team shall make direct reference to every SI in the rationale and confirm whether or not the SI is fully met at each SG level.
- 7.15.10.3 An exception to 7.15.10.2 is permitted for those PIs that include only a single SI at each SG level.
  - a. For these PIs, the team may partially score the issue to obtain intermediate scores.
  - b. The team shall provide a rationale, clearly explaining which aspects of the SI are met.
- 7.15.11 If multiple scoring elements are included in Principle 1 or Principle 2 PIs, the team shall score the PI as follows:
  - a. All scoring elements shall meet the SG60 level in order for the UoA to be certified.
  - b. If any single scoring element fails to meet SG80, the overall score for that PI shall be less than 80 so that a condition is raised, regardless of whether any other scoring elements have met SG80 or higher.
  - c. The overall score given shall reflect the number of scoring elements that meet each SG, rather than being derived directly as a numerical average of the individual scores for all scoring elements. ■
  - d. The score shall be determined for each scoring element by applying the process in 7.15.7 to each scoring element.
  - e. The team shall use Table 1 to determine the overall score for the PI from the scores of the individual scoring elements.
  - f. If some scoring elements have been scored using the RBF, the converted MSC score shall be treated as an individual scoring element score when combining element scores in Table 1.

Table 1: Combining element scores

Score	Combination of individual scoring elements
<60	The team shall not assign a score to any scoring element within a PI that fails to reach SG60. The team shall record their rationale in narrative form for the PI rather than assigning actual scores of less than 60.
60	All elements meet SG60 and only SG60.
65	All elements meet SG60; a few achieve higher performance, at or exceeding SG80, but most do not meet SG80.
70	All elements meet SG60; some achieve higher performance, at or exceeding SG80, but some do not meet SG80 and require intervention action to make sure they get there.
75	All elements meet SG60; most achieve higher performance, at or exceeding SG80; only a few fail to achieve SG80 and require intervention action.
80	All elements meet SG80.
85	All elements meet SG80; a few achieve higher performance, but most do not meet SG100.
90	All elements meet SG80; some achieve higher performance at SG100, but some do not.
95	All elements meet SG80; most achieve higher performance at SG100, and only a few fail to achieve SG100.
100	All elements meet SG100.

- 7.15.12 The team shall modify scores where appropriate:
- Downwards by the scores falling between 2 SGs obtained by the individual elements that fail to meet an upper SG level.
  - Upwards by the scores falling between 2 SGs obtained by the individual elements that exceed an upper SG level.
  - Upwards change should never rise as high as 80 if the team judges that a condition is required.
- 7.15.13 The CAB shall not certify the UoA if the weighted average score for all PIs under each Principle is less than 80 for any of the 3 Principles.
- 7.15.14 The CAB shall not certify the UoA if any individual SI is not met at the SG60 level, contributing to a score of less than 60 on any PI.

## 7.16 Setting conditions

- 7.16.1 The CAB shall set 1 or more auditable and verifiable conditions for continuing certification if the UoA achieves a score of less than 80 but equal to or greater than 60 for any individual PI.
- 7.16.1.1 The CAB shall ensure that every PI that receives a score of less than 80 has its own distinct condition associated with it.
- 7.16.2 The CAB shall draft conditions to follow the narrative or metric form of the PI SGs and accompanying requirements used in the assessment tree. 
- 7.16.3 The CAB shall draft conditions to result in improved performance to at least the 80 level within a period set by the CAB but no longer than the term of the certification.
- 7.16.4 The CAB shall specify a deadline for each condition.

- 7.16.5 The CAB shall draft conditions to specify milestones that detail:
- a. The measurable improvements and outcomes, using quantitative metrics, expected each year.
  - b. The specific timeframes over which the milestones and the whole condition must be met.
  - c. The outcome and score that shall be achieved at any interim milestones.
- 7.16.6 If, when drafting a condition, the CAB determines that achieving a performance level of 80 may take longer than the period of certification even with perfect implementation (referred to as "exceptional circumstances"), the CAB may draft conditions to result in improved performance to at least the 80 level within a longer, specified time frame set by the CAB. ■
- 7.16.6.1 In "exceptional circumstances", the CAB shall specify conditions that outline:
- a. The significant and measurable improvements, in terms of milestones or outcomes, that must be achieved and the score that must be reached at interim milestones and at reassessment.
  - b. What constitutes a successful overall outcome to achieve the 80 performance level over a longer, specified period.
- 7.16.6.2 The CAB shall include justification for "exceptional circumstances" in the summary of conditions in the Client and Peer Review Draft Report and all subsequent reports.
- 7.16.7 The CAB shall create a summary of conditions stating the action(s) to be taken within a specified timeframe.
- 7.16.8 If the client and the CAB are unable to agree on conditions and milestones, the CAB shall not certify the UoA.
- 7.16.9 The CAB shall include conditions and milestones in the Client and Peer Review Draft Report and all subsequent reports.
- 7.16.10 If a condition or milestone relates to reducing uncertainty or improving processes, the CAB shall include in its reports a narrative about the ultimate ecological or management outcome that the condition aims to achieve over the longer term.
- 7.16.11 If there are IPI stocks within the scope of certification, the team shall follow Annex PA1.3.

## **7.17 Determination of the traceability systems and point(s) at which fish and fish products enter further certified chains of custody ■**


- 7.17.1 The CAB shall determine whether the fishery client has sufficient systems of tracking and tracing to ensure all fish and fish products identified and sold as certified by the fishery client originate from the individual UoC. ■
- 7.17.1.1 The CAB shall confirm that systems allow the fishery client to trace any fish or fish products sold as MSC certified back to the individual UoC.
- 7.17.1.2 The CAB shall confirm that the fishery client maintains appropriate records to demonstrate the traceability of certified fish or fish products back to the individual UoC. ■
- 7.17.1.3 If fish and fish products are transhipped on the high seas, the CAB shall only determine that systems are sufficient if: ■
- a. The systems are verified independently from the certificate holder.
  - b. The systems cover fishing and receiving vessels involved in transhipment.
  - c. The systems apply to all the transhipment events.
- 7.17.1.4 The CAB shall determine any risks for the integrity of certified products based on the risk factors listed in the 'MSC Reporting Template', and how the risks are managed and mitigated. ■

- 7.17.2 Where there are IPI stock(s) within the scope of certification, the CAB shall follow 7.5.13–7.5.15.
- 7.17.3 If the CAB makes a positive determination under 7.17.1, fish and fish products from the UoC may enter into certified chains of custody and be eligible to be sold as MSC certified or carry the MSC ecolabel.
- 7.17.4 The CAB shall determine the scope of the fishery certificate, including the parties and categories of parties eligible to use the certificate and the point(s) at which CoC is needed, as follows:
- a. CoC certification shall always be required following first change of ownership to any party not covered by the fishery certificate.
  - b. CoC certification may be required at an earlier stage than change of ownership to any party not covered by the fishery certificate, if the team determines that the systems within the fishery are not sufficient to make sure all fish and fish products identified as such by the fishery originate from the UoC.
- 7.17.5 If the CAB makes a negative determination under 7.17.1, fish and fish products from the UoC shall not be eligible to be sold as MSC certified or carry the MSC ecolabel.
- 7.17.5.1 This determination shall remain in force until the CAB revises the determination in a subsequent assessment.
- 7.17.6 The CAB shall document in the '[MSC Reporting Template](#)':
- a. The movement of fish and fish products between harvest and landing.
  - b. If CoC starts after landing, the movement of fish and fish products between landing and the point from which subsequent CoC certification is required.
  - c. For all critical tracking events covered by the fishery certificate, the process of segregation of fish and fish products at the level of UoC and the associated documentation and/or data confirming the UoC origin.
  - d. Where there are IPI stock(s) within the scope of certification, the CAB shall report on the verification of traceability systems.
  - e. Each risk identified in 7.17.1.4, and details of the mitigation or management of the risk.
  - f. The determination under 7.17.1, and, if negative, the stipulation under 7.17.5.
  - g. The point of change of ownership of product to any party not covered by the fishery certificate.
  - h. The point from which subsequent CoC certification is required.
  - i. How fish or fish products can be identified or can be confirmed as certified at the point that it enters certified chains of custody.
  - j. Any specific eligibility criteria for product to be sold as certified, or where to find this information.
  - k. Which points of landing, auctions or other transfer may be used for the sale of fish from the certified fishery into further chains of custody.
  - l. A list of entities, or categories of entities, eligible to access the certificate and sell product as certified.
  - m. The entities, or categories of entities, at the point of landing and/or sale, that are required to have separate CoC certification.
- 7.17.6.1 The CAB shall ensure that the traceability section in the '[MSC Reporting Template](#)' assessment report is completed or reviewed by an auditor who conforms to the personnel requirements in the [MSC Chain of Custody Certification Requirements](#) and the [GCR](#).
- 7.17.7 The CAB shall inform the fishery client that if they sell or label non-eligible (non-conforming) product as MSC certified, they are required to:

- a. Inform any affected customers and the CAB of the issue within 4 days of detection.
- b. Immediately cease to sell any non-conforming products in stock as MSC certified until their certified status has been verified by the CAB.
- c. Cooperate with the CAB to determine the cause of the issue and to implement any corrective actions required.

## 7.18 Determination of eligibility date

7.18.1 The CAB shall nominate the “eligibility date”, from which product harvested from a UoA under assessment may be eligible to be identified as under-assessment product.

7.18.1.1 The “eligibility” date shall be any nominated date on or between the publication date of the 1st Public Comment Draft Report and the certification date. 

7.18.2 If the “eligibility date” is set before the certification date, the CAB shall inform the fishery client that any fish harvested after the “eligibility date” and sold or stored as under-assessment fish shall be handled in conformity with the following requirements:

- a. All under-assessment product shall be clearly identified and segregated from certified and non-certified products.
- b. The client shall maintain full traceability records for all under-assessment product, demonstrating traceability back to the UoC and including the date of harvest.
- c. Under-assessment products shall not be sold as certified or labelled with the MSC ecolabel, logo, or trademarks until certification and product eligibility are confirmed.

## 7.19 Client and Peer Review Draft Report

7.19.1 Once conditions, milestones, and the point at which fish may enter further chains of custody have been determined, the CAB shall use the ‘[MSC Reporting Template](#)’ to create the Client and Peer Review Draft Report.


7.19.2 The CAB shall issue the Client and Peer Review Draft Report to the client and to the Peer Review College at the same time.

### Peer review

7.19.3 The CAB shall arrange a review of the Client and Peer Review Draft Report, as detailed in Section 7.12 by peer reviewers from the Peer Review College.

7.19.4 The CAB shall allow the selected peer reviewers to review the Client and Peer Review Draft Report.

7.19.5 Upon receipt of the peer reviewers’ written comments, the team shall:

- a. Address all the issues raised, changing any part of the scoring, conditions, and report as the team sees necessary. 
  - i. The team shall provide clear explanations, with evidence, in the CAB response column of the ‘[MSC Template for Initial Peer Review of MSC Fishery Assessments](#)’ to support the team’s conclusion on whether they accept or reject each of the issues raised by the peer reviewer.
- b. Incorporate peer reviewer comments, team responses to those comments, and any appropriate changes into the Client and Peer Review Draft Report to create the Public Comment Draft Report.
- c. Amend any conditions as required, and ensure the fishery client amends the Client Action Plan as required.

## Client review

- 7.19.6 The CAB should allow 60 days after receipt of the Client and Peer Review Draft Report for the client to: ▣
- a. Provide information on items that would lead to a “material difference”, as defined in 7.20.6.c, in the outcome of the assessment.
  - b. Develop a Client Action Plan.
    - i. The use of the ‘[MSC Client Action Plan Template](#)’ is optional.
- 7.19.7 The CAB shall verify that the client has prepared a Client Action Plan that includes: ▣
- a. A description of the actions that will be implemented by the client, and other entities (where relevant) to achieve milestones and conditions.
  - b. Roles and responsibilities for actions.
  - c. The outputs that will be provided to the assessment team to demonstrate that milestones are achieved and progress towards meeting conditions is being made.
- 7.19.8 The CAB shall not accept a Client Action Plan if the client is relying upon the involvement, funding and/or resources of other entities, such as fisheries management or research agencies, authorities, or regulating bodies that might have authority, power, or control over management arrangements, research budgets, and/or priorities, without:
- a. Verifying with those same entities whether the closure of conditions is likely to require any or all of the following:
    - i. Investment of time or money by these entities.
    - ii. Changes to management arrangements or regulations.
    - iii. Re-arrangement of research priorities by these entities.
  - b. Being satisfied that the closure of conditions is both achievable by the client and realistic in the period specified.
- 7.19.9 If the CAB cannot find evidence to show that funding and/or resources are, or will be, in place to address conditions, the UoA shall not be certified.
- 7.19.10 The CAB shall document and retain any comments made by the client on the Client and Peer Review Draft Report and responses from the team.
- 7.19.10.1 The CAB shall make these comments and responses available to any party upon request.
- 7.19.11 If conditions are added as a result of the peer review, the CAB should allow an additional 30 days for the client to update the Client Action Plan.

## 7.20 Public Comment Draft Report

- 7.20.1 The CAB shall use the ‘[MSC Reporting Template](#)’ to create the Public Comment Draft Report.
- 7.20.2 When creating the Public Comment Draft Report, the team shall only make changes to scoring (Section 7.15) if:
- a. Justified by registered stakeholder, MSC, client, or peer reviewer comments received during consultation opportunities, or
  - b. Justified by findings issued by the MSC’s accreditation body, or
  - c. Harmonisation as per Annex PB has resulted in score changes.
- 7.20.2.1 The information used to justify scoring changes was publicly available on or before the last day of the site visit.

- a. If the CAB and any participant at the site visit agree in writing that information will be made available after the site visit, the CAB shall accept this information up to 30 days after the last day of the site visit.

7.20.3 The Public Comment Draft Report shall include:

- a. Confirmation that the UoA is in scope ([MSC Fisheries Standard Section 1](#)).
- b. Confirmation of the assessment tree used to assess the UoA.
- c. The UoA(s).
- d. The proposed UoC(s).
- e. The Principle 1 and Principle 2 scoring elements.
- f. The scores and weightings for each PI.
- g. A rationale for each PI and SI.
- h. A reference list.
- i. The draft determination on whether or not the UoA(s) will be recommended for certification.
- j. A review of traceability factors as defined in 7.5.10.
- k. The eligibility date.
- l. The surveillance schedule.
- m. Any conditions.
- n. The Client Action Plan.
- o. Peer review comments and team responses.
- p. If the UoA is an enhanced fishery and is found to be within scope, an assessment of each enhancement activity conducted by the UoA and a documented justification for the determination that the UoA is within scope.
- q. Identification and justification for IPI stock(s).
- r. A review of RBF outcomes, if completed.

7.20.4 The CAB shall include in the References section of the report any references used to support statements in the evaluation tables of the reports.

7.20.4.1 The CAB shall include an in-text reference to the relevant source. ■

7.20.5 The CAB shall include responses from the team as per 7.20.6.d in each '[MSC Template for Stakeholder Input into Fishery Assessments](#)' uploaded as per 7.20.7.

7.20.6 The CAB shall include the following in a separate section or appendix to the Public Comment Draft Report:

- a. Any written submissions from registered stakeholders received during consultation opportunities on:
  - i. The Announcement Comment Draft Report.
  - ii. The proposal for the modification of the default tree and/or use of the RBF ([MSC Fisheries Standard Toolbox](#)).
- b. All written submissions received during site visits.
- c. A summary of verbal submissions received during site visits that are likely to cause a "material difference" to the outcome of the assessment, including those with information that could influence:
  - i. A PI score falling below 60.
  - ii. A PI score falling between 60 and 80.



- iii. A Principle score falling below an aggregate 80 score as a result of the changes to the score for 1 or more PIs.
  - iv. A change in scope (as per [MSC Fisheries Standard Section 1](#), 7.5.2, or 7.5.3).
  - d. Responses from the team to submissions described in 7.20.6.a, b, and c, including:
    - i. Any changes to scoring, rationales, or conditions that have been made.
    - ii. Where changes are suggested but no change is made, a substantiated justification.
- 7.20.7 The CAB shall upload the following to the MSC database for publication on the MSC website:
- a. Any '[MSC Template for Stakeholder Input into Fishery Assessments](#)' submitted by a stakeholder as per 7.20.6.a or 7.20.6.b.
  - b. Any '[MSC Template for Stakeholder Input into Fishery Assessments](#)' with a summary of verbal submissions received during site visits as per 7.20.6.c.
- 7.20.8 The CAB shall upload the Public Comment Draft Report to the MSC database for publication on the MSC website.
- 7.20.8.1 The CAB shall also upload:
- a. An announcement with the Public Comment Draft Report including a hyperlink to the '[MSC Template for Stakeholder Input into Fishery Assessments](#)'.
  - b. A statement that the CAB will only consider stakeholder input on the Public Comment Draft Report from registered stakeholders (4.2.8).
  - c. The timeline for stakeholder input.
- 7.20.8.2 The CAB shall inform registered stakeholders (4.2.8) that their previous input (7.20.6.a, 7.20.6.b or 7.20.6.c) and the response from the team is published on the MSC website and available for review.
- 7.20.9 The CAB shall make the Public Comment Draft Report available for input from registered stakeholders (4.2.8) for at least 30 days.
- 7.20.9.1 The CAB shall only consider stakeholder input on the Public Comment Draft Report from registered stakeholders.
- 7.20.9.2 If the CAB receives input from stakeholders who are not registered, the CAB shall:
- a. Note the stakeholder input for review at the next surveillance audit.
  - b. Inform the stakeholder that their input will be reviewed at the next surveillance audit.
- 7.20.9.3 The CAB shall inform registered stakeholders that they are required to provide objective evidence in support of any claims or any claimed errors of fact.

### Peer reviewer comments and MSC technical oversight


- 7.20.10 The CAB shall provide the Public Comment Draft Report to the peer reviewers for follow-up review of the assessment team's responses to the peer reviewers' initial comments.
- 7.20.10.1 The CAB shall provide the Public Comment Draft Report to peer reviewers at the same time that it is provided to registered stakeholders for input, for at least 30 days.
- 7.20.11 The CAB shall provide the Public Comment Draft Report to the MSC to conduct technical oversight.
- 7.20.11.1 The CAB shall provide the report to the MSC at the same time that it is provided to registered stakeholders for input, for at least 30 days.



## 7.21 Determination

- 7.21.1 The team shall consider the suggested changes and comments made to the Public Comment Draft Report under Section 7.20.
- 7.21.1.1 The team shall confirm or amend the draft determination.
- 7.21.2 When creating the Final Draft Report, the team shall only make changes to scoring if:
- Justified by registered stakeholder, MSC, client, or peer reviewer comments received during consultation opportunities, or
  - Justified by findings issued by the MSC's accreditation body, or
  - Harmonisation as per Annex PB has resulted in score changes.
- 7.21.2.1 The information considered to justify scoring changes must have been publicly available on or before the last day of the site visit.
- If the CAB and any participant at the site visit have agreed in writing that information will be made available after the site visit, the CAB shall accept this information up to 30 days after the last day of the site visit.
- 7.21.3 The team shall record the final determination in the Final Draft Report.
- 7.21.4 If changes to scoring have resulted in conditions being added or removed, the CAB should give the client at least 20 days to make any amendments to the Client Action Plan.
- 7.21.4.1 Once complete, the CAB shall add the amended Client Action Plan to the Final Draft Report.

## 7.22 Final Draft Report

- 7.22.1 If the period from the full assessment announcement to the publication of the Final Draft Report by the MSC is more than 18 months, the CAB shall withdraw the UoA from the MSC assessment process.
- 7.22.2 The CAB shall use the '[MSC Reporting Template](#)' to create the Final Draft Report.
- 7.22.3 The CAB shall include the following in a separate section or appendix to the Final Draft Report: 
- Any written submissions from registered stakeholders received during the consultation opportunity on:
    - The Announcement Comment Draft Report.
    - The Public Comment Draft Report.
  - All written submissions received during site visits.
  - A summary of verbal submissions received during site visits likely to cause a "material difference" to the outcome of the assessment, including those with information that could influence:
    - A PI score falling below 60.
    - A PI score falling between 60 and 80.
    - A Principle score falling below an aggregate 80 score as a result of changes to the score for 1 or more PIs.
    - A change in scope (as per [MSC Fisheries Standard Section 1](#), 7.5.2 or 7.5.3).
  - If applicable, peer review follow-up and MSC technical oversight submissions.
  - Responses from the team to the submissions in 7.22.3.a–d, including:
    - Any changes to scoring, rationales, or conditions that have been made.

- ii. Where changes are suggested but no change is made, a substantiated justification.
- 7.22.4 The CAB shall upload the Final Draft Report to the MSC database for publication on the MSC website.
- 7.22.4.1 The CAB shall upload an announcement with the Final Draft Report, including information about the process and a timeline for registered stakeholder input, as per the [MSC Disputes Process](#).
- 7.22.5 The CAB shall upload the following to the MSC database:
- a. Any '[MSC Template for Stakeholder Input into Fishery Assessments](#)' submitted by a stakeholder during the assessment containing stakeholder input and the CAB responses as per 7.22.3.a, b, c, and e.
  - b. Any '[MSC Template for Stakeholder Input into Fishery Assessments](#)' with a summary of verbal submissions containing stakeholder input and the CAB responses as per 7.22.3.c and e.

## 7.23 MSC Disputes Process

- 7.23.1 Before publishing the Public Certification Report, the CAB shall follow the process and timeline set out in the [MSC Disputes Process](#).

## 7.24 Public Certification Report

- 7.24.1 At the end of the full assessment process, the CAB shall finalise a Public Certification Report in accordance with this section that incorporates the Final Draft Report and, if relevant, results arising from the [MSC Disputes Process](#).
- 7.24.2 If the [MSC Disputes Process](#) is not triggered, the CAB should publish the Public Certification Report within 60 days of the closing date of the objection period.
- 7.24.3 If the [MSC Disputes Process](#) is triggered, the CAB should publish the Public Certification Report within 60 days of completion of the Disputes Process, depending on the outcome of the dispute.
- 7.24.4 The CAB shall use the '[MSC Reporting Template](#)' to create the Public Certification Report.
- 7.24.5 The CAB shall upload the Public Certification Report to the MSC database for publication on the MSC website, identifying a determination to certify or fail the UoA.
- 7.24.5.1 The CAB shall upload to the MSC database, for publication on the MSC website, an announcement with the Public Certification Report including the determination to certify or fail the UoA.
- 7.24.6 The CAB shall determine which entities should or should not be allowed to use the fishery certificate.
- 7.24.7 The CAB shall only permit fish caught by those fishers that are identified by reference to or on a valid fishery certificate to be eligible to enter certified chains of custody and subsequently bear the MSC ecolabel.
- 7.24.7.1 The CAB shall upload a Fishery Certificate Statement to the MSC database for publication on the MSC website defining: ■
- a. Which entities are currently eligible to access the certificate.
    - i. If a group of vessels or individual fishing operators (i.e. not an entire fishing fleet) is used to define the UoA or UoC, the CAB shall require the client to provide a list of the vessels, or a hyperlink to a publicly available list of vessels, for the CAB to upload to the MSC database for publication on the MSC website.

- b. Which other eligible fishers, if identified in the UoA, may be able to access the certificate through the mechanism of certificate sharing.
- c. Which points of landing, auctions, or other transfer may be used for the sale of fish and fish products from the UoC into further chains of custody.
- d. The point from which subsequent CoC certification is required.
- e. Any specific eligibility criteria for product to be sold as certified, or where to find this information. ▣

7.24.7.2 If there are any changes related to information on the Fishery Certificate Statement, the CAB shall update the Fishery Certificate Statement by uploading a new version with changes to the MSC database for publication on the MSC website within 14 days of the change, except for the list of vessels detailed in 7.24.7.1.a.i.

7.24.8 The CAB shall update information under 7.24.7.1.a at every surveillance audit.

## 7.25 Certification decision and certificate issue ▣

7.25.1 If the CAB makes a decision to award certification, the CAB shall determine that the date of certification is the date the Public Certification Report is published on the MSC website or, for reassessments, the 5th anniversary date of the existing certificate, whichever is later.

7.25.2 For each UoA, the CAB shall add catch data into the MSC database for the most recent fishing year for which data is available.

7.25.2.1 The CAB shall complete this within 10 days from the date the Public Certification Report has been published on the MSC website.

7.25.3 The CAB shall upload a copy of the issued fishery certificate(s) to the MSC database for publication on the MSC website.

