



# Assessment process for product certification schemes

Date June 2015

## Contents

<b>Change log</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>1.0 Foreword</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>2.0 Assessment process</b>	<b>4</b>
2.1 Stage 1: Eligibility review	5
2.2 Stage 2: Registration	7
2.3 Stage 3: Submission	7
2.4 Stage 4: Pre-Assessment Review by GBCA	8
2.5 Stage 5: Round 1 Assessment by Independent Assessment Panel	8
2.6 Stage 6: Round 2 Assessment by Independent Assessment Panel	9
2.7 Stage 7: Appeal Process	10
2.8 Stage 8: GBCA Recognition of Applicant Scheme and Standard(s)	11
2.9 Review and Re-assessment of Schemes and Period of Recognition	11
<b>3.0 General information and answers to Frequently Asked Questions</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>4.0 Assessment Fee Schedule</b>	<b>13</b>

## Change log

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<b>Release date</b>	<b>Description of changes</b>
<b>30 May 2009</b>	Release
<b>20 November 2013</b>	Changes to accommodate expanded framework including two additional assessment parts, Part III – VOC and Part - IV Cleaning Products.  Removed 'Part II' from document title.
<b>10 June 2015</b>	Review of product certification scheme assessment process to align with building certification model.

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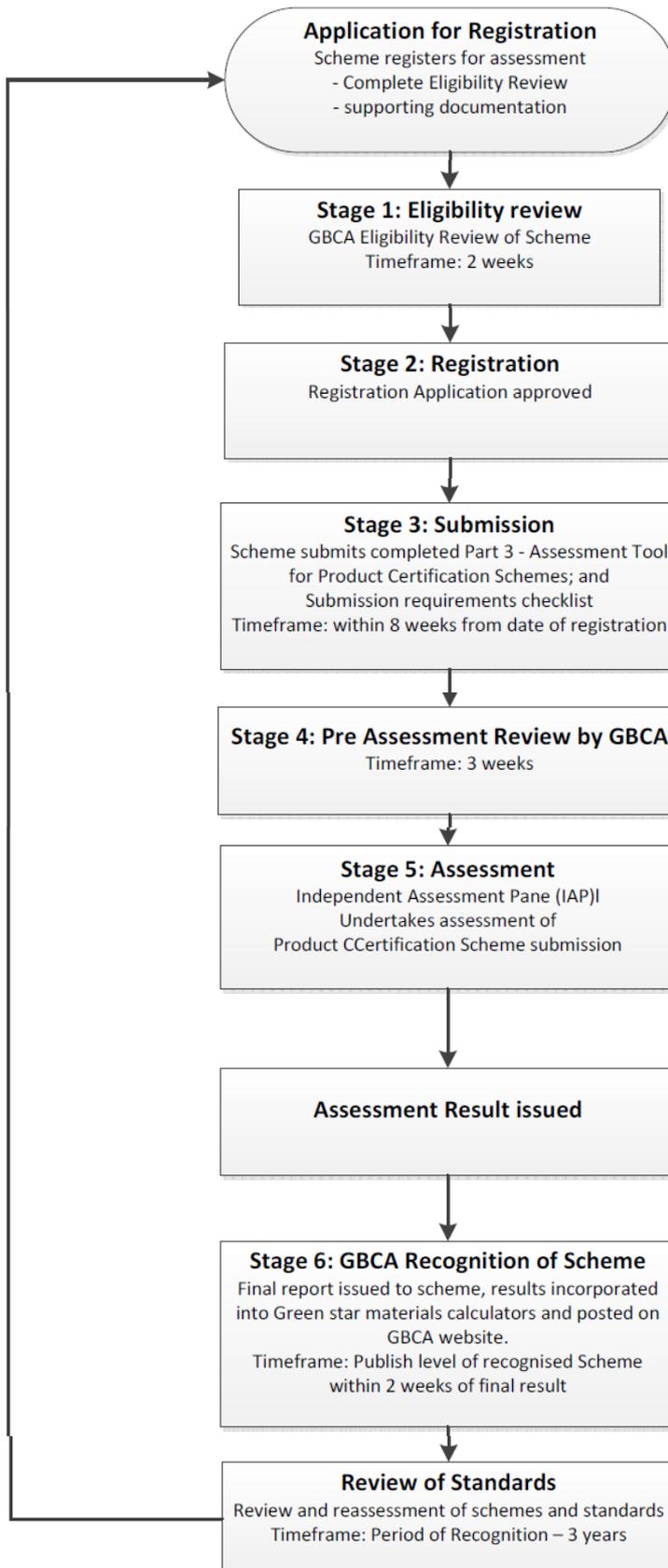
## 1.0 Foreword

