

# Forestry Certification Guidebook

**Contents**

- 1. Introduction ..... 4**
- 2. Accreditation Status..... 4**
- 3. The Certification Process ..... 4**
  - 3.1 Initial Audit (Stage 1 Audit) ..... 4
  - 3.2 Certification Audit (Stage 2 Audit) ..... 5
  - 3.3 Certification Audit Report..... 5
  - 3.4 Surveillance Assessment..... 6
  - 3.5 Re-Certification Assessment..... 6
  - 3.6 Audit findings and non-conformances ..... 6
  - 3.7 Certification Decision..... 7
  - 3.8 Certification documentation ..... 8
  - 3.9 Scope of Certification ..... 8
  - 3.10 Refusal of Certification/Recognition ..... 8
  - 3.11 Suspension of Certification..... 8
  - 3.12 Cancellation of Certificate ..... 9
  - 3.13 Changes and Variations to Certification ..... 9
  - 3.14 Reduction in Scope of Certification ..... 10
  - 3.15 Site Sampling ..... 10
- 4. Use of the BSI Certification Mark..... 10**
- 5. Use of the JASANZ Accreditation Symbol ..... 10**
- 6. Use of the Responsible Wood Logo or PEFC Logo ..... 11**
- 7. Standard Owner Information and Notification Fees ..... 11**
- 8. Confidentiality..... 11**
- 9. Additional Obligations..... 11**
  - 9.1 Complaints ..... 12
  - 9.2 Certification Agreement..... 12
  - 9.3 Assessment Scheduling ..... 12
  - 9.4 Misleading Statements..... 12
  - 9.5 Observers..... 13
  - 9.6 Group Forest Certification ..... 13
- 10. Complaints and Appeals..... 13**

**Revision History**

<b>Revision No.</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Process owner</b>	<b>Approved By</b>	<b>Changes</b>
1	July 2014	Ross Garsden	S Vincent	All
2	June 2023	Ross Garsden	Dr Craig Miller	All

## 1. Introduction

This Certification Guidebook is designed to provide your organisation with guidance on the requirements for certification to the Forestry Management Systems (FMS) Scheme and the requirements of AS/NZS 4708:2021 (the Standard).

In Australia, the implementation of the FMS Scheme is overseen by Australian Forestry Standard Limited, trading as Responsible Wood. Responsible Wood is the Standard Owner and display information about certified organisations on its website.

The FMS Scheme is based on internationally agreed criteria and forest management performance measures which lead to continuous improvement and sustainable forest management.

Certification links your business to the management of the Defined Forest Area (DFA) within the scope of your certification.

The benefits of certification to this Standard include recognition that your business supports sustainable forest management and that the forest products originating from your forest estate have been produced in a manner that has been independently verified to conform with internationally recognized sustainability criteria.

The information provided in this Guidebook establishes additional requirements with respect to your contract with BSI.

As a BSI client, you will be appointed a Client Manager who will be your initial point of contact for arranging audits and dealing with any matters that may arise during the period of your contract.

## 2. Accreditation Status

In Australia, accreditation to this Standard is provided by the Joint Accreditation System – Australia and New Zealand (JASANZ).

BSI holds accreditation for this standard with JASANZ and your certificate will display the JASANZ logo.

BSI and its auditors are routinely audited by JASANZ.

## 3. The Certification Process

### 3.1 Initial Audit (Stage 1 Audit)

To gain certification to the AS/NZS 4708 standard your organisation is required to undergo an initial assessment. This assessment is intended to verify that a management system is in place and that it has the capacity to meet the requirements for certification. It provides an opportunity to identify any deficiencies that need to be addressed, prior to the certification assessment. Essentially, it determines your readiness for certification.

The initial audit will be carried out by a qualified assessor. All sites that are covered under the scope of certification must be available for assessment at this stage. This audit focuses on the documentation related to the scheme.

Audit and certification to AS/NZS 4708 can only be applied to the full range of forest management activities within the Defined Forest Area (DFA). It is not permissible to certify only a part of a forest manager's management system, e.g., harvesting.

**Inspiring trust for a more resilient world.**

Where your organisation is not responsible for all requirements of the standard within the DFA, you are required to have contractual arrangements in place with other parties that share responsibility. Verification of these arrangements is carried out during the Stage 1 assessment.

