

In-Transition to MSC (ITM) Program Requirements and Guidance – Pilot



Version 2.0, 1 May 2023

Marine Stewardship Council

Vision

Our vision is of the world's oceans teeming with life, and seafood supplies safeguarded for this and future generations.

Mission

Our mission is to use our ecolabel and fishery certification program to contribute to the health of the world's oceans by recognising and rewarding sustainable fishing practices, influencing the choices people make when buying seafood, and working with our partners to transform the seafood market to a sustainable basis.

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The official language of these requirements is English. The definitive version is maintained on the MSC website ([msc.org](https://www.msc.org)). Any discrepancy between copies, versions or translations shall be resolved by reference to the definitive English version.

The MSC prohibits any modification of part or all of the contents in any form.

Marine Stewardship Council
Marine House
1 Snow Hill
London EC1A 2DH
United Kingdom

Phone: +44 (0) 20 7246 8900

Fax: +44 (0) 20 7246 8901

Email: standards@msc.org

Responsibility for these requirements

The Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) is responsible for these requirements.

Readers should verify that they are using the latest copy of this and other documents. Updated documents, together with a master list of all available MSC documents, can be found on the MSC website ([msc.org](https://www.msc.org)).

Versions published

Version no.	Date	Description of amendment
1.0	30 September 2019	N/A – new document
1.1	15 December 2020	<p>Annexes containing eligibility and progress verification templates removed and reference added to new standalone templates.</p> <p>References updated to reflect new Improvement Action plan template and new version of Benchmarking and Tracking Tool (BMT)</p> <p>In Terms and Definitions, the description of Fishery updated to reflect relationship between Unit of Assessment (UoA) and Unit of Certification (UoC) entry on Ecert.</p> <p>Guidance added about naming a fishery in Ecert and how to record offsite verifications.</p>
2.0	1 May 2023	<p>Requirements have been streamlined and updated to align with the MSC Fisheries Standard v.3.0.</p> <p>Entry documents have been updated to include 'Full Assessment Reports' as well as Pre-Assessment Reports.</p> <p>Frequency of Progress Verification required has been updated.</p> <p>Unnecessary timelines have been removed to enable more flexibility for the CAB and ITM fisheries to determine timelines appropriate to their context.</p> <p>Reports required for completion of ITM have been updated to include either a draft ACDR or a Surveillance Report.</p> <p>ITM fisheries will now be listed on the MSC website: https://fisheries.msc.org</p>

General introduction

Background

The creation of an In-Transition to MSC (ITM) Program was motivated by the MSC's commitment to improving access for fisheries in the pre-certification space, with the ultimate intention of preparing them to enter assessment against the MSC Fisheries Standard at the end of the ITM process.

Purpose

The MSC ITM Program offers fisheries a structured and independently verified approach to improving their performance towards MSC certification. The ITM Program is intended to act as an entry point for fisheries wishing to get MSC certified or to reinstate an existing MSC certificate within 5 years of entering the ITM Program. To mark the completion of ITM for fisheries at their final Progress Verification, either a draft Announcement Comment Draft Report or a Surveillance Report can be developed by the CAB to commence the MSC assessment process or commence the reinstatement of certificate process respectively.

This document outlines the procedure for confirming compliance with ITM entry requirements and verifying continuous progress.

The ITM Program is in a pilot phase until the end of 2024. During this time, the details of the Program – including cost and terms of participation – are subject to change.

Implementation timeframes

Effective Date of the ITM Program Requirements and Guidance – Pilot v2.0

Publication date: 1 May 2023

Effective date: 1 May 2023

All new ITM Applicant fisheries applying to enter ITM on or after 1 May 2023 shall apply the ITM Program Requirements and Guidance – Pilot v2.0 (v2.0 ITM requirements).

Existing ITM fisheries wishing to be visible on the MSC Track a Fishery website will need to apply v2.0 ITM requirements and related templates. This may be done as part of a regular Progress Verification.

Existing ITM fisheries that transition to v2.0 ITM requirements will become visible on the website <https://fisheries.msc.org>, and their existing ITM Eligibility Reports, and Benchmarking and Tracking Tools from previous Progress Verifications will be published on the website. For existing ITM fisheries transitioning to v2.0 ITM requirements, only revised or new reports are required to be completed using the v2.0 templates.