This document describes the process that the Green Building Council of Australia (GBCA) shall apply to the assessment of product certification schemes ("schemes") that apply for recognition in Green Star Material Calculators, VOC related credits and cleaning products (in relevance to Green Star - Performance). It is intended to be used in conjunction with the following supporting documents which can be accessed on the Product Certification page of the GBCA website:

- Product Certification Project – Background and Outcomes;
- Criteria for Evaluating Product Certification Schemes;
- Assessment Tool for Product Certification Schemes; and
- Assessment Tool Users Guide

## 2.0 Assessment process

The following flow chart summarises the key stages of the assessment process. A more comprehensive explanation of all steps in the process is detailed in the following sections.



## 2.1 Stage 1: Eligibility review

- The scheme must register for assessment by downloading an application form from the GBCA website. It must be completed and submitted to the GBCA along with payment of the Eligibility review fee (see Section 4 for more information) and any supporting documentation requested by the form to demonstrate compliance with the eligibility criteria.
- The scheme must meet the following prerequisite eligibility criteria to be successfully registered for assessment. The scheme must:
  - Be a voluntary, third-party scheme conducting product-focused environmental and social assessment of fitout products that are directly applicable to the various Green Star Material Calculators;
  - Base assessment of products on multi-criteria, performance-based standards that require an overall product lifecycle approach;
  - Award a licence that authorises the use of a label on products;
  - Award a licence and label that is representative of overall environmental preference of a product within a particular product category;
  - Be a legally registered entity;
  - Maintain a website containing current contact details; and
  - Nominate a representative to serve as the primary contact with the GBCA throughout the assessment process.
- The GBCA will review the registration application and supporting documents to ensure that the scheme meets the eligibility criteria and notify the scheme of the outcomes of the Eligibility review.
- If the registration application is approved by the GBCA, the scheme will be eligible to officially register for certification.
- If the registration application is denied by the GBCA, an explanation will be provided to the scheme. The scheme will have an opportunity to address the issues raised by the GBCA and resubmit any information that may be required to satisfy the eligibility criteria.

### **Timeframe:**

- The GBCA shall have a period of up to 2 weeks, from the time of receipt of completed registration application and the review fee, to complete the Eligibility review and issue a response to the scheme.
- If the Eligibility application is denied, the scheme shall have a period of up to 4 weeks from receipt of the GBCA Eligibility review response to resubmit the information required by the GBCA to satisfy the eligibility criteria. If no response is received from the scheme during this period, the GBCA reserves the right to charge the scheme a further Eligibility review fee to consider the scheme's eligibility criteria should the scheme opt to pursue of registration for assessment at a later time.

## 2.2 Stage 2: Registration

- Following successful completion of the Eligibility requirements, the scheme is sent an Assessment Agreement which sets out the terms and conditions of the service that the GBCA will provide. It must be signed by an authorised representative(s) of the scheme to officially register for assessment.
- Payment of the appropriate assessment fee (see Section 4 for more information) must be received by the GBCA at the same time as the executed Assessment Agreement.
- Where necessary, the GBCA will enter into a confidentiality agreement with the scheme in relation to any proprietary documentation that may need to be submitted by the scheme to demonstrate compliance with the Assessment Criteria.

