

Solar Stewardship Initiative **Assurance Manual**

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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, as well as end-to-end transparency across the solar supply chain. Businesses actively involved in the solar value chain can apply to join the SSI and get 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 enhance supply-chain integrity 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 Assurance Manual has been primarily written for Assessment Bodies (ABs) and Assessors conducting assessment activities against the SSI ESG and Supply Chain Traceability Standards (the Standards). It describes the roles and responsibilities of all parties involved in the SSI assurance system. It aims to provide the transparency needed for stakeholders to understand the SSI certification process.

SSI Manufacturing Members should use this document to understand the assurance process.

This document specifies the processes that apply when:

- Preparing for an assessment against the SSI Standards.
- Verifying conformance of a site against the requirements of the SSI Standards.
- Taking certification decisions and issuing certificates based on assessment reports from independent and approved third-party Assessment Bodies.
- Determining the certification cycle.

This document is aligned with relevant requirements outlined in the ISEAL Assurance Standard Setting Code 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	April 2025	Second version issued, reflecting the addition of the SSI Supply Chain Traceability Standard as approved by the SSI Board.
2.1	August 2025	Updated to clarify roles, scope changes, certification criteria, assessment duration, and conflict of interest as approved by the SSI Secretariat.

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1. Roles and Responsibilities

1.1.SSI Secretariat

The SSI Secretariat have the following roles and responsibilities regarding assurance, assessments, and certification:

- Develop and regularly review, and update the SSI Standards and related assurance documents to ensure they remain relevant and fit for purpose.
- Develop and maintain cost-effective and user-friendly tools and guidance for the SSI assurance, assessments, and certification process.
- Oversee the quality, integrity and credibility of the SSI assurance, assessments, and certification process.
- Regularly review the assurance, assessment and certification system and incorporate lessons learned, stakeholder input, and evolving best practices to improve robustness and credibility.
- Maintain and update the recognition of external standards and schemes deemed as equivalent.
- Engage industry and other stakeholders to build awareness of the value of the SSI certification.
- Review applications and approve independent third-party Assessment Bodies and assessors to conduct SSI assessments against the SSI Standards.
- Monitor Assessment Body and assessor performance through periodic reviews, feedback from SSI Manufacturing Members, and shadow assessments.
- Provide SSI Manufacturing Members, Assessment Bodies and assessor with training and support.
- Review and approve Self-Assessment Questionnaires submitted by SSI Manufacturing Members to confirm they are complete, accurate, and clearly presented, and that they contain all information necessary for the Assessment Body to determine the Member's readiness for assessment.
- Once the SSI Manufacturing Members are ready for assessment:
 - Initiate a tender process inviting all approved Assessment Bodies to submit proposals.
 - Evaluate all proposals received through the tender process, shortlisting the top two based on predefined criteria, and presenting these to the SSI

Manufacturing Members, who will then select their preferred Assessment Body from the shortlisted options.

- Once the SSI Manufacturing Member confirms the selection of the Assessment Body, formally introduce the SSI Manufacturing Member and the Assessment Body to initiate coordination and planning for the assessment.
- Once the SSI Manufacturing Member and the Assessment Body have a contract in place, share the Self-Assessment Questionnaire with the Assessment Body for the readiness analysis and assessment planning.
- Review and approve the assessment plan submitted by the Assessment Body, to ensure it is aligned with the requirements of the SSI Standards and the scope of the assessment.
- Conduct shadow assessments when deemed necessary, to monitor the quality and consistency of the assessment process and ensure alignment with the Standards and assurance requirements.
- Review the assessment report submitted by the Assessment Body and request (when necessary and justified) additional information and adjustments to the findings.
- Share the draft assessment report with the SSI Manufacturing Members, who will have ten (10) working days to review the findings, provide any additional evidence or clarifications, and sign off on the final report.
- Award certifications:
 - Issue certificates and Public Summary Reports
 - Publish and maintain up-to-date information on SSI Manufacturing Members's certification status on the SSI website
- Authorise SSI claims.
- Administer or outsource to third parties' complaints related to the assurance, assessment and certification system and carry out disciplinary proceedings where required, in line with the SSI Complaints and Appeals Mechanism.

1.2. SSI Manufacturing Members

The SSI Manufacturing Members undergoing assessment have the following roles and responsibilities:

- Sign and abide by the SSI Principles.
- Adjust internal systems to meet the Standard(s) requirements.
- Communicate and train relevant personnel on the SSI Principles and Standards.

- Complete the self-assessment questionnaires against the SSI Standards requirements for at least two (2) of their sites within (6) months of receiving the official communication confirming acceptance of membership. If the SSI Manufacturing Member operates only one site, the requirement for a minimum of two sites does not apply.
- Select an Assessment Body from the shortlist presented by the SSI Secretariat after the tender process for the assessment has been completed and the top results have been presented.
- Enter into a contractual agreement directly with the selected Assessment Body to carry out the assessment in line with the agreed scope and timelines.
- Provide the selected Assessment Body and its assessors with access to all relevant documentation, records, and any other information necessary to determine assessment readiness and support effective planning of the assessment.
- Provide access to the SSI Secretariat or externally appointed third party to relevant documentation records and any other relevant information requested to shadow assessments.
- Inform the selected Assessment Body and SSI Secretariat or externally appointed third party of any health, safety, security, or other relevant information whilst on-site.
- Support the assessors with stakeholder identification.
- Facilitate interviews with site management, workers, and other stakeholders.
- Complete the assessments of both SSI Standards for at least two (2) of their sites by an SSI-approved Assessment Body within twelve (12) months of receiving the official communication confirming acceptance of membership. (for new SSI Manufacturing Members) or twelve (12) months from the publication of a new Standard (for existing SSI Manufacturing Members).. If the SSI Manufacturing Member operates only one site, the requirement for a minimum of two sites does not apply.
- Review and sign off on the final assessment report within ten (10) working days following the feedback round, once all clarifications or additional evidence have been addressed.
- Identify the root causes of non-conformances by defining and implementing corrections and completing the Corrective Action Plans to address the non-conformances.

- Implement Corrective Action Plans, as appropriate, to achieve and maintain conformance with the requirements of the SSI Standards.
- Promptly Inform the SSI Secretariat and Assessment Body of any changes to their business activities and incidents that might impact their governance, social or environmental performance, or the certification assessment scope.
- Prepare for any required surveillance or follow-up assessments, including implementing corrective actions and ensuring relevant documentation and evidence are available for review.
- Add new sites for assessments each year, as applicable, until all relevant sites are certified in accordance with the Standards.
- Actively encourage key suppliers to become SSI Manufacturing Members and participate in the assurance process, in order to strengthen responsible practices across the supply chain.
- In exceptional circumstances, if the SSI Manufacturing Members outsources its manufacturing processes, it may nominate its supplier to undergo the assessment. The SSI Manufacturing Members are responsible for ensuring that the nominated entity cooperates fully with the assessment process.
- In the event of complaints being raised, through the SSI Complaints and Appeals Mechanism, cooperate with the SSI Secretariat in the resolution of concerns, complaints, and appeals, as requested.