Fisheries may join the ITM Program with the aim of achieving MSC Certification against v3.0 of the MSC Fisheries Standard from the effective date of v2.0 ITM requirements. Fisheries may join the ITM Program with the aim of achieving MSC Certification against v2.01 of the MSC Fisheries Standard until 1 November 2028, by which time all MSC certified fisheries shall apply v3.0 of the MSC Fisheries Standard. From 1 November 2028, all ITM fisheries shall use ITM templates relevant to achieving MSC Certification against v3.0 of the Fisheries Standard.

Normative Documents

The documents listed below contain provisions that, through reference in this text, become part of the ITM Requirements. For documents listed, the latest effective version of the document applies:

- a. MSC Pre-Assessment Reporting Template
- b. MSC Database User Manual for CABs: Fisheries
- c. MSC-MSCI Vocabulary.
- d. In-Transition to MSC (ITM) Eligibility Reporting Template
- e. MSC Fishery Improvement Action Plan Reporting Template
- f. MSC Benchmarking and Tracking Tool (BMT)
- g. In-Transition to MSC (ITM) Progress Verification Reporting Template
- h. In-Transition to MSC (ITM) Progress Reporting Template

Reference Documents

The documents listed below are referenced in this text and only specific sections apply in the ITM Requirements.

- i. MSC Fisheries Standard
- j. MSC Fisheries Certification Process
- k. Fisheries Standard Toolbox
- l. MSC General Certification Requirements.
- m. MSC Rules on Unacceptable Conduct

The latest effective versions of the reference documents listed above shall be used in conjunction with ITM requirements v2.0 as relevant. Where reference to specific clause numbers or sections of a specific version of these documents is made in these ITM requirements, but a new effective version of that document has been released, the CAB shall apply the corresponding clause in the updated version of the document, noting that the clause number itself may have changed between versions.

Table 1: Summary of the Fisheries Standard, Fisheries Certification Process and Fisheries Standard Toolbox versions which may be used in conjunction with ITM requirements v1.1 and v2.0.

ITM requirements Version	Fisheries Standard Version	Fisheries Certification Process Version	Fisheries Standard Toolbox Version
v1.1	v2.01	v2.1	N/A
v2.0	v2.01	v2.3	N/A
v2.0	v3.0 or most recent effective version	v3.0 or most recent effective version	v1.1 or most recent effective version

Terms and Definitions

All definitions in the most recent version of the MSC-MSCI Vocabulary apply in addition to the ones below:

Benchmarking and Tracking Tool (BMT): The BMT is MSC's Excel-based tool that allows a Fishery Improvement Project to track progress against PIs to the ≥ 80 draft scoring range level.

Completion date: The expected date on which an Improvement Action Plan is completed, whereby the fishery has achieved a target draft scoring range equivalent to an MSC pass, and has submitted either a draft ACDR or a Surveillance Report as a means to 'complete' the ITM process.

Draft scoring ranges: <60 , 60-79, ≥ 80 for each PI, referenced in the MSC Fisheries Certification Process (FCP).

Full Assessment Report: Any report produced during an MSC assessment against the MSC Fisheries Standard including Announcement Comment Draft Report (ACDR), Client and Peer Review Draft Report (CPRDR), Public Comment Draft Report (PCDR), Final Draft Report (FDR), Public Certification Report (PCR) and latest Surveillance Reports.

Fishery: The term 'fishery' refers to one or more Units of Assessment (UoAs). The term 'fishery' used throughout this document differs from that in the MSC-MSCI Vocabulary in that it refers to the Unit of Assessment (UoA) as identified in either the Pre-Assessment, or Full Assessment Report of the ITM Applicant Fishery.

Fishery Improvement Project (FIP): FIPs are multi-stakeholder initiatives that aim to improve a fishery towards sustainability.

Improvement Action Plan (IAP): A detailed schedule of improvement actions linked to MSC Performance Indicators and designed to close gaps in the performance of the Fishery, including the resources required, the parties responsible, the timescale in which the changes are expected, and how progress is monitored.

ITM Applicant Fishery: Any fishery wishing to enter the ITM program, prior to the point where the fishery becomes recognised as an ITM Fishery.

ITM Fishery: A fishery which has successfully completed the application process and is listed on the MSC database as an active ITM Fishery.