Your organisation will receive a written report which outlines the readiness for the Certification Audit. The findings from the initial audit must be satisfactorily addressed prior to the certification audit.

### 3.2 Certification Audit (Stage 2 Audit)

The certification audit is generally conducted within four (4) months of the initial audit. If the certification audit is not conducted within this time the initial audit may need to be repeated.

The purpose of the certification assessment is to verify the implementation of the management system across all sites. This will involve sampling for larger organisations.

The audit will be undertaken by a qualified forestry auditor. In some circumstances, BSI may need to include a Technical Expert as part of the audit team. In such a case, BSI will advise you prior to the audit, and ensure that the roles and responsibilities of the Technical Expert are understood and agreed.

Following the certification audit, providing the requirements of the Standard have been met, the auditor will make a recommendation for certification. The audit report is then reviewed by an independent qualified report reviewer.

It will generally take a minimum of 30 days following the audit for the certificate to be issued. Your certificate will be issued electronically.

### 3.3 Certification Audit Report

BSI will prepare an Assessment Report following each audit. The audit report will include the following information:

- An executive summary of the overall findings (conclusions) on the effectiveness of your system in meeting the requirements of the standard
- A Summary Report which can be used by your organisation as a publicly available document
- Details of any Non-conformances raised during the assessment
- Opportunities for improvement identified during the assessment
- Positive findings, including strengths of the business or the management system and areas where your business has demonstrated significant improvement
- Next visit plan which outlines the areas that will be assessed at your next assessment

Non-conformities will be discussed with your team as they are identified during the assessment. Any non-conformities will be discussed and clarified during the exit meeting.

BSI will normally provide you with a Draft Assessment Report prior to finalisation. This will provide an opportunity to correct any errors or omissions.

If you are unclear of any of the information in your report, you should initially discuss this with your BSI Client Manager.

BSI prefers that you only make the Summary Report publicly available.

### 3.4 Surveillance Assessment

The scheme provides some flexibility for timing audits, requiring that audits be conducted at least every 12 months (plus or minus three months).

Surveillance assessments are usually planned and scheduled on a 9-month cycle. This allows for variations for seasonal activities to be included in the 3-year audit program. Audit duration is calculated using the Audit Duration Calculator which takes into consideration the complexity of your organisation. The calculator specifies the minimum number of days (not including planning, travel and report writing) that must be included in the three-year program. Surveillance assessments are not required to all be of equal duration, providing the minimum is delivered over the three years.

The Audit Duration Calculator is re-checked at each assessment to account for any changes in the business.

### 3.5 Re-Certification Assessment

The Forest Management Scheme currently requires recertification every three years.

The re-certification assessment must take place no later than 3 months prior to the expiry date.

The duration for a recertification assessment will be longer than that of surveillance audits. The anticipated duration will be provided in your contract and may be revised during the certification cycle.

If a major non-conformance is raised in a recertification assessment, you will be required to close it prior to a new certificate being issued. The timeframes for closing out or downgrading major nonconformities shall not exceed 3 months from receipt of the audit report.

If the recertification assessment is not completed and processed within the required timeframe, your certification will lapse and your certificate will no longer be valid.

### 3.6 Audit findings and non-conformances

Specific audit findings are categorised as follows:

#### Major Non-Conformances

Major Non-conformances are audit findings where either there is a failure to conform with one or more requirements of the Standard, FMS Scheme or your own requirements. This may include any situation where there is significant doubt regarding the ability of your organisation's forest management system to conform with the requirements.

Where a non-conformance is identified during an audit, the details will be provided in the Assessment Report, and you will be required to submit an action plan via the Connect Portal within a specified timeframe (usually 14 days from receipt of the report). BSI will review the action plan to verify that it has:

- Correctly determined the root cause of the non-conformance;
- Specified any immediate corrective measures;

Inspiring trust for a more resilient world.

- Set out a detailed plan as to what needs to be done in order to prevent recurrence; and
- Specified a timeframe for completion as well as responsibility for overseeing the implementation of the action plan.

