

ASC Requirements for the Certification of Producer Groups (Group Certification)

Introduction

The Aquaculture Stewardship Council (ASC)

The Aquaculture Stewardship Council is an independent not-for-profit organisation. The ASC was founded in 2010 by the WWF (World Wildlife Fund) and IDH (The Sustainable Trade Initiative) to manage global standards for responsible aquaculture. The ASC Standards were first developed by the Aquaculture Dialogues, a series of roundtables initiated and coordinated by the WWF.

What the ASC is

The ASC's aquaculture certification programme and logo recognise and reward responsible aquaculture. The ASC is a global organisation working internationally with aquaculture producers, seafood processors, feed producers, retail and foodservice companies, scientists, conservation groups, social NGOs, and the public to promote the best environmental and social practices in aquaculture.

What the ASC does

Working with partners, the ASC runs a programme to transform the world's aquaculture markets by promoting the best environmental and social aquaculture performance. The ASC seeks to increase the availability of aquaculture products certified as sustainably and responsibly produced. The ASC's consumer logo provides third party assurance of conformity with production and chain of custody standards and makes it easy for everyone to choose ASC certified products.

What the ASC will achieve

The ASC is transforming aquaculture practices globally through:

- **Credibility:** Standards developed according to ISEAL Alliance and the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) guidelines, multi-stakeholder, open and transparent, science-based performance metrics.
- **Effectiveness:** Minimising negative environmental and social footprint of commercial aquaculture by addressing key impacts while increasing farm efficiency.
- **Added value:** Connecting the farm to the marketplace by promoting responsible practices through a consumer logo.

Group Certification

These ASC Group Certification requirements seek to make certification against ASC standards for responsible aquaculture attainable for smallholder farmers. They also strive to make Group Certification efficient and cost-effective while not compromising external audit quality. The requirements are designed to enable members of organized groups of farmers to comply fully with all requirements in the applicable ASC Standard.

These Group Certification Requirements provide the framework for a central, shared management system to coordinate the Group's certification process including applying for, obtaining and maintaining certification for the Group.

A Group is formed when a number of producers join together in order to become certified. The group is made up of two main elements: 1) the Group Management Body and 2) Group Members.

The Group Management Body is a central organization that includes members in its decision making and is responsible for obtaining and maintaining the ASC certification. Groups that meet the requirements receive a single certificate that is issued to the Group Management Body. Maintaining the certificate is the key responsibility of the Group Management Body. To do this, it is responsible for training Group members about the requirements of ASC Standards, managing the relationship with the Conformity Assessment Body (CAB), recording all sales of certified product.

The Group Management Body conducts or is responsible for internal inspections of the site, or sites, of each Group member to ensure that all are in conformity with ASC Standards. The Group Management Body may add or remove members based on the findings of internal inspections. To ensure that these functions are carried out in a consistent manner, the Group Management Body maintains a written management system that describes each function. It also maintains centralized records of its work.

The CAB conducts audits of the Group. These audits include a thorough audit of the Group Management Body that includes its management system, its activities and its records. In addition, the CAB conducts audits of selected members and their production sites. The CAB selects sites for audit using a risk-based formula. Site audits verify the compliance of the members and the way in which internal inspections are carried out within the Group to ensure reliability and consistency.

A non-conformity may be raised at both levels, the Group Management Body and its Members. When a non-conformity is identified, regardless at which level, the non-conformity is raised against the Group Management Body. The Group Management Body is responsible for identifying the root cause and taking corrective and preventive actions to fix the non-conformity.

This document sets out the requirements for certification against an ASC Standard by a Group of two or more aquaculture operations, regardless of their size. The Group Management Body shall have the responsibility and authority to implement and maintain compliance with ASC requirements including those for the Group Management Body and Group Members.

All requirements in the ASC Standard(s) and ASC Certification and Accreditation Requirements (CAR) apply to Groups unless specifically stated otherwise in this document.

Vocabulary

ASC	Aquaculture Stewardship Council
ASC Requirements	Requirements applicable for ASC certification, which include those in ASC standards, ASC Certification and Accreditation Requirements (CAR), ASC requirements for the certification of Producer Groups (this document), requirements for traceability within the group (MSC Chain of Custody) and requirements for the use of the ASC trademark(s) and logo.
ASC Standard	Standards that apply to clients for certification. ASC standards can be found at: http://www.asc-aqua.org/index.cfm?act=tekst.item&iid=6&iids=290&lng=1
CAB	Conformity Assessment Body (often referred to as a Certification Body or CB) that is accredited for ASC certification.
Group Certification	Collective certification against one ASC standard by a group of two or more producers, regardless the size of their site(s), whereby the Group's Management Body has the responsibility and authority to implement and maintain all relevant ASC requirements for the group's compliance.
Group Management Body	The person or group of people who manages and is responsible for the actions of the group.
Group Management Body Representative	Individual appointed by Group Management Body who is the contact point for the certification related issues.
Group Member	Aquaculture or feed producer operating one or several production sites and participating formally in a group for the purpose of applying for, obtaining and maintaining ASC certification as part of a Group.
Site	Production facility owned or operated by an individual, company or partnership that is included in the unit of certification.
Internal Inspection	A review of the compliance of a Group Member with ASC Standard and Group requirements.
Internal Inspector	A person appointed by the Group Management Body to undertake an internal inspection of individual Group Members.
Internal Audit	An independent and objective review of compliance of the management system of the Group Management Body that includes ASC requirements.
Internal Auditor	A person appointed by the company or Group Management Body to undertake internal audits.