ITM Application Date: The date that the ITM Applicant Fishery submits documents to the CAB.

ITM Start Date: The date that the ITM Applicant Fishery is determined to have entered the ITM Program with all relevant documents accepted on the MSC database.

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In-Transition to MSC (ITM) Program Requirements

1 Preparation to enter the ITM Program

1.1 Application

- 1.1.1 The Conformity Assessment Body (CAB) shall:
- a. Notify the MSC via email to fisheries@msc.org of the intention of the Fishery to enter the ITM Program.
 - b. Appoint an individual or team for the ITM verification who meet the competencies as per FCP 7.1.3.
 - c. Request the submission of the following documentation and information from the ITM Applicant Fishery:
 - i. The Unit of Assessment (UoA).
 - ii. MSC Scope Declaration Template.
 - iii. MSC At Sea Labour Eligibility Requirements Reporting Template.
 - iv. A copy of the Pre-Assessment Report, or the most recent Full Assessment Report along with the MSC Notice of Suspension and Corrective Action Plan as relevant for the ITM Applicant Fishery.
 - v. The Improvement Action Plan (IAP).
 - vi. The Benchmarking and Tracking Tool (BMT).
 - vii. Annual catch data.
- 1.1.2 The CAB shall reject an ITM Applicant Fishery if notified by the MSC to do so, following the process and timeline set out in the MSC Rules on Unacceptable Conduct.

Guidance 1.1.1.c

Where fisheries are transitioning between Fisheries Standard versions (e.g. from v2.01 to v3.0), the CAB should upload revised documents including either a Pre-Assessment or a Full Assessment Report and Improvement Action Plan (IAP) as well as the Benchmarking and Tracking Tool (BMT) to the MSC database.

Catch data submitted by the ITM Applicant Fishery should be the most recent publicly available annual catch data.

1.2 Entry requirements

- 1.2.1 The CAB shall confirm that the ITM Applicant Fishery is within scope of the MSC Fisheries Standard as per the relevant version of the MSC Fisheries Standard or FCP, and has completed and submitted the following documents:
- a. MSC Scope Declaration Template
 - b. MSC At Sea Labour Eligibility Requirements Reporting Template
- 1.2.2 The CAB shall confirm that:
- a. The Pre-Assessment or Full Assessment Report submitted by the ITM Applicant Fishery has been updated within 36 months of CAB receipt of the application using the relevant templates.
 - b. The Pre-Assessment Report has been submitted in English.
 - c. The ITM Applicant Fishery has the explicit aim and will be able to enter MSC assessment against the Fisheries Standard or start the reinstatement process for its

certificate as per the 'Fishery certificate suspension' section of the MSC General Certification Requirements (GCR) within 3 months of its ITM Completion Date based on the CAB's judgement of the Improvement Action Plan and either the:

- i. Pre-Assessment Report or;
- ii. The latest Full Assessment Report, and Notice of Suspension and Corrective Action Plan as relevant.

Guidance 1.2.2.b

If the Pre-Assessment Report of an ITM Applicant Fishery has been written in any of the United Nations official languages other than English, the MSC may support its translation to English, subject to availability of resources at the time the application is processed.

Guidance 1.2.2.c

The planned date for the announcement of entering MSC assessment against the Fisheries Standard or starting the process to reinstate a suspended MSC certificate should be expressed as a month and year (MM/YYYY).

The timeline of an IAP aiming to reinstate a suspended MSC certificate is restricted by the latest certificate expiration date.

The 'Completion Date' is the date by which all actions in an IAP are completed, and the ITM Fishery achieves a draft scoring range equivalent to an MSC pass. This date should be expressed as month and year (MM/YYYY).

1.3 Conflict of interest and safeguarding of impartiality

- 1.3.1 During any verification activities of an ITM Applicant Fishery or ITM Fishery, the CAB shall conform to all requirements of ISO17065 for mechanisms to safeguard impartiality as per the GCR.

Guidance 1.3.1

CABs should ensure that their activities are limited to verification only. Evidence of CABs providing advice to ITM Fisheries could result in Assessment Findings (i.e., non-conformities) being raised by the Accreditation Body against ISO 17065 if an assessment against the MSC Fisheries Standard is done by the same CAB.