### **Timeframe:**

- The scheme shall have a period of up to 12 months from the date of the GBCA issued Eligibility review response to finalise registration for assessment. If no response is received by the scheme within this period, then the GBCA reserves the right to require the scheme to undergo a further Eligibility review, should the scheme opt to pursue of registration for assessment at a later time.

## 2.3 Stage 3: Submission

- Once registered, the scheme must submit to the GBCA a completed Part III – Assessment Tool for Product Certification Schemes to demonstrate compliance with the Assessment Criteria set out in the document Part I - Criteria for Evaluating Product Certification Schemes.
- The Assessment Tool is the spreadsheet tool that contains the GBCA Assessment Criteria. It allocates fields for the scheme in which to nominate criteria weightings and to provide comments, links and references to supporting documents that will provide evidence of compliance with the Assessment Criteria. Refer to Part III – Assessment Tool for Product Certification Schemes for more information.
- The document Part IV – Assessment Tool Users Guide should be used by the scheme as a guide when completing the Assessment Tool.

### **Timeframe:**

- The scheme shall have a period of up to 8 weeks from the date of registration to lodge a completed Assessment Tool to the GBCA.
- If the scheme requires additional time to lodge a submission, then it must obtain the prior written consent of the GBCA.
- If no submission is received within this period and no extension has been arranged, then GBCA reserves the right to cancel the registration in which case the scheme may forfeit the assessment fee.

## 2.4 Stage 4: Pre-Assessment Review by GBCA

- The GBCA undertakes a review of the completed Assessment Tool to ensure that all the information that will be needed by the Independent Assessment Panel is supplied and correctly presented in the submission by the scheme.
- If the GBCA considers the submission to be complete it will be forwarded to the Independent Assessment Panel for the Round 1 assessment to be conducted.
- Incomplete and/or non-compliant submissions will be returned to the scheme with an explanation of the issues that must be addressed.
- The scheme may resubmit for assessment after addressing the identified issues.

### **Timeframe:**

- The GBCA shall have a period of up to 3 weeks, from the time of receiving the documentation from the scheme, to issue the pre-assessment review response to the scheme.
- If the pre-assessment review finds the submission to be incomplete the scheme shall have a period of up to 4 weeks, from receipt of the GBCA pre-assessment review response, to resubmit the assessment in full, ensuring that the information required by the GBCA to satisfy the pre-assessment review has been provided.
- If the scheme requires additional time to address the issues raised in the pre-assessment review then it must obtain the prior written consent of the GBCA. If no response is received from the scheme during this period, then the GBCA reserves the right to cancel the registration in which case the scheme forfeits the assessment fee.

## 2.5 Stage 5: Round 1 Assessment by Independent Assessment Panel

### **Independent Assessment Panel**

- The Independent Assessment Panel (IAP) is an assessment body, external to the GBCA, contracted by the GBCA to undertake the assessment of a product certification scheme's submission and supporting documentation against the Assessment Criteria.
- Participants from the GBCA Product Certification Project Expert Reference Panel will serve as the inaugural pool of assessors to comprise the IAP.
- The use of an assessment panel comprised of independent assessor(s) is consistent with the process by which Green Star submissions for buildings are assessed.

### **Round 1 Assessment**

- Assessor(s) undertake an assessment of the completed Assessment Tool and supporting documentation that has been submitted by the scheme against the GBCA Assessment Criteria.
- A Round 1 assessment meeting is convened following the assessors' independent reviews of the scheme's submission.
- At the Round 1 assessment meeting, the Round 1 assessment results and recommendations are officially documented.

## Assessment process for product certification schemes

Date Revised: June 2015

- Following the Round 1 meeting, the IAP provides recommendations to the GBCA along with any additional information to pass on to the scheme (e.g. requests for more information from the scheme).
- The GBCA considers the recommendations of the IAP and issues the Round 1 assessment results to the scheme along with any additional comments from the assessors.