1. Scope

- 1.1. This document contains the requirements for a Group Management Body to apply for, obtain, and maintain certification to an ASC Standard.

2. Normative references

Documents listed below are part of the ASC Requirements for the Certification of Producer Groups.

For references without dates or version numbers, the latest edition of the referenced document applies.

- a. ASC standard(s)
- b. ASC Certification and Accreditation Requirements (CAR)
- c. MSC Chain of Custody standard
- d. Use of ASC logo/trademark and claim/ ASC Logo License Agreement

3. Requirements for the Group Management Body

- 3.1. The Group Management Body shall:
 - 3.1.1. be a legal entity or legally recognised organisation.
 - 3.1.2. have the authority to enter into legal agreements as well as make commitments on behalf of the Group.
 - 3.1.3. operate according to its written constitution and bylaws.
 - 3.1.3.1. This shall include member participation in governance and decision making.
 - 3.1.4. ensure that all members of the Group are in compliance with all applicable ASC requirements.
 - 3.1.5. contract with and serve as the principal contact between the Group and the CAB and the ASC.
 - 3.1.6. assume responsibility for the overall management of Group members as one operational unit.
 - 3.1.7. conduct internal audits and management reviews of the Group Management Body.
 - 3.1.8. review and respond to customer and stakeholder complaints pertaining to the Group.

3.2. The Group Management Body shall have a documented common Quality Management System (QMS) in which the scope and objectives of the management system are defined. This shall include documentation of:

3.2.1. An organizational chart and other documentation as needed shall be available and include:

- 3.2.1.1. roles and responsibilities of the Group Management Body, its different functions and members
- 3.2.1.2. The names of the senior managers of the Group Management Body, the Group Management Body Representative and the Site Managers for each individual site and their back-up personnel in case of absence, health concerns or emergency situations.
- 3.2.1.3. Description of procedures for the utilization of the services of a subcontractor or consultant.

3.2.2. procedures to:

- 3.2.2.1. ensure that Group Members are aware of and understand relevant information and documentation of the QMS.
- 3.2.2.2. conduct internal inspections
 - i. Each site shall be inspected annually by appointed internal inspectors.
 - ii. Internal inspection of the Group Members shall follow the sampling rate determined by the CAB at the previous on-site audit.
 - iii. Internal inspections shall include all risk areas identified by the CAB in the previous on-site audit.
 - iv. Raise non-conformities and impose sanctions as necessary on group members based on the findings of internal inspections.
 - v. Determine whether each Group Member and their site(s) are in conformity with ASC Standards based on the findings of internal inspections.
- 3.2.2.3. conduct annual internal audits of Group Management Body operations.
 - i. Internal audits of the Group Management system shall follow the sampling rate determined by the CAB at the previous on-site audit.
 - ii. Internal audits shall include all risk areas identified by the CAB in the previous on-site audit.
- 3.2.2.4. conduct annual management reviews.
- 3.2.2.5. approve and remove of members of the Group.
- 3.2.2.6. obtain agreements with all Group Members to:

- i. ensure Group Members understand what is required of them, and
 - ii. allow for external audits and internal inspections.
- 3.2.2.7. trace all inputs into the production system as specified in the ASC Standard.
- 3.2.2.8. keep and manage records of the Group Management Body and Group Member as per ASC requirements.
- 3.2.2.9. maintain traceability of the products of Group Members according to the conditions set by the CAB.
- 3.2.2.10. communicate with Group Members, the CAB, and ASC that include:
- i. Communication between Group Members and the Group Management Body;
 - ii. Within the Group Management Body between different functions, e.g. internal inspectors, the ASC Representative and other members of the Group Management Body; and
 - iii. Group Management Body decision makers.
- 3.2.2.11. manage complaints, including:
- i. recording and tracking by the Group Management Body of all complaints, concerns and issues brought to its attention.
 - a) Trends in complaints, concerns and issues shall be analysed and reviewed by the Group Management Body in order to utilize them for continual improvement.
 - ii. resolution and review of complaints, concerns, and issues raised.
 - iii. a mechanism for obtaining information from Group Members and the Group Management Body regarding complaints in order to facilitate their investigation, action and resolution.
 - iv. forms and protocols for communication of the status of the complaint or concern, to and from the Group Management Body, Group Members, suppliers, buyers, handlers, stakeholders, customers and consumers, during investigation and up to final resolution.
 - v. process covering product recall, withdrawal, disposal, quarantine and release.
- 3.2.2.12. train and qualify all personnel involved in the Group Management Body and at individual sites.
- i. Requirements for Group positions shall be clearly specified, personnel shall be trained and evaluated ensure that they qualify.
- 3.2.2.13. control documents used within the Group.