- 1.3.2 If a CAB produced the Improvement Action Plan supplied by the ITM Applicant Fishery for entry into the ITM Program, that same CAB shall not carry out any verification relating to that Fishery or other impacted fisheries.
- 1.3.3 The CAB shall respect the right of the (Applicant) ITM Fishery to change CAB at any time.
- a. In this case both CABs shall follow the relevant requirements as per the GCR 'Transfer of certificate between CABs' section.

Guidance 1.3.4

Whilst GCR requirements relating to certificate transfer were written specifically to apply to certified fisheries, CABs should use their judgement in applying the requirements where applicable for ITM fisheries that have not been previously certified but that are requesting a transfer of CAB. In the case of ITM fisheries that have not been certified, the intent is that the CAB should conduct checks in line with requirements under GCR 2.5., 4.11 and where reference is made to 'certificates' this should be interpreted as being 'ITM status'.

2 Verification of entry

2.1 Pre-Assessment or Full Assessment Report verification

- 2.1.1 If the CAB is the same as that which completed the Pre-Assessment or Full Assessment Report, no verification is required.
- 2.1.2 If the CAB did not complete the Pre-assessment, the CAB shall verify that:
- a. The Pre-Assessment Report has been completed using the relevant MSC Pre-Assessment Reporting Template using full scoring tables for Performance Indicators down to Scoring Issue (SI) level.
 - b. The Pre-Assessment has the following outcomes:
 - i. Informs the ITM Applicant Fishery of the likelihood of achieving MSC certification.
 - ii. Identifies performance gaps against the requirements of the MSC Fisheries Standard.
 - iii. Enables the ITM Applicant Fishery to develop an Improvement Action Plan, as detailed in 2.2.
 - c. The Pre-Assessment includes the following activities:
 - i. Assessment of the extent to which the fishery is consistent with the relevant MSC Fisheries Standard.
 - ii. A review of the availability of data.
 - iii. A description of the potential obstacles or problems that may be a barrier to MSC certification.
 - d. The UoA is correctly defined as per the relevant version of the MSC Fisheries Standard and the FCP.
 - e. The draft scoring ranges in the Pre-Assessment Report are justified for each SI.

Guidance 2.1.2

Section 2.1.2 is applicable where the Pre-Assessment was compiled by another CAB or by another entity, for example, an NGO or consultant not working for a CAB.

When verifying that draft scoring ranges in the Pre-Assessment Report are justified as per 2.1.2.e, the CAB should check all scores at draft scoring range ≥ 80 , not only those scores that require improvement actions.

- 2.1.3 If any of the verification requirements under 2.1.2, are not met, the CAB shall:
- a. Notify the ITM Applicant Fishery and request an updated version of the Pre-Assessment Report is submitted to address the gap(s).
 - b. Determine whether the updated Pre-Assessment Report has addressed the gap(s) before making the final eligibility determination as per 2.4.1.a.
- 2.1.4 If the CAB did not complete the latest Full Assessment Report(s), the CAB shall verify the report(s) in line with GCR v2.5 clauses 4.11.3 b and c as relevant depending on the assessment status of the fishery.

2.2 Improvement Action Plan verification

2.2.1 The CAB shall verify that the Improvement Action Plan (IAP):

- a. Was prepared after:
 - i. The completion of a Pre-Assessment that meets the criteria set out under 2.1.2, or:
 - ii. the completion of a Full Assessment Report of a failed, withdrawn or suspended fishery that meets the criteria set out under 2.1.4.
- b. Conforms to the relevant IAP template listed on the MSC website.
- c. Includes realistic and achievable Improvement Actions that aim and are likely to deliver a draft scoring range that would result in a pass score for the Fishery against the MSC Fisheries Standard aligned with requirements for full assessment, reassessment, or the reinstatement of the certificate as per the FCP or the GCR, by the end of the ITM period.
- d. Defines specific milestones that stipulate measurable improvements, and the outcomes expected at each Progress Verification using quantitative and appropriate metrics.
- e. Stipulates an appropriate and feasible timeframe over which each milestone should be fully met.
- f. Indicates the expected outcome and improvement scores that should be achieved for each milestone, expressed as the expected draft scoring range and Benchmarking and Tracking (BMT) score calculated using the relevant version of the BMT published on the MSC website.
- g. Provides information on funding and/or resources that are, or will be, in place to implement actions, and action leads.
- h. Identifies a dedicated ITM Fishery Project Manager for the duration of the ITM period.
- i. Includes a realistic timeline for regular Progress Verifications for the duration of the IAP ensuring that:
 - i. The duration between consecutive Progress Verification reports being uploaded to the MSC database is no longer than 2 years.