### Timeframe:

- The GBCA shall have a period of up to 6 weeks from the time of receiving the documentation from the scheme to issue the Round 1 assessment results to the scheme.

### Scheme Response:

- The scheme may opt to make further submissions to address the comments provided in the Round 1 assessment results and then resubmit for a Round 2 assessment.

### Timeframe:

- Should the scheme wish to lodge a Round 2 submission, it must communicate in writing to the GBCA this decision within 3 weeks of the GBCA issuing the Round 1 assessment results to the scheme.
- If the scheme chooses to lodge a Round 2 submission, then it must be received by the GBCA within this same 3-week period.
- If the scheme requires additional time to lodge a Round 2 submission, then it must obtain the prior written consent of the GBCA.
- If no submission is received within this period and no extension has been arranged, then the GBCA will proceed with the course of action identified in Stage 8 – Recognition of Product Certification Schemes.

## 2.6 Stage 6: Round 2 Assessment by Independent Assessment Panel

- If a Round 2 submission is made by the scheme, then the GBCA will reconvene the same IAP that undertook the Round 1 assessment (if possible, or else engage a new IAP) and issue the assessors with the further submission provided by the scheme.
- Round 2 submissions must address the comments provided by the assessors in the Round 1 assessment results as well as any other relevant supporting documentation that the scheme believes will be useful to clarify the matters raised by the assessors.
- The Round 2 assessment meeting will be convened following the assessors' independent reviews of the Round 2 submission.
- At the Round 2 assessment meeting, the Round 2 assessment results will be officially documented.
- The assessors may not request more information from the scheme during this stage of review.
- Following the Round 2 meeting, the IAP will provide recommendations to the GBCA along with any additional information to pass on to the scheme.
- The GBCA will consider the recommendations of the IAP and issue the Round 2 assessment results to the scheme along with any additional comments from the assessors.

## Assessment process for product certification schemes

Date Revised: June 2015

### Timeframe:

The GBCA shall have a period of up to 4 weeks from the time of receiving the Round 2 documentation from the scheme to issue the Round 2 assessment results.

### Scheme Response:

If the scheme is unsatisfied with the assessment results it may opt to engage in the appeal process.

### Timeframe:

Should the scheme wish to appeal, it must communicate this decision in writing to the GBCA within 2 weeks of the GBCA issuing the assessment results.

If the scheme requires additional time to lodge an appeal submission, then it must obtain the prior written consent of the GBCA.

If no submission is received within this period and no extension has been arranged, then the GBCA will proceed with the course of action identified in Stage 8 – Recognition of Product Certification Schemes.

## 2.7 Stage 7: Appeal Process

- The scheme shall have an opportunity to formally appeal any grievance with the assessment results.
- The GBCA will convene a different IAP to undertake the review of the appeal submission.
- A fee will apply to process an appeal (refer to Section 4 for more information)
- The appeal submission must address the comments provided by the assessors in the Round 2 assessment results as well as any other relevant supporting documentation that the scheme believes will be useful to clarify the matters raised by the IAP.
- Only one appeal submission will be accepted from the scheme.
- Only one round of assessment is offered in the appeal process.
- The GBCA will consider the recommendations of the IAP and issue the results of the appeal to the scheme.
- The results of the appeal will be final and will supersede the previously issued assessment results.

### Timeframe:

- Should the scheme opt to lodge an appeal submission, it must communicate this in writing to the GBCA within 2 weeks of the issue of the assessment results from the GBCA.
- The GBCA must receive the appeal submission from the scheme within 6 weeks of the receipt of the scheme's notice communicating its intent to lodge an appeal.
- The GBCA shall have a period of up to 4 weeks from the time of receiving the appeal submission from the scheme to facilitate the appeal process with the IAP, and issue the appeal result to the scheme.