1.3. SSI-Approved Assessment Bodies and Assessors

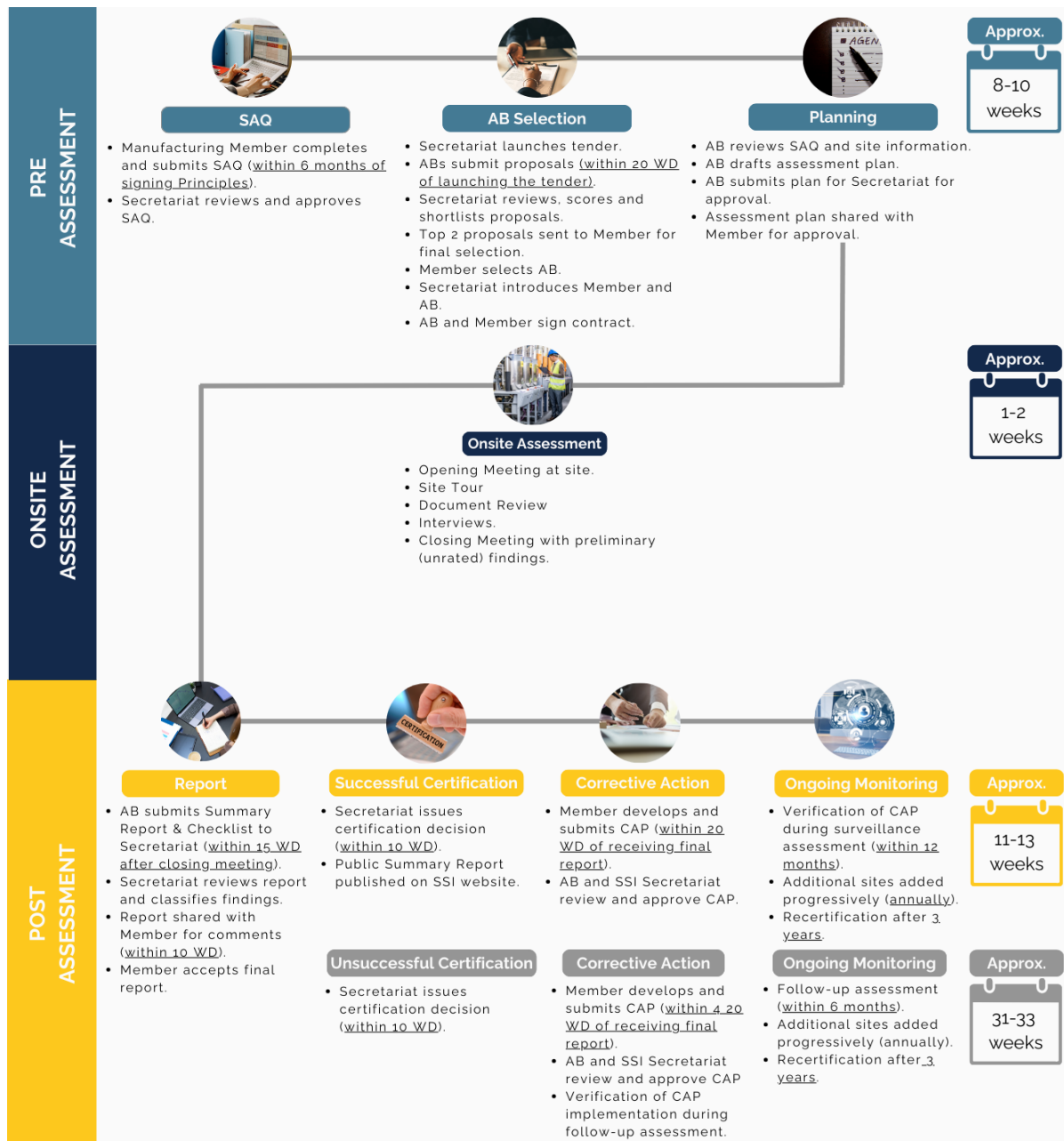
The SSI-approved Assessment Bodies and assessors have the following roles and responsibilities regarding assessments:

- Provide the SSI Secretariat with all requested documentation required for the approval and/or renewal process, as established in the SSI Assessment Body and Approval Procedure.
- Participate in all mandatory SSI training sessions and complete any required exams or competency assessments to maintain approval status.
- Participate in the official tender process and respect its terms by avoiding the submission of quotes or proposals outside the formal tender procedure coordinated by the SSI Secretariat.
- Once an assessment has been assigned, sign a contract directly with the SSI Manufacturing Members to conduct the assessment, in line with the agreed scope, methodology, and timelines.

- Verify all information provided in the Self-Assessment Questionnaire, including the proposed certification scope, to determine the SSI Manufacturing Members's readiness for assessment.
- Request all necessary documentation and information from the SSI Manufacturing Members to prepare the assessment plan, ensuring it follows the agreed format and aligns with the Standard's requirements.
- Submit the assessment plan to the SSI Secretariat for approval, using the template provided and ensuring it aligns with the scope and requirements of the Standard(s).
- Conduct independent SSI assessments against the SSI Standard(s).
- After the assessment is concluded, identify any non-conformances which require corrective actions by the SSI Manufacturing Members.
- Inform the SSI Secretariat of the preliminary assessment results immediately after the assessment concludes, highlighting any significant findings or concerns and immediately reporting any critical breaches.
- Prepare the draft assessment report for the SSI Secretariat in the agreed format and make assessors available for feedback sessions as needed to support the finalisation of the report.
- Prepare the final assessment report for both the SSI Manufacturing Members and the SSI Secretariat in the agreed format after the rounds of feedback have been concluded.
- Review and approve the Corrective Action Plan submitted by the SSI Manufacturing Members, ensuring that proposed actions are adequate, time-bound, and aligned with the nature of the findings.
- Inform the SSI Secretariat of any changes organisational changes that may affect the scope, capacity and competence to conduct independent assessments.
- In the event of complaints being raised, through the SSI Complaints and Appeals Mechanism, cooperate with the SSI Secretariat in the resolution of concerns, complaints, and appeals, as requested.

2. Assurance Process

Graphic 1: Assurance Process



3. Pre Assessment Activities

3.1. Assessment Bodies Appointment

The [Assessment Body and Assessor Approval Procedure](#) outlines the process for approving and maintaining Assessment Bodies and assessors. outlines the process for approving and maintaining ABs and assessors.

3.2. Assessment Body Selection

When required to conduct an SSI Manufacturing Member's assessment, the SSI Secretariat will launch a tender process among all SSI-approved Assessment Bodies.

The SSI Secretariat will assess the proposals received based on the following:

- Technical Proposal:
 - Qualification and competence of the lead assessor and the assessment team
 - Capacity and expertise of the assessment team working in the country/region of the assessment
 - Approach and methodology
 - Availability and flexibility
- Commercial Proposal:
 - Fees for the assessment
 - The SSI Secretariat will submit the top two proposals to the SSI Manufacturing Members, who will select the preferred Assessment Body for their assessment from the shortlist

If the Assessment Body, the SSI Manufacturing Members, or the SSI Secretariat identifies a conflict of interest, the SSI Secretariat will select the proposal that scored second highest in the selection process.

Once the decision is made, the SSI Secretariat will notify all Assessment Bodies that submitted a proposal of the outcome of the tender.

It is not compulsory for the same Assessment Body to conduct both the SSI ESG Standard and the Supply Chain Traceability Standard assessments. The SSI Manufacturing Members may choose to work with different Assessment Bodies for each standard, as long as they are approved by the SSI Secretariat.

If an SSI Manufacturing Member wishes to reappoint the same Assessment Body that conducted an earlier ESG or Traceability assessment for the same site—for example, for a follow-up, surveillance, or initial Supply Chain Traceability assessment—no new tender process is required, as long as this is agreed with the SSI Secretariat. This reappointment is limited to a maximum of three (3) consecutive assessments per Standard (ESG or Traceability) for the same site. After three consecutive assessments, a new tender process must be conducted.

When the same Assessment Body is reappointed, the same assessor may conduct a maximum of three (3) assessments at the same site, regardless of the type or scope of the assessment. After this limit, a different assessor must be assigned to ensure impartiality and a fresh perspective.

This provision does not apply to new sites: each new site will require a separate tender process. Negotiation of contractual terms and conditions remains the responsibility of the SSI Manufacturing Member and the Assessment Body, but the SSI Secretariat must be informed of all relevant details, including confirmed assessment dates.

For any reassessment conducted after the three-year assessment cycle, a new tender process must be launched to ensure transparency, competitiveness, and alignment with SSI's assurance procedures.

3.3. Assessment Team Selection

Assessment team members must:

- Be free of conflict of interest.
- Be comparable to that of the SSI Manufacturing Members in terms of gender composition and strive towards cultural diversity.
- Include at least two assessors, including a designated lead assessor and one assessor with demonstrated expertise in human rights.
- Not have assessed the same company for more than three (3) consecutive assessments.
- Have the required language skills.

3.4. Assessment Scope

At least two (2) sites and associated activities of the SSI Manufacturing Member must be included in the initial assessment. These sites must be under the SSI Manufacturing Member's control and directly related to the purchasing of raw materials and the manufacturing of polysilicon, ingots, wafers, cells, modules, or other components.

If the SSI Manufacturing Member operates only one site, the requirement for a minimum of two sites does not apply.