7.25.3.1 The CAB shall ensure that the date of certification on each fishery certificate matches the date in 7.25.1.

7.25.3.2 The CAB shall submit a copy of the issued certificate(s) up to 10 days after the date of certification.

7.25.4 If changes to the information contained on a fishery certificate are made, the CAB shall ensure the updated copy of the fishery certificate is uploaded to the MSC database for publication on the MSC website within 10 days of the changes occurring.

## 7.26 UoA(s) that fail or withdraw from assessment

### UoA(s) that withdraw from assessment

7.26.1 If at any time the fishery client makes the decision not to proceed with the assessment, the CAB shall withdraw the UoA(s) from assessment and:

- a. Publish an announcement informing stakeholders that the UoA(s) have been withdrawn from assessment.
- b. Update the MSC database to withdraw the UoA(s) from assessment.

7.26.2 The CAB shall follow 7.5.9.1 if the fishery client decides to withdraw 1 or more UoAs and proposed UoCs from the fishery assessment whilst continuing the assessment for the remaining UoAs and proposed UoCs.

### UoA(s) that fail assessment

- 7.26.3 If the CAB makes a decision not to award certification and fail the UoA(s), the CAB shall upload the Public Certification Report to the MSC database for publication on the MSC website.
- 7.26.4 The CAB shall include the following in the Public Certification Report of the failed UoA(s):
- a. Draft non-binding conditions for any PIs that score more than 60 but less than 80.
  - b. Specification that the conditions outlined are non-binding and serve to provide an indication of the actions that may have been required had the UoA(s) been certified.
- 7.26.4.1 The CAB may draft and include non-binding conditions in the Client and Peer Review Draft Report and subsequent assessment reports. ■
- 7.26.5 The CAB shall not include the following in the Public Certification Report of the failed UoA(s):
- a. Mandatory conditions or defined actions that would need to be conducted before the UoA(s) could be reconsidered for certification in the future.
  - b. An agreement from the client to address conditions as per 7.19.7.
- 7.26.6 The CAB shall follow 7.5.9.1 if 1 or more UoAs and proposed UoCs fails the assessment and the fishery client decides to continue the assessment for the remaining UoAs and proposed UoCs.

### UoA(s) that re-enter assessment

- 7.26.7 If a withdrawn or failed UoA re-enters full assessment, the CAB shall follow the most recent versions of the MSC Fisheries Program Documents in full. ■
- 7.26.8 In assessment reports for withdrawn or failed UoA(s) that have re-entered assessment, the CAB shall:
- a. Specify that the UoA(s) have re-entered assessment.
  - b. Summarise the details of the previous assessment, including:
    - i. The results of the previous assessment.
    - ii. The date of the previous determination not to certify.
  - c. Identify those PIs for which scoring and/or the rationale for scoring has changed from the previous assessment.

## 7.27 Extension of scope of fishery certificate (scope extensions) ■

- 7.27.1 The CAB may extend the scope of an existing fishery certificate to include another UoA within its scope, providing:
- a. The Principle 1 target stock of the proposed UoA was previously assessed under Principle 1 or Principle 2 of the existing UoC(s).
  - b. The existing UoC(s) and the proposed UoA have some assessment components that are the same. ■
  - c. The existing UoC(s) and the proposed UoA operate in either an overlapping or adjacent fishing area.
- 7.27.2 The CAB shall only accept a request for a scope extension from a holder of a valid MSC fishery certificate.
- 7.27.3 The CAB shall use the version of the assessment tree that was used for the assessment of the existing UoC(s) for the scope extension assessment of the proposed UoA.
- 7.27.4 The CAB shall assign a person who meets the fishery team member qualification and competency criteria as set out in Table PC2.
- 7.27.5 The assigned individual shall:
- a. Identify the assessment components and scoring elements in the proposed UoA.


- b. Conduct a gap analysis to confirm which assessment components and scoring elements are the same in the proposed UoA and the existing UoC(s). ▣
- 7.27.6 If some assessment tree components are not the same as assessment components in the existing UoC(s), the CAB shall conduct a scope extension assessment according to Annex PD.
- 7.27.7 If all the assessment components and scoring elements of the proposed UoA are the same as for the existing UoC(s), the CAB shall determine whether the proposed UoA is an “other eligible fisher” (7.5.11). ▣
  - 7.27.7.1 The CAB shall confirm that:
    - a. The client is willing to extend the existing certificate.
    - b. All assessment components and scoring elements are the same as for the existing UoC(s).
    - c. The impacts of the potential new “other eligible fisher(s)” were considered in the assessment of the existing UoCs.
    - d. That extending the scope of the certificate does not have implications for the scoring of any PIs.
  - 7.27.7.2 The CAB shall include justifications for 7.27.7.1.a–d in the gap analysis.
- 7.27.8 If the CAB concludes that the proposed UoA is an “other eligible fisher”, the CAB may extend the fishery certificate.
  - 7.27.8.1 The CAB shall:
    - a. Review and update the key traceability factors and associated risks (7.5.10).
    - b. Confirm that traceability risks are managed and mitigated (Section 7.17).
    - c. Include 7.27.8.1.a–b in the gap analysis.
    - d. Upload an announcement to the MSC database for publication on the MSC website informing stakeholders that new “other eligible fishers” have been added.
    - e. Upload the gap analysis to the MSC database for publication on the MSC website.
    - f. Update the Fishery Certificate Statement (see 7.24.7.2).
    - g. Update the fishery certificate (see 7.25.4 and fishery certification requirements in the [GCR](#)).
    - h. Upload the Fishery Certificate Statement and fishery certificate to the MSC database for publication on the MSC website.
- 7.27.9 If the CAB cannot confirm 7.27.7.1.b–d, the CAB shall conduct a scope extension assessment according to Annex PD.
- 7.27.10 If the scope extension assessment results in certification, the CAB shall make the duration of the certificate for the scope extension only as long as the existing fishery certificate.
- 7.27.11 The CAB shall draft conditions, as per Section 7.16 , to result in improved performance to at least the 80 level within a period set by the CAB but no longer than 5 years from the date of certification of the new UoA.
- 7.27.12 The CAB shall conduct the reassessment of both the new UoA and the originally certified UoA at the same time using the version of the [MSC Fisheries Standard](#) that is effective.

### CAB assistance with certificate sharing

- 7.27.13 If the certificate has other eligible fishers and/or a certificate sharing mechanism, the CAB shall, within 30 days of receiving a request to share the certificate, facilitate the client’s and other eligible fishers’ engagement in good faith efforts to enter into a certificate sharing agreement.

- 7.27.14 If an on-land (non-fishing) entity wishes to join the client group, the CAB shall consider the factors in Section 7.17 to determine whether CoC certification is required.

## 7.28 Merging fishery certificates

- 7.28.1 The CAB may merge 2 or more existing fishery certificates provided that:
- a. The CAB issued the fishery certificates that will be merged.
    - i. If 1 or more of the fishery certificates were issued by different CABs, the CABs shall transfer certificates as per the transfer of certificate between CABs requirements in the [GCR](#).
  - b. The same version of the [MSC Fisheries Standard](#) was used for all assessments.
  - c. The request is made by holder(s) of valid MSC fishery certificates.
  - d. All fishery clients and client group members have agreed to merge their fishery certificates.
- 7.28.2 To merge 2 or more fishery certificates, the CAB shall:
- a. Confirm that any changes to key traceability factors and associated risks are identified, mitigated, and managed (see 7.5.10 and Section 7.17).
  - b. Confirm existing condition deadlines and milestone timeframes.
    - i. The CAB shall not change existing condition deadlines and milestone timeframes.
  - c. Update 1 of the existing fishery certificates to include all UoCs and relevant information (see the fishery certification requirements in the [GCR](#)).
    - i. The CAB shall set the expiry date as the expiry date of the fishery certificate with the shortest duration remaining. 
    - ii. The CAB shall withdraw the other fishery certificate(s).
  - d. Upload a copy of the issued fishery certificate(s) to the MSC database for publication on the MSC website.
  - e. Update the Fishery Certificate Statement (7.24.7.2).
  - f. Upload the Fishery Certificate Statement to the MSC database for publication on the MSC website.
  - g. Publish a stakeholder announcement for each fishery to inform stakeholders that the fishery certificates have been merged.
    - i. The CAB shall include 7.28.2.a–b in the stakeholder announcement.

## 7.29 Surveillance

### Surveillance level


- 7.29.1 During each initial assessment, surveillance, and reassessment, the team shall determine the level at which subsequent surveillance of the UoA shall be conducted.
- 7.29.2 Surveillance audits shall take place according to the default surveillance level described in Table 2, unless the team decides on a reduced surveillance schedule, see 7.29.4–7.29.7. 

Table 2: Surveillance levels

Surveillance level	Surveillance requirements
Level 6 <i>Default surveillance</i>	4 on-site surveillance audits
Level 5	3 on-site surveillance audits 1 off-site surveillance audit
Level 4	2 on-site surveillance audits 2 off-site surveillance audits
Level 3	1 on-site surveillance audit 3 off-site surveillance audits
Level 2	1 on-site surveillance audit 2 off-site surveillance audits 1 review of information
Level 1 <i>Minimum surveillance</i>	1 on-site surveillance audit 1 off-site surveillance audit 2 reviews of information

7.29.3 The following types of surveillance audit are available:

- a. On-site audit. The audit involves face-to-face engagement with the client, conducting stakeholder interviews and a review of changes in management and science in the UoA.
- b. Off-site audit. The audit involves engagement with the client, conducting stakeholder interviews and a review of changes in management and science in the UoA, and is undertaken by the team members from a remote location.
- c. Review of information. The audit involves seeking the views of the client and identifying whether there are any issues requiring further investigation. The audit is undertaken from a remote location. The CAB publishes a statement of the review of information.

7.29.4 The CAB shall determine whether the UoA is eligible for a reduction of surveillance levels dependent upon:

- a. The number of conditions outstanding.
- b. The ability of the CAB to remotely verify information. ■
- c. The progress against the conditions.

7.29.4.1 The CAB shall determine the surveillance level for the UoA based on the confidence of the CAB in its ability to remotely verify information and progress towards meeting conditions.

- a. The CAB shall only choose surveillance level 1 if, following an assessment or surveillance audit, the UoA has no outstanding conditions.

7.29.5 If a reduced surveillance level is adopted, the CAB shall provide a justification for how the UoA meets the criteria in 7.29.4.

7.29.6 The CAB shall determine whether the fishery certificate is eligible for a reduction in the number of team members dependent upon:

- a. The certification period.
- b. The number of conditions.
- c. The ability of the CAB to remotely verify information and progress against the conditions. ■



- 7.29.6.1 In the initial certification period, the number of team members for surveillance activities shall be at least 2.
  - a. The on-site audit may be undertaken by a minimum of 1 team member who is supported by the rest of the team remotely.
- 7.29.6.2 In the 2nd and subsequent certification periods, a reduced team of 1 team member may be used if the UoA has conditions associated with only 1 Principle, or no conditions.
- 7.29.6.3 If a fishery certificate is not eligible for a reduced team in the 2nd or subsequent certification periods, the on-site audit may be conducted by a minimum of 1 team member who is supported by the rest of the team remotely.
- 7.29.7 If a reduced team is used, the team shall provide a justification for how the criteria in 7.29.6 are met.

### Surveillance audit timing

- 7.29.8 The CAB shall conduct surveillance audits within 30 days prior to the anniversary date of the certificate unless the following applies.
  - 7.29.8.1 The CAB may conduct surveillance audits up to 6 months earlier or later than the anniversary date, where this deviation is appropriate given the circumstances of the UoA.
    - a. The CAB shall provide a justification for deviating from the anniversary date as part of the surveillance schedule.
    - b. If deviations from the surveillance schedule are more than 30 days, the CAB shall inform stakeholders.
- 7.29.9 The CAB shall conduct 4 surveillance audits before the 5th anniversary of the existing certificate.

### Surveillance schedule

- 7.29.10 The CAB shall agree a surveillance schedule for the duration of the certificate with the client, based on 7.29.1–7.29.9.
- 7.29.11 The CAB shall publish the surveillance schedule in the Public Comment Draft Report.
  - 7.29.11.1 The CAB shall review the proposed surveillance schedule for the Final Draft Report and Public Certification Report to take account of any changes to the assessment.
- 7.29.12 The CAB may amend the surveillance schedule prior to a surveillance audit.
  - 7.29.12.1 If changes are made, the CAB shall note where amendments to the surveillance schedule have been made, along with justification for the change, in the '[MSC Surveillance Announcement Template](#)'.
- 7.29.13 The CAB may amend the surveillance schedule following a surveillance audit.
  - 7.29.13.1 If changes are made, the CAB shall note where amendments to the surveillance schedule have been made, along with justification for the change, in the Surveillance Report.

### Preparing the surveillance audit

- 7.29.14 The CAB shall plan each surveillance audit as follows.
  - 7.29.14.1 During the initial surveillance cycle, the CAB shall appoint a team of 2 or more team members to conduct the surveillance audit.
    - a. The team shall comprise a team leader and a minimum of 1 additional team member who together meet at least 3 of the Fishery Team qualifications and competency requirements, see Table PC3.



- 7.29.14.2 During the 2nd or subsequent surveillance cycles, the CAB shall appoint 1 or more team members to conduct the surveillance audit following the requirements set out in 7.29.6.2.
- a. If 2 or more team members are appointed as the team, the requirements set out in 7.29.14.1.a shall apply.
  - b. If 1 team member is appointed, the team member shall meet the team leader requirements specified in Table PC1 and at least 1 of the fishery team qualification and competency criteria from Table PC3 relevant to the outstanding conditions in the UoA.
- 7.29.14.3 The CAB shall ensure that the team has local knowledge of the UoA.
- 7.29.14.4 The CAB shall use the '[MSC Surveillance Announcement Template](#)' to inform stakeholders and the MSC of:
- a. Time, dates, and location of the surveillance activities.
  - b. What will be assessed/reviewed during the audit.
  - c. The relevant skills and expertise of team members carrying out the surveillance audit.
  - d. Details of the opportunities and input methods for stakeholders to participate during the surveillance audit.
    - i. The CAB shall make it clear that all members of the team are available to meet with stakeholders in person or remotely.
- 7.29.14.5 The CAB shall include a hyperlink to the '[MSC Template for Stakeholder Input into Surveillance Audits](#)' in the Surveillance Announcement Template.
- 7.29.14.6 The CAB shall upload the Surveillance Announcement to the MSC database for publication on the MSC website at least 30 days before the surveillance audit activities are carried out.
- 7.29.14.7 The CAB shall allow at least 30 days for stakeholder input into the surveillance audit.
- a. If the CAB and any participant in the surveillance audit agree in writing that information will be made available after the surveillance audit activities, the CAB shall accept this information up to 15 days after the last day of the surveillance audit activities.

### Surveillance audit activities

- 7.29.15 During each on-site and off-site surveillance audit, the CAB shall:
- a. Actively seek the views of the client on:
    - i. Any changes to the information provided in the Scope Declaration as per 7.4.5.1.
    - ii. Changes to the UoA and its management.
    - iii. Performance in relation to any relevant conditions of certification.
    - iv. Any developments or changes within the UoA that affect traceability and the ability to segregate MSC from non-MSC products. ■
    - v. Any other significant changes in the UoA.
  - b. Hold interviews and actively seek the views of stakeholders and surveillance audit participants to ensure that the team is aware of any stakeholder concerns.
    - i. If stakeholders do not wish to be interviewed, the team shall inform them that they may submit written information to the team using the '[MSC Template for Stakeholder Input into Surveillance Audits](#)'.
  - c. Apply the provisions set out in Sections 4.3–4.5 regarding access to information.

- d. If a group of vessels or individual fishing operators (i.e. not an entire fishing fleet) is used to define the UoA or UoC, require the client to provide an updated list of the vessels, or a hyperlink to a publicly available list of vessels.
    - i. The CAB shall upload the updated vessel list or hyperlink to the MSC database to be published on the MSC website.
  - e. Review and include in the Surveillance Report:
    - i. Any potential or actual changes in management systems.
    - ii. Any changes or additions/deletions to regulations.
    - iii. Any personnel changes in science, management, or industry and their impact on the management of the UoA.
    - iv. Any potential changes to scientific information, including stock assessments.
    - v. Any changes affecting traceability.
    - vi. Any changes affecting harmonisation of overlapping fisheries, see PB1.3.1.
    - vii. Any changes in scope (as per [MSC Fisheries Standard Section 1](#), 7.5.2, or 7.5.3).
- 7.29.15.1 Where the information for PI scores has changed, the CAB shall:
- a. Report and record what information has changed.
  - b. Rescore the PI following scoring processes as per Section 7.15.
    - i. If the new score is less than 80, the CAB shall define conditions and require the client to develop a Client Action Plan for the new conditions.
- 7.29.16 At each on-site or off-site surveillance audit, the team shall evaluate progress against conditions.
- 7.29.16.1 The team shall evaluate conformity with, and progress and performance against, conditions.
- a. The CAB shall document conformity with, and progress and performance against, certification conditions using the narrative or metric form of the original condition.
  - b. The CAB shall document whether progress is “on target”, “ahead of target” or “behind target”, as well as its justification for such a judgement.
  - i. If progress against the measurable outcomes, expected results, or (interim) milestones that were specified when setting the condition is judged to be “behind target”, the CAB may specify remedial action, and any revised milestones, that are required to bring progress “back on target” within 12 months to achieve the original condition by the original deadline.
- 7.29.16.2 If the CAB determines that progress against a condition is not “back on target” within 12 months of falling “behind target”, the CAB shall:
- a. Consider progress as inadequate.
  - b. Apply the suspension or withdrawal of certification requirements of the [GCR](#).
  - c. Inform the fishery client that they cannot enter the same UoC(s), or any entity in the UoC(s), into full assessment under either the same or an alternative name unless the cause for suspension has been addressed.
- 7.29.16.3 To verify that conditions have been met and outcomes have been achieved, the CAB shall:
- a. Examine relevant objective evidence.
  - b. Rescore all relevant PISGs relating to that condition.
  - c. Only close the condition if the score is raised above 80.

- d. Document the justification for the rescoring and closing out of the condition in the Surveillance Report.
- 7.29.16.4 If a condition is not closed by its deadline, the CAB shall:
- a. Consider progress as inadequate.
  - b. Apply the suspension or withdrawal of certification requirements of the [GCR](#).
  - c. Inform the fishery client that they cannot enter the same UoC(s), or any entity in the UoC(s), into full assessment under either the same or an alternative name unless the cause for suspension has been addressed. ■
- 7.29.17 During each review of information surveillance audit, the CAB shall perform the activities specified in 7.29.15.a.
- 7.29.17.1 If the CAB becomes aware of changes to the circumstances of the UoA, and/or of new information, that may cause a “material difference” as defined in 7.20.6.c during a review of information audit, the CAB shall conduct an off-site audit according to 7.29.15.
- 7.29.18 During an off-site audit or a review of information, if the CAB determines that the information required to conduct the required surveillance audit activities (7.29.15 and 7.29.16) has not been provided or is unavailable, the CAB shall conduct an on-site audit.
- 7.29.18.1 The CAB shall re-announce the surveillance audit as per 7.29.14.4–7.

## Reporting

- 7.29.19 The CAB shall prepare a Surveillance Report using the relevant MSC template:
- a. For on-site and off-site surveillance audits, the CAB shall use the '[MSC Surveillance Reporting Template](#)'.
  - b. For review of information surveillance audits, the CAB shall use the '[MSC Surveillance Review of Information Template](#)'.
- 7.29.20 The CAB shall send the Surveillance Report to the client along with any requests or conditions that may arise from surveillance activities.
- 7.29.20.1 If new conditions are identified, the CAB should allow a period of up to 30 days after receipt of the Surveillance Report for the client to prepare a Client Action Plan.
- 7.29.21 The CAB shall include the following in a separate section or appendix to the Surveillance Report:
- a. All written submissions and a summary of verbal submissions made by stakeholders during the annual surveillance audit process.
  - b. Responses from the team to the submissions in 7.29.21.a, including:
    - i. What (if any) changes to scoring, rationales, or conditions have been made.
    - ii. Where changes are suggested but no change is made, a substantiated justification.
- 7.29.22 At the time of submission of each Surveillance Report, the CAB shall add catch data into the MSC database, for each UoC, for the most recent fishing year for which data is available.
- 7.29.23 Within 60 days of completing the audit, the CAB shall upload the Surveillance Report to the MSC database for publication on the MSC website. ■
- 7.29.23.1 If the client has revised the Client Action Plan following surveillance, the CAB shall, within 90 days of completing the audit, upload the Surveillance Report to the MSC database for publication on the MSC website.

## Additional audit considerations

7.29.24 If there are IPI stock(s) within the scope of certification, the team shall follow Annex PA during each surveillance audit.

## 7.30 Expedited audits

7.30.1 The CAB shall conduct an expedited audit if the CAB becomes aware of changes to the circumstances of the UoA and/or of new information that may cause: ■

- a. A PI score to fall below 60.
- b. A Principle score to fall below an aggregate 80 score as a result of changes to the score for 1 or more PIs.
- c. A change in scope (as per [MSC Fisheries Standard Section 1](#), 7.5.2 or 7.5.3).

7.30.2 The CAB shall assign a person who meets the fishery team leader qualification and competency criteria as set out in the [GCR](#) and Table PC1, and is competent to review the relevant information.

7.30.2.1 The CAB shall send the assigned person the relevant information for review.

7.30.2.2 The assigned person shall determine whether an expedited audit needs to be conducted.

7.30.3 An expedited audit can be an off-site audit or on-site audit, based on what the CAB determines necessary.

7.30.4 The CAB shall announce an expedited audit, if triggered, within 30 days of becoming aware of the relevant information.

7.30.4.1 The CAB shall appoint a team of 2 or more team members to conduct the expedited audit.

- a. The team shall comprise a team leader and a minimum of 1 additional team member who together meet the Fishery Team qualifications and competency requirements relevant to what will be assessed.

7.30.4.2 The CAB shall use the '[MSC Surveillance Announcement Template](#)' to inform stakeholders and the MSC of:

- a. Time, dates, and location of the expedited audit activities.
- b. What will be assessed/reviewed during the expedited audit.
- c. The relevant skills and expertise of team members carrying out the expedited audit.

7.30.4.3 The CAB shall upload the Surveillance Announcement to the MSC database for publication on the MSC website.

7.30.5 The CAB shall review the relevant information by completing the activities as defined in 7.29.15 except for 7.29.15.a.iii.

7.30.6 The CAB shall prepare an expedited audit report using the '[MSC Surveillance Reporting Template](#)'.

7.30.7 The CAB shall send the expedited audit report to the client along with any new conditions.

7.30.8 Within 60 days of announcing the expedited audit, the CAB shall upload the expedited audit report to the MSC database for publication on the MSC website.

7.30.9 The CAB may include the expedited audit in a surveillance audit providing that:

- a. The surveillance audit is announced within 30 days of the CAB becoming aware of the relevant information.
- b. The CAB follows Section 7.29.

## Expedited audits during a full assessment or scope extension

- 7.30.10 If the CAB becomes aware of changes to the circumstances of the UoA and/or of new information after the site visit, except for information subject to 7.15.1.1.a, the CAB shall follow 7.30.1–8 during the initial assessment. ■
- 7.30.10.1 The CAB shall not use the results of the expedited audit in the determination or certification decision for the UoA(s).
- 7.30.11 For an expedited audit conducted during an initial assessment or scope extension, if the 60-day reporting deadline (7.30.8) is prior to the publication of the Public Certification Report, the CAB shall upload the expedited audit report to the MSC database for publication on the MSC website on the same date as the Public Certification Report.
- 7.30.11.1 If the expedited audit results in a score of less than 60 for any PI or a weighted average score of less than 80 for any Principle, the CAB shall apply the suspension or withdrawal of certification requirements of the [GCR](#) with the following modifications:
- The CAB shall set the effective date for the fishery certificate suspension as the date of certification, disregarding the 30-day notice period.
  - The CAB shall announce the suspension by completing and uploading the '[MSC Notice of Suspension Template](#)' to the scheme database, to be published on the MSC website on the date of certification.
  - If the eligibility date was set before the date of certification, the CAB shall inform the client and stakeholders in the notice of suspension that the eligibility date has been changed to the certification date.
- 7.30.12 If the CAB becomes aware of changes to the circumstances of the UoA and/or new information during a reassessment, the CAB shall follow 7.30.1–8 for both the existing certificate and the reassessment. ■
- 7.30.12.1 For an expedited audit conducted during a reassessment, if the 60-day reporting deadline (7.30.8) is prior to the publication of the Public Certification Report, the CAB may upload 1 expedited audit report that includes the results for both the existing certificate and the reassessment.
- 7.30.12.2 If the expedited audit results in a score of less than 60 for any PI or a weighted average score of less than 80 for any Principle, the CAB shall:
- For the existing certificate, apply the suspension or withdrawal of certification requirements of the [GCR](#).
  - For the reassessment, apply the suspension or withdrawal of certification requirements of the [GCR](#) with the following modifications:
    - The CAB shall set the effective date for the fishery certificate suspension as the date of certification, disregarding the 30-day notice period.
    - The CAB shall announce the suspension by completing and uploading the '[MSC Notice of Suspension Template](#)' to the MSC database, to be published on the MSC website on the date of certification.
    - If the eligibility date was set before the date of certification, the CAB shall inform the client and stakeholders in the notice of suspension that the eligibility date has been changed to the certification date.