Guidance 2.2.1.c.

Where a fishery has joined the ITM Program following the suspension of an existing MSC certificate, the cause of suspension should be addressed as part of the IAP and all open conditions should be incorporated into the IAP as 'improvement actions' aimed at achieving the reinstatement of the fishery certificate in line with GCR requirements for 'Fishery certificate suspension'. Where the term 'pass score' is used, this is intended to cover both a conditional pass and an unconditional pass as relevant. The CAB should verify that the IAP will deliver the appropriate pass score required for the fishery as per the GCR and FCP depending on their assessment status at the time of application to enter ITM.

MSC accepts that some fisheries may have formed fisheries improvement projects (FIPs) and started implementing improvement actions before entering the ITM program. These actions may be included if they do not precede the ITM Application Date by more than 12 months and as long as it is clearly indicated when the ITM period starts and which actions have already been completed.

Guidance 2.2.1.i.i

No longer than 2 years should lapse between consecutive public reporting on progress for an ITM Fishery. The intent is that the regular Progress Verification outlined in the IAP should be tailored to the ITM Fishery and their IAP, recognising that fixed-term verification is not always the most efficient given the different timelines that improvement actions may require. Within the timeline specified for regular progress verifications, sufficient time should be allocated to enable CABs to complete and upload the relevant reports to the MSC database by the 2-year deadline. Failure to meet this deadline will result in withdrawal of the ITM Fishery. The ITM Fishery may propose to conduct more regular Progress Verifications as needed.

- 2.2.2 The CAB shall verify that the ITM Project Manager identified under 2.2.1.h confirms commitment to undertake the following key responsibilities:
- a. Serves as the key contact between the CAB and the ITM fishery.
 - b. Coordinates the implementation of the Improvement Action Plan.
 - c. Collates all information necessary for Progress Verification, including compiling the ITM Progress Report and updating the IAP and BMT as relevant.

Guidance 2.2.2

The ITM Project Manager should have suitable competencies to carry out the key responsibilities, for example, someone who has experience working in the region and has attended at least one MSC Capacity Building Training Level 2 training in the past two years and who is working directly with the fishery, fishery association or an organisation supporting the fishery in the implementation of the improvements.

- 2.2.3 If any of the requirements under 2.2.1 – 2.2.2 are not met, the CAB shall:
- a. Notify the ITM Applicant Fishery and request an updated version of the IAP is submitted within a mutually agreed timeline to address the gap(s).
 - b. Determine whether the updated IAP has addressed the gap(s) before making the final eligibility determination as per 2.4.1.a.

Guidance 2.2.3

The CAB and the ITM Applicant Fishery should agree on the details of possible submissions, such as a timeline and a number of iterations.

2.3 BMT verification

- 2.3.1 The CAB shall verify that the BMT has been submitted using the relevant BMT reporting template.
- 2.3.2 The CAB shall verify that the UoAs defined in the BMT match the UoAs defined in the Pre-assessment or Full Assessment Report.
- 2.3.3 The CAB shall verify that results of the Pre-Assessment or Full Assessment Report have been correctly entered into the BMT as follows:
- a. Year 0 reflects the Pre-Assessment Report draft scores or the latest Full Assessment Report scoring as relevant, and confirms the BMT index of the ITM fishery.
 - b. Expected years 1-5 reflect the Improvement Action Plan projected draft scores.

2.4 Eligibility determination and reporting

- 2.4.1 Once the Application documents listed in 1.1.1.c have been successfully verified, the CAB shall:
- a. Determine whether the ITM Applicant Fishery is 'eligible' or 'ineligible' to enter ITM.
 - b. Complete the ITM Eligibility Report using the relevant version of the ITM Eligibility Reporting Template and notify the ITM Applicant Fishery of the result.
- 2.4.2 If the ITM Applicant Fishery is determined as 'eligible' to enter the ITM Program, the CAB shall:
- a. Upload the ITM Eligibility Report and the application documents as per 1.1.1.c to the MSC database.
 - b. Enter the following information into the MSC database:
 - i. CAB contact
 - ii. UoA(s)
 - iii. Client contacts
 - iv. Annual catch data
 - v. Longitude and latitude of the fishery
- 2.4.2.1 The date that documents are accepted on the MSC database shall be regarded as the 'Start Date' of the ITM period.