- i. Documents shall be approved by a designated individual
 - ii. Only the current approved version shall be in use.
 - iii. Obsolete documents shall be recovered and disposed of, or marked to prevent mistakes.
- 3.2.2.14. publish a master list of approved forms for Group Members.
- 3.2.2.15. maintain an issue log for problems, recommendations or complaints related to the Group QMS.
- 3.2.2.16. documents for the Group shall be in a language common to all Group Members.
- i. It is the responsibility of the Group Management Body to ensure that any translations of documents convey the same meaning as the original documents.

3.3. Requirements for Group membership

- 3.3.1. All Group Members shall have all of the following characteristics; or if they do not, the Group shall be satisfactorily stratified for sampling.
- 3.3.1.1. Be subject to the same ASC standard.
 - 3.3.1.2. Have the same production system.
 - 3.3.1.3. Have the same culture system with regards to water use, effluent discharge, sediment handling; unless otherwise determined and justified by the Group Management Body.
 - 3.3.1.4. Each site shall operate within the same country or within neighbouring jurisdictions that share relevant common regulations.
 - i. for variations or exceptions granted, the CAB shall evaluate each jurisdiction separately using the risk weighted sampling method described in this document.
 - 3.3.1.5. Group Members may have one or more sites and may not include all the sites in the Group for certification.
 - i. When a site is registered with the Group, all activities of the site shall be subject to the Group certification scope.
 - ii. Upon application for Group membership, the Member shall declare also the site(s) that they do not intend to register with the Group, if there is any.

- 3.3.1.6. Restrictions and limitations including those on site size and total area for individual sites shall be determined and justified on a case-by-case basis by the group during its formation.
- 3.3.2. Individual Sites shall implement a common Quality Management System and ASC standard.
 - 3.3.2.1. Prior to the site's inclusion in the Group, individual sites shall
 - i. implement all elements of the Group's QMS
 - ii. have all performance data and records for the period as required by the ASC standards available.
 - 3.3.2.2. Each individual site is subject to continuous surveillance by the Group Management Body and scheduled internal inspections with at least one internal inspection completed for each site prior to initial certification of the Group.
 - 3.3.2.3. Internal inspections conducted prior to the initial audit by the CAB shall have been implemented in accordance with ASC requirements.
 - i. The sampling rate for records review and worker interviews shall be no less than the square root, rounded up to the next full integer, of all the records and staff that each site keeps and employs.
- 3.3.3. The Group Management Body shall document the membership eligibility criteria for uniformity in:
 - 3.3.3.1. common culture method(s);
 - 3.3.3.2. shared water sources/bodies; and,
 - 3.3.3.3. infrastructure that may include but not limited to:
 - i. The purchasing, storage and management of inputs (i.e. feed, fuel, treatment materials, etc.)
 - ii. Services (i.e. veterinary, waste management, social/environmental risk assessment, training, laboratory tests, etc.)
 - iii. Support facilities (i.e. equipment repair, boats, harvest equipment, etc.)
 - iv. Water treatment facility.
 - 3.3.3.4. Any variations or exceptions to these criteria, including all justification, shall be documented.
- 3.3.4. Individual sites requesting to be added to or removed from the Group, shall give the Group Management Body a minimum of three months advance notice.

3.4. Agreement between the Group Management Body and Group Members

- 3.4.1. There shall be a written agreement signed between the Group Management Body and each Group Member.
- 3.4.1.1. The Group Management Body may enter into one legally binding agreement per site where sites are held by the same Member.
- 3.4.1.2. The agreement shall include the following provisions:
- i. each member commits each site to compliance with ASC requirements, including ASC Standard(s) and ASC Requirements for the Certification of Producer Groups (this document).
 - ii. any individual site(s) which have cancelled or have been withdrawn from the Group cannot apply to re-join the Group for at least 12 months and the root cause(s) of the cancellation/withdrawal must be satisfactorily addressed.
 - iii. Any individual site(s) that sell product as certified which have been cancelled or have been withdrawn from the Group shall notify their buyers of the change within 7 days of the decision.
 - iv. authorization for the Group Management Body to change requirements for group membership or procedures for operating the group shall be defined in the agreement between the Group Management Body and its Members.
 - v. authorization for the Group Management Body to conduct inspections of each site, and for the CAB, ASI and ASC to conduct audits and inspections of each site.

