ASI Oversight Mechanism

Version 2 – June 2020

1. PURPOSE

This procedure describes the various components of the ASI Oversight Mechanism, designed to implement initial and ongoing evaluation and improvement of the competence of assurance providers.

ASI's Oversight Mechanism is designed to be comprehensive and integrated across a range of processes that comprise the ASI assurance system and support the overall integrity of the certification program. Drawing from the ISEAL Assurance Code[1], the relevant desired outcomes of the ASI Oversight Mechanism are that:

- *The ASI assurance system results in accurate assessments of compliance:*
    - o *The assurance system is implemented consistently*
    - o *The assurance system is implemented competently*
    - o *The assurance system is implemented impartially*
- *Effectiveness and efficiency of the ASI assurance system are improved over time:*
    - o *Risks to the integrity of the assurance system are managed*
    - o *The scheme owner is responsible for and makes improvements to the assurance system*

2. SCOPE AND APPLICATION

ASI recognises that it carries overall responsibility for the effective functioning and ongoing improvement of the ASI assurance system. ASI retains the authority to define and oversee implementation of this procedure by the ASI Secretariat and other parties, including independent reviewers, ASI Accredited Auditing Firms, and ASI Accredited Auditors, and ASI Members.

3. DEFINITIONS

Term	Definition
Accreditation Body	An organisation that accredits Conformity Assessment Bodies to ISO/IEC 17021, and/or ISO/IEC 17065 and/or other technical equivalent standard accreditation for conducting certification audits, with accreditation activities conducted in accordance with ISO/IEC 17011.
ASI Accredited Auditing Firm	A Conformity Assessment Body (CAB) meeting ASI's objective selection criteria and accredited to carry out ASI Audits.
ASI Accredited Auditor	A qualified person individually accredited by ASI who conducts ASI Audits on behalf of and under the responsibility of an ASI Accredited Auditing Firm.
ASI Audit	Systematic, independent and documented process for obtaining and assessing objective evidence to determine the extent to which the requirements for ASI Certification are fulfilled by an ASI Member. Audit types include Certification Audits, Surveillance Audits and Re-Certification Audits. *See the ASI Assurance Manual for more information.*
ASI Certification	An attestation issued by ASI, based on the results of an ASI Audit by an ASI Accredited Auditing Firm, that the required level of Conformance has been achieved against the applicable ASI Standard and for the documented Certification Scope.

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[1] ISEAL Code of Good Practice for Assuring Compliance with Social and Environmental Standards

Term	Definition
ASI Secretariat	Individuals employed or contracted by ASI to carry out Secretariat functions for the organisation. This includes responsibility for implementation of the ASI assurance system, including the Oversight Mechanism as noted.
ASI Standards	ASI Performance Standard and ASI Chain of Custody Standard.
Audit Report	Report on the ASI Audit generated by the ASI Accredited Auditing Firm and submitted to the Member and to ASI via the ASI Assurance Platform, *elementAl*.
Audit Support Personnel	Non-auditing personnel affiliated to an ASI Accredited Auditing Firm, managing audit engagements, ASI liaison, or other administrative activities to support ASI Audits.
Certification Scope	The Certification Scope is defined by the Member and sets out what parts of a business, Facilities and/or Business Activities are covered by an ASI Certification.
Conformity Assessment Body (CAB)	An independent third party organisation that undertakes conformity assessment techniques and activities, including audits.
Impartiality	Presence of objectivity. Other terms that are useful in conveying the element of impartiality include "independence", "freedom from conflict of interests", "freedom from bias", "lack of prejudice", "neutrality", "fairness", "open-mindedness", "even-handedness", "detachment" and "balance". (adapted from ISO/IEC 17011:2017)
Lead Auditor	A qualified person responsible for the overall conduct of an ASI Audit and who can lead an Audit Team.
Member	An entity or group of entities that is a current member of one of ASI's six membership classes: • Production and Transformation (eligible for ASI Certification) • Industrial Users (eligible for ASI Certification) • Civil Society • Downstream Supporters • Associations • General Supporters.
Registered Specialist	A person registered by ASI as being a technical expert that can support the implementation or assessment of ASI Standards. Registered Specialists may be used by Members and Auditors. *Note: a Registered Specialist currently offering consultancy or having offered consultancy in the last two years to a Member as it relates to the Members self assessment or in the development of a Member's systems to conform to requirements in an ASI Standard, cannot be part of that Member's ASI Audit team, as this represents a conflict of interest.*
Oversight	Assessment of an assurance provider's demonstration of competence to carry out specific assurance tasks. *(adapted from ISO 17000, sourced from ISEAL Assurance Code V2.0)*
Proxy accreditation	A type of oversight employed by a scheme, whereby recognition of another scheme's oversight mechanism is deemed sufficient to demonstrate assurance. *(sourced from ISEAL Assurance Code V2.0)*