Guidance 2.4.1.b

The ITM Eligibility Report should contain a clear rationale for the chosen eligibility status.

3 Verification of progress

3.1 General

- 3.1.1 The CAB shall choose to carry out either an offsite or onsite Progress Verification:
- a. The CAB shall determine the most appropriate means of Progress Verification and include a justification for the choice of verification.
- 3.1.2 The CAB shall request that the ITM Project Manager submits evidence in support of progress against the fishery's IAP, within a mutually agreed timeline, prior to the verification of progress date outlined in the IAP.
- 3.1.3 At each Progress Verification date defined in the IAP, for the duration of the Fishery's involvement in the ITM Program, the CAB shall verify the ITM Fishery's progress against its IAP.
- 3.1.4 The CAB shall appoint an assessor or assessors who meet the competencies as per FCP 7.1.3 to conduct the ITM Fishery's verification of progress.
- 3.1.5 The CAB shall notify the ITM Project Manager that progress reports should be submitted on the verification dates identified in the verification of progress timeline as per 2.2.1.i.
- 3.1.6 The CAB shall verify that the duration between each verification of progress follows requirement 2.2.1.i.i.

Guidance 3.1.1

It is recommended that at least one onsite visit is conducted by the CAB when the total duration of the IAP is more than 2 years long. It is recommended that the onsite visit should take place around the midway point of the ITM period. This decision should consider both the possibility of verifying information remotely and the CAB's level of confidence in progress made by the ITM fishery.

3.2 Verification activities

- 3.2.1 At each Progress Verification, the CAB shall request the following documentation from the ITM Project Manager:
- a. ITM Progress Report and supporting evidence.
 - b. Updated BMT with updated scoring across all PIs including those with draft scoring ranges ≥ 80 .
 - c. Updated IAP if relevant.
 - d. Updated annual catch data
- 3.2.2 At each Progress Verification, the CAB shall review the provided evidence and verify the following:
- a. The ITM Progress Report has been completed using the relevant version of the ITM Progress Reporting Template.
 - b. Continued conformity to the scope requirements of the relevant version of the Fisheries Standard or FCP.
 - i. The CAB shall request that the ITM Project Manager reviews and, if there are any changes, submit an updated 'MSC Scope Declaration Template'.
 - c. The UoA(s) remains consistent with entry documentation and conforms to 2.1.2.d.
 - d. Any changes to draft scoring ranges for each PI are supported by evidence that the necessary improvement action(s) have progressed.
 - e. The IAP remains relevant and likely to deliver the objective set out as per 2.2.1.c by the specified ITM completion date, including PIs that were not due a scoring change at this Progress Verification.
 - f. Changes to the expected and actual BMT Index are supported by evidence and correspond to the Progress Report provided.
 - g. Where applicable, any exceptional circumstances that may prevent the fishery from achieving expected outcomes (Section 3.6).
- 3.2.3 If changes to the UoA(s) have been requested by the ITM Fishery, the CAB shall re-confirm ITM eligibility as per Sections 1.2 and 2.
- 3.2.4 The CAB may seek the views of key stakeholders (either remotely or in-person) about changes reviewed as per 3.2.2
- 3.2.5 If any of the requirements under 3.2.2 are not met, the CAB shall:
- a. Notify the ITM Fishery and request an updated Progress Report and BMT is submitted as relevant to address the gap(s).
 - b. Determine whether the updated Progress Report and BMT as relevant have addressed the gap(s) before making the Progress Determination as per 3.3.
- 3.2.6 Where the ITM Fishery draft scoring has been revised such that the IAP requires revision, the CAB shall:
- a. Request that the ITM Project Manager submits a revised IAP.
 - b. Verify the revised IAP as per Section 2.2.
- 3.2.7 The timeframe for actions that will lead to an MSC pass of the ITM Fishery against the MSC Standard (as per 2.2.1.c) shall not exceed the ITM duration as per Section 3.5 unless exceptional circumstances apply (Section 3.6).