3.5. Register of Sites

- 3.5.1. The Group Management Body shall maintain and update the Register of Sites.
- 3.5.2. The Register of Sites shall be part of the public certification report. The Register shall be reviewed at every surveillance inspection and updated if there are changes. The Register shall include:
- 3.5.2.1. the name and address of each Member.
 - 3.5.2.2. the GPS location of each site owned or operated by each Member, including those sites that are not part of the group.
 - i. GPS coordinates shall be recorded using degrees, minutes and seconds and using the compass points of N, S, E, and W.
 - ii. When possible, the GPS coordinates that are entered on computer should be done so in a format that allows for the GPS coordinates to be converted to other formats.
 - 3.5.2.3. telephone contacts and/or e-mail addresses of the Member and/or manager and/or responsible person(s) at the site(s).
 - 3.5.2.4. aquaculture license, site ID from the competent government authority.

- 3.5.2.5. activities carried out at the individual site (i.e. hatchery, nursery, grow-out, processing).

3.6. Adding / Removing Individual Sites

3.6.1. Adding new sites to the Group

- 3.6.1.1. Before new sites (of a new Group Member or current Group Member) are added to the Group, the Group Management Body shall conduct an internal inspection of each new applicant.
 - i. The Group Management Body shall notify the CAB within 7 days of applications for new Members to join the Group or for current Members to add additional sites.
 - ii. The Group Management Body shall not add new site(s) with any major non-conformity.
 - iii. All sites and members that have previously been a member of the Group or of another group shall be treated as new members or sites.
- 3.6.1.2. The Group Management body may increase the total number of sites by 10% in any single 12 month period.
 - i. The CAB shall determine whether or not to conduct an additional on-site audit before the new sites above the 10% annual increase are officially added to the Register of Sites.
 - a) The CAB shall communicate their determination in writing to the Group Management Body within 7 days of receiving notification of the new sites addition.
- 3.6.1.3. When the addition of a new site or sites is approved, the Group Management Body shall update the Register of Sites within 2 days to reflect the change.
- 3.6.1.4. The Group Management Body shall notify ASC within 7 days of the official addition of new Members or sites to the Group with the updated Register of Sites.
 - i. ASC shall publish the updated Register of Sites that includes newly added sites on its websites within 3 days of receipt of notification from the Group Management Body.

3.6.2. Removing sites from the Group

- 3.6.2.1. When sites voluntarily cancel or are withdrawn from the Group for any reason the Group Management Body shall:
 - i. remove the sites from the Register of Sites within 2 days of the decision.
 - ii. inform the respective Member and the sites' personnel in writing within 2 days of the decision that their site(s) are no longer part of the Group and

therefore they may not use the ASC trademark and logos or claim any right to ASC-certified product or an ASC-certified supply chain.

- 3.6.2.2. The sites shall acknowledge in writing the decision of the Group Management Body within 2 days of receiving written notice.
- 3.6.2.3. The Group Management Body shall notify the CAB and ASC within 7 days of:
 - i. decisions to suspend or remove a Member or site from the Group accompanying with the updated Register of Sites.
 - ii. ASC shall publish the updated Register of Sites that no longer contains the removed sites on its websites within 3 days of receipt of notification from the Group Management Body.
- 3.6.2.4. The Group shall formally notify a site that has been cancelled or withdrawn from the group that no claim of certification can be made by the individual site and buyers of product from the affected site relating to ASC certified product.
 - i. If the cancelled or withdrawn site(s) sells product as certified directly to buyers they shall require the responsible member to inform their buyers within 7 days that products sold are no longer certified.
- 3.6.2.5. If the cancelled or withdrawn site(s) sells their product via the Group Management Body, the latter is responsible to inform the buyers within 7 days that products sold are no longer certified.
- 3.6.3. The Group Management Body shall notify the CAB within 7 days of:
 - 3.6.3.1. any major non-conformity being raised against a Member and/or site of the Group.
- 3.6.4. Failure by the Group Management Body to provide the CAB with the above information in the time specified shall lead to suspension of the Certificate until the corrections are completed to the satisfaction of the CAB.

3.7. Traceability

- 3.7.1. The Group Management Body shall be responsible for maintaining traceability of all certified products produced by Group Members.
 - 3.7.1.1. Product from Group Members may be sold into a certified chain of custody by the Group Management Body according the determination made by the CAB as detailed in the ASC CAR v.2 (17.6)
 - 3.7.1.2. Individual Members may sell their product as certified to their own certified chain of custody, if that is allowed within the Group (3.2.2.9).
 - i. This practice shall be reported in the audit report.

- ii. The CAB shall take account of this practice when determining the start of the chain and make any determination necessary to ensure traceability (CAR v.2 17.6).
- iii. Members shall record and report the sold volumes to the Group Management Body within 7 days of the physical transaction.

3.8. Use of Certification Trademarks

- 3.8.1. The use of ASC certification trademarks is regulated in the ASC Logo Licence Agreement.
- 3.8.2. The Group Management Body shall be eligible to apply to use the ASC logo and trademark, after it has been issued a certificate by the CAB.
 - 3.8.2.1. Individual Group Members are not eligible to enter into a Logo License Agreement with ASC unless the CAB has determined that they are able to maintain traceability.