Term	Definition
Witness Assessments	Observation conducted or arranged by ASI of an ASI Accredited Auditing Firm carrying out an ASI Audit within its ASI Accreditation Scope. (adapted from ISO 17011: 2017 definition of 'witnessing')
Witness Assessor	Person assigned by ASI to perform, alone or as part of an assessment team, a Witness Assessment of an ASI Accredited Auditing Firm. (adapted from ISO 17011: 2017 definition of 'assessor')

4. REFERENCES

- ASI Assurance Manual
- ASI Auditor Accreditation Procedure
- ASI Auditor Competence and Assessment Procedure
- ASI Registered Specialists Competence and Assessment Procedure
- ASI Audit Report Oversight Assessment Procedure
- ASI Witness Assessments Procedure
- ASI Impartiality Reviews Procedure
- ASI Management Reviews Procedure
- ASI IT and Data Governance Handbook
- ASI Complaints Mechanism
- ASI Standards Setting Procedure
- ASI Governance Handbook
- ISEAL Code of Good Practice for Assuring Compliance with Social and Environmental Standards
- ISO/IEC 17011:2017 *Conformity assessment — Requirements for accreditation bodies accrediting conformity assessment bodies*
- ISO/IEC 17021-1:2015 *Conformity assessment — Requirements for bodies providing audit and certification of management systems — Part 1: Requirements*
- ISO/IEC 17065:2012 *Conformity assessment -- Requirements for bodies certifying products, processes and services.*

5. PROCEDURE

5.1. Roles and Responsibilities

1. The table below sets out key roles and responsibilities for Oversight:

Role	Responsibilities
CEO	• Overall management of organisational risk management systems. • Overall management of organisational data governance systems. • Providing appropriate resources for oversight processes to be carried out efficiently and effectively. • Reporting any material issues or significant improvement opportunities to the ASI Board. • Approving new or updated procedures.
Director of Assurance	• Overall functioning and improvement of the assurance system, including associated information and risk management. • Overall management of oversight processes, including planning, regular reviews and internal reporting. • Identifying and actioning opportunities to improve the ASI assurance system, auditor competency, data governance and/or other aspects of ASI's systems.
Director of Impacts and Partnerships	• Overall management and implementation of the ASI Monitoring and Evaluation Plan as relevant to the Oversight Mechanism.
Director of Standards	• Updates to the Assurance Manual in accordance with the ASI Standards Setting Procedure.
elementAl Manager	• Effective functioning of the ASI Assurance Platform, elementAl.
Learning Manager	• Development and implementation of resources for auditor competence building and evaluation.
Data Governance Manager	• Data governance in accordance with the ASI Monitoring and Evaluation Plan as relevant to the Oversight Mechanism.

2. Personnel carrying out Oversight activities shall gain and/or maintain in-depth knowledge of the ASI Standard/s and intent, and of the ASI Assurance Manual.

3. Where this knowledge is not in place through involvement in ASI standards development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation and/or training delivery, relevant training courses on the ASI program are available through:
https://asi-educational.thinkific.com/collections

5.2. Overview

4. Figure 1 below sets out the five main components of the ASI Oversight Mechanism. They are each addressed in more detail in sections 5.3 to 5.7 below.