Guidance 3.2.2

Progress reporting by the ITM Project Manager should include making any changes to draft scoring ranges and BMT scores and providing supporting evidence for such changes.

If draft scoring ranges have changed for PIs that previously scored ≥ 80 , relevant improvement actions may be added to a revised IAP and submitted to the CAB for verification. These new improvement actions should not result in the fishery extending their ITM timeline beyond the expected 5-year duration unless exceptional circumstances apply. If the IAP is considered ahead of target, the IAP may be revised to reduce the overall ITM timeframe.

Guidance 3.2.4

The CAB is not required to seek feedback from stakeholders, however, they may choose to do so where additional information is required to support the changes reviewed during a Progress Verification.

3.3 Progress determination

- 3.3.1 At each Progress Verification, the CAB shall determine the progress at PI level, and the overall progress against the expected draft scoring ranges and expected BMT score in the IAP for all PIs that are due an improved draft scoring range in the year of verification.

Progress at Performance Indicator Level

- 3.3.2 The progress at PI level shall be verified for all PIs with draft scoring ranges < 60 or $60-79$ and expressed as one of the following progress status categories:

- a. **On target:** the PI has achieved the target draft scoring range.
- b. **Behind target:** the PI has not achieved the target draft scoring range.
- c. **Exceptional circumstances:** the PI is behind target, but the CAB has determined that exceptional circumstances apply as per Section 3.6.

- 3.3.3 If evidence to support draft score changes cannot be verified, the CAB shall assume that there has been no score change.

- 3.3.4 PIs shall be considered 'completed' once they have reached the final desired draft scoring range as per the IAP.

Overall progress

- 3.3.5 The CAB shall verify the overall progress in any given Progress Verification by:
- a. Identifying those PIs as per 3.3.2 that are due an improved draft scoring range in the year of verification.

Guidance 3.3.5.a

For PIs where the target draft scoring range is the same as the actual scoring range of the year before, these will not be considered for the overall progress determination in that year.

- b. Identifying the number of PIs '**behind target**'.

Guidance 3.3.5.b

PIs that are behind target due to exceptional circumstances should not be considered when determining overall progress.

- c. Checking the actual overall BMT index against the expected BMT index.

3.3.6 The CAB shall assign one of two possible categories, **'adequate'** or **'inadequate'**, to indicate overall progress status during the year of verification.

3.3.6.1 The CAB shall assign the overall progress as **'adequate'** when:

- a. Less than 50% of the PIs due a change in score are behind target, or
- b. More than or equal to 50% of PIs are behind target but the actual BMT index is at or higher than the expected value.

Guidance 3.3.6.1.b

The intent of including the consideration of the BMT index under 3.3.6.1.b is to avoid penalising a fishery which may not have made progress on PIs where a score improvement is expected but is ahead on other PIs that were not due for a change in score.

3.3.6.2 The CAB shall assign the overall progress as **'inadequate'** when more than or equal to 50% of the PIs due for an improved draft scoring range are behind target AND the BMT index is lower than the expected value.

3.4 Progress reporting

3.4.1 Each Progress Verification Report shall be completed using the relevant version of the ITM Progress Verification Reporting Template.

3.4.2 The ITM Progress Verification Report shall include a rationale for the determination of progress, which may be supplemented by supporting evidence as required.

3.4.3 The CAB shall update the progress status of the ITM Fishery, and upload the following documents to the MSC database within 30 days of receiving the requested documents from the ITM Fishery:

- a. the ITM Progress Report
- b. the ITM Progress Verification Report
- c. the updated BMT
- d. the updated IAP as relevant.
- e. the updated 'Scope Declaration Template' as relevant

3.4.4 The CAB shall enter the updated catch data into the MSC database.

3.5 ITM duration

3.5.1 The default duration of a fishery's involvement in the ITM Program shall not exceed 5 years.

Guidance 3.5.1.

A fishery can apply to enter the ITM Program even when the expected date for entering assessment against the Fisheries Standard is less than 5 years from the ITM Start Date.

3.5.2 Under exceptional circumstances (Section 3.6) the default duration may be extended by a maximum of 3 years.

3.5.3 In cases where a fishery is withdrawn from the ITM Program and wishes to re-enter the ITM Program, the total time in the Program, starting from the ITM Start Date, shall not exceed 5 or 8 years, whichever is applicable.

