ASI Standards Benchmarking and Recognition Procedure

Version 3 – July 2024

1. PURPOSE

The Aluminium Stewardship Initiative (ASI) aims to recognise relevant Standards Systems 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 Standards Systems for potential recognition with, including recognition by and of, ASI Standards.

Benchmarking is the comparison of ASI Standards with an external Standards System.

Recognition of an external Standards System by ASI means that ASI accepts as Equivalent the whole Standard or Scheme, or section(s) of it.

Recognition of ASI by an external Standards System means that the external Standards System accepts the ASI Performance or CoC Standard as Equivalent, or section(s) of it.

Recognition of ASI and by ASI facilitates:

- Reduced duplication and administrative burden of ASI Certified Entities and ASI Accredited Auditors
- Increased drivers for, benefit from and/or 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 Code of Good Practice for Sustainability Systems and the ISEAL Sustainability Benchmarking Good Practice Guide.

2. SCOPE AND APPLICATION

This procedure outlines the steps to identify, prioritise and review relevant Standards Systems for benchmarking and recognition with ASI Standards and Assurance program. Within its recognition process, ASI differentiates between:

1. **Full Equivalence:** where an external Standards System is assessed as being equivalent to the whole ASI Standard
2. **Partial Equivalence:** where an external Standards System is equivalent with specific section(s) of the ASI Standard.

3. DEFINITIONS

Term	Definition
ASI Standards	Includes the ASI Performance Standard and the ASI Chain of Custody Standard.
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.
Benchmarking	The comparison of an ASI Standard with an external Standards System.
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.
Equivalence (Full or Partial)	Where an external Standards System is assessed as being equivalent to the whole ASI Standard (Full) or with specific section(s) of the ASI Standard (Partial).
Minor Gap	Where the scope and intent (and therefore likely outcomes) of the requirements are the same, even if there are minor differences in the details of the requirements and/or language used.
Major Gap	Where the scope and intent (and therefore likely outcomes) of the requirement are not the same.
Not Applicable	Requirements that are beyond the scope of the Standards System because the Standards System was not designed with those issues in mind, or those issues that are specific to a type of metal or type of production process not included in the scope of the Standards System are considered not applicable.

4. REFERENCES

- ASI Assurance Manual
- ASI Benchmarking Assessment
- ASI Chain of Custody Standard
- ASI Chain of Custody Standard Guidance
- ASI Glossary
- ASI Log of External Standards and Schemes
- ASI Performance Standard
- ASI Performance Standard Guidance
- ASI Standards Setting and Revision Procedure
- ISEAL Code of Good Practice for Sustainability Systems
- ISEAL Sustainability Benchmarking Good Practice Guide
- ISO/IEC Guide 2 Standardization and related activities -- General vocabulary

5. PROCESS OVERVIEW

There are four steps to be followed for recognition of Standards Systems with the current ASI Standards and for consideration in future reviews of the ASI Standards. These include:

- Identification of Standards Systems and Prioritisation
- Benchmarking Assessment
- Outcome and Improvement Opportunities
- Recognition by ASI

Each of these steps is explained in more detail in the sections below.

6. IDENTIFICATION OF STANDARDS SYSTEMS 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, Standards Systems for potential recognition.
2. During ASI Standards Setting and Revision periods, based on research, consultation, and Stakeholder engagement, the ASI Standards Team and Standards Committee (supported by relevant Working Groups) shall identify external Standards with complementary or overlapping scopes and shall develop options to further strengthen alignment and reduce duplication (see ASI Standards Setting and Revision Procedure V5 8.1.1).

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

4. The ASI Secretariat and/or the SBHWG will review the proposed Standards Systems to determine if it is relevant and material to ASI and agree whether to carry out an ASI Benchmarking Assessment (see section 7). Since the process to recognise a Standards System can be time-consuming and resource intensive, and the ASI Secretariat has limited resources, a prioritisation process will be regularly undertaken to determine which Standards System are deemed most urgent to undergo a Benchmarking Assessment.

5. ASI has seven main factors that it considers in determining priority of a Standards System to be recognised by ASI, or external recognition of ASI. These include:

    a) An updated version of a Standards System (that has already been recognised by ASI, or of ASI) has been published

    b) Requests from ASI Members that identify the potential value of recognition for ASI

    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 Standards System

    g) Relevance/urgency to complete the recognition process during a Standards Revision process, where applicable.

6. All these factors will be taken into consideration by the Secretariat when prioritising a Standards System.

7. Standards Systems that have been prioritised will be scheduled to undergo a Benchmarking Assessment (see section 7). Standards Systems of interest may be placed in a 'queue' to be considered for this process in the future. The remainder will not progress to a Benchmarking Assessment.

7. BENCHMARKING ASSESSMENT

8. Once a Standard or Certification Scheme has been prioritised, the ASI Secretariat will complete the ASI Benchmarking Assessment Checklist.