3.9. Training

- 3.9.1. The Group Management Body shall establish a training procedure to ensure that Group Members and responsible personnel (under 3.2.1.2) are familiar with and understand ASC Requirements for obtaining and maintaining ASC certification.
- 3.9.2. An annual training plan shall be developed and shall include training on the ASC Requirements.
 - 3.9.2.1. The training plan shall be reviewed and if necessary revised annually.
 - 3.9.2.2. Internal auditors and internal inspectors shall be trained and qualified to carry out their duties effectively (Table A & D in Annex 2 of this document).
- 3.9.3. Training shall be delivered by qualified, competent trainers who have been selected by the Group Management Body.

3.10. Group Management Body Representative

- 3.10.1. The Group Management Body shall designate a Group Management Representative and document the following:
 - 3.10.1.1. Appointment of the Group Management Body Representative.
 - i. The Group Management Body Representative may be employed by the Group Management Body, an employee or owner of one of the Members, a consultant hired for the job or affiliated with a trade association.
 - ii. The Group Management Body Representative shall be familiar with the activities of the Group Members and establish personal contact with them.

- iii. The appointed individual shall be familiar with the ASC requirements, and the Group's QMS, including internal audit and internal inspection process.

3.10.1.2. Responsibilities and authority of the Group Management Body Representative.

- 3.10.2. The Group Management Body shall inform all Members of the appointment, role, responsibilities and authority of the Group Management Body Representative.

3.11. Records

3.11.1. The Group Management Body shall keep the following Records:

- 3.11.1.1. Master Lists of Procedures, forms/templates and Work Instructions
- 3.11.1.2. Master List of External Documents (e.g. reference Standards, Regulations)

3.11.1.3. Register of Sites that includes:

- i. Size of each individual site - total area in hectares,
- ii. number of ponds/cages/pens,
- iii. area used for grow-out,
- iv. production volume of the latest harvest,
- v. area used for water reservoirs,
- vi. number of employed workers
- vii. Date each Group Member and its site(s) joined the Group, and
- viii. Date each Group Member and its site(s) left the Group and reason of leaving

3.11.1.4. Detailed site diagrams for each site with water flow and infrastructure.

3.11.1.5. List of members and related documents for justification of Group membership.

3.11.1.6. Signed agreements with members that cover each site, including all amendments and revisions.

3.11.1.7. Training records.

3.11.1.8. Internal inspector and internal auditor training and qualification records.

3.11.1.9. Signed statements of conflicts of interest.

3.11.1.10. Internal Inspection Reports, including sampling of sites.

3.11.1.11. Evidence of Corrections, Corrective and Preventive Actions.

- 3.11.1.12. An up-to-date overview of internal inspections results of all sites, which includes sites' name, address, internal inspection date(s), non-conformity categories, proposed corrective and preventive actions, date of non-conformity close-out and verification.
- 3.11.1.13. Internal Audit Reports.
- 3.11.1.14. Management Review Reports.
- 3.11.1.15. Certificate; rules for use.
- 3.11.1.16. Complaints log, including resolutions.
- 3.11.1.17. Records pertinent to packaging material with trademark / logos, if applicable
- 3.11.1.18. Testing results.
- 3.11.1.19. Service contracts that are signed on behalf of the Group (i.e. for certification, training, laboratory tests, logo use, etc.) all amendments and revisions.

3.12. Internal Inspections

- 3.12.1. The Group Management Body shall document its internal inspection procedures that include as the minimum:
 - 3.12.1.1. Initial inspections, surveillance inspections, follow-up inspections, unannounced inspections and other inspections as deemed necessary by the Group Management Body.
 - i. Initial inspections of all sites in the Group shall be completed satisfactorily with no open major non-conformities before the certification audit may be conducted.
 - ii. Surveillance inspections shall be carried out at least one month prior to the CAB surveillance audit.
 - a) 10% of yearly surveillance inspections shall be unannounced.
 - iii. Results of internal inspections shall be submitted to the CAB at least 15 days prior to the CAB audit.
 - 3.12.1.2. Inspection methods and conformity decisions, inspection plans & schedules, checklists and other inspection guidance tools.
 - i. The Group Management Body shall follow the requirements for Audit Findings (section 17.10) of the CAR – See Annex 1.
- 3.12.2. Internal inspections of every individual Member site shall take place at minimum once every year (or more often as required by the status and nature of the activity performed at each site or department based on risk-weighted sampling).