"Control" is understood as direct or indirect ownership, direct or indirect power to remove, nominate or appoint at least 50% of the SSI Manufacturing Member's board or management, day-to-day executive management, or any legally recognised concept analogous to these.

Where certain production activities are subcontracted, the Assessment Body must evaluate the associated risks and determine whether an on-site visit of the subcontractor site is necessary as part of the assessment.

As part of the SSI Manufacturing Member's commitment to continuous improvement, additional sites under their control will be progressively added to the scope of future assessments on an annual basis. This ensures that over time, the SSI Manufacturing Member's full operations are subject to review and aligned with the SSI Standards.

The SSI Manufacturing Member site seeking the assessment of the SSI Supply Chain Traceability Standard shall be a current SSI Manufacturing Member certified against the SSI ESG Standard or in the process of obtaining the SSI ESG certification in parallel with the SSI Supply Chain Traceability certification.

In exceptional cases, SSI Manufacturing Members that outsource their manufacturing processes may nominate their outsourced supplier for assessment. In case of doubt, Assessment Bodies should contact the SSI Secretariat for confirmation.

The SSI Manufacturing Member must promptly inform the SSI Secretariat of any significant changes at the site, including the addition or removal of production lines, so that the scope of the assessment can be updated to ensure it remains accurate and comprehensive. This requirement applies as follows:

- Initial Assessments: If new lines are added or removed after the Self-Assessment Questionnaire has been submitted and before the initial assessment is conducted, the scope must be revised accordingly, and all relevant lines must be included.
- Follow-up Assessments: If changes occur after the initial assessment and before a follow-up assessment, the updated scope must be considered when reviewing corrective actions or verifying implementation.
- Surveillance Assessments: Any production line added or removed since the previous assessment must be disclosed and reflected in the surveillance scope. This may require additional sampling or on-site verification, as determined by the SSI Secretariat and the Assessment Body.
- Re-certification Assessments: At the end of the three-year cycle, the re-certification must consider all current production lines. Any significant scope changes since the last full assessment must be fully reflected in the new assessment scope.

3.5. Self-Assessment Questionnaire (SAQ)

The SSI Manufacturing Member must complete the self-assessment questionnaire in the format provided for at least two (2) of their sites within six (6) months of receiving the official communication confirming acceptance of membership. If the SSI Manufacturing Members operates only one site, the requirement for a minimum of two sites does not apply.

The SSI Manufacturing Member must make every effort to submit the Self-Assessment Questionnaire in English, ensuring that it is complete, accurate, and truthful. An incomplete or unclear Self-Assessment Questionnaire may result in the Assessment Body determining that the SSI Manufacturing Members is not ready for assessment, which can delay the assurance process.

Once the SSI Secretariat has appointed an Assessment Body, the Assessment Body should use the information and documentation obtained about the SSI Manufacturing Members in the Self-Assessment Questionnaire to evaluate their readiness for the assessment. The Assessment Body must refrain from advising the SSI Manufacturing Members on adapting its systems in areas where deficiencies might have been identified.

3.6. External Standards and Schemes Recognition

The SSI acknowledges that SSI Manufacturing Members may have undergone third-party audits or assessments as part of their involvement in other sustainability standards or certification systems, including operating areas and practices like those covered by the SSI Standard(s).

The SSI recognises as 'equivalent' other sustainability systems, certifications, and externally assured management systems where they match and meet the requirements of the SSI Standards. The list of SSI-recognised standards and assurance frameworks is provided in a separate document and updated regularly.

The SSI reserves all rights to recognise all or parts of any other standard and assurance system as equivalent to the SSI Standards.

During an SSI assessment, where there is evidence that a credible independent assessment or third-party certification has identified and documented a level of conformance that is equivalent to the expectations of an SSI Standard criterion, that criterion will be considered met and will not require further verification by the Assessment Body.

3.7. Planning and Preparation

The Assessment Body should collect sufficient information about the site through the tender application process and the SSI Manufacturing Members Self-Assessment Questionnaire to prepare the assessment plan, decide on duration, management, worker and other stakeholders' interviews and to draft a contract with the SSI Manufacturing Members. An Assessment Body- SSI Manufacturing Members contract must be in place before the assessment activities can begin. The contract must specify:

- The SSI Manufacturing Members must make all documents and records within the scope of the assessment, including contractors, available.
- The SSI Manufacturing Members consents to the SSI Secretariat or an externally appointed agent third party to conduct a shadow of the assessments conducted by the Assessment Body.
- A clause outlining the conditions and terms for cancellation of the assessment, to ensure mutual clarity and proper planning.

3.8. Assessment Methodology Determination

All assessments must be conducted on-site and require a minimum of two (2) assessors. Certain activities may be conducted off-site (remotely) if deemed appropriate and in line with Table 1.

Table 1: Guidance on Remote Assessment Activities

Assessment Activity	Remote assessment eligibility check
Opening meeting: The purpose is to provide an explanation of how the audit activities will be undertaken.	Eligible
Closing meeting: The purpose is to present the assessment preliminary findings	Eligible
Site tour: The purpose is to observe the physical conditions and current practices in all areas of the Site.	Not eligible
Document review: The purpose is to review of documents, such as policies, procedures, records, payslips, employment contracts, etc.	Eligible
Management interviews: The purpose is to conduct interviews with senior management and management.	Eligible

Worker interviews: The purpose is to conduct confidential interviews with a representative sample of the SSI Manufacturing Members's workforce, both individually and in groups.	Not eligible
Stakeholder input: The purpose is to conduct written or in-person feedback from individual(s) or group(s) that have an interest in any activity of the site.	Eligible

3.9. Assessment Duration Determination

SSI ESG Standard

There are factors to consider when determining an SSI ESG Standard assessment duration, including:

- Number of individual and group stakeholders' interviews to be conducted (see Table 4)
- Existing site certifications and any external equivalent recognition standards (see section 3.6 External Standards and Schemes Recognition)
- Assessment scope (see section 3.4 Assessment Scope)
- Assessment methodology

The assessment duration will be reflected on the assessment plan that the Assessment Body must submit to the SSI Secretariat for approval, using the template provided. The recommended onsite assessment duration is provided for guidance in Table 2.

Assessment Bodies should consider that post-assessment time may vary depending on the number and complexity of findings, the development and review of the Corrective Action Plan, and the feedback rounds required to finalise the report.

Should the assessment duration fall below the guidance, an explanation/rationale must be given by the Assessment Body to the SSI Secretariat for the discrepancy.

Table 2: Guidance on SSI ESG Standard Onsite Assessment Duration

Number of workers on site	Estimated assessment duration (days)
1-100	2.5-3
101-500	3-4.5
501-1000	5-6.5

1001-2000	7-8.5
2001-5000	9-11
>5001	11+

SSI Supply Chain Traceability Standard

There are factors to consider when determining an SSI Supply Chain Traceability Standard onsite assessment duration, including:

- The position in the supply chain: for example, module manufacturer, cell manufacturer, etc.
- The complexity of the supply chain.
- The number of active suppliers during the assessment period.
- The number of high-risk suppliers.
- The number of transactions during the assessment period.

The assessment duration will be reflected on the assessment plan that the Assessment Body must submit to the SSI Secretariat for approval, using the template provided. The estimated onsite assessment durations are provided as guidelines in Table 3.

Assessment Bodies should consider that post-assessment time may vary depending on the number and complexity of findings, the development and review of the Corrective Action Plan, and the feedback rounds required to finalise the report.

Table 3: Guidance on SSI Supply Chain Traceability Standard Onsite Assessment Duration

Supply Chain Position	Complexity Level	Suggested Baseline Assessor Days	Adjustment: Active Suppliers	Adjustment: Transactions/Year
Polysilicon Producer	High	3–5 days	+0 days (1–5) +0.5 days (6–10) +1 days (11–20) +1.5 days (21+)	+0 days (<100) +0.5 days (100–500) +1 days (500–1000) +1.5 days (>1000)
Ingot/Wafer Manufacturer	Medium-High	3–4 days		
Cell Manufacturer	Medium	2–3 days		
Module Manufacturer	Medium-Low	2 days		

Note:

- History of Non-compliance: Add 0.5–1 day

- Use of Outsourced contractors for the material handling: Add 0.5 day
- Complexity of Record-Keeping Systems (e.g., paper vs digital): Add 0.5–1 day

If the Assessment Body disagrees with the recommended number of assessor days, the Assessment Body can suggest the SSI Secretariat a different number of days with a reasonable explanation.