## 7.31 Reassessment

- 7.31.1 The CAB shall announce the reassessment of a certified UoA no later than 90 days after the 4th anniversary of the existing certificate.
- 7.31.1.1 The CAB shall be responsible for the exact timing and planning of the reassessment, in consultation with the client.

- 7.31.2 The CAB may change the scope of a fishery assessment to include or remove other UoA(s) as part of the reassessment.


### Full reassessment activities

- 7.31.3 When reassessing a certified UoA, the CAB shall apply all the steps of the FCP version effective at the time of the announcement of the reassessment.
- 7.31.4 If a modified assessment tree was used during the initial assessment, the CAB shall consult on reapplication of this modified assessment tree if no appropriate new default assessment tree has been released by the MSC.
- 7.31.5 The CAB shall review all surveillance reports and outcomes and evaluate progress against certification conditions.
- 7.31.5.1 Unless “exceptional circumstances” as set out in 7.16.6 or 7.31.5.4 apply, the UoA shall have met all conditions and milestones.
  - 7.31.5.2 The CAB shall clearly identify all open conditions in the reassessment Announcement Comment Draft Report. ■
    - a. The CAB shall clearly identify whether an open condition is being carried over into the next certificate. ■
    - b. The CAB shall clearly identify whether an open condition will be closed during the reassessment.
      - i. The CAB shall outline how and when the condition will be closed during the reassessment.
  - 7.31.5.3 If there are any open conditions, the team shall apply 7.29.16.1, to determine the adequacy of progress against those conditions and milestones.
    - a. If the CAB concludes that the client has made inadequate progress (7.29.16.2 and 7.29.16.4), the CAB shall withdraw the UoA from reassessment.
  - 7.31.5.4 If an open condition is written against a PI in the assessment tree that differs from that in the reassessment tree, the CAB shall determine whether the condition as originally drafted is appropriate to deliver the SG80 outcome for the PI, or the equivalent PI, in the reassessment tree.
    - a. If the condition is appropriate to deliver the SG80 outcome in the reassessment tree, the CAB shall evaluate progress against the conditions according to 7.31.5.3.
    - b. If the condition is not appropriate to deliver the SG80 outcome in the reassessment tree, the CAB shall determine what action is needed to deliver the outcome required at SG80 level and evaluate whether this outcome has been achieved.
      - i. If the SG80 outcome has not been achieved, the CAB shall rewrite the condition against the reassessment tree, in accordance with 7.16.1.
      - ii. If the SG80 outcome has been achieved, or if achievement of the condition would not affect the score of any PI that would otherwise score less than 80 in the reassessment tree, the CAB shall apply 7.29.16.3 to close the condition.
  - 7.31.5.5 The CAB shall include its determination of the issues above, and any justification for decisions made relating to these issues, in the ‘[MSC Reporting Template](#)’.
- 7.31.6 The CAB shall clearly identify related conditions that are set during reassessment, and include a justification for each. ■
- 7.31.7 If there are IPI stock(s) within the UoA, the CAB shall follow Annex PA.
- 7.31.8 The CAB shall follow the [MSC Disputes Process](#) during reassessment.




- 7.31.8.1 If an objection is accepted during a reassessment, the CAB may extend the current certificate up to a maximum of 6 months from the date that the objection is accepted, to allow this procedure to be followed.
- 7.31.9 The CAB shall use the '[MSC Reporting Template](#)' to create the Full Reassessment Report.

### Reduced reassessment activities

- 7.31.10 A UoA is eligible for reduced reassessment if:
- a. The UoA was covered under the previous certification or scope extension.
  - b. The UoA had no conditions remaining after the 3rd surveillance audit.
  - c. The CAB confirms that all stakeholder input related to the [MSC Fisheries Standard](#) has been addressed by the 3rd surveillance audit.
  - d. The reassessment is against the same version of the [MSC Fisheries Standard](#) as the UoC.
- 7.31.11 If multiple fishery clients wish to combine their UoAs into 1 reassessment, the CAB may conduct a reduced reassessment provided all the UoAs meet the eligibility criteria under 7.31.10.
- 7.31.12 If the UoA is eligible for reduced reassessment, the CAB shall provide a detailed explanation of how the reduced reassessment criteria are satisfied at the time of announcing the reassessment.
- 7.31.13 For a reduced reassessment, the CAB shall follow the full reassessment requirements, with the following modifications: 
- a. The CAB may conduct the site visit with 1 team member on site and other team member(s) joining remotely.
    - i. The CAB shall determine which team member competencies are required on site and remotely, based on:
      - A. The topic(s) that stakeholders raised in previous audits.
      - B. The availability of information on Principle 1, Principle 2 or Principle 3 components that would enable comprehensive review by an off-site team member.
  - b. Only 1 peer reviewer is required to review the reassessment peer review report.
- 7.31.14 The CAB shall use the '[MSC Reduced Reassessment Reporting Template](#)' to create the Reduced Reassessment Report.

## 7.32 Assessing UoCs that expire after the transition deadline against the MSC Fisheries Standard v3.1

- 7.32.1 As per the implementation timeframes of the [MSC Fisheries Standard v3.1](#), if a certificate expires after 1 November 2030 and is certified against a version of the [MSC Fisheries Standard](#) published before the [MSC Fisheries Standard v3.0](#), the CAB shall either:
- a. Apply Annex PE (Transition Assessment) by 1 November 2030, or 
  - b. Announce the reassessment of the certified UoA against the [MSC Fisheries Standard v3.1](#) no later than 9 months before 1 November 2030.
- 7.32.1.1 The CAB may apply 7.32.1 at any time to a UoC that is certified or in assessment against a version of the [MSC Fisheries Standard](#) published before the [MSC Fisheries Standard v3.1](#).
- 7.32.2 If the CAB has not applied 7.32.1 by 1 November 2030, the CAB shall suspend the certificate until the UoC has been certified against the [MSC Fisheries Standard v3.1](#).

### 7.33 Management system requirements for CABs

- 7.33.1 To identify any corrective or preventive actions that would contribute to continual improvement of the assessment process, the CAB shall conduct, and document, a review of each full fishery assessment.
- 7.33.1.1 The CAB shall consider, and document, submissions and/or comments from stakeholders or other parties on the CAB's activities and processes in the review.
  - 7.33.1.2 The CAB shall keep records of the reviews.
- 7.33.2 For any complaint evaluated by the CAB as per the complaints and appeals requirements of the [GCR](#), and that relates to the MSC Fisheries Program, the CAB shall send a summary of the complaint and decision(s) taken to the MSC via [complaints@msc.org](mailto:complaints@msc.org) within 20 days of closure of the complaint.

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End of Fisheries Certification Process

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## **Annex PA: Requirements for inseparable or practicably inseparable stocks – normative**

### **PA1 Requirements for inseparable or practicably inseparable stocks**

#### **PA1.1 Scope**

PA1.1.1 The requirements of this annex shall apply to all inseparable or practicably inseparable (IPI) catch within fisheries being assessed.

#### **PA1.2 Default assessment tree**

PA1.2.1 The Conformity Assessment Body (CAB) shall review and, if necessary, propose modifications to the default assessment tree to proceed with the assessment of IPI stock(s).

PA1.2.2 Using the tree, the CAB shall:

- a. Assess the IPI catch under the in-scope species component of Principle 2.
- b. Separately assess the impact of all fishing activity on the IPI stock(s) considered for entry into certified Chains of Custody using the criteria specified in PA1.4.2, for the purposes of determining the eligibility of the catches of IPI stock(s) to enter further certified Chains of Custody.

#### **PA1.3 Conditions**

PA1.3.1 If there are IPI stock(s) within the scope of certification, the CAB shall set conditions to: ■

- a. Promote the future Principle 1 assessment of the IPI stock(s), or
- b. Promote the development of techniques to effectively separate catches of currently IPI stock(s).

#### **PA1.4 Entry into further Chains of Custody**

PA1.4.1 The CAB shall ensure that only defined and limited proportions of catches from IPI stock(s) enter into certified Chains of Custody.

PA1.4.1.1 The MSC ecolabel is only permitted for use on these catches for a maximum of 1 certification period.

PA1.4.2 The CAB shall verify that the IPI stock(s) meet the following requirements, prior to being considered eligible to enter further certified Chains of Custody:

- a. The IPI stock(s) are likely to be above the PRI as defined in the [MSC Fisheries Standard GSA2.2.1.1](#), or if below the limits, measures are in place that are expected to ensure that all fishing-related mortality does not hinder the recovery and rebuilding of IPI stock(s).
- b. If the stock status is poorly known, measures or practices are in place that are expected to keep the IPI stock(s) above the point of recruitment impairment (PRI) or to prevent all fishing activity from hindering recovery.
- c. The measures are considered likely to work, based on plausible argument. ■

## **PA1.5 Surveillance**

PA1.5.1 If the UoA includes IPI stock(s), the CAB shall review and document the continuing performance against conditions in PA1.3.1 and against the requirements in PA1.4.2.

## **PA1.6 Reassessment**

PA1.6.1 IPI stock(s) are only eligible for the period of 1 certificate. For continued certification, the CAB shall inform clients of the following options:

- a. Certify all IPI stock(s) against Principle 1 at reassessment.
- b. Develop techniques to effectively separate catches of currently IPI stock(s) from target stock(s) so the IPI scope criteria are no longer met.
- c. Develop measures to reduce the proportion of IPI stock(s), to be able to meet the requirements for IPI stock(s) as set out in 7.5.14.2.

PA1.6.2 The CAB shall assess remaining IPI stock(s) against Principle 1 at reassessment.

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End of Annex PA

## Annex PB: Harmonisation of overlapping Units of Assessment – normative

### PB1 Harmonised Units of Assessment – normative

#### PB1.1 Scope and assessment tree

PB1.1.1 The CAB shall use this annex where Units of Assessment (UoAs) overlap, irrespective of the assessment tree and version of the [MSC Fisheries Standard](#).

PB1.1.1.1 Where UoAs have been assessed against different versions of the [MSC Fisheries Standard](#), CABs shall only harmonise those Performance Indicators (PIs) that have the same intent.

PB1.1.1.2 The CAB shall use the

PB1.1.1.3 [Change Tracker Report](#) to identify the PIs across different versions of the [MSC Fisheries Standard](#) that have the same intent.

PB1.1.2 The CAB shall use the latest version of this annex when different versions of the [MSC Fisheries Certification Process](#) are used.

#### PB1.2 Identifying overlapping Units of Assessment

PB1.2.1 The CAB shall use the following criteria to identify overlapping UoAs:

- a. UoAs that have the same P1 stock (7.5.2.a).
- b. UoAs that operate in the same geographical area (7.5.6).
- c. UoAs that impact the same P2 scoring elements ([MSC Fisheries Standard SA3.1.2](#)).
- d. UoAs that are subject to management by the same jurisdictions ([MSC Fisheries Standard SA4.1.1](#)).

PB1.2.2 The CAB shall use Table PB1 to determine the PIs that are subject to harmonisation (noting PB1.1.1.1).

Table PB1 – Harmonisation requirements per PI

PI / Scoring Issue (SI)	Required to harmonise	
All P1 PIs	Yes	Teams shall harmonise P1 assessment outcomes for any UoA that has the same P1 stock.
PI 2.1.1.a ( <a href="#">MSC Fisheries Standard v3.1</a> and <a href="#">v2.01/v1.3</a> )	Partially	For stocks that are “main” in both UoAs, teams shall harmonise status relative to PRI (at SG60, 80, and 100), and if below PRI, harmonise cumulative impacts at SG80 (not at SG60).
PI 2.2.1.a (for UoAs assessed against the <a href="#">MSC Fisheries Standard v3.1</a> only)	Partially	Harmonise selection of Endangered, Threatened, or Protected (ETP) and Out-of-Scope (OOS) units unless UoAs have demonstrably different footprints or the organisations responsible for assessing impact of ETP/OOS species in different UoAs have identified different ETP/OOS species (or PB1.3.1.1a applies). Where the same ETP/OOS unit is selected, teams shall harmonise status relative to favourable conservation status.
PI 2.4.1.b ( <a href="#">MSC Fisheries Standard v2.01</a> ) PI 2.3.1.b ( <a href="#">MSC Fisheries Standard v3.1</a> )	Partially	Teams shall harmonise identification of more sensitive habitats (v3.1) / vulnerable marine ecosystems (VMEs) (v2.01) where both UoAs operate in the same “managed area(s)” (see the relevant Guidance to the <a href="#">MSC Fisheries Standard</a> ).

PI / Scoring Issue (SI)	Required to harmonise	
PI 2.4.2.a, c ( <a href="#">MSC Fisheries Standard v2.01</a> ) PI 2.3.2.a, c ( <a href="#">MSC Fisheries Standard v3.1</a> )	Partially	Teams shall harmonise scoring with consideration of cumulative impacts at SG100 as all UoA impacts are considered (not at SG60 or SG80).
All P2 PIs	Situation dependent	If UoAs are identical in scope (FCP 7.5.2), even if the Units of Certification (UoCs) are different (e.g. separate clients), teams shall harmonise P2 assessment outcomes.
PIs 3.1.1–3.1.3	Situation dependent	If overlapping UoAs are part of the same larger fishery or fleet or have stocks in either P1 or P2 that are at least partially managed by the same jurisdiction(s) (nation states, Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMOs), or others) or under the same agreements, teams shall harmonise assessment outcomes for PIs 3.1.1–3.1.3 where management arrangements apply to overlapping UoAs. The MSC accepts that it may be impractical to attempt full harmonisation, due to the large number of fisheries that may be managed under the relevant policy framework, and the differences in application between them.
PIs 3.2.1–3.2.4	Situation dependent	If overlapping UoAs have stocks within either P1 or P2 that are at least partially managed by the same jurisdiction(s) (nation states, RFMOs, or others) or under the same agreements, the teams shall harmonise assessment outcomes for PIs 3.2.1–3.2.4 where management arrangements apply to overlapping UoAs (e.g. at the RFMO level but not the national level in the case of 2 separate national fleets both fishing the same regional stock).

PB1.2.3 The CAB shall:

- a. Identify the overlapping UoA(s) and the PIs subject to harmonisation in the Announcement Comment Draft Report.
- b. Confirm the need for harmonisation in the Fishery Announcement.
- c. Inform the CAB(s) of the overlapping UoA(s) that an overlapping UoA is entering an assessment.

## **PB1.3 Harmonised assessment outcomes**

PB1.3.1 CABs shall harmonise assessment outcomes of overlapping UoAs to ensure:

- a. Consistent scoring and rationales.
- b. Consistent conditions and milestones, including condition deadlines.
- c. Consistent categorisation of Principle 2 scoring elements ([MSC Fisheries Standard SA3.1.2](#)).

PB1.3.1.1 CABs shall ensure the same categorisation of ETP/OOS species ([MSC Fisheries Standard SA3.1.4](#)).

- a. If differences in categorisation within Principle 2 arise due to changes in species designations once a UoA is certified, harmonisation shall occur at the next reassessment.

PB1.3.1.2 CABs shall ensure the same modifications to ETP/OOS species are applied ([MSC Fisheries Standard SA3.1.4.1–4](#)).

PB1.3.1.3 If ETP/OOS species are nationally listed in 1 country but not another, the CAB shall cite “exceptional circumstances” as per PB1.3.2.1 and PB1.3.2.2.

PB1.3.2 Teams shall only allow differences in outcomes with respect to scoring, identification of scoring elements, rationales, and/or conditions of the overlapping assessments if a team identifies “exceptional circumstances”, such as the UoAs being demonstrably different. ▣

PB1.3.2.1 Teams shall fully document “exceptional circumstances”, together with clear indication of agreement of “exceptional circumstances” between teams responsible for the overlapping fisheries.

PB1.3.2.2 Teams shall explain and justify any difference in the scores, scoring elements identified, rationales, and/or conditions resulting from “exceptional circumstances” in the scoring rationale for relevant PIs.

## **PB1.4 Annual harmonisation** ▣

PB1.4.1 CABs shall complete the harmonisation activities (PB1.5) for overlapping UoAs once per calendar year.

PB1.4.1.1 CABs shall convene additional harmonisation activities (PB1.5) if there are changes to the circumstances of the overlapping UoAs and/or new information that may cause: ▣

- a. A PI score to fall below 60.
- b. A Principle score to fall below an aggregate 80 score as a result of changes to the score for 1 or more PIs.

## **PB1.5 Harmonisation activities**

PB1.5.1 Teams of overlapping UoAs shall discuss (verbally or via email): ▣

- a. Fishery information.
- b. Scoring and rationales of PIs subject to harmonisation. ▣
- c. Conditions and milestones. ▣
- d. Categorisation of P2 scoring elements, including ETP/OOS species and modifications ([MSC Fisheries Standard SA3.1.2 - SA3.1.5](#)).

PB1.5.1.1 Teams shall consider:

- a. Stakeholder input received during assessments or surveillance audits that took place since the previous harmonisation activity.
- b. Peer reviewer comments received during assessments that took place since the previous harmonisation activity.
- c. MSC technical oversight comments received during assessments that took place since the previous harmonisation activity.

PB1.5.2 If teams reach agreement on PB1.5.1.b–d, the teams shall adopt the outcomes.

PB1.5.2.1 If teams do not reach agreement on PB1.5.1.b, all teams shall adopt the lowest score(s).

PB1.5.3 The CAB shall include the harmonised assessment outcomes (PB1.3) in the next report published for the UoA as part of an assessment or audit process (e.g. Public Comment Draft Report or Surveillance Report).

PB1.5.4 CABs of overlapping UoAs shall coordinate planning and conduct of assessments, including coordinated process steps and publications of assessment outputs.

## **PB1.6 Harmonisation scenarios**

- PB1.6.1 Where a UoA in an assessment (initial assessment, reassessment, scope extension assessment, or transition assessment) overlaps with only 1 UoA that is also in an assessment, the team shall liaise with the CAB of the overlapping UoA to organise harmonisation activities (PB1.5) as soon as possible during the assessment process, to ensure harmonised assessment outcomes (PB1.3).
- PB1.6.2 Where a UoA in an assessment (initial assessment, reassessment, scope extension assessment or transition assessment) overlaps with only 1 UoA that is certified, the team of the UoA in assessment shall liaise with the CAB of the overlapping UoA to organise harmonisation activities (PB1.5) as soon as possible during the assessment process, to ensure harmonised assessment outcomes (PB1.3).
- PB1.6.3 Where a UoA in an assessment (initial assessment, reassessment, scope extension assessment, or transition assessment) overlaps with 2 or more UoAs that are certified, and these certified UoAs have harmonised assessment outcomes, the team shall liaise with the CABs of the overlapping UoAs to:
- a. Determine the date of the last harmonisation activities.
  - b. Determine the harmonised assessment outcomes (PB1.3).
  - c. Determine if there are changes to circumstances of the overlapping UoAs and/or new information.
- PB1.6.4 Teams shall follow PB1.4.1.1 if there are changes to the circumstances of the overlapping UoAs and/or new information.
- PB1.6.4.1 If there are no changes to circumstances of the overlapping UoAs and/or new information, teams shall adopt the harmonised assessment outcomes of the overlapping UoAs.

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End of Annex PB

## Annex PC: Fishery team leader, team member, team and peer reviewer qualifications and competencies – normative



### PC1 Fishery team leader, team member, team and peer reviewer qualifications and competencies

#### PC1.1 Scope

PC1.1.1 This annex sets out additional requirements to the [MSC General Certification Requirements](#) (GCR) for fishery team leader, team member and team qualifications and competencies, which the CAB shall verify in accordance with [GCR](#).

#### PC1.2 Fishery team leader qualification and competency criteria

Table PC1: Fishery team leader qualification and competency criteria

<b>1. General</b>
<b>Qualifications</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Degree or equivalent in business, economics, science, or technical subject (for example, supply chain and logistics management, food/seafood science, or fisheries science), or</li> <li>b. 3 years' experience in the fisheries sector related to the tasks under the responsibility of the team leader.</li> </ul>
<b>Verification mechanisms</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CV</li> <li>• Certificates</li> </ul>
<b>2. Understanding of MSC Fisheries Standard and MSC Fisheries Certification Process</b>
<b>Qualifications</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Review any updates to the MSC Fisheries Program Documents at least annually. </li> <li>b. Pass the MSC's fishery team leader training course at least every 5 years. </li> <li>c. Pass new versions of the compulsory online training modules when new versions of the <a href="#">MSC Fisheries Standard</a> or certification process are published prior to undertaking assessments against the revised <a href="#">MSC Fisheries Standard</a> or certification process.</li> <li>d. Pass new online training modules on modifications to the <a href="#">MSC Fisheries Standard</a> before undertaking assessments using these modifications, such as enhanced bivalves, salmon, and other modifications that may be developed in the future.</li> </ul>
<b>Competencies</b>
<p>Ability to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Describe the intent and requirements of the <a href="#">MSC Fisheries Standard</a>.</li> <li>i. Place the steps of the fisheries assessment process in the correct order.</li> <li>ii. Identify the steps in which stakeholder consultation occurs.</li> <li>iii. Score a fishery using the default assessment tree.</li> <li>iv. Describe how conditions are set and monitored.</li> </ul>

**1. General**

- v. Describe the reporting stages, including the role of the peer reviewer.

**Verification mechanisms**

- Examination pass
- Witness or office audits by an MSC-appointed accreditation body
- CAB witness audits

**3. Assessment experience**

**Qualifications**

- a. Has conducted 2 MSC fishery assessment or surveillance site visits as a team member in the last 5 years.
- b. For new fishery team leaders only: has conducted an assessment as team leader that will be witnessed by an MSC-appointed accreditation body as part of a CAB's initial accreditation audit.

**Competencies**

- i. Ability to apply knowledge of auditing techniques in the gathering of information, the scoring of the fishery, and the rationales for the scores given.

**Verification mechanisms**

- CAB records
- Previous employer reference letter
- Witness or office audits by an MSC-appointed accreditation body
- CAB witness audits
- Previous audit reports

**4. Communication and stakeholder facilitation skills**

**Qualifications**

- a. Experience in applying different types of interviewing and facilitation techniques.

**Competencies**

- i. Ability to communicate effectively with the client and other stakeholders.

**Verification mechanisms**

- CV
- CAB records
- Witness or office audits by an MSC-appointed accreditation body
- CAB witness audits



## PC1.3 Fishery team member qualification and competency criteria ▣

Table PC2: Fishery team member qualification and competency criteria

<b>1. General</b>
<b>Qualifications</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. University degree in fisheries, marine conservation biology, natural resources environmental management, or relevant field (for example, economics, mathematics, or statistics), or</li> <li>b. 3-years' management or research experience in a marine conservation biology, fisheries, natural resources, or environmental management position.</li> </ul>
<b>Verification mechanisms</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CV</li> <li>• Certificates</li> </ul>
<b>2. Understanding of MSC Fisheries Standard and relevant MSC Certification Process requirements</b>
<b>Qualifications</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Review any updates to the MSC Fisheries Program Documents at least annually. <span style="float: right;">▣</span></li> <li>b. Pass the MSC's fishery team member training course at least every 5 years. <span style="float: right;">▣</span></li> <li>c. Pass new versions of the compulsory online training modules when new versions of the <a href="#">MSC Fisheries Standard</a> are published prior to undertaking assessments against the new <a href="#">MSC Fisheries Standard</a>.</li> <li>d. Pass new online training modules on modifications to the <a href="#">MSC Fisheries Standard</a> before undertaking assessments using these modifications, such as enhanced bivalves, salmon, and other modifications that may be developed in the future.</li> </ul>
<b>Competencies</b>
<p>Ability to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ii. Describe the intent and requirements of the <a href="#">MSC Fisheries Standard</a>.</li> <li>i. Score a fishery using the default assessment tree.</li> <li>ii. Describe how conditions are set and monitored.</li> </ul>
<b>Verification mechanisms</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Examination pass</li> <li>• CAB records</li> </ul>

## PC1.4 Fishery team qualification and competency criteria ▢

PC1.4.1 The CAB shall ensure that the fishery team collectively meets the qualification and competency criteria listed in Table PC3.

