ASI Standards Benchmarking and Recognition Procedure

V2 – February 2022

1   PURPOSE

The Aluminium Stewardship Initiative (ASI) aims to recognise relevant Certification Schemes wherever possible and appropriate, in order to enhance collaboration, reduce unnecessary duplication, and inform ASI's learning and continual improvement.

This procedure outlines the process to be followed by the ASI Secretariat for identification, prioritisation, benchmarking and review of Certification Schemes for potential recognition with, including recognition by and of, ASI Standards.

Benchmarking against and recognition of and by other certification schemes facilitates:

- increased uptake of ASI membership and certification, particularly by Entities engaged in activities beyond the aluminium value chain
- informed revision of ASI Standards (particularly where the ASI Standard may be lower in performance requirements by comparison) and supporting documents and activities (e.g. Guidance, Learning & Training).

This in turn has the potential to improve responsible production, sourcing and material stewardship of aluminium, as per ASI's mission.

The Benchmarking and Recognition Procedure has been developed with reference to the ISEAL Codes of Good Practice (Standards Setting Code, Impacts Code and the Assurance Code) and the ISEAL Sustainability Benchmarking Good Practice Guide.

This procedure must be read in conjunction with the ASI Standards Setting Procedure, the ASI Log of External Standards and Schemes, and the ASI Assurance Manual.

2   SCOPE AND APPLICATION

This procedure outlines:

- The steps to identify, prioritise and review relevant Certification Schemes for benchmarking and recognition with ASI Standards and Assurance program
- The framework for having the ASI Standards and Assurance program benchmarked and recognised by Certification Schemes.

ASI looks at both performance requirements (standard requirements and guidance) and the operational system that support standards' uptake (assurance, governance and claims) when benchmarking Certification Schemes. These requirements are based on the 'Core elements for benchmarking sustainability standards' as outlined in the ISEAL Sustainability Benchmarking Good Practice Guide and described in more information below:

Element of Scheme	Details	How assessed
Governance and Management	How the external Standards system is structured and implemented, including the governance structure, standard-setting processes (including	Description of Scheme's Governance

	stakeholder participation) and grievance or dispute resolution mechanisms.	and Management system
Scope and Uptake	The breadth and scale of uptake of the Certification Scheme with relevance to the aluminium value chain, which includes the geographical scope, the strategies or services used to stimulate uptake of the standard, and the extent of that uptake. For example, a rigorous standard with little market uptake will not be of value in sourcing decisions.	Description of Scheme's Scope and Uptake
Standard Requirements	The sustainability criteria delineated in the ASI Performance and/or Chain of Custody standard against which the Certification Scheme is benchmarked.	All criteria need to be Met
Assurance System	The assurance elements of the Certification Scheme, including the certification procedures, requirements for conformance, competencies required of auditors or evaluators, accreditation or oversight of the assurance providers, and transparency of audit/certification results.	All criteria need to be Met
Claims	The level and type of sustainability claims allowed within the external standards system and by the participating entities.	Description of Scheme's Claims guidelines

This procedure describes roles and responsibilities for the ASI Secretariat and the ASI Standards Benchmarking and Harmonisation Working Group (SBHWG).

3   DEFINITIONS

Term	Definition
ASI Standards	Includes the ASI Performance Standard and the ASI Chain of Custody Standard.
ASI Standards Benchmarking and Harmonisation Working Group (SBHWG)	ASI Working Group convened by the Standards Committee to review a range of relevant externally recognised Standards, Certification Schemes for benchmarking and recognition with ASI Standards. *Since ASI sets the criteria for recognition and holds relationships with some of the Standards and Schemes seeking recognition, ASI's SBHWG acts as an independent group that reviews the results from ASI's Benchmarking Assessments. This contributes to objectivity of the assessment results and perception of bias.* SBHWG will be used in this document as the abbreviation for *ASI Standards Benchmarking and Harmonisation Working Group.*
ASI Working Group	A group comprised of experts and interested stakeholders convened by the Standards Committee to address and review a particular topic or task related to standards programs.

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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.
Certification (ASI Certification)	ASI Certification is 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.
Certification Scheme	A set of common requirements for third party Accredited Auditors conducting Certification audits against a certifiable Standard. *Examples of Certification Schemes include those for international Standards such as ISO 14001, ISO 45001, SA 8000, etc. or those for sector or supply chain Standards with third party audits such as Forest Stewardship Council or the Responsible Jewellery Council for their respective Chain of Custody Standards.*
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
Standards Committee	ASI Standards Committee as defined in the ASI Constitution.
Stakeholders	Persons or groups who are directly or indirectly affected by a project and its Associated Facilities, as well as those who may have interests in a project and/or the ability to influence its outcome, either positively or negatively. From a Due Diligence perspective impacted Stakeholders will be the priority for engagement and may include but are not limited to: • Workers (including local and Migrant Workers) and Labour Unions • Land owners and other resource users • Artisanal miners • Governments (local, regional and national) • Civil society organisations, including environmental and Community-based organisations and local Human Rights defenders Additionally, interested Stakeholders that may be important for meaningful engagement can include: • Industry peers • Investors/shareholders • Business partners • Scientific community • The media

	• Ecosystems and biodiversity features (represented by advocates) (Derived from the OECD Due Diligence Guidance for Meaningful Stakeholder Engagement in the Extractives Sector)
Standard	Document that provides, for common and repeated use, rules, guidelines or characteristic for products or related processes and production methods, with which compliance is voluntary (ISEAL Code of Good Practice for Setting Social and Environmental Standards).