3.10. Sample Size Determination

SSI ESG Standard Initial Assessment

Table 4: Interview Sample Size for Initial, and Recertification Assessment ()*

Number of workers excluding management	Individual interviews	Group interviews	Total workers interviews	Workers files, time, and wage records	Effective time spent on interviews
1-100	6 or total workers if <5	1 group of 4	10	10	2.5 hours
101-500	6	4 groups of 5	26	26	6 hours
501-1000	12	6 groups of 5	42	42	8.5 hours
1001-2000	20	8 groups of 4	52	52	12.5 hours
2001+	22	8 groups of 5	62	62	14 hours

**Source: SEDEX Members Ethical Trade Audit (SMETA) Best Practice Guidance*

In addition to the direct workers' interviews as per guidelines listed in Table 4 above, the assessors should also interview an adequate number of contracted workers and external stakeholders.

Should the interview sample size be lower, the lead assessor must provide an explanation/rationale when submitting the assessment plan for the approval of the SSI Secretariat.

SSI ESG Standard Surveillance Assessment

Interview Sampling

- During surveillance assessments, assessors should interview approximately 50% of the number of interviewees from the initial assessment.

- Where records of previous interviewees are available, it is recommended that at least half of the surveillance interviews are conducted with the same individuals interviewed during the initial assessment (where still employed / available / possible).
- The remaining interviewees should be selected to ensure coverage of different shifts, worker types, genders, and employment categories, using a risk-based approach.

Requirements Sample Size

During a surveillance assessment, assessors must review:

- All non-conformities and observations raised in the initial assessment, including verification of progress and implementation of corrective actions.
- A random sample of approximately 20% of the remaining requirements of the SSI ESG Standard, using a risk-based approach, focusing on operational changes, previous vulnerabilities, or any issues identified during the assessment and including:
 - Requirements from Chapter 5, and
 - Any other areas where potential risks, regressions, or changes may reasonably occur.

SSI Supply Chain Traceability Standard

For assessments against the SSI Supply Chain Traceability Standard, the proposed sampling approach (including the planned number and type of transactions and supplier files to be reviewed and the criteria for sample selection) must be described in the assessment plan (see section 3.14) submitted to the SSI Secretariat for approval.

Interview Guidance

Assessors are expected to conduct management, worker, and other relevant stakeholder interviews to evaluate the development and implementation of the traceability management system. The interviewees should include but not be limited to:

- Senior manager responsible for the development and implementation of the traceability management system
- Other management staff involved in the implementation of the traceability system. e.g. compliance, procurement, document control.
- Workers, e.g. warehouse workers involved in material receipt, inventory management, production.
- Contractors that are involved in the handling of material.

The sample size is up to the assessor's discretion to collect all necessary information to verify conformance with the Supply Chain Traceability Standard. The Assessment Body must document and share with the SSI Secretariat the methodology used to determine the sample set of transactions and supplier files selected for detailed review, including justification for sample size and selection criteria.

Documentation Sampling Guidance

Assessors are required to apply a sampling methodology when selecting material transactions and supplier files for review. The selection of supplier files must correspond directly to the transactions sampled. The sample must include a mix of both low-risk and high-risk suppliers and transactions to ensure balanced and risk-based coverage.

The determination of sample size is the responsibility of the assessor and must follow the parameters outlined in Table 5 and 6 (Supplier Files Sampling Guidance for Low and High-Risk Transactions). The assessed site must not determine or influence the sample size or selection.

Table 5: Documentation Sampling Guidance Low-Risk Transactions

Number of low-risk transactions	Sample size
1-100	10
101-500	11-30
501-1000	31-50
1001+	51-100

Table 6: Documentation Sampling Guidance High-Risk Transactions

Number of high-risk transactions	Sample size
1-100	All transactions
101-500	101-150
501-1000	151-200
1001+	201-250

3.11. Stakeholder Identification and Input Plan

In anticipation of the assessment, the Assessment Body, in consultation with the SSI Manufacturing Members, must establish a mechanism for stakeholder comments to be

submitted at any time during the assessment and the validity of a certificate. It must also describe how comments received will be considered. Stakeholders should be invited to provide input during interviews or in writing.

3.12. Technical Experts and Interpreters

When technical experts and interpreters/translators are required, the SSI Manufacturing Members must agree to this in advance.

The Assessment Body must ensure that the technical expert's role is limited to advising the assessment team on issues related to the expert's area of expertise. Technical experts and interpreters/translators must not participate actively in the assessment unless the SSI Secretariat specifically qualifies them as assessors for that purpose.

3.13. Conflicts of Interest

The SSI assurance system is founded on impartiality and transparency. All actors involved in assurance activities—including the SSI Secretariat, Assessment Bodies, assessors, technical experts, and SSI Manufacturing Members—must avoid any situation that could compromise, or appear to compromise, their objectivity.

A documented process is maintained by the SSI Secretariat to identify, disclose, evaluate, and manage conflicts of interest throughout the assurance cycle. This includes pre-assessment declarations, regular monitoring, and recusal from decision-making where necessary.

The SSI Secretariat, in its role as certification decision-maker, must operate independently from any consultancy, financial, or operational interest in the SSI Manufacturing Members's business. Where impartiality cannot be ensured, appropriate mitigating actions will be taken, including reassignment of responsibilities.

3.14. Assessment Plan

The SSI Secretariat has developed a set of Standards Guides, available to support the site assessment process, ensuring consistency and clarity in the interpretation and application of the SSI Standards requirements. The Guides, Self-Assessment Questionnaire and tender documentation must be taken into account when planning the assessment.

The assessment plan should be drafted by the Assessment Body using the assessment plan template provided and shared with the SSI Secretariat for approval, no later than ten (10) working days before the start of the on-site assessment, and must include:

- Dates, places, and times of the on-site visit.
- Meetings to be held with the management.
- Number and types of workers' interviews to be held.
- Dates, places, and times of interviews with external stakeholders (if applicable).
- Time for document review.
- Dates and times for opening and closing meetings.

Once the assessment plan is approved by the SSI Secretariat, the Assessment Body must share it with the SSI Manufacturing Member, including the name and, when requested, background information on each assessment team member, with sufficient time for the SSI Manufacturing Members to object to the appointment of any particular assessor, interpreter/translator, or technical expert.

4. Site Assessment Activities

4.1. Opening Meeting

All assessments must begin with an opening meeting using the template provided by the SSI Secretariat during which the assessment team must confirm with the site:

- Assessment team roles.
- The purpose of the assessment.
- Scope and objectives
- Assessment plan, including how the assessment activities will be undertaken.
- Confidentiality of the information shared during the assessment.
- Site employees' roles and responsibilities
- Allow time to clarify questions

4.2. Evaluation of the Site

Assessors are required to evaluate sites in accordance with ISO 19011:2018 Guidelines for auditing management systems, considering the significance as well as the quality and quantity of the evidence available.

4.3. Gathering Objective Evidence

The objective of the assessment is to evaluate the extent to which the site meets SSI Standard(s) requirements and expectations on ESG performance and/or Supply Chain Traceability.

The assessors should use a risk-based assessment approach for sample selection and include document reviews, interviews, and a site tour to crosscheck information and evidence received.

Assessors are also expected to take an evidence-based approach to determining conformance with the requirements of the SSI Standards and must not advise the site on how to meet the requirements.

4.4. Documents and Records Revision

The document review aims to obtain evidence and determine whether key documents, such as procedures, guidelines, and handbooks, are available and adequate, given the size of the site.

Records reviewed may include:

- For the SSI ESG Standard: timecards, payrolls, wage slips, job descriptions, environmental disclosures, waste records, training logs, policies, and procedures, etc.
- For the SSI Supply Chain Traceability Standard: supplier contracts, purchase orders, invoices, shipping and delivery records, batch or lot records, inventory and training logs, policies, and procedures, etc.

4.5. Interviews

The purpose of the interviews is to cross-check information collected during document and record reviews, management interviews, visual observations, and stakeholder input review.