- 3.12.3. Internal inspections of individual sites should take place during periods of peak activity.
- 3.12.4. Internal inspections shall be completed according to scheduled dates.
- 3.12.5. The Group Management Body shall ensure that internal inspection procedures as well as inspection schedules and inspection results are communicated to Group Members.
 - 3.12.5.1. Unannounced inspections shall not require advance notice to Group members.
- 3.12.6. There shall be an annual plan for internal inspections, which shall be adjusted to reflect the results of the previous internal inspections.
 - 3.12.6.1. The plan shall provide for sampling of records and worker interviews at the rate determined by the CAB at the previous onsite audit.
 - 3.12.6.2. The plan shall include sampling risk areas identified by the CAB during the previous onsite audit.
- 3.12.7. The internal inspection plan and schedule shall include information on each site for the following:
 - 3.12.7.1. Planned date of the internal inspection.
 - 3.12.7.2. Name of the internal inspector assigned to perform the inspection.
 - 3.12.7.3. Date and results of the previous inspection.
 - 3.12.7.4. Type of internal inspection (initial, annual, follow-up, unannounced).
 - 3.12.7.5. Name of the internal inspector who performed the previous inspection.
 - 3.12.7.6. Correction / response rate to previous non-conformities raised.
 - 3.12.7.7. Any open non-conformities and the dates by which they shall be closed.
 - 3.12.7.8. Other matters of significance to the certification process and / or quality management system.
- 3.12.8. Only trained qualified personnel shall conduct internal inspections and evaluate the results of those internal inspections.
- 3.12.9. The decision on conformity of an individual site to the ASC Standard and group requirements shall be taken by an individual or a committee who was not involved in the site inspection and shall be based on the objective evidence obtained during the site inspection.
- 3.12.10. All personnel carrying out or managing internal inspections and site conformity decisions shall declare all potential conflict of interest prior to involvement in those activities.
 - 3.12.10.1. Conflicts of interest include but are not limited to:

- i. Having a direct financial interest in the site being inspected.
- ii. Having close family members (i.e. spouse, parent, child) with a direct financial interest in the site being inspected.

ANNEX 1

Definitions of Major and Minor Non-conformities and Sections 17.9 & 17.10 of the ASC Certification and Accreditation Requirements, Version 2.0, December 2015

NOTE 1: Any disagreement between this annex and the text of the CAR shall be resolved by reference to the text of the CAR.

NOTE 2: When used for internal inspections and internal audits, the “CAB” is read as “Group Management Body”.

Major Nonconformity

Any non-conformity with an ASC requirement that has one or more of the following characteristics:

- The absence or total breakdown of a system that is likely to result in a failure to achieve the objective of the relevant ASC Standard Criteria or another applicable certification requirement
- Would result in the probable shipment of product that does not conform to ASC requirements
- Is likely to result in a failure of the system or materially reduce the ability of the client to assure the integrity of the certified product
- Is shown to continue over a long period of time
- Is repeated
- Is systematic or is the result of the absence or a total breakdown of a system
- Affects a wide area and/or causes significant damage
- Is not corrected or adequately responded to by the client once identified
- Where two (2) or more minor non-conformities may together meet any of the above criteria

Minor Nonconformity

Any non-conformity with an ASC requirement that does not jeopardise the integrity of the certified product. This includes one or more of the following characteristics:

- Where failure to comply with a requirement which is not likely to result in the breakdown of a system to meet an ASC requirement
- Where the failure is a single observed lapse or isolated incident
- Where there is no systemic failure to conform to ASC requirements
- Where the impacts are limited in their temporal and spatial scale
- Where there is minimal risk of the shipment of a product that does not conform to ASC requirements
- Where the failure does not meet the definition of a Major Nonconformity
- Where the failure will not produce a non-conforming product

17.9 Audit Evidence

- 17.9.1 Audit evidence relevant to the audit objectives, scope and criteria, including information relating to interfaces between functions, activities and processes shall be collected by appropriate sampling and shall be verified.
- 17.9.2 Only information that is verifiable may be audit evidence.
- 17.9.3 The CAB shall record all audit evidence in the audit report.

17.10 Audit Findings

- 17.10.1 CABs shall classify non-conformities as minor or major as follows:

- 17.10.1.1 A minor non-conformity

- a) For initial certification, the CAB may recommend the applicant for certification once an action plan to address minor non-conformity(ies)
 - i. Has been agreed to by both the client and the CAB.
 - A. The action plan shall include a brief description of:
 - 1. The root cause(s) of the non-conformity
 - 2. The corrective action(s) to be taken is intended to satisfactorily address the non-conformity
 - ii. Has been implemented.
 - iii. Within (3) three months the CAB shall:
 - A. Confirm receipt of objective evidence that demonstrates that a satisfactory corrective action plan has been finalized.
 - B. Confirm receipt of objective evidence that demonstrates that the corrective action plan has been implemented.
 - C. Close the minor non conformity once it can confirm receipt of objective evidence that demonstrates conformity.
 - 1. Minor non-conformities may be extended once for a maximum period of one (1) year if on-site verification is necessary to confirm conformity.
 - 2. If an extension is granted, the CAB shall have confirmed receipt of sufficient objective evidence that demonstrates conformity such that it is satisfied that all efforts have been made or are being made by the client to demonstrate conformity.
 - 3. If an extension is approved by the CAB, it shall be justified in the next audit report.
 - b) The CAB should raise a major non-conformity where minor nonconformities are repeatedly raised against a particular requirement.

- c) The CAB shall raise the minor non-conformity to a major non-conformity if any of the above deadlines are not met.