Figure 1 – The 5 main components of the ASI Oversight Mechanism

5. The following table summarises who carries out the respective roles of 'assurance providers' and 'oversight bodies', as per the ISEAL Assurance Code and Figure 1 above:

Role	Carried out by
Assurance providers	• ASI Accredited Auditing Firms, through their individual ASI Accredited Auditors, Audit Support Personnel and Registered Specialists (where relevant).
Oversight bodies *Note: all must be independent from the assurance providers*	• Accreditation Bodies carry out oversight of ASI Accredited Auditing Firms *(1: Proxy accreditation of Auditing Firms)*. • ASI carries out oversight of ASI Accredited Auditors *(2: Individual accreditation of Auditors)*, training and assessment *(3: Competence building and evaluation)*, ASI Audit Reports *(4: Audit report oversight assessments)*, and carries out relevant internal reviews (*5: Internal and external reviews*). • Other external/independent service providers are contracted by ASI as additional oversight bodies for relevant external reviews and reporting back to ASI *(5: Internal and external reviews)*. These must be legally incorporated entities.

6. All oversight bodies have the authority to take action regarding the compliance status of assurance providers as relevant to Oversight Components 1-5, which may be taken directly or by raising matters to ASI for action.

5.3. Oversight Component 1 – Proxy accreditation of Auditing Firms

7. Operating procedures that apply:

ASI Procedure	Application	Frequency

Auditor Accreditation	• Specifies the criteria and processes for accepting Conformity Assessment Bodies as ASI Accrediting Firms and qualified persons as ASI Accredited Auditors.
	• ASI uses a 'proxy accreditation' as part of its criteria to assess Conformity Assessment Bodies that have been accredited against other scopes.
	• Independent accreditation bodies must be a member of the International Accreditation Forum or equivalent organisation, and comply with the current version of ISO/IEC 17011.
	   o They oversee ISO/IEC 17021 and/or ISO/IEC 17065 and/or other technical equivalent standard accreditation for Conformity Assessment Bodies.
	   o They provide publicly available information on the accreditation status and scope of applicant and currently accredited ASI Accredited Auditing Firms, which is checked by ASI.
	• ASI Accredited Auditing Firms are required to complete an Annual Renewal Confirmation with annual payment of their accreditation fee to continue their ASI Accreditation status.
		Initial application from a Conformity Assessment Body
		+
		Changes, updates and reporting

5.4. Oversight Component 2 – Individual accreditation of Auditors

8. Operating procedures that apply:

ASI Procedure	Application	Frequency
Auditor Accreditation	• Sets out the competence and other criteria for accepting individuals as ASI Accredited Auditors and support personnel.	Initial or Scope Change application from an Individual Auditor
Registered Specialists	• Sets out the requirements for applicants to become ASI Registered Specialists. • Where ASI Audit teams have a requirement for specialist knowledge, they may include technical experts or Registered Specialists working under the direction of a Lead Auditor.	Initial application from a Registered Specialist

5.5. Oversight Component 3 – Competence building and evaluation

9. Operating procedures that apply:

ASI Procedure	Application	Frequency
Auditor Competence and Assessment	• Sets out ASI's processes for mandatory initial, refresher and calibration training modules for all ASI Accredited Auditors. • Sets out ASI's processes for training participants to demonstrate understanding of the learning objectives in each module through formal assessment.	Initial and periodic training and assessment

ASI Procedure	Application	Frequency
	• Audit Support Personnel are also encouraged to participate in these training modules but this is not mandatory. • These competence and assessment processes are a supplementary measure to proxy accreditation to enhance competence and consistency of assurance.	
Registered Specialists Competence and Assessment	• Sets out ASI's processes for mandatory initial, refresher and calibration training modules for all ASI Registered Specialists. • Sets out ASI's processes for training participants to demonstrate understanding of the learning objectives in each module through formal assessment.	Initial and periodic training and assessment
Assurance Manual	• Comprehensive manual to be used by ASI Accredited Auditing Firms and ASI Accredited Auditors when carrying out activities and responsibilities associated with ASI Certification. • The Manual is operationalised through *elementAl*, the ASI Assurance Platform, to enhance consistency and efficiency. • The Manual was developed and is updated through a multi-stakeholder process, as described in the ASI Standards Setting Procedure.	Each ASI Audit