The assessment team must select workers for interviews and should be representative of the workforce regarding shift patterns, worker types, gender, and other considerations. The interview selection should consider shift patterns to minimise disruption at the site. Workers' interviews should include direct employees as well as contracted workers.

Interviews must be conducted in a setting that promotes comfort, confidentiality, and trust. Management must not be present during interviews (both in individual and group settings).

All information obtained must remain confidential to the workers involved, and any findings should only be discussed with management in a general manner.

4.6. Site Tour

The assessment team should be able to walk through the entire site and conduct interviews freely. Photographs can be taken if agreed in advance.

SSI ESG Standard

The site tour aims to observe the physical conditions and current practices in all site areas, verify on-the-ground adherence to environmental, social, and governance (ESG) commitments and identify gaps.

SSI Supply Chain Traceability Standard

The site tour aims to verify the practical implementation of traceability systems, processes, and current practices in all site areas, check the movement of materials and products through the site, confirm that data and labels align with actual products and processes and identify gaps.

4.7. Closing Meeting

The assessment team must conduct a closing meeting after the site assessment with the SSI Manufacturing Members's /site's representative(s) to:

- Recap of the assessment
- Key preliminary findings without rating. Preliminary confirm findings identified during the assessment (if any) without rating, as this is subject to the SSI Secretariat's decision, timeframes to address these findings, and the process for verifying their closure. Refrain from confirming any likely overall score, as this is subject to the SSI Secretariat analysis and decision.
- Confidentiality reminder.
- Next steps.
- Confirm that the site/SSI Manufacturing Members must inform the SSI of any significant future changes that could affect its status as a certified SSI Manufacturing Members. Inform the SSI Secretariat and Assessment Body of any changes to their business activities and incidents that might impact their governance, social or environmental performance.

Note: Any attempt to prevent the assessment from proceeding through fraud, coercion, deception, or interference will be considered a critical breach and must be immediately reported to the SSI Secretariat. In this case, the assessment must be suspended pending an investigation.

5. Post Assessment Activities

5.1. Assessment Report

Upon completion of the assessment, the assessment team must compile the list of preliminary findings with recommended preliminary ratings for the consideration of the SSI Secretariat, and highlight positive practices and conformances in the assessment report.

The site assessment report consists of the Summary of Findings and completed Checklist drafted by the Assessment Body using the template provided by the SSI Secretariat.

The report should give a complete, balanced, and accurate description of the site, its current systems in place and the evidence examined during the assessment.

The Assessment Body should write the Summary Report and Checklist in British English, in clear and unambiguous language. If agreed upon with the site, these materials may also be written in another language.

The SSI Secretariat will review the Summary Report and Checklist and classify the findings. The SSI Secretariat may request further information or clarification from the assessment team, in which case these should be promptly responded to.

The Summary Report and completed Checklist should be sent to the SSI within three (3) weeks (fifteen [15] working days) of the closing meeting.

After the SSI Secretariat approves the report, they will share it with the SSI Manufacturing Members for their sign-off. If necessary, the SSI Manufacturing Members can provide further clarification or evidence to the Assessment Body within ten (10) working days.

Once all rounds of feedback between the SSI Secretariat, the Assessment Body and the SSI Manufacturing Members are concluded, the SSI Secretariat will share the final report with the SSI Manufacturing Members. At this point, the report is considered final, and the SSI Secretariat can proceed to issue the certification.

5.2. Conformance Ratings

Upon reception of the assessment, the SSI Secretariat will define the rating of the list of preliminary findings recommended by the Assessment Body.

Table 7: Conformance Ratings and Description

Conformance Ratings	Description
Conformance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Systems, policies, procedures, and processes performed in a manner that is in line with the intent of the SSI Standards.
Observation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A Conformance that meets the fundamental requirements of the SSI Standard(s) but needs improvement. If this improvement is not adequately addressed, the Observation could escalate to a Non-Conformance during the next Assessment.
Minor Non-Conformance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An isolated lapse of performance or control. A breach which represents low risk to workers/those on site. A policy issue where there is no evidence of material breach. Policies or procedures that have been recently adopted but have not been in place or implemented for a sufficient period to demonstrate effective application.
Major Non-Conformance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A systemic failure or total lack of required controls by the site, A total absence of implementation of the requirement, A breach of law. A group of related, repetitive, or persistent minor non-conformances indicating inadequate implementation.
Not Applicable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A requirement which cannot be implemented by a site due to the nature of its operations.

5.3. Certification Decision

Once the assessment report is final, the SSI Secretariat will issue a certification decision to the SSI Manufacturing Members within ten (10) working days., as long as:

- There are no Major non-conformances identified.
- For the SSI ESG Standard assessment: No more than ten (10) minor non-conformances have been raised, and adequate Corrective Action Plans have been implemented.

- For the SSI Supply Chain Traceability Standard assessment: No more than five (5) minor non-conformances have been raised, and adequate Corrective Action Plans have been put in place.

The SSI Secretariat will issue a certificate to the site with a grade assigned and update its status to Certified Site on the [SSI website](#).

The site will also be informed of its Surveillance Frequency (see section 5.6 below) based on the grade (see Graphic 2), and information will be shared on Claims and Labelling requirements related to their new status as a certified SSI Manufacturing Members.

Table 8: SSI ESG Standard CAP, Timeline, Outcome and Score

Conformance Ratings	Corrective Action Plan	Timeline	Outcome and Score
Conformance	None	None	No Non-Conformances – Certification: Gold
Observation	Needs to be addressed before the next Assessment.	Implementation and effectiveness of the Observation at subsequent Assessment.	Does not affect the outcome Gold / Silver / Bronze
Minor Non-Conformance	CAP to be developed by the SSI Manufacturing Members and sent to the AB.	CAP received and approved by the AB. Verification. Implementation and effectiveness of the corrective actions at subsequent Assessment.	5 or less Minor NC – Certification: Silver Between 6 to 10 Minor NC – Certification: Bronze
Major Non-Conformance	Root Cause Analysis and CAP to be developed by the SSI Manufacturing Members and sent to the AB.	CAP received and approved by the AB. A follow-up onsite (or remote depending on the nature of the NC) assessment will usually be required to verify implementation and effectiveness of the corrective actions.	No certification until Major NC are closed or downgraded to Minor NC.

Table 9: SSI Supply Chain Traceability Standard CAP, Timeline, Outcome and Score

Level of Traceability	Conformance Ratings	Corrective Action Plan	Timeline	Outcome and Score
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Quartz	Major NC	0	None	None	Gold (No certification awarded until all Minor NC are closed.
	Minor NC	<5	Root Cause Analysis and CAP to be developed by the SSI Manufacturing Members and sent to the AB	<p>CAP sent to AB within four (4) weeks (twenty [20] working days) of receiving the final report.</p> <p>CAP reviewed and approved by the AB within four (4) weeks (twenty [20] working days) of receiving it.</p> <p>A follow-up onsite (or remote depending on the nature of the NC) assessment will usually be required to verify implementation and effectiveness of the corrective actions.</p>	
Metallurgical-grade silicon (MG-Si)	Major NC	0	None	None	Silver
	Minor NC	<5	Root Cause Analysis and CAP to be developed by the SSI Manufacturing Members and sent to the AB	<p>CAP sent to AB within four (4) weeks (twenty [20] working days) of receiving the final report.</p> <p>CAP reviewed and approved by the AB within four (4) weeks (twenty [20] working days) of receiving it.</p> <p>Implementation and effectiveness of the corrective actions at subsequent Assessment.</p>	
Polysilicon	Major NC	0	None	None	Bronze
	Minor NC	<5	Root Cause Analysis and CAP to be developed by the SSI Manufacturing Members and sent to the AB	<p>CAP sent to AB within four (4) weeks (twenty [20] working days) of receiving the final report.</p> <p>CAP reviewed and approved by the AB within four (4) weeks (twenty [20] working days) of receiving it.</p> <p>Implementation and effectiveness of the</p>	

				corrective actions at subsequent Assessment.	
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5.4. Public Summary Report

The SSI Secretariat will prepare a Public Summary Report (see Annex 8.2) based on basic information about the certified site/SSI Manufacturing Members, which will be published on [the SSI website](#).

The Public Summary Report will contain a summary of the site and the assessment outcome, including grade.