## 2.8 Stage 8: GBCA Recognition of Applicant Scheme and Standard(s)

- Only schemes that have been assessed against the Framework as successfully meeting the benchmarks for Level A, Level B or Level C will be recognised by the GBCA.
- Unsuccessful schemes will not be recognised by the GBCA.
- The GBCA will maintain an up-to-date section on its website that lists all recognised product certification schemes.
- The level of recognition achieved by a scheme, and what that means in terms of relevance to points available for a Green Star project, will be clearly explained in this section of the website. Refer to the document Product Certification Project – Background and Outcomes for more information.

### **Timeframe:**

The GBCA shall publish the level of an assessed scheme's recognition on the GBCA website within 2 weeks of the date of issuing the Round 1, Round 2 or appeal assessment results (whichever is applicable) to the scheme.

## 2.9 Review and Re-assessment of Schemes and Period of Recognition

- GBCA recognition of a product certification scheme within Green Star Material Calculators shall be effective for a period of 3 years subject to the GBCA's right of review as set out below.
- The GBCA reserves the right at its sole discretion to cancel or refuse assessment or recognition of any scheme and its standard(s), and to conduct a full or partial re-assessment at any time.
- After a scheme has achieved recognition by the GBCA, it must immediately communicate to the GBCA any changes to the scheme or its standard(s) which may impact on its compliance with the Assessment Framework for Product Certification Schemes. A detailed report of how the changes affect compliance with the Assessment Criteria must be submitted at that time and a partial re-assessment process may be required.
- The scheme must meet the cost of any such re-assessment or partial assessment, based on the number of criteria affected by the changes to the scheme or standards. Refer to Section 4 for more information.
- Full or partial re-assessment of a recognised scheme may be triggered when:
  - any changes are made to the scheme or its standard(s) which impact on its compliance with the Framework;
  - significant adaptations are made to the GBCA Assessment Framework for Product Certification Schemes; or
  - contravention in the implementation of a scheme's procedures become apparent.
- The GBCA may cancel recognition of a scheme in the event that the scheme refuses to submit for re-assessment at the request of the GBCA, or fails to sufficiently address concerns that the GBCA may raise regarding aspects of the scheme's or standard's performance against Assessment Criteria that it has previously been assessed as meeting.
- Recognised schemes may lodge an application for partial assessments of revised aspects of the scheme or its standard(s) which have already undergone the assessment process and received some level of GBCA recognition. A fee will apply for partial assessments of revised schemes and standards (refer to Section 4 for more information).

## Assessment process for product certification schemes

Date Revised: June 2015

- The provision of a partial assessment option is intended to minimise formalities associated with the entire assessment process and to encourage schemes to improve upon their existing process and standards in accordance with the guidance provided by the Assessment Criteria.
- GBCA recognised schemes will be required to follow a set of guidelines and rules with regards to the use, marketing and advertisement of the GBCA recognition. Contravention of these rules may result in the cancellation of the scheme's recognition by the GBCA.

