

Solar Stewardship Initiative

Assessment Body and Assessor Approval Procedure

v.2.1 | August 2025

Intellectual Property Notice

The present document was drafted and issued by the Solar Stewardship Initiative (referred to as 'SSI') in November 2023.

All copyrights in this document are held by the SSI. Copying, adapting, publishing or otherwise using this document or the content thereof, other than for the purpose mentioned in this document, without the explicit authorization by the SSI, will be considered a copyright infringement. The SSI reserves all rights in that regard.

The words "SSI", "Solar Stewardship Initiative" and the logos included in this document are trademarks of the SSI. They may only be used with the explicit consent of the SSI and subject to the conditions set by the SSI. All other use of those signs will be considered a trademark infringement. The SSI reserves all rights in that regard.

The Solar Stewardship Initiative

The Solar Stewardship Initiative (SSI) works with industry participants including manufacturers and buyers of solar photovoltaic modules, as well as other stakeholders including civil society, NGOs, intergovernmental institutions, international financial institutions, academics and independent experts with human rights and environmental expertise to collaboratively foster responsible production, sourcing, and stewardship of materials in the solar value chain. The SSI's mission is to enhance sustainability, and environmental, social, governance (ESG) performance across the solar supply chain.

Businesses actively involved in the solar value chain can apply to join the SSI and have their certified against the SSI Standards.

The SSI's core objectives are to:

- Ensure the energy transition is just, inclusive, and respects people's human rights.
- Establish mechanisms to create supply-chain transparency in the global solar industry.
- Enable continuous improvement of ESG performance and level of transparency.
- Prepare the industry for relevant upcoming laws and regulations on ESG, transparency and responsible supply chains.

About This Document

The SSI Assessment Body and Assessor Approval Procedure establishes the requirements and processes governing the recognition and oversight of independent Assessment Bodies (ABs) and assessors engaged in conducting assessments against the SSI Standards.

Specifically, this procedure defines how SSI will:

- Approve and recognise Assessment Bodies that meet the competence, impartiality, and independence requirements necessary to conduct credible SSI assessments.
- Maintain and renew the approval of Assessment Bodies, including oversight, monitoring, and quality assurance to ensure continued compliance with SSI requirements and evolving best practices.
- Approve individual assessors affiliated with approved Assessment Bodies, based on defined competency, qualification, and ethical criteria, and ensure they maintain competence through continuous training, exams, and professional development.

This procedure is designed to:

- Ensure credibility, transparency, and impartiality in the selection and approval of Assessment Bodies and assessors.
- Promote consistency, competence, and integrity in all SSI assurance activities.
- Support continuous improvement of the SSI assurance system, in line with [ISEAL Code of Good Practice \(v2.0\)](#).

Version History

Version	Date	Description
1.0	November 2023	First version issued as approved by the SolarPower Europe and SEUK Board.
2.0	March 2025	Second version issued, reflecting the addition of the SSI Supply Chain Traceability

		Standard as approved by the SSI Board.
2.1	August 2025	Version issued to strengthen impartiality and oversight requirements, introduce detailed rules on assessor training and exams, clarify record-keeping and notification obligations, and enhance alignment with the ISEAL Code of Good Practice, as approved by the SSI Secretariat

Table of Contents

<i>Intellectual Property Notice</i>	2
<i>The Solar Stewardship Initiative</i>	2
<i>About This Document</i>	3
<i>Version History</i>	3
1. General Guidelines	6
2. Assessment Body Approval Process	7
2.1. Initial Application and Approval	7
2.2. Eligibility criteria	7
2.3. Approval Process.....	8
2.4. Approval Scope and Duration.....	8
3. Assessor Competency Criteria and Approval Process	8
3.1. Application Process.....	8
3.2. Competency Requirements.....	9
3.3. Training and Exams	10
3.4. Notification of Assessor Changes	11
4. Oversight and Quality Control	11
5. Records	12
6. Enquiries, Complaints and Appeals Mechanism	13
6.1. Complaints & Appeals Mechanism	13
7. Annexes	14
7.1. Annex I: Assessor Audit Log Template	14

1. General Guidelines

- **Impartiality and Independence**
Approved Assessment Bodies (ABs) must demonstrate, and consistently uphold, impartiality, independence, and objectivity in all assessment activities.
Mechanisms must be in place to identify, prevent, and manage any real or perceived conflicts of interest.
- **Confidentiality and Integrity**
Approved Assessment Bodies (ABs) and assessors are required to safeguard the confidentiality of all information obtained during the assessment process and use it solely for the purposes of SSI assurance.
- **Authorisation to Operate**
Only Assessment Bodies (ABs) formally approved by SSI, and listed on the official [SSI website](#), are authorised to enter into contracts with SSI Manufacturing Members for the delivery of assessment services.
- **Approved Assessors**
Only assessors who have been individually approved by SSI under this procedure, and who are affiliated with an approved AB, may conduct assessments against the SSI Standards.
- **Transparency and Accountability**
SSI reserves the right to publish and update the list of approved ABs and assessors, as well as to suspend or withdraw approval in cases where impartiality, competence, or integrity cannot be assured.
- **Tender Process Integrity**
Approved Assessment Bodies must respect the SSI tender process. They are prohibited from negotiating contracts or terms directly with SSI Manufacturing Members outside the formal process unless expressly authorised in writing by the SSI Secretariat. Any breach of this requirement may lead to suspension or withdrawal of approval.