**Table PC3: Fishery team qualification and competency criteria**

<b>1. Fish stock assessment <span style="float: right;">▢</span></b>
<b>Qualifications</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. 3-years' or more experience of applying relevant stock assessment techniques being used by the fishery under assessment, or</li> <li>b. Primary authorship of 2 peer-reviewed stock assessments of a type used by the fishery under assessment.</li> </ul>
<b>Competencies</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Ability to conduct a stock assessment using stock assessment techniques relevant to the fishery.</li> </ul>
<b>Verification mechanisms</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CV with full publication list</li> <li>• Employer's reference letter</li> <li>• CAB witness audits</li> </ul>
<b>2. Fish stock biology/ecology <span style="float: right;">▢</span></b>
<b>Qualifications</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. 3-years' or more experience working with the biology and population dynamics of the target species or species with similar biology.</li> </ul>
<b>Competencies</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Can demonstrate knowledge of, and ability to interpret, scientific information relating to the biological processes of the target species, or species with similar population dynamics.</li> </ul>
<b>Verification mechanism</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CV with full publication list</li> <li>• Employer's reference letter</li> <li>• CAB witness audits</li> </ul>
<b>3. Fishing impacts on aquatic ecosystems</b>
<b>Qualifications</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. 3-years' or more experience in research into, policy analysis for, or management of, the impact of fisheries on aquatic ecosystems, including at least 2 of the following topics:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Bycatch</li> <li>ii. Endangered, Threatened, or Protected (ETP) and Out-of-Scope (OOS) species</li> <li>iii. Habitats</li> <li>iv. Ecosystem interactions</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

**1. Fish stock assessment** 

**Competencies**

- v. Can demonstrate knowledge of, and ability to interpret, scientific data relating to the impact of fisheries on at least 2 of the topics in 3.a.i–iv above.

**Verification mechanisms**

- CV
- Employer’s reference letter
- Witness or office audits by an MSC-appointed accreditation body
- CAB witness audits

**4. Fishery management and operations**

**Qualifications**

- a. 3-years’ or more experience as a practising fishery manager and/or fishery/policy analyst/consultant.

**Competencies**

Ability to:

- i. Identify likely problems for a fishery under Principle 1 and Principle 2 that would arise from poor management.
- ii. Demonstrate a good understanding of the types of management system(s) and laws applicable to the fishery under assessment.

**Verification mechanisms**

- CV with full publication list
- Employer’s reference letter
- Witness or office audits by an MSC-appointed accreditation body
- CAB witness audits

**5. Current knowledge of the country, language and local fishery context** 

**Qualifications**

- a. Knowledge of a common language spoken by clients and stakeholders, and 1 of the following:
  - i. 2-years’ fishery work experience in the country or in a relevant fishery in the last 15 years.
  - ii. 2 assignments in the country or region in which the fishery under assessment is based in the last 10 years.
  - iii. Primary authorship of at least 1 published paper in a journal or grey literature in the last 5 years on a fishery issue in the country or region in which the fishery under assessment is based.

**Competencies**

Ability to:

- i. Communicate effectively with stakeholders in the country in a common language.
- ii. Explain the geographical, cultural, and ecological context of the fishery under assessment.

**Verification mechanisms**

**1. Fish stock assessment**

- iii. CV
- iv. Employer's reference letter
- v. Journal extracts
- vi. Witness or office audits by an MSC-appointed accreditation body
- vii. CAB witness audits

**6. Understanding of the Chain of Custody Standard and Chain of Custody Certification Requirements**

**Qualifications**

Pass the MSC's Traceability training module every 5 years.

- b. Pass new versions of the training when new traceability requirements are published prior to undertaking assessments against the new requirements.
- c. Review any updates to the traceability requirements at least annually.

**Competencies**

- i. Ability to explain the elements of traceability that are relevant to fishery assessments.

**Verification mechanisms**

- Examination pass
- CAB records
- CAB witness audits

**7. Use of the Risk-Based Framework**

**Competencies**

Demonstrate an understanding of:

- i. When the Risk-Based Framework (RBF) can be used.
- ii. How to implement RBF components.
- iii. How to engage stakeholders effectively when the RBF is used.
- iv. How Performance Indicators are scored when the RBF is used.
- v. The reporting of the RBF process and outcomes.

**Verification mechanisms**

- Examination pass
- CAB witness audits

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End of Annex PC

## Annex PD: Scope extensions – normative

### Scope extensions – normative

#### Scope

The requirements of this annex shall apply to all scope extensions for the purpose of extending an existing fishery certificate.

If the Conformity Assessment Body (CAB) determines in its review of the proposed Unit of Assessment (UoA) that additional assessment steps or Performance Indicator (PI) rescoring are necessary, the CAB shall conduct these in addition to the requirements in this annex. ▣

#### Assessment process

The CAB shall upload an announcement and Announcement Comment Draft Report to the MSC database for publication on the MSC website, announcing its intent to conduct a scope extension assessment.

The CAB shall follow 7.10.2 and 7.10.3.

The CAB shall include the following additional information in the announcement:

A gap analysis, described in 7.27.5, and justifications for the outcomes. ▣

The assessment components held in common between the two fisheries.

The assessment components that will be assessed in the scope extension.

Justification confirming whether there are any potential implications for other PIs.

The CAB shall follow Section 7.13 except for 7.13.1.1.

The CAB shall include in the scope extension assessment at least the following steps:

The CAB shall announce at least 1 team member who meets:

The criteria in Table PC2.

The criteria in Table PC3 rows 1–4 appropriate to the assessment components to be assessed.

The CAB shall conduct the scope extension either during an on-site assessment or during a regular on-site surveillance audit.

The CAB shall inform stakeholders and the MSC, specifically identifying that the scope of the assessment or regular surveillance audit will include a scope extension of the certificate to include another UoA.

The CAB shall identify in the notification which assessment components will be assessed in the scope extension.

The CAB shall evaluate the assessment components using all relevant requirements in the [MSC Fisheries Standard](#) and following the process as described in Sections 7.15, 7.16 and 7.17.

If the stock under assessment overlaps with another UoA(s), the CAB shall follow the harmonisation steps as per Annex PB.

If there are any changes in the other assessment components, the CAB shall rescore the relevant PIs. ▣

The CAB shall conduct the scope extension assessment in compliance with timelines as set out in 7.11.1 and 7.22.1.

## Reporting

The CAB shall produce the following reports using the appropriate templates:

- Announcement Comment Draft Report.
- Client and Peer Review Draft Report.
- Public Comment Draft Report.
- Final Draft Report.
- Public Certification Report.

The CAB shall follow requirements in Sections 7.8, 7.12, and 7.19–7.24.

If the scope extension assessment site visit is taking place at the same time as an on-site surveillance audit of the existing Units of Certification (UoCs), the CAB shall produce a separate report for the scope extension assessment as per Sections 7.19–7.24.

The CAB may populate sections of the '[MSC Reporting Template](#)' using the information from the Public Certification Report for the existing UoC(s).

There shall be at least 1 peer reviewer for the scope extension.

The CAB shall follow all other requirements for peer review in 7.19.3–7.19.5 and 7.20.10.

## Certification decision and certificate issue

The CAB shall make a determination regarding the scope extension assessment outcome and inform stakeholders of the Final Draft Report.

The CAB shall follow the [MSC Disputes Process](#).

If the CAB determines that the scores from the assessed PIs in combination with the scores obtained for the commonly held components with the existing UoC(s) meet the requirements for certification, the CAB shall:

- a. Include the new UoC within the scope of the existing valid fishery certificate.
- b. Follow the requirements on certification decision and certification issue as per Section 7.25.

If the CAB determines that the new UoA has not met the requirements for certification, the CAB shall report this in the Final Draft Report and Public Certification Report.

The CAB shall not make changes to the existing certificate's scope, which shall remain valid.

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End of Annex PD

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## Annex PE: Transition assessments – normative

### PE1 Transition assessments – normative

#### PE1.1 Scope

PE1.1.1 The Conformity Assessment Body (CAB) shall apply the requirements of this annex to all transition assessments for the purpose of assessing Units of Certification (UoCs) against the [MSC Fisheries Standard v3.1](#).

PE1.1.1.1 In a transition assessment, the CAB shall assess the Principle Indicators (PIs) marked with 'Y' in column G of [Change Tracker Report](#) against [MSC Fisheries Standard v3.1](#). ▣

PE1.1.2 The CAB shall only conduct a transition assessment on a certificate holder of a valid MSC fishery certificate. ▣

#### PE1.2 Assessment process

PE1.2.1 The CAB shall upload an announcement and Announcement Comment Draft Report to the MSC database for publication on the MSC website, announcing its intent to conduct a transition assessment.

PE1.2.1.1 The CAB shall ensure that the Announcement Comment Draft Report is open to stakeholder input for 60 days.

PE1.2.1.2 The CAB shall follow 7.10.2.

PE1.2.1.3 In the announcement, the CAB shall confirm whether there are any potential implications for PIs not marked with 'Y' in column G of [Change Tracker Report](#).

PE1.2.2 If the CAB proposes to use the Risk-Based Framework (RBF), the CAB shall follow 7.10.3.

PE1.2.3 The CAB shall form an assessment team as per Section 7.6.

PE1.2.3.1 The team member shall also meet the criteria in Table PC3 rows 1–4 appropriate to the assessment components to be assessed.

PE1.2.4 The CAB shall conduct the transition assessment on site.

PE1.2.4.1 The CAB should coordinate the on-site transition assessment with any other on-site activities.

PE1.2.5 The CAB shall assess the PIs marked with 'Y' in column G of [Change Tracker Report](#) against [MSC Fisheries Standard v3.1](#) as per Sections 7.15, 7.16 and 7.17.

PE1.2.5.1 If the stock under assessment overlaps with one or more Units of Assessment (UoA), the CAB shall conduct harmonisation as per Annex PB.

PE1.2.5.2 If there are any implications for PIs identified at PE1.2.1.3, the CAB shall assess the relevant PIs against [MSC Fisheries Standard v3.1](#).

PE1.2.5.3 If new conditions and milestones are set as part of a transition assessment, the CAB may set condition timeframes that carry over into the next certificate. ▣

PE1.2.5.4 If there are any open conditions, the CAB shall apply 7.29.16.1 to determine the adequacy of progress against those conditions and milestones.

a. If the CAB concludes that the client has made inadequate progress, the CAB shall withdraw the UoA from transition assessment. ▣

PE1.2.5.5 If an open condition is written against a PI in an assessment tree that differs from that in the transition assessment tree, the CAB shall consider whether the condition as originally drafted is appropriate to deliver the SG80 outcome for the PI, or the equivalent PI, in the transition assessment tree. ▣

- a. If the condition is appropriate to deliver the SG80 outcome in the transition assessment tree, the CAB shall evaluate progress against the conditions according to PE1.2.5.4.
  - b. If the condition is not appropriate to deliver the SG80 outcome in the transition assessment tree, the CAB shall consider what action is needed to deliver the outcome required at SG80 level and evaluate whether this outcome has been achieved.
    - i. If the SG80 outcome has not been achieved, the CAB shall rewrite the condition against the transition assessment tree, as per 7.16.1.
    - ii. If the SG80 outcome has been achieved, or if achievement of the condition would not affect the score of any PI that would otherwise score less than 80 in the transition assessment tree, the CAB shall apply 7.29.16.3 to close the condition.
- PE1.2.5.6 The CAB shall clearly identify all open conditions in the transition assessment Announcement Comment Draft Report.
- a. The CAB shall clearly identify if an open condition will be closed during the transition assessment.
  - b. The CAB shall outline how and when the condition will be closed during the transition assessment.
- PE1.2.5.7 The CAB shall include its consideration of the issues above, as well as any justification for decisions made relating to these issues, in [the 'MSC Reporting Template'](#).
- PE1.2.5.8 The CAB shall clearly identify related conditions that are set during a transition assessment and include a justification for each. ■
- PE1.2.6 The CAB shall complete the transition assessment in compliance with timelines set out in 7.11.1 and 7.22.1.

### PE1.3 Reporting

- PE1.3.1 The CAB shall produce the following reports using the appropriate templates and follow procedures in Sections 7.8, 7.12, and 7.19–7.24:
- a. Announcement Comment Draft Report.
  - b. Client and Peer Review Draft Report.
  - c. Public Comment Draft Report.
  - d. Final Draft Report.
  - e. Public Certification Report.
- PE1.3.2 Where appropriate, the CAB shall populate sections of the ['MSC Reporting Template'](#) from the previous Public Certification Report.
- PE1.3.3 The CAB shall follow all other requirements for peer review in Section 7.12, 7.19.3–7.19.5, and 7.20.10.

### PE1.4 Certification decision and certificate issue

- PE1.4.1 The CAB shall make a determination regarding the transition assessment outcome and inform stakeholders in the Final Draft Report.
- PE1.4.2 The CAB shall follow the [MSC Disputes Process](#).
- PE1.4.3 If the determination is that the UoC has met the requirements of the [MSC Fisheries Standard v3.1](#), the CAB shall:
- a. Report this decision in the Final Draft Report and Public Certification Report.



- b. Set the duration of the certificate for the transition assessment for only as long as the existing fishery certificate.

PE1.4.4 If the determination is that the UoC has not met the requirements of the [MSC Fisheries Standard v3.1](#), the CAB shall:

- a. Report this decision in the Final Draft Report and Public Certification Report.
- b. If the existing certificate against a previous version of the [MSC Fisheries Standard v3.1](#) expires after 1 November 2030, the CAB shall update the certificate by setting its new expiry date as 1 November 2030.
  - i. The CAB shall make no other changes to the existing certificate's scope.
- c. Upload a copy of the updated fishery certificate(s) to the MSC database for publication on the MSC website.
- d. Upload a copy of the updated certificate(s) to the MSC Database within 10 days of the date that the Public Certification Report was published on the MSC website.

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End of Annex PE

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End of Fisheries Certification Process

# MSC Guidance to the Fisheries Certification Process



**Version 3.1, 22 July 2024**

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The MSC prohibits any modification of part or all of the contents in any form.

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## Responsibility for the MSC Guidance to the Fisheries Certification Process

The Marine Stewardship Council is responsible for the MSC Guidance to the Fisheries Certification Process.

Readers should verify that they are using the latest copy of this and other documents. Updated documents, together with a master list of all available MSC documents, can be found on the MSC website ([msc.org](https://www.msc.org)).

### Versions published


Version no.	Date	Description of amendment
2.0	1 October 2014	New document released as part of the Fisheries Standard Review completed in 2014.
2.1	31 August 2018	Version released incorporating guidance to support changes to the fisheries assessment process, including streamlining, harmonisation, and labour policy development topics.
2.2	25 March 2020	Version issued incorporating guidance to support changes to the confirmation of scope process, defining the Unit of Assessment (UoA) and Unit of Certification (UoC), conditions, and the expedited audit process. Minor edits and clarifications were also incorporated.
2.3	26 October 2022	Version issued incorporating guidance to support changes to: harmonisation, stakeholder input, traceability.  Minor edits and clarifications were also incorporated.
3.0	26 October 2022	Version issued incorporating guidance to support changes to the assessment process related to the release of v3.0 of the MSC Fisheries Standard, removal of the Risk-Based Framework, harmonisation, stakeholder input, and traceability.
3.1	22 July 2024	Version issued incorporating changes related to the amended Fisheries Standard v3.1.


## Introduction to this document

The MSC Guidance to the MSC Fisheries Certification Process (GFCP) is provided to help conformity assessment bodies (CABs) interpret the MSC Fisheries Certification Process (FCP).

The headings and numbering in the GFCP, when included, match those in the FCP exactly, with numbers prefaced with the letter “G” to indicate guidance.

The MSC recommends that CABs read the FCP in conjunction with the GFCP. Text in the FCP is not repeated in the GFCP.

Where guidance is provided that generally relates to the subject of a section, or relates to the content of a specific clause, this icon  appears at the end of the section title or clause in the FCP. These icons provide hyperlinks to the related guidance section in the GFCP.

Within the GFCP, this icon  provides a hyperlink back to the corresponding section or clause in the FCP.

## Auditability of the Guidance to the MSC Fisheries Certification Process

The guidance in the GFCP is not directly auditable.

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## The MSC Guidance to the Fisheries Certification Process

### Guidance to implementation timeframes ▲

The Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) does not expect the Conformity Assessment Body (CAB) to change between versions of the MCS Fisheries Certification Process (FCP) during any assessment or audit process.

## G4 General requirements

### G4.2 Consultation requirements ▲

Stakeholder consultation is a critical component of the MSC fisheries assessment process, as:

- A robust stakeholder consultation process is fundamental to conducting a high-quality assessment.
- Stakeholder input provides important information to assessment team members and the CAB.
- Stakeholder input contributes significantly to the credibility and outcome of the assessment process.

The MSC's intent for stakeholder consultation throughout the FCP is to ensure:

- Early identification of relevant stakeholders, each of whom are given adequate opportunity to provide their views during relevant stages of the assessment.
- Issues raised by stakeholders are acknowledged and reported as early in the assessment process as possible to provide maximum opportunity for resolution.
- Comments from stakeholders are targeted and relevant to each assessment.
- Responses from the CAB are presented in a way that makes it easy to see how, where, and why the comments have (or have not) been considered.

### Awareness of cultural norms and technical capacity of stakeholders

Different consultation mechanisms may be best for different stakeholders. To ensure stakeholders are provided adequate opportunity to comment on the assessment, the stakeholder consultation process should be designed and carried out in a way that is culturally and technically appropriate for each stakeholder. This may inform how stakeholders are consulted.

Awareness of cultural norms and expectations and the technological capabilities of those to be consulted will contribute to the design and implementation of an appropriate and successful consultation process. For example, there may be specific acceptable channels through which to approach community or tribal leaders, or elected officials. Ignorance or insensitivity regarding these factors, even though unintended, may cause embarrassment or offence to the parties, the CAB, and/or the MSC, and may seriously undermine efforts to obtain useful input.

It is important to understand the technical capacity of individuals or organisations, particularly regarding communications mechanisms such as email, telephones, and videoconferencing. For example, in some circumstances it may be inappropriate to require written input or refer someone to a website for information. In some situations, communication services may be unreliable, or fishers may be at sea for extended periods and unable to communicate promptly. It is also important to understand and consider cultural sensitivities when contacting and planning meetings with different stakeholders.

### Contacting stakeholders

Throughout the FCP, where there is a requirement that stakeholders are contacted, neither the uploading of a document for publication on the MSC website nor the inclusion of a notification in the MSC Fisheries Updates email should be viewed as a substitute for the CAB directly contacting a stakeholder.

#### G4.2.1.1 Identifying stakeholders ▲

The MSC takes an inclusive approach when considering the definition of a stakeholder. A stakeholder is a group or individual who may affect or be affected by the outcome of an MSC fisheries assessment. Stakeholder groups may vary from one assessment to another, but will generally fall under these 2 categories:



1. Organisations or individuals who can provide information that is relevant to the assessment.
2. Organisations or individuals who may be affected by the outcome of an assessment.
  - This includes individuals and organisations that have expressed a particular interest in the assessment, the fishery being considered for certification, or in other resources potentially affected by the fishery.

The only exception to this in MSC fishery assessments is that the organisation seeking certification is considered the client, rather than a stakeholder. The client provides information and input into the assessment in other ways (for example, via the ['MSC Client Document Checklist'](#)).

Typical stakeholders may include:

- Government agencies (with direct fishery management, research responsibility, or responsibility for related resources or research).
- Non-governmental conservation or other public interest organisations (these may be local, regional, national, and/or international organisations).
- Academic researchers.
- Adjacent or potentially affected fisheries (other than the client fishery) or other potentially affected commercial interests (e.g. the post-harvest sector).
- Community or tribal entities or individuals.

The team should compile a list of potential stakeholders at the start of the assessment or surveillance process. The approach to identifying stakeholders will differ from one assessment or audit to another. As a starting point, the following steps can be taken:

- If a pre-assessment was undertaken, any stakeholders identified in the pre-assessment process should be included on the stakeholder list.
- The CAB should ask the client for a list of potential stakeholders. The client will typically have a good idea of the primary parties who have shown interest in the fishery at the local, regional, national and/or international levels. The client is also a good first source of information about any cultural or political issues or sensitivities that should be considered when planning stakeholder consultation. To ensure the client does not withhold information, either intentionally or unintentionally, the CAB should inform the client about:
  - Who can be considered a stakeholder in the context of an MSC fishery assessment.
  - The importance of engaging stakeholders, including those who may be critical of the fishery.
  - The risk of objections if stakeholders are not provided with adequate opportunity to comment during the early stages of an assessment.
- The CAB should make use of organisational knowledge, including the experience of their assessors, when identifying stakeholders (for example, by considering the stakeholders who expressed interest in similar or nearby assessments).
- The CAB may contact the MSC to seek information about stakeholders to consider including on the initial contact list. MSC regional staff are often knowledgeable about the stakeholders interested in certain fisheries and may be able to provide information about national and international interest groups (particularly industry, conservation, government entities, academics, and technical experts) who have a history of interest in the fishery in question or a similar one, or in issues that could emerge in the fishery under examination. The MSC cannot, however, provide an exhaustive list of stakeholders for use in the assessment.

Other sources of information that could inform stakeholder lists may include coverage of the fishery or specific fishery issues in the media, interest group publications, and the public record.

Prior to the site visit being announced, the CAB should contact the identified stakeholders to coordinate a date for the site visit that ensures the highest level of attendance. There may be some instances where identified stakeholders cannot be engaged ahead of announcing the full assessment; in such instances, the CAB may choose to postpone the announcement of the site visit date until these stakeholders have been engaged in the process.

## G4.2.2 Consultation announcements ▲

Consultation announcements should be sent at the start of each consultation period. Consultation periods include the following:

- Announcement of a fishery assessment or reassessment.
- Announcement of use of the Risk-Based Framework (RBF).
- Announcement of the Public Comment Draft Report.
- Announcement of the Final Draft Report.
- Surveillance audit announcement.
- Scope extension announcement.

“Relevant stakeholders” should be taken to mean all identified stakeholders, except for during consultation on the Public Comment Draft Report and Final Draft Report, at which stage only registered stakeholders should be contacted.

As part of consultation announcements, CABs can ask stakeholders contacted to confirm the following, as appropriate to the consultation period:

- Whether they are interested in providing input on the report or attending the site visit.
- If an organisation is identified, who the most appropriate contact in the organisation is for matters relating to the fishery assessment or audit.
- If an individual representing an organisation has been contacted, that the individual is the most appropriate person in the organisation to be contacted.
- If they are aware of any other stakeholders who should be contacted.

For announcements of fishery assessments or reassessments, stakeholders should be informed that, to engage with the assessment, they must provide comments on the Announcement Comment Draft Report or attend the site visit.

## G4.2.3–4 MSC Templates for Stakeholder Input into Fishery Assessments ▲

The main purpose of the MSC stakeholder input templates is to enable interested parties to easily track how the team considers input provided by stakeholders and incorporates the input into assessments. This ensures that stakeholder input and CAB responses are reported transparently.

## G4.2.8 Registering stakeholders ▲

Stakeholders should be considered “registered” in an assessment if they provide written input on the Announcement Comment Draft Report or provide written or verbal input at the site visit for the ongoing assessment. If stakeholders do not participate during the site visit or comment on the Announcement Comment Draft Report, they cannot comment during later stages of the assessment. At each surveillance audit, and at the start of each reassessment:

- The full list of stakeholders should be revisited.
- Any new stakeholders should be added.
- All stakeholders should be contacted again and offered the opportunity to provide input.

The CAB is encouraged to have stakeholder management systems in place to ensure the correct stakeholders are contacted and provided with adequate opportunity to comment during each part of a fishery assessment. These management systems may go above and beyond the requirements and guidance set out in the FCP and the Guidance to the FCP (GFCP).

If stakeholders do not wish to actively engage with a fishery assessment but would like to be kept updated about progress on the assessment, the CAB is encouraged to support this. Stakeholders can sign up for MSC Fisheries Update emails to keep track of assessments and can also keep up to date with progress via the [MSC Track a Fishery](#) website.

## G4.4 Access to information

### G4.4.1 Key information ▲

The CAB should interpret “key information” to mean information that is essential for a stakeholder to have access to so that they are able to properly review the logic that the team has used in scoring rationales.

For information that is available online, the CAB should provide a full reference to make it easy for stakeholders to find this information. Where possible, the CAB should include a hyperlink, and include additional details that can be used to find the information if the hyperlink breaks.

If peer-reviewed literature that is not open access is cited within a public assessment report, the CAB should provide the details required for a stakeholder to find and gain access to the peer-reviewed literature. However, the CAB is not expected to provide this access.