3.6 Exceptional circumstances

- 3.6.1 'Exceptional circumstances' shall refer to situations where, even with perfect implementation of the IAP, the expected change in draft scoring range at PI level could not be achieved.

Guidance 3.6.1

Examples of unforeseen situations that could prevent achieving completion of improvement actions may include: for Outcome PIs, an ecologically harmful incident such as a major oil spill impacting the UoA; and, for Management and Information PIs, factors outside of the control of the ITM Fishery such as serious socio-political unrest e.g. a coup d'état. If the ITM Fishery plans to transition between different versions of the MSC Fisheries Standard (e.g., from V.2.01 to V.3.0), exceptional circumstances can be applied to enable time to work on additional improvements.

- 3.6.2 In situations where exceptional circumstances apply, the CAB may accept an extension to the timeframe of the IAP of up to a maximum of 8 years from the ITM Start Date.
- 3.6.3 Where an extension has been allowed due to exceptional circumstances the CAB shall instruct the ITM Project Manager to update the IAP accordingly, explicitly stating how the IAP will achieve a performance level equal to an MSC pass over the longer, specified period.
- 3.6.4 The CAB shall review the continued implications of exceptional circumstances at each Progress Verification.

3.7 Decisions resulting from inadequate progress and withdrawal

Withdrawal from the ITM program

- 3.7.1 The CAB shall withdraw a fishery from the ITM Program if any of the following apply:
- The fishery no longer conforms to the ITM entry requirements as per 1.2.
 - It has been determined that the fishery's overall progress status is '**inadequate**' as per 3.3.6.2 for 2 consecutive progress verifications.
 - The duration between consecutive Progress Verification reports being uploaded to the MSC database is longer than 2 years as per 2.2.1.i.i.
 - The ITM Fishery has become unresponsive and/or has not provided relevant reports and evidence in support of progress verifications when requested by the CAB within the timeframes specified as per 3.1.2.
 - The date by which Improvement Actions in the Improvement Action Plan (as per 2.2.1.c) are projected to result in an MSC pass, extends beyond the maximum ITM duration, as per 3.5.
 - The ITM Fishery has not completed a final Progress Verification.
 - Notified by the MSC to do so, following the process and timeline set out in the MSC Rules on Unacceptable Conduct.
- 3.7.2 A fishery may withdraw at any time from the ITM Program by notifying the CAB.
- 3.7.3 The CAB shall update the status of the fishery in the MSC database.

Guidance 3.7

If the ITM Fishery comprises more than one UoA, individual UoAs may be withdrawn separately without impacting the ITM status of the remaining UoAs.

Re-entry of a withdrawn ITM Fishery

- 3.7.4 A withdrawn ITM Fishery will not be eligible to be reinstated into the ITM Program if the time since the ITM Start Date exceeds the total ITM duration (as per 3.5).
- a. The CAB may accept the reinstatement application of a withdrawn ITM Fishery if the CAB can verify that:
 - i. The ITM Fishery conforms to the Entry Requirements as per Section 1.2 and;
 - ii. The ITM UoA or fishery has not changed and has made the required progress to address the withdrawal cause and meets 2.2.1.c.

3.8 ITM completion

- 3.8.1 The CAB shall notify the ITM Fishery of the option to complete either a draft ACDR or a Surveillance Report in order to 'complete ITM' during their final Progress Verification.
- 3.8.2 The CAB shall notify the ITM Fishery that they will be withdrawn if the final Progress Verification is not completed as per 3.7.1.f.
- 3.8.3 The CAB shall update the status of the relevant UoC or ITM Fishery in the MSC database.

Guidance 3.8

If the ITM fishery comprises more than one UoA, individual UoAs may have different ITM completion dates and may be completed separately without impacting the ITM status of the remaining UoAs.

4 Confidentiality

- 4.1.1 The CAB shall treat the existence, process, and outcomes of the ITM verification activities as confidential until they have been published online.
- 4.1.2 Any pre-assessment, IAP and Progress Report relating to ITM (Applicant) Fisheries shall be treated as confidential to the fishery, the CAB and MSC, unless otherwise directed by the ITM (Applicant) Fishery.
- 4.1.3 All ITM Eligibility reports, Progress Verification Reports, BMTs, and Scope and Labour Declarations shall be published on MSC's Track a Fishery website.

End of document