17.10.1.2 Major non-conformities

- a) The CAB shall require that major non-conformities shall be satisfactorily addressed by an applicant:
 - i. Prior to certification being granted.
 - ii. Within three months of the date of the audit or a full re-audit shall be required.
 - iii. That the root cause of the non-conformity is identified and addressed.
- b) The CAB shall determine whether or not an on-site visit is needed to close the major non-conformity.
- c) The decision, justification and conclusion shall be made clear in the final audit report.
- d) In the case of a major non-conformity raised during the period of validity of a certificate, the CAB shall require:
 - i. That the certificate holder satisfactorily addresses the nonconformity within a maximum of three (3) months
 - ii. Major non-conformities may be extended once for a maximum period of three months if the CAB has confirmed receipt of sufficient objective evidence that demonstrates conformity was not possible due to circumstances beyond the control of the client.
 - A. Extensions of major non-conformities shall be clearly documented along with a clear justification in the audit report.
 - iii. That objective evidence is confirmed by the CAB that:
 - A. The root cause of the non-conformity is identified,
 - B. An action plan is agreed with the CAB,
 - C. That the action plan is implemented and
 - D. That conformity can be demonstrated.
- e) The CAB shall decide if an on-site audit is required to close out the major non-conformity(ies).
- f) The CAB shall suspend the certificate if a major non-conformity remains open after six (6) months and follow requirement in Section 7.6 of this document.

17.10.2 All non-conformities shall reference the relevant section of the ASC standard or other ASC requirement as relevant to the audit.

17.10.3 The CAB shall not include evidence of more than one non-conformity into a single documented non-conformity report unless they apply to the same ASC requirement.

17.10.4 Major non-conformities shall not be downgraded to minor non-conformities

- 17.10.5 The CAB shall assess the effectiveness of the corrective and/or preventive actions in addressing the root cause of the non-conformity taken before closing out a major or minor non-conformity.

ANNEX 2

NOTE: The following tables are excerpted from the CAR (Annex B) and are included here for the information of the Group Management Body. These tables describe the requirements for Internal Auditors and Internal Inspectors.

Table A – All Auditor and Technical Expert qualifications and competencies

All auditors and technical experts shall possess the following qualifications and competencies.

Qualification/Competency	Requirement
B1. Analytical skills	The individual will effectively and systematically assess situations and information to make informed decisions on objective and verifiable evidence
B2. Audit Training	The individual will have knowledge of the purpose and procedure of conducting audits. The individual will be trained and competent in accordance with the CAB procedures.
B3. Diplomatic	The individual will be tactful in dealings with people, as appropriate to achieve the audit objectives.
B4. Education	The individual will have at least a post-high school diploma or equivalent (minimum course duration of two (2) years) must have been obtained in a discipline related to the scope of certification. In exceptional cases practical experience can be regarded as equivalent. These cases shall be documented.

Qualification/Competency	Requirement
B5. Ethical	<p>The individual will be fair, truthful, unbiased, sincere, discreet, trustworthy and honest.</p> <p>The individual will possess a high level of integrity, particularly in relation to bribery and corrupt practices.</p>
B6. Listening	<p>The individual will understand and interpret verbal material.</p> <p>The individual will understand and interpret non-verbal communication, such as gestures, and personal expression.</p>
B7. Numeracy	<p>The individual will understand and interpret number systems and their significance.</p>
B8. Observant	<p>The individual will be fully aware of physical surroundings and activities throughout the entire audit process.</p>
B9. Open-minded	<p>The individual will be open-minded, reasonable and will be willing to consider alternative ideas or points of view.</p>
B10. Perceptive	<p>The individual will instinctively be aware of and be able to understand situations.</p>

Qualification/Competency	Requirement
B11. Professional	<p>The individual will be courteous, conscientious, discreet and business like in their approach to auditing .</p> <p>The individual will have the ability to deal sensitively with people from different backgrounds and to make them feel at ease, in order to resolve conflict without losing composure.</p> <p>The individual will be empathetic, respectful to others and will help to build trust during and after the audit.</p> <p>The individual will keep relevant information confidential in accordance with non-disclosure or confidentiality agreements.</p> <p>The individual will communicate confidently and with authority to secure agreement with the client's management.</p> <p>The individual will maintain strict independence from self-interest or personal bias.</p>
B12. Reading	<p>The individual will understand and interpret written material.</p>
B13. Respectful	<p>The individual will act respectfully, show politeness and good manners.</p>
B14. Tenacious	<p>The individual will be persistent and focussed in their approach to achieve audit objectives.</p>
B15. Versatile	<p>The individual will be able to adjust readily to different situations and to effectively resolve conflict and arrive at consensus agreement as far as possible .</p>

Qualification/Competency	Requirement
B16. Work experience	The individual will have at least two (2) years of experience relevant to the operation and, if relevant, the processing facility being audited.
B17. Writing	<p>The individual will have good written communication skills.</p> <p>The individual will produce written documents that can be understood by the intended audience.</p> <p>The individual will produce clear and accurate reports on audit findings and clearly articulate these in relation to legal requirements and relevant codes.</p>

Table D – Internal Auditor and Internal Inspector qualifications and competencies

In addition to the requirements of tables A, internal auditors and internal inspectors conducting ASC Group internal audits and internal inspections shall possess the following experience and competencies.