#### G4.4.1.1 Unpublished information ▲

The CAB can use the ‘Supporting Information’ annex within the reporting templates to make available information that is unpublished or not online. Alternatively, the CAB may make the information available by sharing it directly with stakeholders and the Peer Review College on request.

## G7 Process requirements

### G7.1.7 Communication CAB-client ▲

The CAB should inform the client that failure to prepare properly – if the relevant information is not available, or if critical issues have not been addressed – might mean that the Unit of Assessment (UOA) could fail assessment.

### G7.1.8 Information collection related to MSC pre-assessments ▲

The information provided may be aggregated and publicly reported on the MSC website to show regional pre-assessment activities without revealing either the CAB or client identities or other specific fishery details.

This reporting allows the MSC to monitor the number of fisheries that are engaging with the MSC process in different regions of the world and assess the proportions of those fisheries that subsequently enter (as opposed to those who do not enter) full assessment. The example report (Table G1) provides information from the same CAB for a later year and includes a status update for a previously reported pre-assessment.

**Table G1: Example report (for a year after the first submission, including updates for the previous year where the status is now known or revised)**

Conformity Assessment Body (name)		ABC Certification Ltd							
Reporting period (year ending 31 March)	Fishery Species	Stock (location)	Gear type(s)	Client (organisation name)	Fishery scale	Fishery evaluation at time of pre-assessment		Actions since pre-assessment	
						Status (1, 2, or 3)	Justification for assigned status	Status (1, 2, 3, 4, or 5)	Notes
2012	Brown trout ( <i>Salmo. trutta</i> )	Deep Lake, Scotland	Gill net	BT Fishing Ltd	Small scale	3		1	Now in preparation for submission of announcement documents
2012	Herring ( <i>Clupea harengus</i> )	Irish Sea	Gill net	New Fishing Ltd	Semi-industrial	2	Expected fail in Principle 3 due to lack of written research plan and other issues	3	Working on research plan, expect to enter full assessment when complete
Include rows below to update information on fisheries included in previous annual reports where the status was 'not known' at the time of first reporting, or where the status has since changed									
2011	Lobster ( <i>Homarus gammarus</i> )	Isle of Skye, UK	Pot	DEF Fishing Ltd	Small scale	1	Expected fail on Principle 1 due to lack of existing harvest control rules	2	Entered assessment with CAB XYZ Ltd. Announced September 2011

### G7.3 The MSC Client Document Checklist ▲

The intent of the 'MSC Client Document Checklist' is to ensure that all available information needed to complete the Announcement Comment Draft Report has been collated.

### G7.4 Confirmation that the UoA is within scope of the MSC Fisheries Standard ▲

In the context of the [MSC Fisheries Standard 1.1.5](#) and [1.1.6](#), if a fishery is not vessel-based, the term "vessel" should be interpreted as "individual operators".

#### G7.4.7 CAB process if a vessel is excluded ▲

Figure G1 outlines the process for the CAB to follow if the client (or client groups) informs the CAB that a vessel has been removed in relation to the [MSC Fisheries Standard 1.1.5.1](#) or [1.1.6.1](#). Examples in Figure G1 are for illustrative purposes only.

If a vessel has been excluded or removed from a Unit of Certification (UoC) due to a scope issue related to the [MSC Fisheries Standard 1.1.5](#) and [1.1.6](#), that vessel may request to re-enter the UoC once it can demonstrate that 2 years have passed since its exclusion or removal. In this instance, the CAB should follow the requirements in Section 7.27.

In cases where fishing operations are not vessel based, the requirement should be interpreted to mean the exclusion of the individual fishing operator that undertook a serious crime or a shark finning offence.

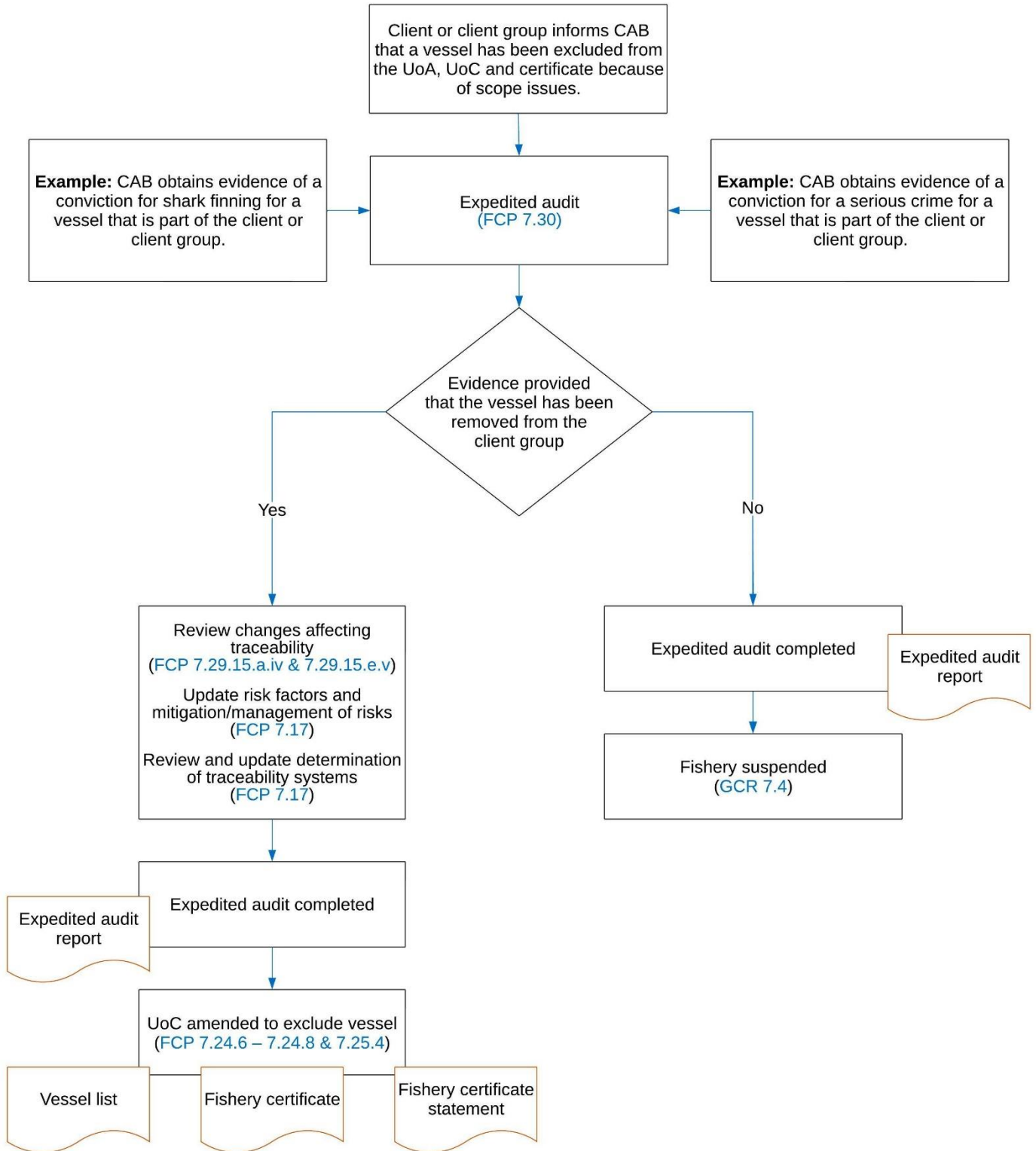


Figure G1: The process the CAB should follow when the client or client groups inform the CAB that a vessel has been removed from the UoA, UoC, and certificate in relation to the [MSC Fisheries Standard 1.1.5.1](#) or [1.1.6.1](#).

## G7.5 Scope of assessment: defining the Unit of Assessment and Unit of Certification ▲

MSC certification is specific to the fishery holding the certificate, defined as the Unit of Certification (UoC). The CAB may choose to assess a wider unit as the Unit of Assessment (UoA), to which the certificate may be extended under some circumstances. Both the UoC and UoA need to be defined at the start of assessment.

The MSC allows parts of a fishery (i.e. a combination of stock(s)/gear(s)/vessel(s)) to be certified even if the rest of the fishery is not certified.

### G7.5.2–3 Defining the UoA/UoC ▲

The UoC (i.e. the unit entitled to an MSC certificate) is defined as follows:

*“The target stock or stocks (= biologically distinct unit(s)) combined with the fishing gear and vessel type(s) pursuing that stock.”*

At its simplest, a single vessel with a single gear could be the UoC, although it is more likely that a UoC would comprise a number of vessels within the same fishery.

The UoA defines the full scope of what is being assessed and is therefore equal to or larger than the UoC. If it is larger, it will include other eligible fishers. Such other eligible fishers exist in cases where a client enters assessment with the aim of initially certifying only part of a fishery (e.g. vessels owned by a single entity), but wishes to have the possibility of expanding the UoC later by the mechanism of certificate sharing.

If the number of fishers within the UoA is greater than the number within the UoC, there are other eligible fishers. If there is any difference between the UoC and UoA, the CAB must communicate this clearly to the MSC and other stakeholders.

Sufficient information should be provided to fully define the scope of the UoA that is to be assessed. In some fisheries, for example, further information may be given on the specific fishing seasons and/or areas that are included. Details could also be provided on which fishing “fleets” are covered, or licence categories, as used in the management of the UoA. “Groups” of vessels could also be identified that are not full fleets, but still have some special characteristics, such as membership of an association, or a binding commitment to a code of conduct. In cases where an assessment is intended to cover all fishing activities on a stock within the national waters of a state, there may be no need to individually specify all the different “fleets” or varieties of vessels that are covered (although the diversity of such vessels and gears should then be considered in scoring). In some cases, individual vessels or “groups” of vessels owned by a particular client may also be named, if the scope of the assessment is limited to only these vessels.

In defining a UoA/UoC, stocks could be different species, or different “more or less isolated and self-sustaining” groups within a species. UoAs/UoCs are usually defined for a single species (or stock) and the gear type(s) used to catch that species. The client may prefer more than 1 species, stock, or gear type to be included in a UoA/UoC. The advantages of joint scoring in these cases (e.g. cost savings and simpler tracking in the Chain of Custody (CoC)) may outweigh the risk that the failure of one element could result in the failure of the whole UoA.

### G7.5.2.b and G7.5.3.b Defining gear type(s) used in the UoAs/UoCs ▲

“Fishing gear” is defined as the tool with which living aquatic resources are captured. For MSC assessments, gear type is distinguished based on the physical configuration, rather than how the gear is deployed. For example, a beam trawl with sumwing can be classified as a different gear type than a beam trawl with tickler chains, because these have different configurations – in this instance, different accessory equipment. However, beam trawling on sandy bottom and beam trawling on rocky substrate would not constitute the use of different gears and both activities are required to be included in a single UoA.

### Single UoA/UoC with multiple gears



Where there are discrete variations in the type of gear used (such as 2 different mesh sizes used in a standard type of trawl gear), the CAB may include these within a single UoA. The CAB should clearly describe the gears and the variations, and consider these in the assessment and scoring (with any conditions included as normal for <80 scores). If the UoA is certified, the CAB should monitor the use of each gear at surveillance to ensure that the effort applied to each has not changed to the extent that the impact of the UoA has also changed; if this occurs, the CAB should update the scoring. The client and the CAB should note that when 2 or more gear types are scored together, the lower score will determine the result. Decisions on the definition of the UoA should thus reflect the benefits of joint scoring against the risk of an individual analysis on a gear type resulting in a fail for all the others in the UoA.

### Single UoA/UoC with single gear

In cases where the UoA/UoC includes a single gear type, the CAB should consider whether there are any variations in use. If so, the CAB should:

- Describe these variations and any potential differences in impact on Principle 2 components.
- Monitor any changes in use at surveillance to ensure the full impact of the variations are considered in scoring.

Examples include, but are not limited to, variations in how the gear is deployed, or variations in type of bait used.

The UoA/UoC must include all activities undertaken for the specified gear. For example, in a UoA where the gear type is purse seine, it may be used in multiple ways, such as setting on a FAD or on a free-school of fish. If the UoA employs multiple set-types, all set-types must be included in the UoA assessment of each gear type.

Such a flexible approach is allowed in order to minimise the complexity of assessment reports as far as possible while ensuring that all fishing impacts for the combined gear types/variations are fully assessed.

### Trading of catch quota between vessels

In cases where catch quotas for certified fish stocks are traded between vessels, fleets, or nations, such catches should be included within the UoA/UoC only if the recipient of the quota is:

- Already explicitly included within the UoA/UoC and/or recognised as a member of the client group, or
- Itself certified and catches that fish in conformity with its own UoA/UoC.

Such trading of catch quota does not automatically grant the right to enter catches into MSC certified CoCs, although this may be possible in the above circumstances.

The team should assess the impacts of fishing by any quota recipients consistent with the normal requirement that the Principle 1 assessment covers all impacts on the stock. Any changes in such access arrangements in an existing certified UoA should be considered during surveillance audits.

### Assessment of metapopulations within the UoA/UoC

The MSC requires that fishing activity on Principle 1 species is assessed at a level that is sustainable for the stock. However, the application of the “stock” concept may vary depending on the knowledge available and complexity in management<sup>1</sup>.

Generally, from the fisheries management point of view, a “unit stock” can be defined as a group of fish that can be treated as a stock and managed as an independent unit, as long as the results of the

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<sup>1</sup> Maguire, J.-J.; Sissenwine, M.; Csirke, J.; Grainger, R.; Garcia, S. (2006). The state of world highly migratory, straddling and other high seas fishery resources and associated species. FAO Fisheries Technical Paper. No. 495. Rome: FAO, 84pp.



assessment and the impact of management measures do not differ significantly from what they would be in the case of a truly independent stock<sup>2</sup>.

In some cases, stocks may be structured as “metapopulations” – systems in which local populations (= sub-populations) inhabit discrete habitat patches, and inter-patch dispersal is neither so low as to negate significant demographic connectivity, nor so high as to eliminate any independence of local population (LP) dynamics<sup>3</sup>.

In these cases, the team should consider the connectivity between sub-populations of the metapopulation that defines the underlying source-sink dynamics, and thereby clearly define the actual unit stock that is to be assessed against Principle 1.

Connectivity patterns range from a well-mixed larval pool (maximal connectivity) at one extreme to a collection of closed self-sustaining populations (minimal connectivity) at the other. However, most situations are intermediate to these two extremes. Connectivity is rarely symmetrical, and larval flows between 2 subpopulations will nearly always be stronger in 1 direction with maximum asymmetry found in non-reproductive pseudo-populations (absolute sinks). Source-sink models describe a situation where larvae or adults from source locations supplement less-productive sink areas. In a sink location, reproduction is insufficient to balance local mortality, and the LP therefore persists only because it receives immigration from more-productive sources. Source locations are considered net exporters of individuals whereas sinks are net importers of individuals.

The degree of self-recruitment and connectivity among sub-populations dictates the specific management required to achieve a sustainable harvest. Where management recognises a metapopulation, it may need to ensure that fishing effort and catches consider the abundance or biomass in each local population.

In cases where fisheries are targeting a mixture of LPs that cannot be clearly separated, a practical management approach may be to consider the whole metapopulation as the unit stock. In this case, more precautionary reference points or other adjustments to the harvest strategy may be needed to allow for uncertainties in the stock structure. However, where appropriate and justified, 1 or more LPs can also be designated as the unit stock(s) on which the outcome and harvest strategy components are to be assessed.

The team should be alert to the special issues of metapopulation in assessing a UoA. At the time of reporting on the fishery assessment, the team should include detailed information in the assessment report, clarifying whether the unit stock is based on 1 or more LPs or on a metapopulation as a whole. Details should be provided on the appropriateness of the level of assessment and management chosen, explaining:

- In the case that management is based on the whole metapopulation, how it is expected to avoid local depletion.
- If based on 1 or more local populations:
  - Whether these are believed to be sources or sinks.
  - The relationship among subpopulations.
  - How management avoids over-exploitation within both the selected local populations and more broadly in the whole metapopulation.

Table G2 shows the level of assessment expected and considerations for scoring the stock outcome and harvest strategy components of a unit stock for a normal single population stock (case A), and for 3 different forms of metapopulations (cases B, C, and D). Teams should note that harmonisation between Principle 1 assessments would normally be expected only in cases where 2 fisheries are fully overlapping in their definition of the unit stock. Fisheries on 2 separate LPs within a wider metapopulation, for example, need not have harmonised outcomes.

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<sup>2</sup> Gulland, J.A. (1983). Fish stock assessment. A manual of basic methods. Chichester, John Wiley and Sons, FAO/Wiley series on food and agriculture. Vol. 1: 223pp.

<sup>3</sup> Sale, P.F.; Hanski, I.; Kritzer, J.P. (2006). The merging of metapopulation theory and marine ecology: establishing the historical context. In: Kritzer JP, Sale PF (Eds) Marine Metapopulations. Chapter 1. Elsevier, Amsterdam: 3–28.

**Table G2: Level of assessment expected and considerations when scoring the stock outcome and harvest strategy components of a unit stock for different forms of metapopulation**

Stock structure	Description (degree of connectivity and self-recruitment)	Implications for management of the stock (assessment of Outcome and Harvest Strategy)
<p>A. Single population</p>	<p>Completely isolated. Self-contained with no emigration or immigration of individuals from or to the stock. Occupies a well-defined spatial range and is independent of other stocks of the same species.</p>	<p>Whole population. Fishing on the population has no effect on the dynamics of neighbouring populations. Normal expectations may apply for reference points. The fishery must manage the stock above the point of recruitment impairment (PRI) to ensure recruitment is sustained.</p>
<p>B. Local population with partial isolation</p>	<p>Partially isolated and minimal connectivity. Self-sustaining. The degree of connectivity with other LPs in the metapopulation is so weak that, for management purposes, it can be considered a self-sustaining population. This may be true even if occasional larval exchanges between LPs are enough to maintain a certain degree of genetic flow and homogeneity.</p>	<p>Local population. Fishing on the local population appears to have no effect on the dynamics of neighbouring populations. Normal expectations may apply for reference points. The fishery must manage its own local unit stock above the PRI to ensure recruitment is sustained. Requires information on the biology of the species, larval dispersal, source-sink dynamics, and oceanographic conditions supporting management at a local level. Information and uncertainties related to stock structure need to be scored in Performance Indicators (PIs) 1.2.2, 1.2.3, and 1.2.4.</p>
<p>C. Local population (s) with moderate connectivity within the meta-population</p>	<p>Moderate connectivity. The degree of connectivity between LPs is enough to maintain genetic flow and some degree of homogeneity. Source-sink dynamics with variable degree of self-recruitment. Sources of recruits act as core areas in the species range where the species occurs in all years and where the typical age composition exhibits regular recruitment patterns with multiple age classes present. There may be sinks where occasional individuals or low densities usually occur and where populations typically consist of only 1 or a few age groups, often of old individuals.</p>	<p>Local population(s). Fishing on local populations affects the dynamics of neighbouring populations. Fishing and the management decision affecting upstream populations will have impacts on the components downstream. Local populations are not entirely in control of their productivity. The fishery must manage its own local unit stock above the PRI to ensure recruitment is sustained, but reference points also need to take into account connections with and dependences on neighbouring local populations. Per recruit reference points (e.g. percentage spawners per recruit) may confirm the good management of the fishery to contribute to the wider surrounding populations. Separate monitoring of absolute reference points (either of incoming recruitment or of local population levels) may also be needed to confirm that the inputs of external recruitment are being sustained. Requires information on the biology of the species, larval dispersal, source-sink dynamics, and oceanographic conditions supporting management at local level. Information and uncertainties related to stock structure need to be scored in PIs 1.2.2, 1.2.3, and 1.2.4.</p>

Stock structure	Description (degree of connectivity and self-recruitment)	Implications for management of the stock (assessment of Outcome and Harvest Strategy)
D. Local populations with maximum connectivity within the meta-population	Maximum connectivity. Metapopulation is panmictic (mating is random within the entire metapopulation). Subpopulations are arbitrary. Well-mixed larval pool.	Whole metapopulation. Fishing on local populations affects the dynamics of neighbouring populations. The fishery must manage the whole metapopulation (unit stock) above the PRI to ensure that recruitment is sustained. Special attention may be needed in setting reference points to ensure that the LP structure is not affected by fishing. Scored against the whole metapopulation. Information and uncertainties related to stock structure need to be scored in PIs 1.2.2, 1.2.3, and 1.2.4.

#### G7.5.4 Defining the UoA and UoC by subset of activities ▲

While the MSC allows a portion of the fishery to be certified, it does not allow the UoA or UoC to be defined by a subset of activities undertaken with the stock(s)/gear(s) combination. For example, if assessing a fishery using a purse seine with multiple set types such as FAD-set and free school-set, the CAB should include all set-types within the UoA and UoC.

#### G7.5.5 Definition of UoA at time of fishing ▲

The CAB should define the UoA based on the gears that are used. The CAB should not define a UoA based on the species caught as observed at the time of landing. The CAB should include in the assessment all potential impacts of the UoA from all hauls or landings that are defined as having been taken by the gear type and in the area defined in the UoA. The CAB should not define the UoA based on, for instance, a subset of hauls that are defined as targeting a Principle 1 species and for which a calculation of the proportion of the catch that includes that Principle 1 species is required.

#### G7.5.6 Geographical area of the fishery ▲

This is a description of the geographical area within which the fishery is undertaken. It should include the following:

- FAO Major Fishing Area, identified by name and two-digit code ([www.fao.org/cwp-on-fishery-statistics/handbook](http://www.fao.org/cwp-on-fishery-statistics/handbook)).
- Commonly used name for the body of water (e.g. North Sea).
- Local fisheries management area (e.g. ICES divisions VI, VII, and VIII abc).
- Stock region, which may be all or part of the biological stock unit assessed in Principle 1.

In defining the geographical area, the CAB should consider the fishery client's ability to track and trace to it, as per 7.5.10 (initial traceability risk assessment) and Section 7.17 (Determination of the traceability systems and point(s) at which fish and fish products enter further certified Chains of Custody).

#### G7.5.7 Principle 1 and Principle 2 species components ▲

The team does not need to define all P2 species within the UoA and UoC. However, the team needs to demonstrate that 7.5.7 has been applied to determine and rationalise species being assessed within Principle 1 and 2. This rationale should be presented in sections 10.1 (P1) and 10.2 (P2) respectively of the '[MSC Reporting Template](#)'.

### G7.5.8 Changes to UoC/UoA ▲

During an assessment, the CAB should limit changes to the UoA and proposed UoC to the target stocks identified for consideration under Principle 1, as per 7.15.3. The MSC recognises that stocks initially proposed as target stocks (and assessed under Principle 1) may be recategorised as in-scope species and assessed under Principle 2.

For example, a client may want to propose multiple species for consideration under Principle 1, but the CAB may not have sufficient information to confirm whether that species is best assessed under Principle 1 or Principle 2 until after the site visit. A CAB may therefore confirm the species to be assessed under Principle 1 after the site visit, to be formally confirmed within the Public Comment Draft Report, see 7.15.3.

It is not the MSC's intent that the CAB announces a provisional UoA and adds additional target stocks or gear types or makes other changes during an assessment except those in 7.15.3.

The CAB should consider whether any changes to the UoA or UoC made during an assessment will have an impact on the traceability and ability to trace and identify product to each UoC.

### G7.5.9 Withdrawing a UoA and proposed UoC during the assessment ▲

For fishery assessments with multiple UoAs and proposed UoCs, a client may decide to withdraw 1 or more UoAs and proposed UoCs during the assessment process, for example to remove a gear type.

### G7.5.10 Review of traceability factors ▲

The intent of this section is to assure that the UoCs are defined in such a way that it will be possible for the fishery client to trace and identify them, in order to be eligible to sell product as MSC certified. The CAB will consider the risks that affect this as detailed in the clause. The risk of vessels outside the UoC fishing on the same stock is relevant where this is for commercial purposes (i.e. intending to sell on this catch rather than discard it). Other risks of substitution may occur between point of harvest and point of sale to any party not covered by the fishery certificate, for example transshipment of product between a catch vessel in the UoC and another vessel, or sale via auction.

#### G7.5.10.1 Notification of obligation to meet traceability requirements ▲

Fisheries may have systems in place to manage traceability but may not be fully aware of MSC traceability requirements until later in the assessment process, particularly if the UoC does not cover the entire fishery. The intent of this requirement is to enable clear communication with the client group so that they are aware of the traceability requirements early in the assessment process. Key traceability risks can be documented in the traceability section of the '[MSC Reporting Template](#)', and the client will have more time to implement traceability solutions during the remainder of the assessment process.