### 3.0 General information and answers to Frequently Asked Questions

- Upon public release of the GBCA Assessment Framework for Product Certification Schemes, the GBCA will contact relevant schemes operating in Australia and invite them to apply for assessment by the GBCA.
- A manufacturer or supplier may be nominated as the primary contact (representative) for a certification scheme provided that the scheme supplies a letter to the GBCA expressing consent to this. The scheme must clearly state the name and organisation that they wish to nominate as their representative. The Assessment Agreement shall be between the GBCA and the scheme, irrespective of the representative's involvement. The scheme must authorise in writing that it approves the submission that may have been prepared on its behalf.
- The completed Assessment Tool must be accompanied by documentation that evidences the claims being made by the certification body.
- An Independent Assessment Panel comprised of at least one assessor will be convened by the GBCA to conduct the Round 1 and, where applicable, Round 2 and any appeal.
- The identities of assessors assessing specific applications will remain confidential.
- Members of the IAP will be remunerated for their participation.
- Assessment fees will be payable to the GBCA by the scheme as described in Section 4 to cover the costs of assessment and administration of the Assessment Framework for Product Certification Schemes.
- Products that are not certified by a GBCA recognised product certification scheme will still be able to claim points in the Green Star Material Calculators by providing documentation in accordance with the relevant Technical Manual. This applies to all current Green Star Material Calculators.
- Following a successful assessment result, newly-recognised product certification schemes will be required to follow a set of clear guidelines and rules with regards to the use, marketing and advertisement of the GBCA recognition. Contravention of these rules may result in the cancellation of the scheme's recognition by the GBCA.
- A scheme applying for recognition of multiple standards is only required to provide a submission against the Assessment Criteria for Part I (scheme criteria) one time. However, it must provide a separate submission against Part II, Part-III or Part IV (standard criteria) for each standard that it puts forward for assessment.

## Assessment process for product certification schemes

Date Revised: June 2015

- A tiered standard, meaning a standard that include provisions for different levels of compliance (e.g. silver, gold, platinum), will be considered as one standard for the purpose of assessment fees (refer to section 4 below). However, separate Part II submissions must be provided to document the differences in criteria between each tier awarded within the standard.
- Only standards which are performance-based (e.g. made up of performance-based criteria) will be considered for assessment by the GBCA. Performance-based criteria are defined as criteria that can definitively validate claims that a sufficient level of environmental (and/or other) performance has been achieved.

## 4.0 Assessment Fee Schedule

### Fee Schedule applies from 1 July 2009 – 30 June 2015

Schemes are charged assessment fees strictly to cover the costs associated with the administration of the Assessment Process for Product Certification Schemes including the payment of the Independent Assessment Panel for their services. Fees are non-refundable, exclude GST, and must be paid in full prior to assessments being undertaken by the GBCA.

#### Eligibility Fee: \$500

This is the fee for the review of the registration application and supporting documents to ensure that the scheme meets the eligibility criteria.

#### Assessment Fee:

There are three assessment fee options:

- **Full Assessment: \$5,000**
  - Includes the assessment of the scheme against the criteria for Part I (governance, transparency and standards development).
  - Also includes the assessment of one standard, consisting of up to three tiers (e.g. silver, gold, platinum), against the criteria of Part II (content of standards). Or one standard against the requirements of Part-II and Part-IV
  - Fee includes Round 1 and Round 2 assessment options.
- **Partial Assessment – Additional Standards: \$2,500**
  - Includes assessment of additional standards from a scheme that has already been assessed and successfully passed Part I of the Assessment Criteria. Standards will be assessed against Part II, Part-III and/or Part-IV of the Assessment Criteria only.
  - Fee includes Round 1 and Round 2 assessment options.
  - Does not require payment of Eligibility fee.
  - In the case of Part III multiple standards can be submitted for assessment at this cost.

## Assessment process for product certification schemes

Date Revised: June 2015

- **Partial Assessment – Re-assessment: \$2,500 – \$5,000**

- Includes re-assessment of amended components of a scheme or its standard(s) that have previously been assessed and successfully passed Part I and Part II and/or Part-III and/or Part-IV of the Assessment Criteria.
- The reassessed component of the scheme and/or standard(s) will be assessed against the Assessment Criteria from Parts I, II, III or IV as appropriate.
- The GBCA will notify the scheme if a full re-assessment of the scheme and standard(s) is required. Fee includes Round 1 and Round 2 assessment options.
- Does not require payment of Eligibility fee.
- The fee for partial assessment or re-assessment will vary depending on the amount of material that is required to be assessed and will be communicated to the scheme on a case-by-case basis.

**Appeal Fee: \$2,500**

This is the fee for the assessment of an appeal submission which requires convening a new Independent Assessment Panel to undertake the assessment. Fee includes only one round of assessment.