9. ASI looks at both standard requirements and the operational system (including scheme governance, standard setting and revision, assurance and claims) when benchmarking external Standards Systems.

10. For the standard requirements, ASI will assess if the requirements of the Standard System's standard are found to be materially comparable in scope and intent to the ASI Performance and/or Chain of Custody Standard criteria. This determination is made for each individual criterion separately and will be rated based on the following terms:

   a) **Minor or no gaps:** where the scope and intent (and therefore likely outcomes) of the requirements are the same, even if there are minor differences in the details of the requirements and/or language used.

   b) **Major gaps:** where the scope and intent (and therefore likely outcomes) of the requirement are not the same.

   c) **Not Applicable:** requirements that are beyond the scope of the Standards System because the Standards System was not designed with those issues in mind, or those issues that are specific to a type of metal or type of production process not included in the scope of the Standards System are considered not applicable.

11. ASI will review whether the System's operational system is materially comparable in scope and intent to ASI's operational system. This is done by completing the ASI Benchmarking Assessment, which is based on the ISEAL Sustainability Benchmarking Good Practice Guide, Annex 3, Benchmark Criteria for Evaluating Sustainability Standards.

12. Standards Systems that are governed by national standards bodies (such as the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) Standards or European Standards (EN)) will automatically meet ASI's operational system requirements under 11 as the certification process is covered by CASCO Standards (ISO's Committee on Conformity Assessment) or EN ISO 14025 (in the case of EN). ASI has determined that the assurance processes associated with the ISO and EN Standards, including the accreditation processes for Conformity Assessment Bodies (CABs), are consistent with the requirements of the ASI assurance framework as outlined in relevant ASI policies and procedures.

8. OUTCOME AND IMPROVEMENT OPPORTUNITIES

13. Results from the ASI Benchmarking Assessment are shared and discussed between the ASI Secretariat and external Standards System.

14. If the ASI Benchmarking Assessment identifies only Minor or no gaps in the external Standards System, it is considered Fully or Partially Equivalent.

15. Where the operational system of the external Standard System (including assurance) is also considered Equivalent, the relevant criterion will not need to be (re)audited during an ASI audit (please refer to ASI Assurance Manual for more detail).

16. If the ASI Benchmarking Assessment identifies Major gaps in the external Standards System, an action plan to address these gaps is developed and agreed to by the external Standards System where applicable. Additional checklists or 'bolt-on' requirements to achieve Equivalence may also be agreed at this stage.

17. If the ASI Benchmarking Assessment finds that the requirements of the external Standards System 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.

18. Benchmarking Assessments may be used to identify improvement opportunities within ASI or within the external Standards System.

9. RECOGNITION BY ASI

19. Based on points 14-16 above, the ASI Secretariat makes a recommendation to the ASI Standards Committee whether to recognise the external Standards System as Fully or Partially Equivalent.

20. This would be documented in the ASI Assurance Manual.

21. Following Standards Committee approval, the Recognition and updated Assurance Manual would be sent to the ASI Board for adoption as an ASI By-Law.

22. Once the Recognition has been approved by the ASI Board, the ASI Secretariat will:
    a) Update the ASI Log of External Standards Systems, 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.

23. The ASI Secretariat will monitor the Standards System for revisions and changes that may affect the recognition.

10. EXTERNAL RECOGNITION OF ASI

24. Once a recognition of ASI by an external Standards System has been prioritised under 5, the ASI Secretariat will work with the owner of the external Standards System to complete the benchmarking assessment process.

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

26. Once the external benchmarking assessment process is complete and recognition of ASI has been achieved, the ASI Secretariat will communicate the results on the ASI website and through associated communications, and in the ASI Log of External

Standards Systems as appropriate. The external Standards System will communicate the results of the recognition according to their own processes and procedures.

27. The ASI Secretariat will monitor the external Standards System for revisions and changes that may affect the recognition.

11. DOCUMENT CONTROL

Document Name	ASI Standards Benchmarking and Recognition Procedure
Revision	Version 3
Publication Date	July 2024
Approved By	CEO
Next Review Date	3 years or as required
Revision History	Version 1 – Issue June 2019
Version 2 – Updated in February 2022 to address Standards Committee decision in 2021 that ASI only recognises standards and schemes that verify compliance through independent third-party certification. Aligned with the revised ASI Assurance Manual, ASI Log of External Standards and Schemes and ASI Benchmarking Assessment Checklist, added additional details on the Scope and Application and changed name from 'Standards Benchmarking & Harmonisation Procedure' to 'Standards Benchmarking & Recognition Procedure'.
Version 2.1 – Updated in March 2022 to differentiate between ISO/EN Standards and all other standards, specified that ASI recognises 'Standards and Certification Schemes'.
Version 3 – Updated in July 2024 to make distinction between Full and Partial Equivalence, clarify the rating (minor and major gap) and simplify the procedure and definitions overall.

Please refer to the *ASI Box Folder >*
https://aluminiumstewardship.app.box.com/folder/58285093795 for the latest version of this procedure.