2. Assessment Body Approval Process

2.1. Initial Application and Approval

During the application window, Assessment Bodies (ABs) may apply to the SSI Secretariat by submitting the official AB Application Form (available on [the SSI website](#)) together with all required supporting documentation.

2.2. Eligibility criteria

SSI accepts applications for approval from Assessment Bodies (ABs) that meet one of the following conditions:

- Accredited Assessment Bodies (ABs)
 - The Assessment Body (AB) is a legally registered entity; and
 - Holds current accreditation to ISO/IEC 17065 or ISO/IEC 17021 with a relevant scope, issued by an accreditation body that is a member of the International Accreditation Forum (IAF).

- Exceptional cases – Non-accredited Assessment Bodies (ABs)

In justified cases, SSI may consider applications from Assessment Bodies (ABs) that are not yet accredited but can demonstrate conformance with ISO/IEC 17065 or ISO/IEC 17021. Such Assessment Bodies (ABs) must:

- Be a legally registered entity.
- Provide documented evidence of conformance with the relevant ISO requirements, specifically:
 - A documented impartiality mechanism (e.g. impartiality committee, governance structure).
 - Internal audits carried out at least annually to verify that requirements are met and that the management system is effectively implemented.
 - Documented procedures for preventing, disclosing, reviewing, and addressing any actual or potential conflicts of interest.
 - A formal commitment to integrate the SSI Assurance Programme into their internal management system.

SSI reserves the right to verify implementation of these requirements, including through an oversight verification assessment.

2.3. Approval Process

The SSI Secretariat will confirm approval of an Assessment Body (AB) once the following steps are completed:

- Review and acceptance of the Assessment Body's (AB) application and supporting documentation.
- Completion of SSI due diligence checks on the Assessment Body (AB).
- Signature of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between SSI and the Assessment Body (AB).
- Approval of at least one lead assessor associated with the Assessment Body (AB), who must successfully complete SSI training and pass the relevant exams on the SSI Standards and assurance system.

2.4. Approval Scope and Duration

- Approval is granted for an initial period of three (3) years, after which re-application may be required.
- The SSI Secretariat may restrict approval to specific geographical areas, subject-matter domains (e.g. Environmental, Social, and Governance), or individual SSI Standards (e.g. SSI ESG or SSI Supply Chain Traceability).
- Approval status and scope will be transparently published on the SSI website.

3. Assessor Competency Criteria and Approval Process

3.1. Application Process

- Individuals seeking approval as SSI assessors must submit an application form (available on [the SSI website](#)) together with all required supporting documentation.
- In addition to meeting the competency requirements below, assessors must complete SSI training and pass the relevant exams on the SSI Standards and assurance system.

3.2. Competency Requirements

- Lead Assessor
 - University or college degree.
 - Minimum of 5 years of auditing experience in the solar, renewable energy, or related industries.
 - Demonstrated familiarity with the geographical and cultural context of the site(s) to be assessed.
 - Experience conducting on-site assessments in at least two (2) of the following areas:
 - Management systems
 - Health and safety assessments
 - Greenhouse gas verification/assessments
 - Environmental impact assessments
 - Social impact assessments
 - Human rights impact assessments
 - Environmental monitoring
 - Traceability/chain of custody
 - Relevant management systems or auditing qualifications.
 - English language proficiency.
- Assessor
 - University or college degree.
 - Minimum of 3 years of auditing experience in the solar, renewable energy, or related industries.
 - Experience conducting on-site assessments in at least one (1) of the following areas:
 - Management systems
 - Health and safety assessments
 - Greenhouse gas verification/assessments
 - Environmental impact assessments
 - Social impact assessments
 - Environmental monitoring
 - Traceability/chain of custody
 - Internal audits
 - Relevant management systems or auditing qualifications.
 - English language proficiency.

Approved assessors who meet these criteria will be listed in the SSI Assessor Registry.

3.3. Training and Exams

SSI-approved assessors are expected to maintain and enhance their professional competence through ongoing learning and development.

This may include participation in SSI-led training, relevant external courses, sector events, or self-directed study to keep up to date with changes in the SSI Standards, assurance methodologies, and emerging best practices in ESG and traceability.

SSI reserves the right to introduce minimum Continuous Professional Development (CPD) requirements in the future (e.g. refresher courses or periodic training hours) and assessors will be required to comply as a condition of continued approval.