4   REFERENCES

- ASI Assurance Manual
- ASI Chain of Custody Standard
- ASI Chain of Custody Standard Guidance
- ASI Claims Guide
- ASI Complaints Mechanism
- ASI Communications Procedure for Changes to ASI Documents
- ASI Glossary
- ASI Governance Handbook
- ASI Log of External Standards and Schemes
- ASI Performance Standard
- ASI Performance Standard Guidance
- ASI Standards Benchmarking and Harmonisation Working Group Terms of Reference
- ASI Standards Setting Procedure
- ISEAL Code of Good Practice for Setting Social and Environmental Standards
- ISEAL Code of Good Practice for Assessing the Impacts of Social and Environmental Standards
- ISEAL Code of Good Practice for Assuring Compliance with Social and Environmental Standards
- ISEAL Sustainability Benchmarking Good Practice Guide
- ISO/IEC Guide 2 Standardization and related activities -- General vocabulary

5   PROCEDURE

There are four steps to be followed for recognition of Certification Schemes with the current ASI Standards and for consideration in future reviews of the ASI Standards. The steps are shown in the diagram below.
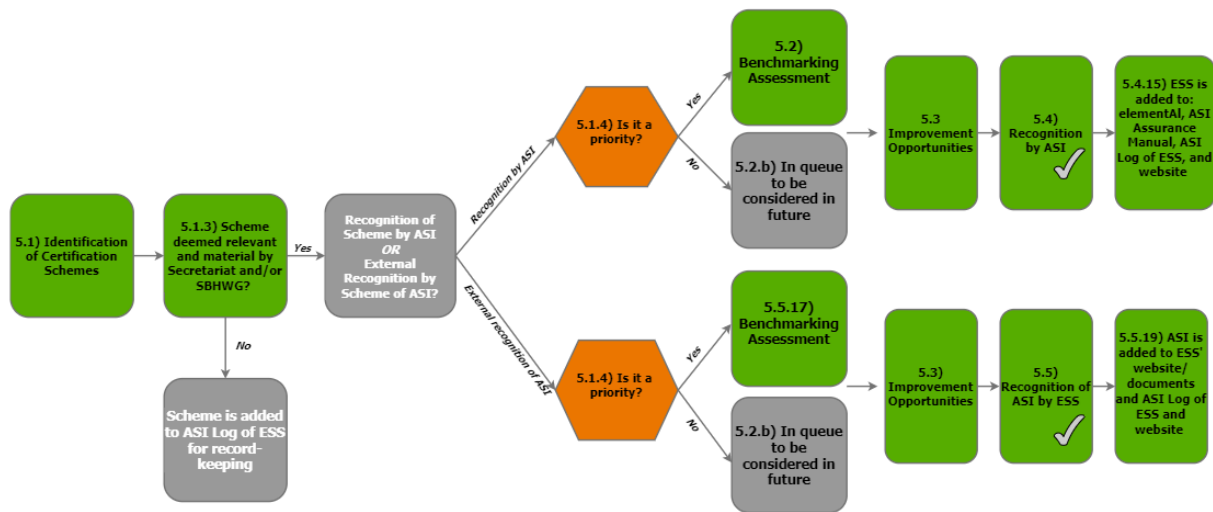
The ASI Log of External Standards and Schemes contains corresponding tables with the steps in this procedure listing all the Standards and Schemes that have been recommended to ASI.

Each step is described in more detail below.

5.1   Identification of Certification Schemes and prioritisation

1. The ASI Secretariat and the Standards Benchmarking and Harmonisation Working Group (SBHWG) will periodically identify and review new, or changes to existing Certification Schemes for potential recognition.

2. Any Stakeholder, including ASI Members, Standards Committee and/or Working Group participants, Auditors, and Schemes, can also identify and propose Certification Schemes for potential benchmarking with the ASI Standards and Assurance program, and for ASI to be benchmarked by Certification Schemes.

3. The ASI Secretariat and/or the SBHWG will review the proposed Certification Scheme to determine if it is relevant and material to ASI, and agree whether to carry out an ASI Benchmarking Assessment (5.2). Since the process to recognise a Certification Scheme can be time-consuming and resource intensive, and the ASI Secretariat has limited resources, a prioritisation process will be regularly undertaken to determine which Certification Schemes are deemed most urgent to undergo a benchmarking assessment.

4. ASI has seven main factors that it considers in determining priority of a Certification Scheme to be recognised by ASI, or external recognition of ASI. These include:
    a) An updated version of a Certification Scheme (that has already been recognised by ASI or of ASI) has been published
    b) Requests from ASI Members
    c) ASI Secretariat resources and budget
    d) Likelihood of successful recognition outcome
    e) Number and type of recognition activities that can feasibly be managed in parallel
    f) Global applicability of the Certification Scheme
    g) Relevance/urgency to complete the recognition process during a Standards Revision process, where applicable.