BSI will review the action plan and confirm if it has been accepted. BSI will then arrange any follow-up audit or assessment activity in order to close out or downgrade the major non-conformance.

Major non-conformances are required to be either closed out or downgraded by the Client Manager within 3 months of the assessment. This typically requires an on-site visit.

It is not possible to issue, or re-issue a certificate where major non-conformities exist.

### **Minor Non-Conformances**

Minor Non-conformances are audit findings where either there is a partial failure to conform with one or more requirements of the Standard or the FMS Scheme.

Where a minor non-conformance is identified during an audit, you will be required to submit an action plan via the BSI Connect Portal (as described above).

Once the action plan has been lodged in the Connect Portal, BSI will review it and confirm acceptance, or advise otherwise. Minor non-conformances are required to be closed out at the next assessment.

### **Note:**

Any breach or contravention found within the scope of the AS 4708 audit will be raised as a minor or major nonconformity and communicated to you via the audit report. The Audit Team Leader will verify that your organisation has notified the regulatory authority in situations that require such notification.

### **Opportunities for improvement**

BSI auditors may identify opportunities for improvement with respect to the implementation of your management system. BSI auditors are not permitted to make recommendations, however opportunities for improvement are unlikely to be raised if your organisation has no intention or willingness to take any action. There is no requirement for an action plan to be submitted to BSI in relation to any opportunities for improvement documented in a BSI Assessment Report. BSI auditors are likely to note any action taken with respect to opportunities for improvement raised in a previous assessment.

### **3.7 Certification Decision**

Once a certification assessment has been completed, the Audit Plan and Assessment Report are subject to an internal review process prior to certification being granted. This may take several weeks. The aim of the review is to verify the recommendation for certification and make an independent decision for certification.

The review will require verification and confirmation that any necessary corrective actions have been undertaken.

### 3.8 Certification documentation

When your organisation has achieved certification, BSI will provide you with a Certificate as a statement that your organisation has achieved certification to the Standard. The certificate will include important information such as your organisation's name, certification number, the standard for which certification has been granted, the scope of certification, the date of certification and the expiry date. The certificate will also display several logos relevant to your certification, including the BSI Mark of Trust logo, the JASANZ logo, Responsible Wood logo and the PEFC logo.

The certificate may be accompanied by a schedule of sites and the scope of certification applicable to each site.

The certificate may be displayed wherever you choose, for example on your website where it is available to interested parties.

Should you need to provide a copy of the certificate to another party, it must be provided in its entirety including any schedules.

BSI provides the certificate in electronic copy. BSI also provides a copy of your certificate to Responsible Wood (the Standard Owner). Details of your certificate are provided on the Responsible Wood website and Responsible Wood also provide a copy of your certificate to PEFC.

### 3.9 Scope of Certification

The scope of certification defines the locations and the activities associated with each certificate.

The main scope is generally presented on the front page of the certificate. Where the certificate includes more than one site, the certificate will include a Schedule of sites covered under the certificate. The scope for individual sites may vary from the main scope.

The scope will also include a brief description of the Defined Forest Area.

You are required to notify BSI of any change to your organisation that is relevant to your certification (See section 3.13 Variations to Certification). If you intend adding new land to your scope of certification, this will usually be done at the next scheduled assessment. However, if the additional area needs to be added as a matter of urgency, BSI may need to conduct a special assessment with respect to the new area, before it can be included in your defined forest area.

### 3.10 Refusal of Certification/Recognition

If your organisation is unable to comply with the requirements of the FMS Scheme or the Standard, BSI may refuse to grant certification. The decision to refuse certification, and the grounds for that decision, will be communicated to your organisation in writing.

### 3.11 Suspension of Certification

When an organisation's certification is suspended or refused, the organisation shall, for the period of suspension or refusal:

- Withdraw and cease to use any advertising or promotional material that promotes or advertises the fact that your organisation is certified

- Ensure that all copies of certificates and scopes of certification are removed from areas of public display; and
- Cease to use the certification mark on stationery and other documents including media and packaging that are circulated to existing and potential clients, or in the public domain.

The organisation shall confirm to BSI in writing of action taken with respect to the requirements listed above;

- BSI shall advise the organisation in writing of the certification processes that will need to be completed to restore certification; and
- During the period of suspension the organisation shall continue to pay all fees levied by BSI.