5.5. Corrective Action Plan (CAP)

After the SSI Secretariat shares the final assessment report, all non-conformances require the site to prepare and implement appropriate Corrective Action Plans. Appropriately qualified and experienced staff should be involved in developing Corrective Action Plans commensurate with the nature and severity of the non-conformances. Within 4 weeks (twenty [20] working days) of receiving the assessment report, the site, with the support of the Assessment Body, must develop and submit a Corrective Action Plan to the SSI Secretariat for approval, detailing how and when they will address the non-conformances.

The Assessment Body and assessors cannot assist in developing a site's Corrective Action Plans but should evaluate them to determine whether the Corrective Action Plan will likely address the non-conformance.

5.6. Surveillance Frequency and Recertification

The SSI Secretariat will determine the surveillance frequency based on the assessment outcome and assigned grade.

The SSI Secretariat will notify certified SSI Manufacturing Members three (3) months before an assessment is due so that arrangements can be made to schedule surveillance and recertification assessments.

Surveillance assessments should focus on actions taken by the site and progress made towards addressing non-conformances.

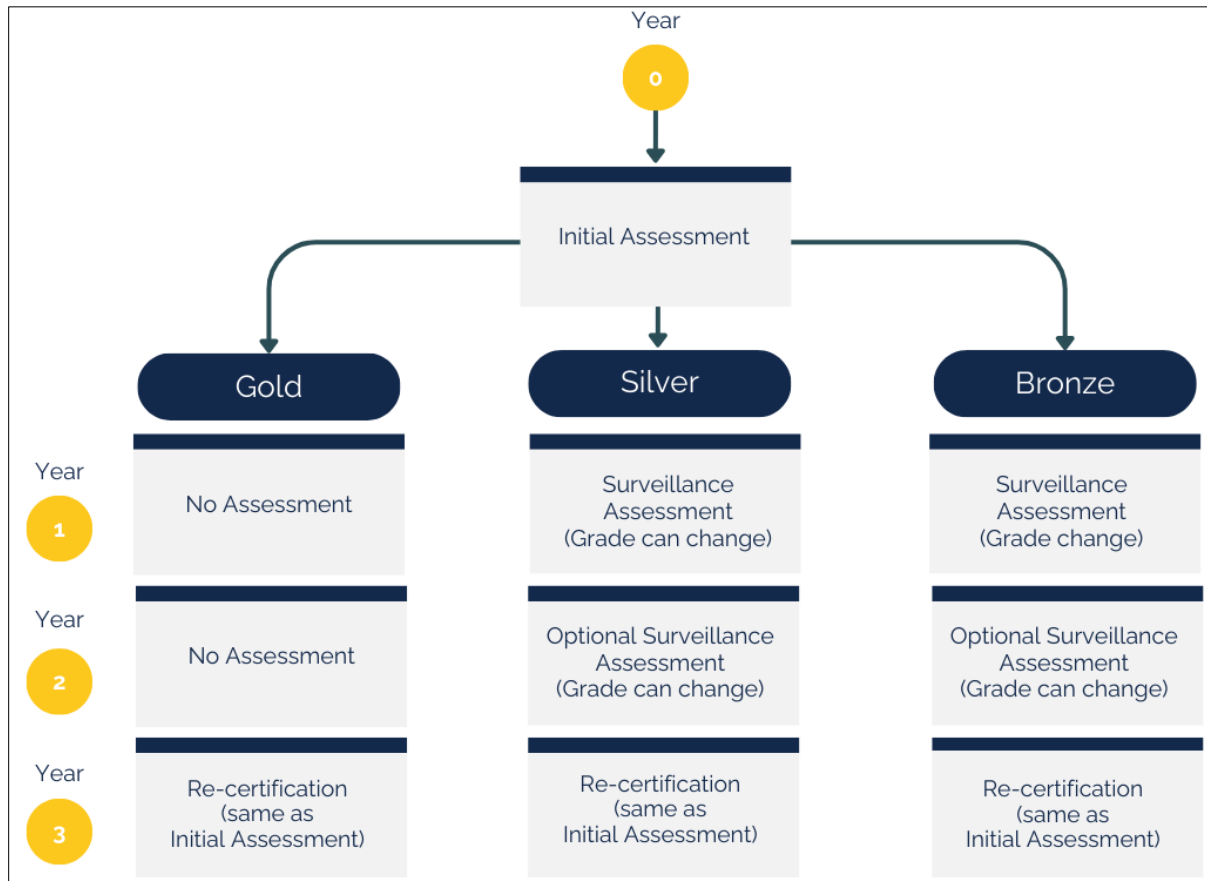
The year 1 surveillance assessment may result in a grade change and should also sample SSI Standards requirements randomly selected by the lead assessor. The

randomly chosen requirements should verify that no regression in performance has taken place over the course of the year. The scope of the surveillance assessment is determined using a risk-based approach that considers the following factors:

- Level of performance at the initial assessment.
- Type and complexity of operations.
- Conditions within the sector (e.g. if issues have arisen at other sites in the same region).
- Regional context (e.g. if regulations change).
- Whether interested parties or affected stakeholders have raised any concerns since the last assessment.
- Any material changes in the site's structure or operations.

Regardless of the grade, a recertification assessment is required at the end of the three-year cycle. The recertification assessment should follow the same procedures as the initial assessment, including a tender to select a new Assessment Body.

Graphic 2: Assessment Cycle



5.7. Unsuccessful Assessment

Unsuccessful SSI Standard(s) assessment requires a Corrective Action Plan to address the identified issues. The following steps describe the roles and responsibilities of SSI, the site, and the Assessment Body in this scenario.

Non-Conformity Report

After the assessment, the Assessment Body will submit a report to the SSI Secretariat detailing the areas where the site does not meet SSI Standard(s). Once approved, by the SSI Secretariat, the Assessment Body will share the report with the site.

Corrective Action Plan Development

Within 4 weeks (twenty [20] working days) of receiving the assessment report, the site, must develop and submit a Corrective Action Plan to the Assessment Body and SSI Secretariat for approval, detailing how and when they will address the non-conformities. The Assessment Body must provide in the Corrective Action Plan the means of verification for evaluation of the implemented actions, namely, if the verification could be done via desktop review or if onsite verification is needed.

Corrective Action Plan Implementation

Once the Assessment Body and SSI Secretariat have approved the Corrective Action Plan, the site must address the corrective actions. The Corrective Action Plan will contain the suggested timelines for addressing non-conformances the site should follow as well as the means of verification (desktop or onsite) required for each non-conformance.

All identified non-conformances must be fully resolved, and a follow-up assessment of the site must take place within 180 calendar days from the date of the reception of the final assessment report.

Verification after Corrective Actions

Once the site has addressed all non-conformities, they must submit evidence to the Assessment Body (e.g., documents, photos, or other verifiable records). The Assessment Body must review and determine if the corrective actions fully address the non-conformities and issue a recommendation for the SSI Secretariat's consideration.

Follow-up Assessment (if needed)

If evidence alone is insufficient or the issues require onsite confirmation, the site may need to schedule a follow-up assessment to verify compliance.

Scenarios requiring an onsite follow-up assessment:

- Major Non-Conformities: If the non-conformities are significant or systemic.
- Critical Supply Chain Issues: If the non-conformities involve high-risk areas (e.g., ethical sourcing or human rights violations).
- Extensive Changes to Policies or Processes: If the corrective actions involve implementing new systems, workflows, or processes.

Scenarios where an online follow-up assessment might be sufficient:

- Minor Non-Conformities: For smaller issues (e.g., incomplete documentation, minor policy gaps, updated policies, training records, or process documentation).
- Rapidly Addressed Issues: If you resolve the non-conformities quickly and provide satisfactory evidence.

Certification Decision

Once the Assessment Body has concluded the reassessment and provided a report, the SSI Secretariat will decide on certification.

Costs for Follow-up Audits

Follow-up online and onsite assessments can incur additional costs, which depend on:

- The scope of the follow-up (onsite vs. online).
- The time required to reassess compliance.
- The travel and administrative expenses involved.

If an SSI Manufacturing Member wishes to change their selected Assessment Body, they may either:

- Negotiate directly with the same Assessment Body to reach an agreement, or
- Liaise with the SSI Secretariat to initiate a new tender process.