To maintain approval status, all SSI-approved assessors must comply with the following requirements:

- Mandatory Webinars
 - Attendance at SSI-organised webinars and training sessions is compulsory.
 - If an assessor cannot attend a live session, they must inform the SSI Secretariat in advance, provide a justification, and confirm when they will review the recorded session.
- Mandatory Exams
 - All SSI exams are mandatory.
 - Assessors must complete each exam within 60 calendar days of its launch.
- Failure Protocol
 - First attempt: If failed, one additional attempt is allowed.
 - Second attempt: If failed again, the assessor is suspended from conducting SSI assessments for 90 calendar days.
 - Third attempt: If failed, assessor approval is withdrawn. The assessor may reapply 12 months after the withdrawal date.

Failure to comply with these requirements may result in suspension or withdrawal of assessor approval.

3.4. Notification of Assessor Changes

Approved Assessment Bodies (ABs) must immediately notify the SSI Secretariat in writing if an approved assessor is no longer employed by, contracted to, or otherwise affiliated with the Assessment Body (AB). This ensures the SSI Assessor Registry remains accurate and up to date. Failure to provide timely notification may result in suspension or withdrawal of the Assessment Body's (AB) approval.

4. Oversight and Quality Control

- Monitoring and Document Review

The SSI Secretariat, or an authorised external agent, may at any time request and review documentation from Assessment Bodies (ABs) relating to the SSI assurance system. This monitoring may be triggered by routine oversight, potential non-compliance, or concerns raised through feedback, complaints, or stakeholder input.

- Shadow Assessments

The SSI Secretariat, or its appointed agent, reserves the right to observe on-site or remote assessments conducted by Assessment Bodies (ABs) at any point.

Shadow assessments are used to evaluate assessor performance, consistency, impartiality, and adherence to SSI requirements.

- Assessment Report Review

The SSI Secretariat will review assessment reports submitted by ABs and, where necessary and justified, request additional information, clarification, or adjustments to ensure findings are consistent, evidence-based, and aligned with the SSI Standards.

- Corrective Actions

If deficiencies are identified through oversight activities (e.g. documentation review, report review, or witness assessment), Assessment Bodies (ABs) are required to take corrective actions within the timeframe specified by SSI. Failure to address deficiencies adequately may result in suspension or withdrawal of approval.

- Continuous Improvement

Oversight findings will be used by SSI to strengthen the assurance system, update guidance, and support continuous improvement of Assessment Bodies (ABs) and assessors in line with the ISEAL Code of Good Practice.

5. Records

The SSI Secretariat maintains comprehensive records relating to the approval and oversight of Assessment Bodies (ABs) and assessors for the duration of their approval status. These records ensure transparency, accountability, and traceability of decisions.

Records maintained include:

- Assessor documentation: CVs, certificates, and completed Audit Logs.
- Training participation and attendance records.
- Signed Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) between SSI and Assessment Bodies (ABs).
- Current approval status of Assessment Bodies (ABs) and assessors, including scope and validity period.
- Results of training exams and any subsequent re-examinations.
- Complaints or concerns raised by stakeholders regarding Assessment Bodies (ABs) or assessors, and records of the corrective or disciplinary actions taken.
- Outcomes of witness assessments and any associated follow-up actions.
- Evidence of implementation of corrective actions by Assessment Bodies (ABs) and assessors.

Updates to records

- Assessment Bodies (ABs) are responsible for promptly notifying the SSI Secretariat of any changes in assessor affiliation (e.g., if an assessor is no longer employed by or contracted to the AB) so that the SSI Assessor Registry remains accurate and up to date.
- SSI reserves the right to update or amend records following oversight activities, complaints, or other relevant information received.

Transparency of records

- To support transparency and build stakeholder confidence, SSI may publish certain non-confidential records on its website, including:

- The list of approved Assessment Bodies (ABs) and assessors, with scope and validity of approval.
 - Confirmation of signed MoUs between SSI and Assessment Bodies (ABs).
 - Any suspensions or withdrawals of approval.
- Other records, such as CVs, certificates, complaints, and detailed oversight findings, are treated as confidential and retained only by the SSI Secretariat.

6. Enquiries, Complaints and Appeals Mechanism

SSI welcomes comments, enquiries, and feedback from all stakeholders on this document and on the broader assurance system. Submissions can be made at any time to: contact@solarstewardshipinitiative.org.

6.1. Complaints & Appeals Mechanism

SSI operates an independent [Complaints and Appeals Mechanism](#) to address concerns raised by SSI Manufacturing Members, approved Assessment Bodies (ABs), assessors, stakeholders, or the public.

The mechanism is designed to align with the effectiveness criteria of the [UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights](#).

The mechanism applies to issues relating to:

- The SSI Assurance Process
- The conduct or performance of Assessment Bodies (ABs) and assessors
- SSI claims, communications, or logo use
- Broader concerns relating to the integrity of the SSI initiative

7. Annexes

7.1. Annex I: Assessor Audit Log Template

Audit Log				
Month/Year	Role	Audit standard/type	Organisation	Country
<i>Starting with the oldest audit of the past 5 years (for lead assessors) or 3 years (for assessors)</i>	<i>Lead Auditor / Auditor / Sole Auditor / Internal Auditor</i>			