All these factors will be taken into consideration by the Secretariat when prioritising a Standard or Scheme to the SBHWG.

5. The ASI Log of External Standards and Schemes will be maintained with all identified Standards and Schemes and their status.
    a) Standards or Schemes that have been prioritised will be scheduled to undergo a Benchmarking Assessment (5.2).
    b) Standards and Schemes of interest may be placed in a 'queue' to be considered for this process in future.
    c) The remainder will not progress to a Benchmarking Assessment.

5.2   Benchmarking Assessment

6. Once a Certification Scheme has been prioritised, the ASI Secretariat will complete the ASI Benchmarking Assessment Checklist. The ASI Benchmarking Assessment Checklist includes the performance requirements and operational system required as described under section 2 of this document.

7. It will also be assessed whether there are opportunities to harmonise aspects of the Scheme into current or future revisions of the ASI Standards and assurance process, and if so:
    a) The relevant steps and timeframes
    b) Whether there are additional evidence requirements or conditions that would need to be communicated to Members and/or Auditors in order for recognition to be implemented
    c) Which changes in elementAl would be required to support the recognition.

8. The ASI Secretariat will discuss the results of the ASI Benchmarking Assessment with the SBHWG. The results of the ASI Benchmarking Assessment will be recorded in the SBHWG's meeting minutes, or other documentation, for communication to the ASI Standards Committee.

9. The ASI Standards Committee is responsible for reviewing and endorsing the recommendations made by the ASI Secretariat or the SBHWG, for further action as appropriate.

5.3   Improvement opportunities

10. Benchmarking Assessments may be used to identify improvement opportunities within ASI or within the external Certification Schemes.

11. If the ASI Benchmarking Assessment Checklist (conducted in section 5.2) finds that the requirements of the external Standards and the associated assurance processes are greater than those defined in the ASI Standards or other ASI Documents, these will be logged by the ASI Secretariat for consideration during the next ASI Standards revision process, as set out in the ASI Standards Setting Procedure.

12. If the ASI Benchmarking Assessment Checklist finds that the Certification Scheme has lower or different performance requirements, recognition by ASI may not be possible unless additional conditions and gaps to address the difference are implemented by the Scheme. This information may be shared with owner of the Scheme as appropriate, particularly where they have requested a benchmarking assessment be conducted by ASI.

5.4 Recognition by ASI

13. A formal recognition of a Certification Scheme will be documented in the recognition table in the ASI Assurance Manual, the ASI Log of External Standards and Schemes, the ASI website and implemented through the associated recognition functionality in elementAl.

14. The ASI Board is responsible for approving the initiation of Standards Revision processes, as per the ASI Standards Setting Procedure.

15. For ASI recognition of a Certification Scheme to take effect, it must be approved by the ASI Standards Committee and adopted by the ASI Board. Following approval, the ASI Secretariat will:

    a. Update the recognition table in the ASI Assurance Manual, the ASI Log of External Standards and Schemes, and ASI website

    b. Update the associated recognition functionality in elementAl

    c. Communicate changes in accordance with the ASI Communications Procedure for Changes to ASI Documents.

16. The ASI Secretariat and SBHWG will monitor the Certification Scheme for revisions and changes that may affect the recognition.

5.5 External recognition of ASI Standards

17. Once an external recognition has been prioritised under 5.1.4, the ASI Secretariat will work with the owner of the Standard to complete the benchmarking or recognition assessment process.

18. The ASI Secretariat will report progress on the recognition process to the ASI SBHWG, ASI Board and the ASI Standards Committee in accordance with their meeting schedules and agendas.

19. Once the external benchmarking or recognition process is complete, the ASI Secretariat will communicate the results on the ASI website and in the ASI Log of External Standards and Schemes as appropriate. The external Standard or Scheme will communicate the results of the recognition according to their own processes and procedures.

20. The ASI Secretariat and SBHWG will monitor the external Standard or Scheme for revisions and changes that may affect the recognition.

6 RECORDS

Records associated with the Standards benchmarking and recognition processes described in the Procedure will be maintained in Box by the ASI Secretariat for at least 5 years from the date the records were generated.

7 DOCUMENT CONTROL

Document Name	ASI Standards Benchmarking and Recognition Procedure
Document ID	ASI-PRO-10
Revision	Version 2
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Approved By	CEO
Next Review Date	3 years or as required

Version History	Version 1 – Issue June 2019
	Version 2 – Updated to address Standards Committee decision in 2021 that ASI only recognises standards and schemes that verify compliance through independent third-party certification, align with the revised ASI Assurance Manual, ASI Log of External Standards and Schemes and ASI Benchmarking Assessment Checklist, add additional details on the Scope and Application and changed name from 'Standards Benchmarking & Harmonisation Procedure' to 'Standards Benchmarking & Recognition Procedure'.

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