In either case, the SSI Manufacturing Members must inform the SSI Secretariat of their decision.

Please note that launching a new tender can take up to six weeks (thirty [30] working days), which may impact the overall assessment timeline.

5.8. Reporting Changes

Certified SSI Manufacturing Members must inform the SSI Secretariat if and when there are changes to the site's business, such as:

- Organisational restructuring.
- Divestments, acquisitions, or changes to the equity shares of the business.
- Changes to the site's activities, products and processes.
- Changes to the locations and distribution of the site's facilities.
- External influences, such as changes in the statutory environment, regulations and other stakeholder expectations and commitments, affect the site.

The SSI Secretariat will decide on any necessary action(s).

If an SSI Manufacturing Members wishes to remove a certified site from the SSI list of certified sites, the following are required:

- A clear and documented justification for the removal;
- A formal decision by the SSI Manufacturing Members's Board or equivalent governing body; and
- Public disclosure of the removal and its rationale, ensuring transparency and accountability.

The SSI Secretariat must be informed and reserves the right to request supporting documentation.

If an SSI Manufacturing Members wishes to delay a scheduled assessment, the following conditions apply:

- Assessment extension requests may only be submitted up to sixty (60) working days before the applicable assessment deadline. Any request submitted later than this timeframe will not be accepted.
- The SSI Secretariat may authorize a delay of up to 90 days, provided a written and valid justification is submitted and accepted.
- Valid justification includes:
 - Force majeure or external disruption: Natural disasters, pandemics, political instability, war, or major transport/supply chain disruptions affecting site access.
 - Health, safety or legal restrictions: Government restrictions (e.g. lockdowns, work stoppages, or safety incidents preventing site access).
 - Major operational or organisational change: Significant reorganisation, relocation, or expansion (e.g. new production line or site relocation) within the 12-month period that would materially affect the audit scope.
 - Overlap with equivalent external certification: When the member has recently undergone a recognised equivalent audit and needs short additional time to align documentation or integrate findings.
 - Severe seasonal or production constraints: Assessment timing coincides with low-season shutdown, factory turnaround, or equipment overhaul, making representative assessment impossible.
 - Transition to new standard version: Member joined during version transition or after publication of new SSI Standards and requires extra time to integrate new requirements.
 - Other: Circumstances not covered above but demonstrably outside the Member's reasonable control and material to assessment validity. Requires Secretariat review and approval.
- Non-Justifiable Reasons:
 - General lack of internal preparation or management attention.
 - Budgetary constraints or internal approval delays.
 - Avoidance of assessment due to expected non-conformances.
- Process for Granting Extensions:
 - Written justification submitted by the member to the SSI CEO with appropriate evidence.

- Note:
 - Record of granted extensions will be logged in SSI database and referenced in the Public Summary Report.
 - No claims are allowed until assessment completion.
- Any delay exceeding 90 days requires a formal decision by the SSI Manufacturing Members's Board and public disclosure of the reasons for the delay.

If a certified site undergoes a significant expansion of scope (e.g., new production lines or major operational changes), the SSI Manufacturing Members must:

- Inform the SSI Secretariat immediately; and
- Ensure that the scope of the next follow-up, surveillance, or recertification assessment is updated accordingly to reflect the changes.
- If the assessment has already been scheduled, at least 8 weeks (forty [40] working days') notice is required to accommodate the expanded scope and adjust the assessment plan accordingly.

Failure to notify in time may result in rescheduling or additional assessment costs.

5.9. Suspension and Withdrawal

The SSI Board will suspend a site's certification if:

- There is inadequate progress towards closing identified non-conformances within the deadlines specified.
- The SSI Manufacturing Members does not agree to a surveillance assessment or does not provide the requested information to allow verification.
- The SSI Manufacturing Members fails to inform the SSI Secretariat of significant changes at a certified site—such as changes in production lines, ownership, processes, or location.

The suspension period will usually be for a maximum period of six (6) months, during which the SSI Manufacturing Members cannot promote nor claim to be certified. The SSI Secretariat must disclose the suspension publicly.

The SSI Board will withdraw a site's certification if:

- It is concluded through an investigation that the SSI-certified Member has breached the SSI Principles.
- Further to a suspension period, no progress has been made to address the issue.

6. Enquiries, Complaints and Appeals

Mechanism

The SSI welcomes comments and feedback from all stakeholders on this document, which can be submitted at any time to contact@solarstewardshipinitiative.org.

The SSI has an independent [Complaints & Appeals Mechanism](#) to process concerns that may arise from SSI Manufacturing Members, SSI-approved Assessment Bodies and assessors, stakeholders and the public regarding the initiative, the SSI Assurance Process, Assessment Bodies and assessors, or SSI claims and logo use.

The mechanism is designed to be aligned with the criteria laid out in the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights for the effectiveness of non-judicial grievance mechanisms. The SSI aims to investigate Complaints & Appeals fairly, balanced and transparently and to resolve the issues efficiently and effectively. to resolve the issues efficiently and effectively.

The mechanism includes clear timelines, confidentiality provisions, and escalation pathways, including independent review panels when necessary.

All stakeholders are informed of their right to appeal assessment outcomes or raise complaints at any point.

7. Annexes

7.1. Glossary

Terms	Definitions
Assessor	An individual (third party) that is approved by SSI and associated with an approved Assessment Body to assess and verify conformance with the SSI Standards at the site.
Assessment	Systematic, independent, and documented process for obtaining audit evidence (interviews, photos, records, policies, statements of fact or other information which are relevant and verifiable) and evaluating the evidence objectively to determine the extent to which the audit criteria (a set of policies, procedures or requirements) are fulfilled by the SSI Manufacturing Members against the relevant standards. Refers to all audit activities carried out to assess conformity of SSI Manufacturing Members against relevant SSI standards.

Assessment Body	An independent service provider that is approved by SSI to conduct assessments of SSI Manufacturing Members' sites against the SSI Standards and following the SSI Assurance Manual.
Assessment Duration	The time allocated for completing an assessment, influenced by factors such as the scope, stakeholder interviews, and complexity of the site operations.
Assessment Plan	The proposed activities and their timing to be carried out by the Assessor to determine the extent to which the standard criteria are fulfilled.
Assessment Methodology	The methodology applied to conduct an SSI assessment. The Assessment techniques are on-site and remote using digital tools (e.g., screen sharing) to share assessment details and documentation.
Assessment Team	Two (2) or more assessors conducting an SSI assessment, supported, if needed, by technical experts.
Commercial Proposal	A document outlining the costs associated with conducting the assessment, including fees, and considering any preferences stated by the SSI Manufacturing Members.
Conformance	Fulfilment of a requirement.
Conformance Rating	A categorisation system used to assess the extent to which a site complies with the SSI Standards, typically graded (e.g., Gold, Silver, Bronze).
Contracted Workers	Individuals working on behalf of a contractor or subcontractor, directly or indirectly involved in the site's operations.
Corrective Action	An action to eliminate the cause of a non-conformance and to prevent recurrence. There can be more than one cause for a non-conformance (Source ISO 9000:2015).
Corrective Action Plan	A proposal which outlines the actions to be taken to eliminate the cause of a non-conformance and to prevent recurrence. (Source ISO 9000:2015).
Critical Breach	Any attempt to prevent the course of the assessment through fraud, coercion, deception, or interference and which must be immediately reported to the SSI Secretariat.
Finding	Results of the evaluation of the collected assessment evidence against the standard or requirements against which the SSI Manufacturing Members is being assessed. Note: Assessment findings can indicate conformity or non-conformity or opportunities for improvement.
Follow-up Assessment	A subsequent assessment conducted after an unsuccessful Initial Assessment, to verify that corrective actions have been implemented for non-conformances identified during the Initial Assessment.