### 3.12 Cancellation of Certificate

BSI is required to advise Responsible Wood within five (5) working days if certification is suspended or withdrawn, or where there are any changes in decisions relating to the status of certification.

When an organisation's certification is cancelled, the organisation shall immediately:

- Cease any advertising and promotional activities that promote the fact that the organisation holds certification;
- Withdraw and cease to use any advertising and promotional material that promotes the fact that the organisation holds certification;
- Cease to use relevant certification marks in any way to promote the fact that the organisation holds certification; and
- Return all certificates and pay outstanding fees.

### 3.13 Changes and Variations to Certification

Your organisation is required to advise BSI if there are any significant changes to your organisation or the scope of certification.

Variations to certification may originate from:

- Change of ownership, management, company name (legal entity), trading name, ABN etc
- Change of scope of certification, location, site addresses
- Significant changes to the DFA e.g., additional areas to be added to the DFA
- Change of authorised representative, contact details and/or Billing Details
- Any event requiring notification to the regulator, e.g., serious safety incident
- Change in business activity/ies, scope of certification (Products and Processes)
- Changes in System Management including Number of employees, covering all shifts and sites

BSI will determine if the degree of change is significant to require an additional assessment or if the changes can be assessed at the next schedule audit.

Clients are obliged to ensure that BSI has been formally briefed in a timely manner when any variations occur. Clients should not wait until the next scheduled assessment to notify BSI. Failure to do so may compromise the organisation's certification status.

### **3.14 Reduction in Scope of Certification**

Should your organisation's scope of certification be reduced, BSI will issue revised certificates with scopes of certification as appropriate, and your organisation is required to:

- Remove all superseded certificates from its system and website;
- Ensure that all advertising and promotional activities and materials are adjusted to reflect the reduced scope of certification; and
- Pay any fees that are applicable for the facilitation of this activity.

### **3.15 Site Sampling**

Sampling is permitted in this scheme.

To qualify for sampling your organisation is required to meet the following requirements:

- Centrally administered under a centrally controlled plan and subject to internal audit and review
- All sites are required to have been internally audited and review prior to the certification process
- An implemented management system shall be in place covering all sites
- All sites are required to meet the requirements of AS/NZS 4708
- Systems shall be in place to collect and analyse data from all sites and the central office

In order to prepare a proposal for provision of certification, BSI will discuss with you the nature of your organisation and determine whether your organisation meets the scheme requirements for multisite sampling. The proposal will include a sampling plan for your on-going assessment.

## **4. Use of the BSI Certification Mark**

You are entitled to use the appropriate BSI Mark of Trust logo and the JASANZ logo whilst you maintain certification to this program with BSI.

Use of the logo is subject to Condition and rules of its application.

## **5. Use of the JASANZ Accreditation Symbol**

Organisations that have been granted certification against AS/NZS 4708 are entitled to use the JASANZ Accreditation Symbol. The rules for the use of this mark are governed by JASANZ. The JASANZ Accreditation Symbol may be used in conjunction with the BSI Mark of Trust.

## 6. Use of the Responsible Wood Logo or PEFC Logo

Organisations that are certified to the Standard are eligible to apply to Responsible Wood for the use of the RW or PEFC Logo. The application forms and fees guide, the rules for use of these logos and the Logo Usage Toolkit are available on the Responsible Wood website.

Please note that you will need to establish a Logo Use Agreement with Responsible Wood prior to the use of the RW or PEFC logos.

## 7. Standard Owner Information and Notification Fees

Responsible Wood (RW) is the owner of this Standard. BSI is responsible for reporting information about your organisation to RW from time to time. Please discuss these with your BSI Client Manager or Assessor if you require clarification on these requirements.

BSI is required to notify RW of any changes in certification (including the issue of new certificates) within 5 business days of any change.

You are also required to provide RW with an annual update confirming the current DFA. This is checked by BSI at each audit.

BSI is required to collect the annual Notification Fee levied by Responsible Wood. The Notification Fee contributes to the cost of running the FMS Scheme. It includes the use of the Responsible Wood logos and the PEFC logos.