5.6. Oversight Component 4 – Audit report oversight assessments

10. Operating procedures that apply:

ASI Procedure	Application	Frequency

Audit Report Oversight Assessment	• All submitted Audit Reports are subject to an internal assessment by ASI to:
	  o confirm that the ASI Accredited Auditing Firm has conducted and documented ASI Audits consistent with the requirements of the ASI Assurance Manual,
	  o through direct feedback, enhance competence and consistency of assurance providers, and
	  o identify ongoing improvement opportunities in ASI's assurance system.
	• This is a supplementary measure to proxy accreditation to enable:
	  o in-depth monitoring of defined issues across all assurance providers
	  o review assurance data, including audit time, shared through elementAl to ensure its adequacy for the audit objectives
	  o subsequent follow-up for any issues or discrepancies discovered.
		Every Audit Report

Publication of Summary Audit Reports	• As noted in the ASI Assurance Manual (section 8.18), Summary Audit Reports are published. • This enhances transparency and provide a means for feedback or queries from stakeholders about ASI Audits, which can further inform ASI oversight activities.	Every Audit Report

5.7. Oversight Component 5 – Internal and external reviews

11. Operating procedures that apply:

ASI Procedure	Application	Frequency
Witness Assessments	• Sets out the requirements for the conduct of Witness Assessments, including the selection of the Witness Assessors.	Every 3 years for each Accredited Auditing Firm, or as required
Impartiality Reviews	• Sets out the processes for independent reviews of the impartiality of decision-making for accreditation and certification.	Annual
Management Reviews	• Sets out how internal management reviews of ASI's management systems are carried out to ensure their continuing suitability, adequacy, effectiveness and alignment with the organisation's strategy.	Annual or more frequently as required
ISEAL Membership – Independent Evaluations and other reviews	• ASI became an ISEAL Full Member in December 2019. • Findings from external ISEAL reviews will be used to identify and implement corrective actions and improvement opportunities for the ASI assurance system.	Annual per Code and others as scheduled

5.8. Other operating procedures relevant to the ASI Oversight Mechanism

12. Other operating procedures that apply generally:

ASI Procedure	Application

IT and Data Governance	• The ASI IT and Data Governance Handbook sets out the resources and process to support data consistency, access and integrity for the data ASI manages generally, and for assurance data specifically in section 6.5. It also lists the data sources ASI uses to monitor risks to the integrity of the assurance system.
	• Applicable ASI Policies in the appendices are:
	    o elementAl System Users Policy
	    o Knack (elementAl) Security Information Policy
	    o Privacy Policy
	    o Confidentiality Policy
	    o Data Publication Policy

Complaints Mechanism	• ASI Accredited Auditing Firms and Accredited Auditors are subject to the ASI Complaints Mechanism. • Complaints processes may trigger additional internal or external reviews (Oversight Component 5 above).

5.9. Assurance and Oversight Data Management in *elementAl*

13. ASI assurance data is managed through ASI's custom-built online assurance platform, *elementAl*. Secure and tailored Dashboards for managing assurance workflows are available for ASI Members, ASI Accredited Auditors, and the Secretariat.

- *elementAl* guides the workflows for the ASI assurance system, with each ASI Accredited Auditor given a unique user account.
- A Help Desk and FAQ facility are maintained by the ASI Secretariat within the platform. In addition to providing user support, these are also used to identify additional learning needs for ASI Accredited Auditors as part of 'Oversight Component 3 – Competence building and evaluation.'

14. Additional or supporting records are maintained in Box, Insightly, Thinkific and Brillium.

6. RECORDS

Records associated with oversight mechanisms described in the procedure will be securely maintained by the ASI Secretariat for at least 10 years from the date the records were generated.

7. DOCUMENT CONTROL

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Version History	Version 1 – Issue August 2018 Version 2 – Updated to address ISEAL Assurance Code V2 and generally improve structure, flow and clarity.

Please refer to the ASI Website > Document Depot for the latest version of this procedure.