### G7.5.11 Other eligible fishers and entities, and certificate sharing ▲

The MSC has the following intent regarding its certification program and certificate sharing:

- To minimise the number of overlapping assessments requiring harmonisation.
- To encourage the largest proportion of fishers to enter at the start of the full assessment process, but when only a select group of fishers within a fishery wants to undertake MSC assessment, to allow them to proceed so as not to delay certification.
- To ensure that the process is clear and transparent to interested parties.

This arrangement defines which other eligible fishers may gain access to the fishery certificate, if and when the fishery is certified.

Certificate-sharing mechanisms developed in existing MSC fisheries include a number of arrangements, such as the provision of unrestricted access to the certificate, providing that certification and surveillance costs:

- Are shared fairly and equitably with all participants.
- Are met through the payment of a landing levy or some other approach agreed within the client group, and/or
- That all product is initially sold to the certificate holder.

The MSC recognises the role of individual fishery clients in devising mechanisms that are appropriate to their circumstances. There are no formal, mandatory arrangements for the development of certificate-sharing mechanisms.

The guidance below provides suggestions rather than directions to clients and their potential partners for their use and/or inclusion in any certificate-sharing mechanisms. The CAB may wish to provide the advice in Box G1 to fisheries.

#### **Box G1: The MSC's advice on allocating costs of certificate sharing**

The MSC provides this non-binding advice to certificate holders on the sharing of certificate costs. The CAB may wish to provide this information to those involved in certificate sharing.

When a client allows access to a certificate and seeks proportional reimbursement of the initial costs paid either as a one-off payment or as an ongoing cost-sharing mechanism, this guidance suggests how these costs could be calculated. Costs may include the following:

- a) Direct costs paid to a CAB.
- b) Direct costs that the client incurs in managing or facilitating the assessment.
- c) Cost of the client's time spent managing/facilitating the assessment process.
- d) Risk premium, a maximum of 20% of the other assessment costs.

If costs additional to those identified above are included in the proposed certificate-sharing mechanism, they must be documented and justified in any and all communication about the proposed sharing mechanism.

Allowable costs would not be expected to include any grant or subsidy made to the client to cover the costs incurred during the assessment, except where a proportion of such grants or subsidies are subsequently repaid.

The direct costs and the time costs that the client incurs in managing or facilitating the assessment may either be costed directly from the client's accounts or estimated as a simple overhead rate.

Where the direct and time costs are to be estimated from the client's accounts, the CAB will make full details available to other fishers seeking to gain entry to the certificate. If audited accounts detailing these costs are required, the other eligible fishers will pay the costs incurred in conducting such audits. The cost of the client's time will be based on the earnings records for the individuals involved. The client will record and substantiate time inputs recorded.

Where the client's direct and time costs are to be estimated according to an overhead rate, this rate should not exceed 30% of the fees paid to the CAB. In this case, the following formula is suggested for calculating the overall cost to be shared:

$$(\text{Costs} \times \text{overhead}) \times \text{risk premium}$$

Where the rates for the overhead and risk premium are set at the proposed upper limits of 30% and 20%, respectively, the overall cost is calculated from the following formula:

$$((\text{Direct cost paid to the CAB less any cost paid for a consultant}) \times 1.3) \times 1.2$$

Costs (both for entry and maintenance to the certificate, including the fulfilment of conditions) would be apportioned to the new entrant(s) seeking certification in accordance to the mechanism.

Examples could include, but are not limited to, a pro rata sharing of costs based on:

- e) The number of vessels (or operators) or processing or marketing entities seeking entry as a proportion of those documented as originally included in the UoC, or
- f) The quota held by the new vessel(s) (or operators) or processing or marketing entities seeking entry, as a proportion of those documented as originally included in the UoC, or
- g) The increase in fishing power of new vessel(s) (or operators) or processing or marketing capacity seeking entry pro rata to those documented as originally included in the UoC.

If additional fishers or processing or marketing entities seek to join the certificate after an initial and successful certificate-sharing negotiation, a rebate may be due to those who joined the certificate previously. Alternatively, potential costs may be apportioned between all the fishers who are potentially eligible to share the certificate, and payments made by sub-sets of fishers only in proportion to their share of the overall costs (thus avoiding the need for rebates if other fishers join later). Such cost-sharing mechanisms will be detailed to stakeholders when an assessment is undertaken.

### G7.5.12 Inseparable or practicably inseparable stock(s) ▲

The intent of the requirements for inseparable or practicably inseparable (IPI) stocks is to:

- Create incentives to promote the improved management of non-target stock(s), for example to bring to Principle 1 level of performance or encourage adoption of a mechanism for catch separation.
- Allow a defined and limited proportion of catches of IPI stock(s) to enter further certified Chains of Custody and use the MSC ecolabel.

The requirements for IPI stock(s) acknowledge that Principle 2 catch can be practicably inseparable from the Principle 1 catch during normal fishing operations. For example, the Principle 2 catch may be from a stock of the same species, or a closely related species. As an extreme example, the Principle 2 species may only be distinguishable by the number of gill rakers or the number of rays in the caudal fin. These requirements also acknowledge that, even when the Principle 2 catch is distinguishable, it may not be commercially feasible to separate the catch (i.e. significant modification to existing harvesting and processing methods would be required).

The intent of the IPI requirements is to incentivise management of these species to Principle 1 level, or to encourage adoption of a mechanism for separation. As a result, IPI is only valid for 1 certification period, unless the proportion is <2%.

Requirements for IPI stock(s) are designed to improve consistency in the application of the MSC FCP. The requirements on IPI stock(s) vary based on the percentage in the catch:

- If the proportion of IPI catches to total target + IPI catches is less than or equal to 2%, the CAB needs to make an assessment that the UoA does not create a significant impact on the IPI stock but is not required to apply PA1.4.2. The CAB is also not required to make a further determination of status under Principle 2, although the IPI stock is effectively held to the same requirement as Principle 2 in that the UoA should not be creating a significant impact on the IPI stock.
- If the proportion is greater than 2% and less than 15%, Annex PA is to be applied in its entirety, including an assessment against Principle 2 in-scope species PIs and considering the impact of all fishing activity.
- The CAB should take into account the variability of the catch composition over the last 5 years or fishing seasons. Depending on data availability and species characteristics, the team may choose a different length of the time series, but a rationale should be provided in all cases for the method chosen. Species characteristics may include life history (e.g. longevity or generation time), time scales of production variability (e.g. decadal-scale vs. shorter time frames), and regulatory periods that affect spatial distribution of the fishing activity. There should be a good understanding of the long-term average catch composition of IPI species.

Note that the MSC restricts the application of the requirements for IPI stocks to a fishery certification to 1 certification period. At reassessment, IPI stock(s) should:

- Be separated from target stock(s), or
- The proportion of IPI should be reduced to 2%, or
- The IPI stock(s) should be assessed against Principle 1.

## G7.7 Preparing for the Announcement Comment Draft Report ▲

### G7.7.1 Fishery with enhanced stock ▲

#### Background

The intent is that management systems exist to control exploitation rates on wild stocks in order to allow for self-sustaining, locally adapted wild stocks (i.e. adequate wild stock levels that can perpetuate themselves at harvestable levels on a continuing basis, consistent with Principle 1). The management of enhancement activities related to the fishery should not prevent the ability of wild stocks to sustain themselves at their optimum levels, according to their natural habitat-related and biologically based productive capacities.

#### G7.7.1.2.b Extent of translocations ▲

For these requirements, translocation does not include the transfer of species to outside the distribution of their native range. The latter should be considered as an introduction of a species, to be considered under [MSC Fisheries Standard Section SD](#).

The extent of translocation must be considered to ensure that the fishery enhancement programs predominantly utilise stocks or populations that are native to the natural production area from which the UoA's catch originates.

The means of confirming that fish are “native” to a fishery production area (i.e. from within the “natural range”) may not be simple, except in cases where no movement occurs.

PIs may need to be developed to determine the extent of movement within a range that can be considered to have acceptably low risks. Related performance assessment will require the identification of the “natural production area” or genetic range of a stock.

Translocation of fish/shellfish in enhanced fisheries should ensure that fisheries maintain the diversity, structure, and function of the ecosystem on which they depend while minimising any adverse effects. Inadequately managed translocations of fish/shellfish between different areas may have genetic and other impacts that need to be assessed (e.g. the spread of diseases between areas, or accidental species introductions).

#### G7.7.1.2.c.i Other interventions ▲

Currently, the [MSC Fisheries Standard](#) does not cover the issues of feed augmentation and the use of medicines or other chemical compounds.

Examples of other interventions used in catch and grow (CAG) systems include:

- Fertilisation to enhance natural food availability, or
- Removal of predators or competitors, either to maximise capture or minimise post-capture mortality.

#### G7.7.1.2.d Habitat modification ▲

The cumulative impacts of multiple production operations, areas, facilities and systems within a geographical region must be considered.

For example, a small mussel rope facility may have minimal impact on the natural ecosystem's structure and function, but filling a whole bay with such structures may have much greater impacts.



Consideration is needed for those situations where an individual operation is the subject of an assessment under the MSC Program but is only 1 of several similar operations in a finite space. The assessment should consider whether the cumulative impacts of a particular production system are likely to cause serious or irreversible harm to the natural ecosystem's structure and function.

## G7.8 The Announcement Comment Draft Report ▲

The MSC's intent is that the drafting of the Announcement Comment Draft Report is a desk-based exercise using information provided in the '[MSC Client Document Checklist](#)'. However, additional resources that are readily available can also be used. For an initial assessment, information available in pre-assessments or from Fishery Improvement Projects (FIPs) may be used. For a reassessment, information in the previous Public Certification Report and surveillance audit reports may be used. The Announcement Comment Draft Report provides indicative scoring and rationales, and identifies where more information is needed.

One of the objectives of the Announcement Comment Draft Report is to assist the site visit by facilitating stakeholder input to the assessment before the site visit. The Announcement Comment Draft Report also ensures the CAB, the client, and stakeholders are better informed and prepared for the site visit.

The Announcement Comment Draft Report includes an initial review of traceability risks identified in the '[MSC Client Document Checklist](#)' stage, the proposed point of change of ownership of product to any party not covered by the fishery certificate, and the point from which subsequent CoC certification is proposed. The full review of risks and mitigation, determination on eligibility of product, and additional description of traceability is completed after, and informed by, the site visit as per Section 7.14.

### G7.8.1 Preparing the Announcement Comment Draft Report ▲

The MSC does not expect assessment teams to conduct stakeholder interviews or site visits for the purposes of completing the Announcement Comment Draft Report. If a CAB chooses to conduct stakeholder interviews or site visits during the drafting of the Announcement Comment Draft Report, this will not count towards meeting the requirements in Section 7.14.

#### G7.8.2.g.i Harmonisation for the Announcement Comment Draft Report ▲

The MSC's intent regarding preparation for harmonisation no later than the site visit is that the CAB identifies overlapping UoAs and the need for harmonisation, and informs the relevant CABs that harmonisation discussions might be needed after the site visit.

The MSC does not expect the team to have had harmonisation discussions with other assessment teams of overlapping fisheries to produce the Announcement Comment Draft Report.

## G7.10 Announcement of fishery assessment ▲

### G7.10.4.b Pre-assessment reports uploaded to database ▲

The MSC will maintain confidentiality of pre-assessment reports. The client may require the MSC to sign a confidentiality agreement.

#### G7.10.5.1 Modifications to the default tree ▲

The CAB should draft quantitative PIs, where appropriate. For example:

- Potential biological removals (PBR) of marine mammals – where fishing activity does not impede the recovery rate of populations.



- Maximum sustainable yield (MSY) – the UoA is at or above MSY, or biomass at maximum sustainable yield ( $B_{MSY}$ ), or some other variation of an appropriate fisheries management reference point.

## G7.12 Peer Review College ▲

The MSC has set up a Peer Review College to fulfil the following objectives:

- Increase the independence of peer reviews of fishery assessments.
- Increase the quality and consistency of peer reviews, and the reliability of their use by CABs, stakeholders and independent adjudicators.
- Not to increase, and if possible reduce, the cost of peer reviewers to fishery clients undergoing assessment.

The CAB will need to request peer reviewers from the College according to the requirements in Section 7.12. The operations of the College are described separately to this guidance. Peer reviewers will have similar competencies to auditors.

### G7.12.3.b Proposed peer reviewers after the site visit ▲

Following the site visit:

- The Peer Review College will ensure that all registered stakeholders are proactively invited to comment on the potential conflicts of interest of the proposed peer reviewers for a period of 10 days.
- The College will review any conflicts of interest highlighted by stakeholders, in accordance with the procedures outlined in the FCP.

If stakeholders do not agree with the Peer Review College's determination on conflict of interest:

- They have the right to appeal to the Peer Review College who shall inform the MSC within 10 working days.
- The MSC will appoint a third party to conduct a review of the decision.
- The MSC Executive will inform the Peer Review College of the outcome of the review.
- The MSC Executive will provide instructions on how the Peer Review College should proceed.

Once the consultation and appeals process is complete and the Peer Review College has acted as directed by the third party, the CAB and stakeholders will be informed of the decision that no conflict of interest exists for the peer reviewers appointed to conduct the peer review.

### G7.12.5 Final decision peer reviewers ▲

The CAB can express a preference for individual reviewers to be contracted from a shortlist drawn up by the Peer Review College. However, the Peer Review College will make the final decision.

## G7.13 Stakeholder input on the Announcement Comment Draft Report ▲

### G7.13.4 Publish stakeholder input on the Announcement Comment Draft Report ▲

The CAB should upload the stakeholder input in a timely manner to the MSC database for publication on the MSC website. The purpose of publication is to keep the stakeholders informed before the site visit about what has been raised. Additionally, the stakeholder input is useful for the assessment team to prepare the site visit.

## G7.14 Site visits, stakeholder input, and information collection ▲

### G7.14.1 Additional site visits ▲

The team may require further site visits by 1 or more team members where:

- Information is not available, or
- The client or stakeholders have not assembled information in time for the first assessment visit to adequately assess and analyse the evidence.

## G7.15 Scoring the UoA ▲

### Background

This is the stage where the information gathered in the formal assessment is evaluated, and scores are assigned and justified.

Guidance for scoring the UoA using the RBF is given in the [MSC Fisheries Standard Toolbox](#).

[\\_Annex\\_GPF\\_Risk-Based](#)

### G7.15.1-2 Scoring decision ▲

The MSC's intent is that the full team appointed by the CAB agrees the scoring of the UoA. Although individual team members may lead on the scoring of a particular Principle, their conclusions should be agreed in discussion with the team as a whole. Discussions on scoring may begin at the site visit. However, these discussions often cannot be completed until after the team has dispersed, when virtual interactions may be needed; for example, by teleconference and exchange of emails.

### G7.15.5.1 Smaller scoring intervals ▲

The team may need to assign scores in intervals smaller than 5 when considering the complexity generated by multiple scoring issues (SIs) and scoring elements.

### G7.15.7.3 Terms used ▲

In considering the scoring of individual PIs based on the performance of different scoring elements, the team should use the terms below:

- Few: most of the SIs should be taken to indicate “minority:majority” or “less than half:greater than half. For example, if there were 3 or 4 SIs, the ratios “1:2” and “1:3” would be represented by the terms “few:most”).
- Some: “some” should be taken to indicate a roughly equal split of SIs.

### G7.15.8 Weighting ▲

Table G3 below shows the default weighting when using the default tree.

This information can be found in the '[MSC Fishery Assessment Default Scoring Worksheet](#)'.

**Table G3: Default weighting to be applied when using the default assessment tree**

Principle weight	Component weight	PI		Weight within component and Principle		
1	Outcome 0.333	1.1.1	Stock Status	EITHER		
				1	0.333	
				OR		
		0.5	0.167			
		1.1.2	Stock Rebuilding	EITHER		
				0	0	
	OR					
	Management 0.667		1.2.1	Harvest Strategy	0.25	0.167
			1.2.2	Harvest Control Rules & Tools	0.25	0.167
			1.2.3	Information & Monitoring	0.25	0.167
1.2.4			Assessment of Stock Status	0.25	0.167	
2	In-scope species 0.2	2.1.1	Outcome	0.333	0.067	
		2.1.2	Management	0.333	0.067	
		2.1.3	Information	0.333	0.067	
	Endangered, Threatened, or Protected (ETP) species 0.2	2.2.1	Outcome	0.333	0.067	
		2.2.2	Management	0.333	0.067	
		2.2.3	Information	0.333	0.067	
	Habitats species 0.2	2.3.1	Outcome	0.333	0.067	
		2.3.2	Management	0.333	0.067	
		2.3.3	Information	0.333	0.067	
	Ecosystem 0.2	2.4.1	Outcome	0.333	0.067	
		2.4.2	Management	0.333	0.067	
		2.4.3	Information	0.333	0.067	
3	Governance and Policy 0.5	3.1.1	Legal/Customary Framework	0.333	0.167	
		3.1.2	Consultation, Roles & Responsibilities	0.333	0.167	
		3.1.3	Long Term Objectives	0.333	0.167	
	Fishery-specific management system 0.5	3.2.1	Fishery Specific Objectives	0.25	0.125	
		3.2.2	Decision Making processes	0.25	0.125	
		3.2.3	Compliance & Enforcement	0.25	0.125	
		3.2.4	Management Performance Evaluation	0.25	0.125	

### G7.15.9 Weighting to be applied in enhanced salmon fisheries ▲

Default weighting is applied in the '[MSC Fishery Assessment Default Scoring Worksheet](#)', adjusted as appropriate for the additional PIs in salmon fisheries.

### G7.15.10.1 Scoring rationale ▲

The report's text should include explicit rationales for all scores.

#### Example: Rationale for a score of 75 in Principle 2 (In-scope species, Management PI 2.1.2)

The rationale for a score of 75 for PI 2.1.2 might read as follows:

There are 5 in-scope species and therefore 5 scoring elements.

For 3 of them, catch by weight of that species is less than 5% of the UoA's total catch, so they would not be considered "main". For these species, there is a management strategy in place that:

- Is primarily designed for the fisheries that target these 3 species.
- Recognises limit reference points (LRPs) that are based on sensible assumptions about the stock.

Although there is evidence that this strategy works in similar fisheries, there is no evidence directly about the UoA that shows it is achieving its objectives. None of the species is a shark, so the shark-finning SI is not scored. All 3 species are landed and sold; additionally, the team considers that unobserved mortality is negligible based on research of similar fisheries. Given these points, the unwanted catch SI is not triggered. As the ghost gear SI has been scored in PI2.2.2, the ghost gear SI within this PI is not scored (this applies to all in-scope species scored within this PI).

Given the information above, only SIs (a) and (b) are scored for the minor species scoring elements. As none of the species are main:

- They all meet the Scoring Guidepost (SG)80 requirements by default.
- They meet the SG100 requirements for SI (a) – strategy in place.
- They do not meet the SG100 for SI (b) – strategy effectiveness.

These 3 species would each score 85 for each scoring element.

A fourth species (hake):

- Is a major target species of high value to another fishery.
- Is assessed and managed rigorously.
- Makes up 20% of the UoA catch.
- Has quotas applied to the UoA and its major target fishery that are effectively monitored and enforced. Evidence indicates that there is a high degree of certainty that the stock status is above the PRI.
- Is landed and sold; additionally, the team has determined that unobserved mortality is negligible based on published research of similar fisheries. Given these points, unwanted catch SI (c) is not triggered.
- Is not a shark species so SI (d) on shark finning is not scored

Given the information above, only SIs (a) and (b) are scored and this scoring element meets the SG100 requirements.

The fifth species is a deepwater species that is:

- Managed using reference points and robust harvest control rules (HCRs).
- Well above its PRI.
- Not utilised, and most of the catch is thrown back with a high mortality rate.
- Is not a shark species so SI (d) on shark finning is not scored.

- The UoA has reviewed current measures to minimise capture of this species as well as other measures. A cost-effective and practical measure was identified, but it has not yet been implemented.

Given the information above, SIs (a), (b) and (c) are scored for this scoring element. This species meets SG80 for SIs (a) and (b) but only meets SG60 for SI (c). This scoring element receives a 75.

Based on the SGs, in the above scenario, 3 of the species achieve a score of 90, 1 achieves a score of 100 and 1 achieves a score of 75. According to Table G7, all of the scoring elements meet the SG60 level, and most achieve higher performance at or exceeding the SG80 level. Only 1 does not achieve the SG80 level. Therefore, using Table G7, the appropriate overall PI score would be 75. This is because, as stated in 7.15.11.b, if any single scoring element fails to meet the SG80 level, the overall score for that element shall be less than 80. In such cases, a condition is raised, regardless of whether any other elements are at the SG100 level.

The rationale for this scoring result is shown in tabular form below.

**Table G4: Example scoring for rationale 1**

Species	SG level	Scoring issue	Met?	Overall score
Minor 1 Minor 2 Minor 3	60	A	Y	90
		B	Y	
		C	n/a	
		D	n/a	
		E	n/a	
	80	A	Y	90
		B	Y	
		C	n/a	
		D	n/a	
		E	n/a	
	100	A	Y	90
		B	N	
		C	n/a	
		D	n/a	
		E	n/a	

**Table G5: Example scoring for rationale 2**

Species	SG level	Scoring issue	Met?	Overall score
Hake	60	A	Y	100
		B	Y	
		C	n/a	
		D	n/a	
		E	n/a	
	80	A	Y	100
		B	Y	
		C	n/a	
		D	n/a	
		E	n/a	
	100	A	Y	100
		B	Y	

		C	n/a	
		D	n/a	
		E	n/a	

**Table G6: Example scoring for rationale 3**

Species	SG level	Scoring issue	Met?	Overall score
Deepwater	60	A	Y	75
		B	Y	
		C	Y	
		D	n/a	
		E	n/a	
	80	A	Y	
		B	Y	
		C	N	
		D	n/a	
		E	n/a	
	100	A	Y	
		B	Y	
		C	N	
		D	n/a	
		E	n/a	

**Table G7: Example overall scoring rationale**

Species	Score
Minor 1	90
Minor 2	90
Minor 3	90
Hake	100
Deepwater	75
OVERALL PI	75

### G7.15.11.c Terms used ▲

In considering the scoring of individual PIs based on the performance of different scoring elements, the terms below should be used:

- **Few:** Most of the scoring elements should be taken to indicate “minority:majority” or “less than half:greater than half” (e.g. if there were 6 scoring elements, the ratios “1:5” and “2:4” would both be represented by the terms “few:most”).
- **Some:** “Some” should be taken to indicate a roughly equal split of scoring elements.

### Scoring of minor species and habitats

For “minor” species and habitats, SGs only exist at the SG100 level in some PIs (2.1.1–2.2.3, 2.3.1, and 2.3.3). When scoring such “minor” species or habitats as scoring elements, the team should assume that the SG80 level is met by default, such that the scores are simply based on how many of the SIs that apply to “minor” (or all) species/habitats are met at the SG100 level.

#### Examples: scoring elements

- Where most elements did not meet the SG80 level, indicating an overall score of 65, but generally scored high intermediate scores, a higher overall score would be appropriate (e.g. 70). However, if the elements score only low intermediate scores, a score of 65 or below would remain appropriate.
- Where only a few elements failed to achieve the SG80 level, suggesting an overall score of 75, but achieved low intermediate scores, a lower score (e.g. 70) would be appropriate.
- Where some elements met the SG100 level but some only met the SG60 level, suggesting a score of 70, it may be appropriate to reflect the very high performance of some of the elements with an upwards adjustment to 75.

## G7.16 Setting conditions ▲

### Background

Conditions provide for agreed further improvement in the UoA and provide one of the bases for subsequent audits. They are intended to improve performance against the MSC Fisheries Standard, in terms of target species status, maintenance of ecological function, and management system performance.

If scores of less than 80 are awarded, then measurable, outcome-oriented, and time-bounded conditions of certification are prepared.

Conditions can relate to:

- Reducing uncertainty.
- Improving processes and/or implementation.
- Reducing risk.
- Improving outcomes.

These elements can be hierarchical and may be linked together in pursuing a longer-term outcome and potential continuous improvement.

### G7.16.2 Drafting conditions ▲

The CAB should draft conditions that articulate the outcome that needs to be achieved by the condition deadline. This should reflect the language used in the SG80 PISG and draw upon relevant text in the [MSC Fisheries Standard Section SA](#) clauses and guidance. The CAB should not simply repeat the SG80 PISG.

### G7.16.6 Exceptional circumstances ▲

Exceptional circumstances should be applied:

- When a condition is first drafted during assessment and before certification, or
- At a surveillance audit if a new condition is raised.

#### Examples: exceptional circumstances

Examples of exceptional circumstances are the time taken for:

- Natural ecological functions and response times.
- Relevant research to be funded, undertaken, and published.

- When there is a program in place to implement or scale up monitoring of a fishery, but where this is planned for a period of more than 5 years.