The applicable fees are published on the RW website and updated every few years. BSI may charge an administration fee for collecting these fees on behalf of Responsible Wood.

## 8. Confidentiality

BSI will treat all information in accordance with the Privacy Amendment (Enhancing Privacy Protection) Act 2012

## 9. Additional Obligations

In order to maintain certification, your organisation is responsible for:

- Demonstrating continued conformance with the FMS Scheme and Standard;
- Demonstrating compliance with the BSI Standard Commercial Terms and Conditions and obligations as specified in this document as well as other guidance documentation that may be specifically provided from time-to-time;
- Conducting regular internal audit and reviews of your system, with appropriate documentation of such reviews and implementation of any subsequent corrective actions;
- Notification to BSI of any significant changes in the structure (key responsibilities and management system), ownership and operations of your organisation to enable the impact of such changes on the certified ownership system to be evaluated; and
- Notification to BSI of any litigation or serious events or matters that relate to the scope of your certification.
- Notification of any changes that are made to the geographic locality/ies of your organisation's DFA.

- Notifying BSI of any breach of regulatory requirements relating to AS/NZS 4708, or any other event that required notification to the regulator within 5 business days.
- Maintaining a DFA register which details all separately described blocks or forest management units. A system that can track additions and/or deletions to the DFA between audits and provides areas and maps of the changes must also be available.

Your organisation is also required to make the following information publicly available

- Maps of the Defined Forest Area (up-to-date maps of the DFA at a scale no smaller than 1:250,000)
- A Summary of your Forest Management Plan
- Copies of the Summary Audit Reports prepared by BSI (including the most recent recertification assessment and all reports relating to the current certification cycle).

### **9.1 Complaints**

Your organisation is required to keep a record of all complaints relating to the requirements of the FMS scheme. These records must be made available to the audit team and BSI when requested. This includes correspondence, recommendations and actions that have been requested by RW, other clients, stakeholders, organisation or person to which the complaint relates.

Your organisation is required to demonstrate that you have taken appropriate action to address these complaints through investigation and correct any deficiencies found. These actions must be documented.

### **9.2 Certification Agreement**

The BSI Standard Commercial Terms and Conditions and obligations specified in this document constitute your Certification Agreement with BSI.

### **9.3 Assessment Scheduling**

Your organisation is required to make all necessary arrangements to allow the evaluation and surveillance activities to take place.

Your Client Manager will be responsible for scheduling each assessment. BSI will develop an Assessment Plan in consultation with you, prior to each assessment.

BSI will provide you with the opportunity to book and pay for any associated travel and accommodation costs.

### **9.4 Misleading Statements**

Your organisation is not permitted to use its certification in a manner that could bring the BSI into disrepute. This includes making misleading or unauthorized statements. If you are unsure if a statement could be misleading, you are advised to contact BSI prior to making the statement.

Statements include but are not limited to the use of the logo on advertising (including your website) and internal communication.

### **9.5 Observers**

From time to time, BSI or JASANZ may require an Observer to attend an audit. This may be related to training of new staff and witness assessment of existing staff. It is a requirement of certification that your organisation allows these activities to occur.

Failure to allow this activity to occur may result in cancellation of your certification.

BSI will, at all times, ensure that the use of observers is kept to a minimum and your organisation will be advised prior to the assessment activity.

The Observer does not take an active part in an assessment.

### **9.6 Group Forest Certification**

In order to obtain Group Forest Certification, your organisation must be a legal entity, act as the contact point for the entire group, coordinate all communications and audit planning with BSI, and have a legally enforceable agreement with all members covered by the scope of certification.

All members of the group forest certification scheme must go through the certification process concurrently and must operate on essentially similar documentation and procedures. All members must be available for audit (and subsequent audits) at the appropriate time.

Your organisation is required to advise BSI of any changes in group membership without delay.

BSI may provide combined audit reports covering all members of the group forest certification scheme.

Acceptance of an application for a group forest certification scheme is at the discretion of BSI.

## **10. Complaints and Appeals**

To raise a complaint or appeal against the service delivery by BSI or audit outcome, please notify [technical.anz@bsigroup.com](mailto:technical.anz@bsigroup.com)