Qualification/Competency	Requirement
<p>B18. Audit/Inspection Experience</p>	<p>The individual shall have undertaken at least two satisfactory audits or inspections as an acting audit or inspection team leader, shadowed by and under the supervision of a competent internal auditor or inspector.</p>
<p>B19. Audit/Inspection principles and techniques</p>	<p>The individual shall be able to apply audit principles, procedures and techniques associated with management systems and possess a detailed knowledge of compliance issues commonly experienced with aquaculture and associated processing operations.</p> <p>The individual shall be able to prioritize and focus on matters of significance and understand the appropriateness and consequences of using sampling techniques for auditing or inspecting.</p> <p>The individual shall be able to verify the accuracy of collected information and be aware of the significance and appropriateness of audit evidence to support audit findings and conclusions.</p> <p>The individual shall understand and assess those factors that can affect the reliability of the audit or inspection findings and conclusions.</p> <p>The individual shall be able to apply audit principles in the conduct of a social audit or inspection.</p>

Qualification/Competency	Requirement
<p>B20. Audit/Inspection training</p>	<p>The individual shall have successfully completed of an Internal Assessor training course based on ISO 19011 principles that have a minimum duration of sixteen (16) hours. The certificate must specify the course content and duration. Successful completion must be indicated on the certificate. The course provider shall be accredited by the International Register of Certified Auditors (IRCA) or equivalent.</p> <p>- or -</p> <p>The individual shall have successfully completed an Internal Inspector training course that has been approved by ASC.</p>
<p>B21. Auditor/Inspection training</p>	<p>The individual shall have undertaken and successfully completed the 'ASC Farm Traceability' online training module.</p> <p>The individual shall complete the ASC training for new requirements as specified by the ASC within the deadlines set by ASC.</p> <p>The individual shall undertake additional training on changes to legislation, specific standards, codes or conventions as appropriate.</p> <p>The individual has had an audit peer witnessed by a qualified ASC internal auditor or inspector no less than once in each two (2) year period.</p>

Qualification/Competency	Requirement
B22. Decisive	<p>The individual shall be able to reach timely conclusions based on logical reasoning and analysis, and in the case of possible conflict, be confident to manage and control discussions.</p> <p>The individual shall assume the leadership role during discussions and other situations in order to resolve issues.</p>
B23. Detection skills	<p>The individual shall have knowledge and investigative skills to detect and document evidence of non-conformities.</p> <p>The individual shall have the investigative skills to determine the authenticity of information and to evaluate allegations made by other sources.</p>
B24. Ethically and morally courageous	<p>The individual shall act professionally and ethically and make decisions even though these actions and decisions may result in disagreement, confrontation or appeal proceedings.</p>
B25. Facilitating meetings	<p>The individual shall effectively control and manage meetings during the audit or inspection.</p>
B26. Interpersonal skills	<p>The individual shall have skills to ensure effective communication between themselves and other people.</p> <p>The individual shall have good people management skills.</p> <p>The individual shall have good communication skills in relation to a situation which warrants careful information gathering such as issues relating to gender, race, culture, discrimination and worker/management dispute.</p>

Qualification/Competency	Requirement
B27. Interviewing	<p>The individual shall be experienced in different types of interviewing techniques.</p> <p>The individual shall understand the principles of sampling techniques with respect to group or individual interviews and cultural considerations.</p>
B28. Language	<p>Unless accompanied by an independent interpreter, the individual shall be a fluent speaker and reader of the language(s) used by managers, administrators and workers of the organisation being audited or inspected.</p> <p>The individual shall communicate effectively through an interpreter.</p>
B29. Logical judgement	<p>The individual shall make correct decisions based on objective and verifiable evidence.</p>
B30. Management systems and reference documents	<p>The individual shall have a general knowledge of management systems standards (such as ISO 9001), applicable procedures or other management systems documents used as audit criteria.</p>
B31. Oral presentation	<p>The individual shall have good oral communication skills, which makes him/her understood by the intended audience.</p> <p>The individual shall provide clear and accurate oral representation on audit or inspection findings at closing meetings and clearly articulate these in relation to legal requirements and relevant codes.</p>

Qualification/Competency	Requirement
B32. Organisational situations	<p>The individual shall have knowledge of general business processes and shall understand the workings of organisations in relation to size, structure, function and relationships.</p> <p>The individual shall understand the social, economic and cultural relationships in worker communities.</p>
B33. Organisational skills	<p>The individual shall have good organisational and time management skills.</p>
B34. Self-reliant	<p>The individual shall be able to act effectively and function independently during audits</p>
B35. Technical language	<p>The individual shall have knowledge of the technical language employed in aquaculture and processing of aquaculture products.</p>
B36. Work experience	<p>The individual shall have experience relevant to the business being audited or site being inspected.</p>