## G7.17 Assessment of the traceability systems and determination of the point(s) at which fish and fish products enter certified Chains of Custody ▲

### Background

Fisheries often have robust systems in place to manage traceability, through regulatory or voluntary controls. However, these systems may not be sufficient for differentiating between certified and non-certified products, especially if the UoC only covers specific vessels or gear types. The intention of this section is to enable clearer documentation of the traceability systems in place for a certified fishery and to make clear how substitution risks are adequately controlled by the fishery client. This can be informed through the site visit and completed in the 'MSC Reporting Template' after the site visit and before the Public Comment Draft Report.

The intent of this section is to ensure that all fishery assessment reports clearly:

- Describe the systems that ensure product segregation and identification to the UoC for all activities and product movements covered by the fishery certificate.
- Identify risks of substitution or mislabelling of certified products.
- Explain how the traceability systems and controls in place mitigate these risks.

### G7.17.1 & 7.17.1.2 Traceability record keeping ▲

Traceability systems need to be sufficient to allow the fishery client to trace MSC certified sales back to the individual UoC. The MSC may request the traceability records for a product traceback or an investigation into an MSC supply chain.

The client will need to trace back to an individual UoC, which means that segregation and identification to each UoC are needed. In some cases, segregation may not be practical throughout handling but will always be ultimately possible prior to or at the start of CoC. An example of this would be where visually distinguishable species (some covered by the UoC and some not) are caught together, and sorting by species happens upon landing. This assures that should a UoC voluntarily leave or be suspended, it is possible to continue trading certified product.

Records demonstrating traceability back to the UoC should be kept for at least 2 years where practicable, to allow a product from the supply chain to be traced back to the UoC.

Traceability records can be maintained by fishers, the fishery client group, auctions, or other entities, depending on the management of the UoA and the point at which subsequent Chain of Custody begins.

### G7.17.1.3 High seas transshipment ▲

High seas transshipment brings higher risks of substitution or mislabelling of MSC certified fish and fish products. Examples of sufficient systems for high seas transshipment include 100% observer coverage or independently verified electronic monitoring.

### G7.17.1.4 and G7.17.6.e Risk factors and mitigation ▲

Mitigation measures can include existing regulatory and traceability controls, such as logbooks, but should consider whether these systems are sufficient to ensure traceability back to the UoC. If not, additional systems or controls may need to be implemented.

Several possible risk factors exist:



- **The possibility that non-certified gears are used within the UoA.**

This concerns cases where vessels within the UoA may use gear types that are not included in the UoC. This can happen on the same trip where certified gears are used, or can happen on different trips. This can lead to a greater risk of mixing between certified and non-certified product on vessels or at points of landing, and the UoA needs adequate systems in place to segregate and identify the certified catch from non-certified catch.

- **The possibility of vessels from the UoC fishing outside the UoC or in different geographical areas (on the same trips or different trips).**

This concerns the potential for vessels to fish in non-certified geographical regions (which may also be affected by fishing-season or temporal restrictions). This can lead to a greater risk of mixing between certified and non-certified product on vessels or at points of landing. The UoA will need to demonstrate how traceability and control systems (such as vessel monitoring systems or logbooks) help to ensure that only product caught within the UoC will be identified and sold as MSC certified.

- **The possibility of vessels from outside the UoC or client group fishing the same stock.**

This concerns the likelihood that other, non-certified fishers may catch the same stock, which could produce higher risks of substitution or mislabelling at the point of landing or sale (for example, where certified and non-certified catches are sold at the same auction).

- **Transshipment, especially high seas transshipment.**

Where high seas transshipment occurs, Chain of Custody is needed unless there are independently verified systems to cover the fishing and receiving vessels for all transshipment events.

- **Any other risks of substitution between fish from the UoC and fish from outside this unit.**

This refers to any other points at harvest, on the vessel, during transshipment, or at points of landing or sale where there is the potential risk of substitution between non-certified and certified products. This also includes the presence of other nearby fisheries activities or other fisheries where non-certified product may be landed or transhipped alongside certified catches. This assessment should consider the presence of these risks and specifically how they are addressed by the traceability systems in place.

## G7.17.6 Documented in the 'MSC reporting template' ▲

Clear information on the UoC must be available to stakeholders and particularly any party purchasing certified product from the fishery client. The change of ownership relates to the first point of sale to any party not covered by the fishery certificate. Any specific conditions related to eligibility of product from the UoC to bear the MSC ecolabel should be clearly stated in this section (for example, if roe is not considered within the UoC).

If sales agents or non-fisher client group members are confirmed as included in the fishery certificate, Chain of Custody could be required to start from the point of sale by the sales agent or client group member, and these entities need to be assessed as per 7.17.1.1. All entities that handle or trade product between harvest and start of CoC (such as transshipment, unloaders, offloaders, storage, and transport) will also be considered under 7.17.1.1.

### G7.17.6.c Critical tracking events ▲

Critical tracking events are all events that need to be recorded in order to allow for effective traceability of products. The critical tracking events within the fishery certificate could include transshipment, offloading at landing, sorting at auction, or sale by sales agent.

### G7.17.6.1 CoC auditor review ▲

The CoC auditor may be a member of the team and involved at each stage, or may be a reviewer who is only involved after the site visit in reviewing and making recommendations on improving clarity and detail of the traceability sections in the '[MSC Reporting Template](#)'. The team can then edit the '[MSC Reporting Template](#)' prior to publication of the Public Comment Draft Report and improve its clarity for buyers and other stakeholders interested in traceability.

### G7.17.7 Non-conforming product ▲

This clause provides consistency with the requirements for CoC certificate holders. Fisheries have a responsibility to ensure that any non-eligible (non-conforming) product that enters the supply chain is identified, and downstream supply chain companies are appropriately notified. For example, if product from outside the UoC is accidentally labelled or sold as MSC certified, the UoA would need to take action in line with this procedure.

## G7.18 Determination of eligibility date ▲

### Background

The MSC has developed requirements on eligibility dates to clarify the date from when the MSC ecolabel could be used on fishery products caught before the eventual fishery certificate date, and to promote consistency of approach across fisheries. The intent of a flexible eligibility date is to:

- Outline the situations under which fishery products caught before the date of certification of a fishery may be considered to have come from a sustainable fishery and be eligible for use of the MSC ecolabel.
- Allow fisheries to use the MSC ecolabel and make claims for fish products that are sold after the fishery certificate is awarded, but that are caught before this date.
- Ensure that the MSC Chain of Custody is maintained and that only products from certified fisheries use the MSC ecolabel.

### G7.18.1.1 Eligibility date ▲

The eligibility date needs to be included in the Public Comment Draft Report as per 7.20.3.k.

In cases where the UoC could change (e.g. due to some regions or fishing gears being omitted at a late stage), or there could be further delays to the assessment process, the CAB may choose to set the eligibility date as the certification date, rather than the Public Comment Draft Report date.

In cases where the eligibility date is set before the certification date, the CAB will need to consider any potential traceability impacts, and risks including that of product from outside the UoC being incorrectly identified as under-assessment product. Accordingly, the CAB should verify traceability and identification systems before the eligibility date.

Fisheries handling under-assessment product should be aware of relevant requirements in the [Chain of Custody Standard](#) on identification and traceability of under-assessment product.

## G7.19 The Client and Peer Review Draft Report ▲

### G7.19.5.a Address peer reviewer comments by CAB ▲

The team should note that reviewers will have the right of reply to the team's conclusion during the Public Comment Draft Report stakeholder consultation in common with other peer review processes, such as those used by scientific journals. The reviewer's reply would state whether they agreed or disagreed with the team's response, as this could assist with the [MSC Disputes Process](#). In the Final

Draft Report, the CAB should include a response to any peer reviewer follow-up comments made on the Public Comment Draft Report.

If any of the peer reviewers' comments are contradictory, the team should provide justified responses for each different comment. It may be possible that the team agrees with some of the peer reviewers' comments, but not all. The team should provide clear justifications for all of their responses, including references to the relevant MSC requirements (Standard and/or FCP), and any MSC interpretations or derogations, as appropriate.

The above also applies to the team's responses to 2 or more sets of stakeholder comments where these are interpreted as contradictory.

### G7.19.6 Report viewed by the client ▲

The client has up to 60 days to consider and respond to the report. If the client response is received before the end of the 60-day period and the peer review is complete, the CAB can move on to the next assessment stage without waiting for the full 60 days to elapse.

### G7.19.7 Preparation of the Client Action Plan by the client ▲

Specific parts of the Client Action Plan may cover more than 1 PI even though each PI must have its own condition. However, the Client Action Plan should refer to these specific conditions and their milestones.

The CAB should not be prescriptive about the means of meeting conditions. The fishery client may develop its own corrective actions and deal with a condition in its own way. The important points for the CAB are that the client must demonstrate to the CAB's satisfaction that a condition can be met and how the outcome or result will be (or has been) achieved.

## G7.20 The Public Comment Draft Report ▲

### G7.20.4.1 References in Public Comment Draft Report ▲

The reference should include identifying details such as number, author, and date.

### G7.21 Determination ▲

The CAB should also refer to the [MSC General Certification Requirements \(GCR\)](#) and ISO 17065. The determination is a recommendation the team makes to the CAB's decision-making entity.

## G7.22 The Final Draft Report ▲

### G7.22.3 CAB response to stakeholder input ▲

During the 30-day Public Comment Draft Report consultation, registered stakeholders may provide follow-up comments to the CAB's responses to their previous input.

Registered stakeholders may also provide input at Public Comment Draft Report stage on issues they have not previously raised, providing that the information the comments are based on was available on or before the site visit.

### Stakeholder input into MSC fishery assessments

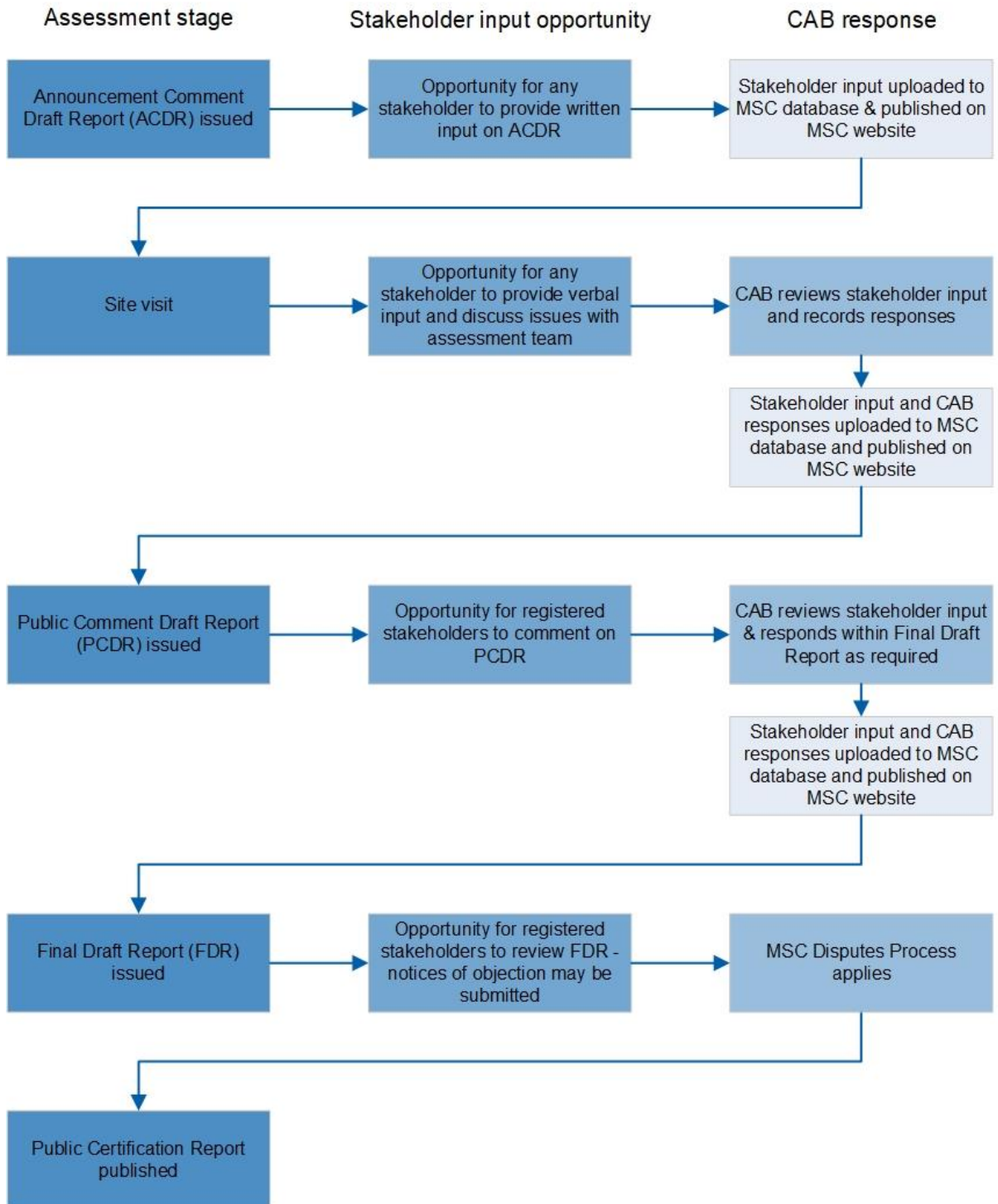


Figure G2: Stakeholder input opportunities and CAB response during the MSC fishery assessment process

## G7.24 The Public Certification Report ▲

### G7.24.7.1 The Fishery Certificate Statement ▲

The Fishery Certificate Statement may be included in the Fishery Certificate or made an annex to it.

The advantage of a Fishery Certificate Statement or as annex is the ability to update it more frequently, e.g. changes with client certificate sharing agreement details, than the Fishery Certificate; while a Fishery Certificate is a statement of fact, the Fishery Certificate Statement can include more explanation.

The CAB should include all information from the 'MSC Reporting Template' Section 'Eligibility to enter Chain of Custody' into the Fishery Certificate Statement in order to provide sufficient information to CoC holders buying from the UoC.

If a negative determination is made, it should be clear in the Fishery Certificate Statement that fish or fish products are not eligible to enter certified chains of custody.

- The entities with access to the certificate referred to in this clause should include:
- Vessels or fleets within the UoA or UoC.
- Client group members, which may be fishers or other bodies such as processing companies.
  - If the client wishes to make the certificate available to non-fishing client group members at the exclusion of non-client group members, a list of named companies needs to be provided or linked to here.
- Sales agents with the right to sell product on behalf of the fishery client into certified chains of custody.

#### G7.24.7.1.e Other limits to eligibility ▲

The Fishery Certificate Statement should detail all exclusions to product eligibility that the client has defined, which could include:

- Sale through the client group.
- Product forms (e.g. fish meal) being excluded from eligibility.
- Trip exclusions (e.g. the trips that go both inside and outside the UoC).
- Landing processes where eligibility is verified (e.g. verifying catch area or gear).

The Fishery Certificate Statement may also include other information relevant to the first buyer. This could include:

- Where the CoC starts and from whom certified product can be purchased (e.g. relevant auctions, agents, and/or client group members).
- How product can be identified as certified when it enters the CoC. This is copied from the fishery assessment report including a description of documents or labels.

## G7.25 Certification decision and certificate issue ▲

A fishery certificate is the formal document that is issued to a fishery client as evidence that a fishery is certified against the [MSC Fisheries Standard](#). The CAB should refer to the certification decision-making entity requirements of the [GCR](#) and ISO 17065.

## G7.26 UoA(s) that fail or withdraw from assessment ▲

#### G7.26.4.1 Non-binding conditions ▲

The CAB should clearly report in the Client and Peer Review Draft Report (CPRDR) and subsequent assessment reports why conditions are non-binding. If, for any reason, there are score changes that result in the UoA passing after the CPRDR stage, the CAB should follow 7.19.6–7.19.9.

#### G7.26.7 Reporting ▲

The following are to be provided in full and should not report only on elements revised between the initial and subsequent assessment of the UoA:

- Announcement Comment Draft Report.
- Client and Peer Review Draft Report.
- Public Comment Draft Report.
- Final Draft Report.
- Public Certification Report.

#### G7.27 Extension of scope of fishery certificate (scope extensions) ▲

##### Background

This section provides for limited extensions to the scope of a fishery certificate, as requested by an existing fishery client, to include other fishing operations in the same area or an adjacent area. Such extensions may, for example, bring in a gear type or fleet of vessels that also targets the main Principle 1 species but was not included in the original assessment. The process also allows for the movement of a target species from Principle 2 to Principle 1, so that it can be included in the existing certificate. It is provided as an alternative, cost-effective assessment option for fishery clients in cases where a whole new assessment is not needed. In these instances, some form of certificate sharing will often be involved between the original and new fisheries.

#### G7.27.1.b Confirming the fisheries' eligibility for extension ▲

The MSC default assessment tree identifies 8 assessment “components”:

- Principle 1 – Target stock outcome (status); target stock management.
- Principle 2 – In-scope species; ETP or out-of-scope (OOS) species; habitats; ecosystems.
- Principle 3 – Governance and policy; fishery-specific management.

#### G7.27.5.b Gap analysis ▲

The individual completing the gap analysis may use Table G8 below to provide justification for the outcome of the gap analysis to determine which assessment components are the same across the proposed UoA and the existing UoC(s).

##### Example

The proposed UoA may have the same target stock, management system, and gear but be fishing in a different geographical area and be taking a different mix of ETP/OOS species. If so, ETP/OOS PIs would have to be rescored in the scope extension assessment.



**Table G8: Gap analysis table for assessment components**

Assessment component	UoA – Fishery 1 (identify the scoring elements for each assessment component)	UoA – Fishery 2 (provide justification to confirm whether the scoring elements in the proposed UoA are the same as those in the existing UoC)
Principle 1 – Outcome	Target species stock + Management of target species stock	
Principle 1 – Harvest strategy	Target species stock + Management of target species stock	
Principle 2 – In-scope species	In-scope (fish/invertebrate) species normally retained by client gear type in client geographical area	
Principle 2 – ETP/OOS	ETP/OOS species bycatch of client gear type in client geographical area	
Principle 2 – Habitat	Habitat impact of client gear type in client geographical area	
Principle 2 – Ecosystem	Broad ecological community and ecosystem in which the fishery operates	
Principle 3 – Governance and policy	Overarching management framework Multi-jurisdictional management framework (as appropriate)	
Principle 3 – Fishery-specific management system	Local management framework + Client-specific management	

### G7.27.7 Adding new “other eligible fishers” ▲

Fishery clients sometimes fail to identify all of the possible “other eligible fishers” who are included in an assessment even though their impacts have been assessed and taken into account when the existing UoA was scored. In this case, the CAB may extend the certificate to these “other eligible fishers” as long as the team confirms that the impacts were included in the scoring of the existing UoA. In cases where the assessment did not include the other fishers (e.g. it was restricted to only a few of the members of the fishing fleet), this option does not apply, and the scope extension process of Annex PE should be followed to assess the additional impacts in Principle 2.

### G7.28 Merging fishery certificates ▲

#### G7.28.2.c.i Merging fishery certificates – expiry dates ▲

The CAB should not extend certificate durations for any of the certificates being merged.

### G7.29 Surveillance ▲

G7.29.2 Surveillance levels ▲

Table G9: All possible combinations of surveillance level

Surveillance level	Years after certification or re-certification				Number of auditors	
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Initial certification period	Subsequent certification period(s)
Level 6 Default surveillance	On-site surveillance audit	On-site surveillance audit	On-site surveillance audit	On-site surveillance audit & re-certification	2	1 or 2
Level 5 (3 on-site, 1 off-site)	On-site surveillance audit	Off-site surveillance audit	On-site surveillance audit	On-site surveillance audit & re-certification	2	1 or 2
	Off-site surveillance audit	On-site surveillance audit	On-site surveillance audit	On-site surveillance audit & re-certification	2	1 or 2
	On-site surveillance audit	On-site surveillance audit	Off-site surveillance audit	On-site surveillance audit & re-certification	2	1 or 2
Level 4 (2 on-site, 2 off-site)	Off-site surveillance audit	On-site surveillance audit	Off-site surveillance audit	On-site surveillance audit & re-certification	2	1 or 2
	On-site surveillance audit	Off-site surveillance audit	Off-site surveillance audit	On-site surveillance audit & re-certification	2	1 or 2
	Off-site surveillance audit	Off-site surveillance audit	On-site surveillance audit	On-site surveillance audit & re-certification	2	1 or 2
Level 3 (3 on-site, 1 off-site)	Off-site	Off-site	Off-site	On-site surveillance audit & re-certification	2	1 or 2
Level 2 1 review of information	On-site / Off-site	On-site / Off-site	Review of information	On-site surveillance audit & re-certification	2	1 or 2
	On-site / Off-site	Review of information	On-site / Off-site	On-site surveillance audit & re-certification	2	1 or 2
	Review of information	On-site / Off-site	On-site / Off-site	On-site surveillance audit & re-certification	2	1 or 2
Level 1	On-site / Off-site	Review of information	Review of information	On-site surveillance	2	1 or 2



Minimum surveillance 2 reviews of information				audit & re-certification		
	Review of information	Review of information	On-site / Off-site	On-site surveillance audit & re-certification	2	1 or 2
	Review of information	On-site / Off-site	Review of information	On-site surveillance audit & re-certification	2	1 or 2

### G7.29.4.b & 7.29.6.c Verification of information ▲

To assess fisheries against the verification of information criteria, the CAB should create a list of information, information resources, and aspects of the UoA that need to be reviewed in the annual audit. For each item, the CAB should use Table G10 below to determine the likelihood that it will be able to access the required information remotely and that it can confirm veracity of the information.

In determining how fisheries meet the criteria on verification of information, the CAB may consider the type, nature, and complexity of the UoA. UoAs will be at different points on the spectrum, from a very limited ability to a highly advanced ability to provide information remotely. The CAB should use its expert judgement and knowledge of the UoA to determine a surveillance level commensurate with the fishery client’s ability to provide the information remotely for verification by the CAB.

**Table G10: Assessment of information available to enable the determination of appropriate surveillance**

	Ability to verify remotely is low (low)	Ability to verify remotely is high (higher)	CAB evaluation (high)
Client and stakeholder input	Electronic forms of communication and other mechanisms to engage with clients and stakeholders (such as video-conferencing, phone-conferencing, email, phone) are absent, limited, or inefficient and ineffective in providing the information required for an audit in the particular circumstances of the fishery.	There are ample opportunities and mechanisms to engage with clients and stakeholders including electronic forms of communication, such as video-conferencing, phone-conferencing, email, and phone. The mechanisms are effective in the particular circumstances of the fishery.	
Fishery reports, government documents, stock assessment reports, and/or other relevant reports	Fishery reports and other types of report, which are required for the surveillance and to demonstrate fishery performance in relation to any relevant conditions and ongoing performance against the MSC Fisheries Standard, are not available publicly and cannot be transmitted electronically. There is no remote access to the information and there are no or very limited other sources available to triangulate and confirm status of the fishery with respect to the MSC Standard.	Fishery reports and other documented evidence, which can be used to demonstrate progress against conditions and other issues relevant to the MSC Fisheries Standard, can be easily and transparently checked remotely. This is due to such information being available publicly, such as being available on a website or having been widely distributed and made publicly available to several stakeholders. The reports can be transmitted electronically, and veracity easily confirmed.	

	Ability to verify remotely is low (low)	Ability to verify remotely is high (higher)	CAB evaluation (high)
Information appropriate to determination of Principle 1 and Principle 2 information requirements (see the Guidance to the MSC Fisheries Standard)	Information from electronic monitoring of position, observer data, logbooks, fisher interviews, dockside monitoring, etc. is required for audits but cannot be easily transmitted to a remote auditor in a form that can be easily interpreted.	Where information from electronic monitoring of position, observer data, logbooks, fisher interviews, dockside monitoring, etc. is required to verify performance against the MSC Fisheries Standard, this information is available to be transmitted electronically to auditors in a form that can be easily interpreted.	
Transparency of the management system	Level of transparency of information by management is low such that information about the performance of the fishery is generally not easily or widely available.	There is a high level of transparency in management, such that information on the fishery is widely and publicly available or known to the wider group of stakeholders. Any information provided on the fishery can be easily verified.	
Vessels, gear, or other physical aspect of the fishery	There are milestones and conditions that require inspection of vessels or other physical aspects of the fishery during the audit and there are no reliable mechanisms for verifying these aspects of the fishery from a remote location.	There are no milestones that require investigation of physical aspects of the fishery or, if there are any such milestones, there are reliable mechanisms to enable verification of developments with respect to that milestone from a remote location.	