Grade	Further to an initial assessment, a category assigned to the SSI certified site based on the number of non-conformances issued. Grades are either Gold, Silver, or Bronze.
High-Risk Supplier	A supplier identified as having a greater potential for non-conformance or a higher likelihood of environmental, social, or governance risks.
High-Risk Transaction	A transaction involving a high-risk supplier, with an increased potential for non-conformance or heightened ESG and Traceability risks, requiring enhanced due diligence and monitoring.
Initial Assessment	A comprehensive assessment of a site against all SSI Standard (s) requirements, conducted to determine the level of compliance and to identify any non-conformances.
Lead Assessor	The primary individual responsible for managing the assessment process, ensuring compliance with SSI standards, and leading the assessment team.
Low-Risk Transaction	A low-risk transaction is a transaction involving a low-risk supplier, with minimal potential for non-conformance or ESG/Traceability risks, requiring standard due diligence and monitoring.
Manufacturing Members	Refers to a legal entity that has a valid membership of the Solar Stewardship Initiative.
Management System	<p>A set of policies, procedures and practices an organisation needs to follow to meet its own objectives.</p> <p>A Management System can address a single discipline or several disciplines, e.g. quality management, financial management or environmental management (Source ISO 9000:2015)</p>
Minor Non-Conformance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An isolated lapse of performance, or control. • A breach which represents low risk to workers/those on Site. • A policy issue where there is no evidence of material breach. • Policies or procedures that have been recently adopted but have not been in place or implemented for a sufficient period to demonstrate effective application.
Major Non-Conformance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A systemic failure or total lack of required controls by the Site. • A total absence of implementation of the requirement • A breach of law. • A group of related, repetitive, or persistent minor non-conformances indicating inadequate implementation.
Non-Conformance	Non-fulfilment of a requirement. In the SSI system a non-conformance can be graded as a major non-conformance or a minor non-conformance.
Objective Evidence	Verifiable information or records pertaining to the quality of an item or service or to the existence and implementation of a quality system element, which is based on visual observation, measurement, or test. Data supporting the existence or verity of something (Source ISO 9000:2015 & ISO 19011:2018).

Observation	A Conformance that meets the fundamental requirements of the SSI Standard(s) but needs improvement. If this improvement is not adequately addressed, the Observation may escalate to a Non-Conformance during the next Assessment.
On-site Assessment	Assessment activities performed physically at the site to collect evidence and conduct interviews.
Public Summary Report	A high-level report made available to the public that outlines basic information about the certified site/SSI Manufacturing Members and the outcome of the assessment, including its certification grade.
Recognition	The acceptance of an external set of requirements, their implementation, and their verification in lieu of the SSI's own requirements.
Remote Assessment	Assessment activities conducted offsite using digital tools (e.g., video conferencing, file sharing platforms) to collect and review evidence.
Root Cause Analysis	<p>Analysis tool used to determine the root cause of a Non-conformance including an evaluation of the extent and scale of the problem identified to determine if it has occurred elsewhere.</p> <p>NOTE: RCA is one of the methods of analysis that can be used to determine the causes and extent of a Non-conformance and to help determine appropriate Corrective Action.</p>
Scope of Assessment	<p>Extent and boundaries of an Assessment.</p> <p>All sites and associated activities that are directly related to the purchasing of raw materials and manufacturing of polysilicon, ingots, wafers, cells and modules, and other component manufacturing, and which are under the control of the SSI Manufacturing Members.</p>
Self-Assessment	Process during which the SSI Manufacturing Members compiles documents to demonstrate fulfilment of requirement of the SSI Standard before engaging an Approved Assessor for a formal assessment.
Self-Assessment Questionnaire (SAQ)	A structured document provided by the SSI Secretariat that SSI Manufacturing Members must complete to demonstrate initial compliance with the SSI Standards. This questionnaire is a preparatory step before the formal assessment by the Assessment Body.
Site	Physical location that is in the scope of Assessment. The definition of a site is based on activities, product, geographical scope, and management control.
SSI ESG Standard	Environmental, social, and governance requirements that sites must adhere to as part of the SSI certification process.

SSI Traceability Standard	SSI Standards relating to the traceability of materials throughout the supply chain, ensuring ethical and sustainable practices.
Stakeholder	Any person, group or organization that may affect, or be affected by, a certification decision, or has expressed an interest in the Site being considered for certification and/or in other potentially affected resources or has or may have information relevant to the certification assessment of the Site.
Surveillance Assessment	An interim assessment during the certification cycle to confirm ongoing compliance with the SSI Standard(s). It verifies closure of minor non-conformances and observations, reviews any scope changes (e.g. new production lines), and samples requirements to ensure no new risks or regressions have arisen.
Suspension	Process of temporarily making SSI certification invalid, by removing the Site's certified status pending corrective action(s).
Technical Expert	Person who provides specific knowledge or expertise to the assessment team. NOTE: A technical expert is not required to be an auditor.
Technical proposal	A detailed document submitted by an Assessment Body outlining the qualifications, capacity, methodology, and approach to conducting an assessment.
Tender application process	A formal process through which the Assessment Body applies to provide assessment services, including details such as assessment techniques, timelines, and resources.
Tender process	A formal process initiated by the SSI Secretariat to solicit proposals from SSI-approved Assessment Bodies for conducting an SSI Manufacturing Members's assessment.
Traceability Management System	A systematic approach implemented by a site to track materials and products through the supply chain, ensuring compliance with traceability standards.
Withdrawal	Process of terminating the certified status of an SSI site; or Process of terminating approval of an assessment body or Assessor

7.2. ESG Standard Public Summary Report Template



Solar Stewardship Initiative: Public Summary Report

Site name:

Published: Month / Year

Disclaimer: This report is a summary of the SSI Assessment. This is a live document and the latest version can be found on <https://www.solarstewardshipinitiative.org/>

1

Solar Stewardship Initiative Certificate

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Presented to

Site name


Certificate number:	SSI Standard:	Certification Grade:	Assessment Body:
XXXXXXXX-XXXX	XXXXXX	XXXXXX	XXXXXX
Date of issue:	Date of expiry:	Certified since:	
dd/mm/yyyy	dd/mm/yyyy	dd/mm/yyyy	

Authorised by:

Solar Stewardship Initiative
contact@solarstewardshipinitiative.org

Validity of this certificate is subject to continued conformance with the applicable SSI Standard and can be verified at <https://www.solarstewardshipinitiative.org/>

2



Solar Stewardship Initiative: Section 1: Site Information

Disclaimer: This report is a summary of the SSI Assessment. This is a live document and the latest version can be found on <https://www.solarstewardshipinitiative.org/>

3

Public Summary Report Solar Stewardship Initiative xxxx Standard

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Overview:

Member name	
Site name	
Location	
Supply Chain Activities	
Assessment type	
Assessment date (s)	
Next Assessment Type	
Next Assessment Due Date	
Claims	

4



5

Summary			
Topic	Conformance	Minor non-conformance	Major non-conformance
Governance and Business Ethics			
Environment			
Human and Labour Rights			
Total count			

Conformance Ratings

Conformance (C):

- Systems, policies, procedures and processes performed in a manner that aligns with the Standard's intent.

Minor Non-Conformance (MiNC):

- An isolated lapse of performance or control.
- A breach which represents low risk to workers/those on site.
- A policy issue where there is no evidence of material breach.

Major Non-Conformance (MaNC):

- A systemic failure or total lack of required controls by the site.
- A total absence of implementation of the requirement.
- A breach of law.
- A group of related, repetitive or persistent minor non-conformances indicating inadequate implementation.

Observation (O):

- A Conformance that meets the fundamental requirements of the SSI Standard(s) but needs improvement. If this improvement is not adequately addressed, the Observation may escalate to a Non-Conformance during the next Assessment.

Not Applicable (N/A):

- A requirement which cannot be implemented by a site due to the nature of its operations.

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Solar Stewardship Initiative: Section 3: Findings Breakdown

Disclaimer: This report is a summary of the SSI Assessment. This is a live document and the latest version can be found on <https://www.solarstewardshipinitiative.org/>


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Governance and Business Ethics					
Topic	C	MINC	MaNC	O	N/A
1. Business Integrity					
2. Policy and Management					
3. Stakeholders and Communities					
4. Transparency					
5. Responsible Sourcing					
Total no. of findings					

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Environment					
Topic	C	MINC	MaNC	O	N/A
1. Business Integrity					
2. Policy and Management					
3. Stakeholders and Communities					
4. Transparency					
5. Responsible Sourcing					
Total no. of findings					

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Human and Labour Rights					
Topic	C	MINC	MaNC	O	N/A
1. Business Integrity					
2. Policy and Management					
3. Stakeholders and Communities					
4. Transparency					
5. Responsible Sourcing					
Total no. of findings					

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