Example of how to determine surveillance levels

In this example, a fishery has conditions on the following PIs: 1.2.1, 1.2.3, 3.2.3.

Condition	Action plan and milestones	Client commitment and CAB evaluation
<p>1.2.1</p> <p>By the fourth annual surveillance audit, the client shall provide information to demonstrate that there is a robust and precautionary harvest strategy in place and evidence exists that it is achieving its objectives for all significant fisheries that target this stock.</p>	<p>1. At each annual surveillance audit, provide updates on progress the fishery management agency has made towards developing a robust and precautionary harvest strategy for the stock.</p> <p>2. By the 4th annual surveillance audit, the client will provide evidence of the robust and precautionary harvest strategy in place for the fishery.</p>	<p>1. The CAB shall be provided with meeting minutes and research papers to assess the developments.</p> <p>2. Adoption of harvest strategy could be checked by documents (agreements, research plans, fishery management plans), letters from stakeholders, as well as impact assessment of harvest strategy.</p>
<p>1.2.3</p> <p>Develop and implement a sampling program of full catch recording across a suitable sample of the fleet.</p>	<p>Year 1</p> <p>1. Request scientific institute to help set up self-sampling program consistent with condition requirement.</p> <p>2. The skippers and crew of vessels will be trained in how to perform self-sampling.</p> <p>3. Results of self-sampling protocol will be presented annually in a report.</p>	<p>Year 1</p> <p>1. Present the CAB with report by scientific institute as well as the self-sampling program protocol and results.</p> <p>2. Provide evidence that crew has been trained – record of training material, attendance list to training. Also (raw) records of self-sampling (from a sample of vessels).</p> <p>3. Analysis of results documents sent to CAB.</p>
<p>3.2.3</p> <p>A monitoring, control, and surveillance (MCS) system has been implemented. However, sanctions for non-compliance exist, but they are not necessarily consistently applied. The lack of regular data collection on vessel infringements will support this view.</p>	<p>Year 1</p> <p>The coastguard will review MCS procedures, provide a plan to ensure effective enforcement and identify required resources; records will also be collated on infringements and sanctions before the first audit.</p> <p>Year 2</p> <p>The updated MCS procedures will be implemented in the 2nd year. Records on infringements and sanctions will be maintained and analysed to determine the effectiveness of the plan.</p> <p>Years 3 and 4</p> <p>Records on infringements and sanctions will continue to be maintained and analysed in subsequent years to monitor and refine the MCS plan.</p>	<p>Year 1</p> <p>The CAB shall be provided with minutes of meetings between the client and the coastguard as well as a detailed plan of how MCS procedures will be tightened and an overview of increased monitoring of infringements.</p> <p>Year 2</p> <p>Evidence of roll-out of updated MCS procedures is provided to the CAB. The CAB will also be presented with effectiveness analysis.</p> <p>Year 3 and 4</p> <p>The CAB will also be presented with effectiveness analysis.</p>

The above assessment demonstrates that all required information can be provided remotely. Consequently, the CAB would present a detailed justification for each surveillance activity and the number of auditors that will carry out the surveillance as outlined in the following table:

Year	Surveillance activity	Number of auditors	Justification
1	Off-site audit	2	Information needed to verify progress towards conditions 1.2.1, 1.2.3 and 3.2.3 can be provided remotely in year 1.
2	Off-site audit	2	Information needed to verify progress towards conditions 1.2.1, 1.2.3 and 3.2.3 can be provided remotely in year 2.
3	On-site audit	1 on site with remote support	Information needed to verify progress towards conditions 1.2.1, 1.2.3 and 3.2.3 can be provided remotely in year 3. Considering that milestones indicate that most conditions will be closed out in year 3, the CAB proposes to have an on-site audit with 1 auditor on site with remote support – this to ensure that all information is collected and because the information can be provided remotely.
4	On-site audit	2	Information needed to verify progress towards conditions 1.2.1, 1.2.3 and 3.2.3 can be provided remotely in year 4. It is assumed that this site visit will be combined with the site visit for the reassessment so that the team for reassessment can carry out the surveillance at the same time.

#### G7.29.8.1 Surveillance schedule ▲

The 6-month flexibility either side of the anniversary date allows:

- Surveillance audits to align with key dates in the fishery management cycle.
- Surveillance audits to align with the expected delivery of conditions according to the Client Action Plan.
- The coordination of site visits with the surveillance audits of other nearby MSC fisheries, thereby minimising the inputs required from management agencies and stakeholders.

This flexibility means that some or all surveillance audits will not be held on the anniversary date of the certificate.

Regardless of revised surveillance audit timings, 4 surveillance audits are to be conducted before the expiry date of the existing certificate, see 7.29.9.

#### G7.29.15.a.iv Changes to traceability ▲

Changes that affect traceability and the ability to segregate MSC from non-MSC product may be to:

- The systems or tools used for traceability, and/or
- The UoC(s).

The team should include this response and the review of the traceability change (as per 7.29.15.e.v) within the surveillance audit report as per the template.

#### G7.29.16.1.b “Behind target” ▲

“Behind target” means that actions, outcomes, expected results, or milestones have fallen behind the timeframes specified when setting the condition.

#### G7.29.16.1.b.i Remedial action ▲

Remedial action can include the CAB setting new milestones provided these are still expected to achieve the condition within the timeframes identified at the time of setting the condition.

#### G7.29.16.2 “Back on target” ▲

“Back on target” means meeting the original milestones or revised milestones (described in 7.29.16.1.b.i) within 12 months of falling behind.

#### G7.29.16.2.c & G7.29.16.4.c Full assessment after suspension related to conditions ▲

The MSC’s intent is that if a fishery client has failed to achieve a condition by its deadline, the fishery client is not allowed to enter the same UoCs, or entities in the UoC(s), into (re)assessment under either the same or an alternative name or alias where the effective intent is to extend the duration of the condition into a new certification period.

#### G7.29.23 Completing the audit ▲

In line with ISO 17065 and ISO 19011 requirements, the CAB is required to have an audit plan established with clear timeframes. The plan is required to justify when evidence-gathering will take place in an audit process. During both on-site and off-site audits, the end of the evidence-gathering stage should be used as the start day for surveillance report submission timelines.

#### G7.30 Expedited audits ▲

##### G7.30.1 New information ▲

Examples of “changes to the circumstances of the UoA and/or new information” that may require completion of an expedited audit include:

- Major changes in management.
- New information describing a major impact of the UoA.

However, as the FCP states, there must be good reason to think that these are actual material differences, and not a likely temporary change in indicated status; such a change might arise, for example, from the introduction of a new and not yet validated stock assessment model.

The MSC’s intent is that if the CAB is uncertain whether changes to circumstances or new information will cause any of the triggers as defined in 7.30.1.a–c, the CAB should:

- Take a precautionary approach.
- Complete an Expedited Audit to assess the impact.

##### G7.30.10 Expedited audits during full and initial assessment or scope extension ▲

The MSC’s intent for expedited audits during full assessments is as follows:

- Expedited audits are triggered at any point after the information cut-off date.

- Expedited audits are conducted alongside the assessment process.
- The determination and certificate decision are based on the information that was available up until the information cut-off date (7.15.1.1).
- If the draft determination is to certify a UoA but the expedited audit results in the rescoring of an individual PI to less than 60 or a Principle score to less than 80, the determination and certificate decision is not affected (i.e. the certificate is issued). However, the result of the expedited audit means that the certificate is suspended immediately. The expedited audit report and the '[MSC Notice of Suspension Template](#)' are published at the same time as the Public Certification Report.
- The suspension is immediate, with no 30-day notice period.

### G7.30.12 Expedited audit during a reassessment ▲

If the reassessment is against a new version of the [MSC Fisheries Standard](#), it is possible that an expedited audit is triggered for the existing certificate and not the reassessment, or vice versa, due to difference in PISGs.

When an expedited audit is triggered as per 7.30.1 for both the existing certificate and the reassessment, the MSC does not expect the CAB to conduct 2 separate expedited audits. Therefore, the CAB may:

- Conduct the expedited audit activities so that all relevant information and PISGs are considered at the same time.
- Publish a single expedited audit report.

However, if there are differences in the Performance Indicator Scoring Guideposts due to a new version of the [MSC Fisheries Standard](#) being used for the reassessment, the CAB will need to:

- Record the results separately.
- Clearly identify the results that are relevant to the existing certificate and the reassessment.

When an expedited audit is triggered for both the existing certificate and the reassessment, the expedited audit report is published within 60 days of announcing the expedited audit regardless of when the Public Certification Report is published. This allows the supply chain to prepare for the suspension of the UoC once the reassessment is complete.

## G7.31 Reassessment ▲

### G7.31.5.2 Open conditions at reassessment ▲

There are a number of scenarios under which a UoA could enter reassessment with an open condition(s):

- The condition is being carried over into the next certificate (see G7.31.5.2.a).
- The condition deadline is the 4th-year surveillance audit and the 4th surveillance audit has not been conducted at the time of announcing the reassessment and publishing the Announcement Comment Draft Report.
- The condition deadline is in the 5th year.

#### G7.31.5.2.a Carrying over conditions ▲

Conditions can be carried over in the following scenarios:

- Exceptional circumstances apply, as per 7.16.6.
- The condition was set during a surveillance audit during the most recent certificate cycle.

- The condition was set during a scope extension assessment during the most recent certificate cycle.
- The condition was set during an expedited audit during the most recent certificate cycle.
- The condition was set on PI 1.2.1 SI (a). The stock is at or above  $B_{MSY}$  and “available” harvest control rules (HCRs) are in place (the [MSC Fisheries Standard Table SA5](#) and the [MSC Guidance to the Fisheries Standard GSA2.5](#)).

### G7.31.6 Related conditions ▲

A related condition is a condition:

- That was closed during the previous certification period, and
- Where a new condition on the same PI or SI is set at the subsequent assessment or audit, or
- That involves the same scoring element or topic (e.g. collecting information on P2 species).
- The scenarios under which a related condition is opened could include:
  - A change in the assessment tree that has led to an increase in the performance required at the SG80 level (i.e. the sustainability bar has been raised).
  - There has been a change in status since the condition was closed; this would only be applicable for outcomes PIs.
  - The scoring element now falls under a different component. For example, in the previous assessment a species was designated as an in-scope species but is now designated as an ETP/OOS species.

### G7.31.13 Reduced reassessment ▲

Remote team members can provide support to the on-site team member. However, the CAB should determine how the team can best make use of on-site and remote team member(s) during the reduced reassessment.

The reduced reassessment may benefit from remote team member(s) participating in stakeholder consultations conducted at the site visit by the on-site team member. This should be considered and arranged as part of the planning process. There may be some stakeholder consultation meetings where it is not necessary for the remote team member(s) to participate remotely. If so, their time could be used more effectively for other reduced reassessment activities.

The team member selected to conduct the site visit (i.e. the on-site team member) should be the person most relevant to the content of the stakeholder interviews and information gathering that is needed to assess the UoA. For example, if the UoA had conditions on Principle 2 components, then the Principle 2 expert should be the on-site team member. The Team Leader will provide oversight of the reduced reassessment process.

### G7.32 Assessing UoCs that expire after the transition deadline against the MSC Fisheries Standard v3.1 ▲

These requirements allow for CABs to assess existing UoCs, as requested by the fishery client, against the [MSC Fisheries Standard v3.1](#) before the transition deadline of 1 November 2030.

### G7.32.1.a Transition assessments ▲

Transition assessments are provided as an alternative assessment option for fishery clients in cases where completing their current certificate cycle against the [MSC Fisheries Standard v3.1](#) is requested or required.

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End of FCP Guidance

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## **Annex GPA Inseparable and practicably inseparable fisheries – Guidance**

### **GPA1.3 Conditions ▲**

#### **GPA1.3.1 Setting conditions in inseparable and practicably inseparable fisheries ▲**

When setting conditions under PA1.3, the CAB should refer to and follow the narrative of PA1.6.1.

### **GPA1.4 Entry into further Chains of Custody ▲**

#### **GPA1.4.2.c Plausible argument ▲**

A plausible argument could be based on general experience, theory, or comparison with similar fisheries or species.

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End of Annex GPA Guidance

## Annex GPB Harmonisation of overlapping Units of Assessment – Guidance

### GPB1 Background ▲

The general principle in Annex PB is that any new assessment or audit within a harmonised group of overlapping fisheries should take into consideration the conclusions of any previous assessment or audit such that harmonisation is maintained over time.

When undergoing harmonisation efforts, clients should be encouraged to collaborate where possible (e.g. via certificate sharing), thereby minimising the number of overlapping assessments that require harmonisation. The MSC accepts that this is sometimes not possible, and that the uncertainties associated with harmonisation can sometimes be difficult for CABs and clients to plan for and manage.

#### GPB1.2.1 Overlapping Units of Assessment ▲

CABs may use the [MSC's Harmonisation Database](#) to identify overlapping Units of Assessment (UoAs).

Harmonisation is not necessary in assessments of UoAs that use similar gears or management approaches but operate in clearly different geographical areas.

#### GPB1.2.3 Reporting overlapping UoAs ▲

These clauses are to ensure there is full transparency over what will need to be harmonised, whether that involves adopting previous scores or whether there is a need to re-open harmonisation discussions because PB1.4.1.1 has been triggered.

#### GPB1.3.1 Harmonised assessment outcomes ▲

In cases where there are 2 Units of Certification (UoC) from the same UoA, harmonisation should be expected to result in identical scores and conditions unless there is a very clear explanation of the different practices adopted by the 2 UoCs that justifies their different scores.

The MSC's intent is that a part of a UoA that simply decides for commercial or other reasons to have a separate certificate should not be allowed to have different scoring from other members of the same fleet. The MSC seeks to avoid a situation, particularly in Principle 2, in which a UoA in receipt of conditions is able to split itself into several small fisheries and avoid conditions or avoid the requirements to deal with cumulative Principle 2 issues, simply because the impacts of the UoAs are much smaller.

##### GPB1.3.1.a Consistent scoring and rationales ▲

The MSC's intent is that overlapping UoAs have the same level of performance (i.e. the overall result of the relevant PI scoring is either a pass or a fail for overlapping fisheries).

Teams are not required to draft a single harmonised rationale for each relevant PI; scoring rationales may be drafted independently by each team. The rationales presented should, however, lead logically to the harmonised scores that are agreed between the teams (i.e. which Scoring Issue (SI) is met at each Scoring Guidepost level and for each scoring element). The teams should use largely similar arguments and logic for the harmonised scoring rationales.

Having consistent outcomes does not mean the scores need to be exactly the same between different teams, so long as any conditions are generated by the same SIs and scoring elements within harmonised PIs, and the same outcome (pass/fail) is achieved. Given this constraint, and the rules applied in scoring (Section 7.15), it should be rare to find a situation where the scores are not exactly

the same (an example would be where P2 species are only partly overlapping such that some species are harmonised, while others are not, such that the overall scores for the PIs may then differ).

### GPB1.3.1.b Consistent conditions and milestones ▲

The MSC's intent is that conditions are set on the same PIs, relating to the same SIs and scoring elements, as appropriate. There may be occasions when different conditions are justified, but they will be rare, and based only on 3 aspects:

1. Differences in requirements from different versions of the default trees.
2. Changes to management or status that have occurred since the original assessment.
3. Differences in actual performance of the fisheries.

Teams should consider the certificate lengths of overlapping UoAs. Teams should be precautionary such that the earliest date for closing a particular condition in 1 (or more) of the overlapping fisheries should apply to all overlapping UoAs.

### GPB1.3.1.1a Harmonisation of categorisation ▲

The MSC's intent is that modification to the ETP/OOS list are only applied once per certification cycle. However, if an ETP/OOS species is removed from any of the lists under MSC Fisheries Standard SA3.1.4b, or the status or management changes such that modifications applied under SA3.1.4.1 – 3.1.4.3 mean that an ETP species is eligible to be scored under Principle 1, the modifications may be reviewed as part of the scope extension process to move the species to Principle 1. In this situation, overlapping UoAs would not be required to harmonise with the change in categorisation until reassessment.

### GPB1.3.2 Exceptional circumstances ▲

An example of an exceptional circumstance in the context of harmonisation relates to P1 when there are 2 countries that share a stock but their methods of monitoring UoA removals are different, causing a demonstrable difference in the fisheries with regard to the scoring and rationales for PI 1.2.3 SI (b).

Exceptional circumstances also apply where endangered, threatened, or protected (ETP) or out-of-scope (OOS) species are nationally listed in one country but not another, as per PB1.3.1.3.

### GPB1.4 Annual harmonisation ▲

The MSC's intent is that harmonisation of assessments of overlapping UoAs takes place once a year and the harmonised assessment outcomes are subsequently applied to all UoAs, regardless of whether they are subject to initial assessment, reassessment, scope extension assessment, transition assessment, or surveillance audit. The CABs of the UoAs subject to harmonisation should collectively and collaboratively determine the timing of annual harmonisation activities and organise harmonisation activities accordingly. CABs should consider the timing of management advice and surveillance audit schedules when organising annual harmonisation activities.

#### Example

Management advice for stock A is released in April every year. There are 4 UoAs that include stock A as the P1 target stock. The surveillance audits for the 4 UoAs are scheduled to take place between July and October. The CABs may decide to hold the harmonisation activities in May, once the stock management advice has been released. The CABs may decide to bring forward the surveillance audits (as per 7.29.8.1) so that the harmonisation activities take place during the surveillance audit and the harmonised assessment outcomes can be incorporated into the Surveillance Reports immediately. Alternatively, the CABs may decide to announce the surveillance audits soon after the harmonisation activities have concluded so that the harmonised assessment outcomes can be incorporated into the Surveillance Reports as soon as possible.

#### GPB1.4.1.1 New information ▲

The MSC's intent is that harmonisation is not triggered by teams who have a difference of opinion based on the same information.

#### GPB1.5.1 Discussion of overlapping UoA by teams ▲

Under PB1.5.1, nothing precludes the harmonisation discussion from being mediated. It is expected that at the end of the harmonisation discussion, teams will have harmonised assessment outcomes.

#### GPB1.5.1.b–c Harmonisation of scores and conditions when evaluating cumulative impacts of MSC UoAs in PI 2.1.1 and PI 2.3.2 ▲

Discussions of cumulative impacts should be considered as per the requirements in PB1.4.

Cumulative impacts for more sensitive habitats are dealt with under management requirements and the MSC expects that precautionary avoidance of the cumulative impact should be implemented rapidly. For instance, it could be the case that a precautionary management measure implemented by a newly certified fishery is the designation and closure of new areas of more sensitive habitat. The already certified fishery should consider these closed areas at its next surveillance audit.

The terms of an existing condition for currently certified fisheries might also change with the arrival of newly certified fisheries triggering the cumulative impact requirements, particularly for more sensitive habitats. This would likely be the case when the cumulative impact has increased and when differing partial strategies have not aligned. In such cases, the harmonisation of milestones to achieve a demonstrably effective strategy at SG80 (for PI 2.1.1) or to provide evidence that more sensitive habitats are being protected by all MSC UoAs at SG80 (for PI 2.3.2) might then also be altered.

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End of Annex GPB Guidance

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## **Annex GPC Fishery team leader, team member, team and peer reviewer qualifications and competencies – guidance**

### **GPC1.2–4 Fishery team qualifications ▲**

The qualification requirements for fishery team leaders, members and the team overall (Tables PC1, PC2 and PC3) each require at least 3 years' experience in different aspects of fisheries science and management. Experience that may be counted towards the 3-year requirement includes:

Experience working on MSC assessments (e.g. as part of a team on a previous fishery assessment).

Relevant research experience, including that gained during higher-level research degrees (e.g. a PhD or a Masters by thesis). However, the CAB should not include lower-level research (e.g. during a Masters by coursework with a short summer project) or undergraduate training.

The CAB should note the additional ISO19011 training requirements for team leaders in the personnel requirements of the [GCR](#).

### **GPC1.2 Table PC1: Team leader qualifications ▲**

#### **2.a Review of updates to MSC Fisheries Program Documents ▲**

This may take the form of a search of the MSC website for new updates issued during the preceding year.

#### **2.b Pass the fishery team leader course ▲**

The fishery team leader training course consists of a set of compulsory online training modules, which are listed on the [MSC Online Training Platform](#).

### **GPC1.3 Table PC2: Team member qualifications ▲**

#### **2.a Review of updates to MSC Fisheries Program Documents ▲**

This may take the form of a search of the MSC website for new updates issued during the preceding year.

#### **2.b Pass the fishery team leader course ▲**

The fishery team member training course consists of a set of compulsory online training modules, which are listed on the [MSC Online Training Platform](#).

### **GPC1.4 Table PC3: Team qualifications ▲**

#### **1 Fish stock assessment ▲**

Where 3 years' or more experience is stated, the "3 years" refers to an individual team member needing to have 3 years' experience. The experience cannot be the accumulated experience of different team members (e.g. 1+2 years).

#### **2 Fish stock biology/ecology ▲**

For a team member to comply with this requirement, "similar biology" in this context means that where the target species is:

- A demersal fish species, experience with other demersal fish species qualifies. A pelagic fish species, experience with other pelagic fish species qualifies. A crustacean species, experience with other crustacean species qualifies. A mollusc species, experience with other mollusc species qualifies.

Similarly, for any other taxon.

## 5 Current knowledge of the country, language, and local fishery context ▲

“Common language” means knowledge of a language that is spoken by clients and stakeholders. The intent of the requirement is to ensure that information can be clearly exchanged between the team, client, and stakeholders, and understood by most parties. For example, “the common language” in Indonesia could be Bahasa, and in African countries it could be English, French, or Portuguese.

A “relevant fishery” in this context means where the scale of the fishery, the stock assessment techniques, and management approaches are similar to those in the fishery under assessment. For example, if the fishery under assessment is a small-scale operation with limited quantitative information and informal management systems, then “relevant fisheries” would also have these characteristics. Similarly, if the fishery under assessment is large scale or industrial with fully quantitative stock assessment approaches and related management systems (such as harvest control rules related to input/output measures) then “relevant fisheries” would also have these characteristics.

### 6.c Review traceability requirements ▲

The review of any updates to the traceability requirements may take the form of a search of the MSC website for new updates issued during the preceding year.

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End of Annex GPC Guidance

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## Annex GPD Scope extensions

### GPD1.1.2 ▲

Annex PD outlines the minimum assessment requirements necessary for a scope extension from an already certified fishery to another fishery. There may be cases where additional assessment steps or evaluations are necessary to ensure that the entire assessment of the fishery across all 3 Principles continues to be accurate when additional stocks are added to Principle 1.

## GPD1.2 Assessment process

### GPD1.2.2.1.a Gap analysis ▲

The CAB may use Table G8 to describe the outcome of the gap analysis.

### GPD1.2.4.3.b Considerations for rescoring of Principle 2 species ▲

In cases where there are a number of stocks identified as main in-scope in a certified fishery, assessing 1 or more of these against Principle 1 instead will mean that they are removed as scoring elements from Principle 2 in-scope species.

The remaining scoring elements in Principle 2 in-scope species should then be rescored according to Section 7.15. This does not require a Principle 2 expert.

If the new Principle 2 score causes a failure of the fishery due to the reallocation of Principle 2 species to Principle 1, the CAB may choose to discontinue the scope extension process for 1 or more stocks.

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End of Annex GPD Guidance

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## Annex GPE Transition assessments – guidance

### GPE1.1.1.1 Assessment components of a transition assessment ▲

The [Change Tracker Report](#) lists out the differences between versions of the MSC Fisheries Standard. These differences are the assessment components that need to be scored as part of the transition assessment.

### GPE1.1.2 Responsibilities related to the existing certificate ▲

Unless specifically stated in PE1, doing a transition assessment does not remove any responsibilities the CAB or certificate holder has towards maintaining the existing fishery certificate.

### GPE1.2.5.3 Condition timelines following a transition assessment ▲

The Unit of Certification of the transition assessment still has a full 5-year timeframe to close out any conditions raised. The transition assessment is thus considered an exceptional circumstance in line with 7.16.6. The CAB must state explicitly when the condition would expect to be closed in line with 7.16.6 and sub-clauses. The maximum timeline for any new conditions would be 5 years in total (unless there are other “exceptional circumstances”).

### GPE1.2.5.4.a Where inadequate progress is made ▲

See PE1.4.4 for more information.

### GPE1.2.5.5 Summary of differences in assessment trees. ▲

See [Change Tracker Report](#) referred to in GPE1.1.1.1 for more information on the differences between versions of the [MSC Fisheries Standard](#).

### GPE1.2.5.8 Related conditions ▲

See G7.31.6.

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End of Annex GPE Guidance

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End of Guidance to the Fisheries Certification Process