



Second Public Consultation
July 2021 - August 2021

Hydropower Sustainability Assessment Council

Second Public Consultation Summary and Responses



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This document provides a compendium of all material issues raised during the Second Public Consultation on the Hydropower Sustainability Standard, gathered in the period between 1 July 2021 and 2 August 2021.

Respondents were asked to submit their comments electronically by completing an online feedback form. Respondents provided feedback on recommendations by answering a series of scaling and open-ended questions. Responses to scaling questions were statistically analysed and are presented as percentages. Responses to open-ended questions were anonymised and presented by matter under consultation. Comments and responses to comments presented in this paper have been approved by the Hydropower Sustainability Governance Committee and are considered a matter of public record.

Overview of respondents

A total of 15 respondents completed the online feedback form. Respondents were grouped by sector and included industry, government, NGO, and research and consultancy, as detailed in Table 1. Consultation efforts also included numerous bilateral and focus group discussions with industry, government and NGO representatives and direct engagement with the seven sectoral chambers of the multistakeholder Hydropower Sustainability Assessment Council. These are not included in the total number of respondents. Instead, email correspondences and minutes from those meetings were recorded and included in the summary of open-text comments.

Table 1 - Number of respondents by sector

Main stakeholder groups	Number of respondents	Percentage
Research and consultancy	4	26%
Industry (manufacturers, owners and developers)	9	60%
Government	1	7%
NGO	1	7%
Total	15	100%

Statistical summary of responses

A statistical summary of the feedback received on the matters for consultation is provided below. Overall, the feedback from the second consultation was positive. Responses to scaling questions were expressed as a score on a 1-5 scale (1-strongly disagree, 2-disagree, 3-neutral, 4-agree and 5-strongly agree) and were mostly made up of 4s and 5s. Open-ended questions allowed respondents to provide additional feedback. These were not captured in the statistical analysis but are summarised further in the comments and responses. In addition, the statistical analysis does not capture the wider consultation efforts conducted over the same period within the seven sectoral chambers of the multistakeholder Hydropower Sustainability Assessment Council as well as the numerous bilateral and focus group discussions with industry, government and NGO representatives of the hydropower community.

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Table 2 - Statistical summary of responses

#	Matter for consultation	Statistical summary
Section 1 – Theory of change		
1.1	The Theory of Change serves its purpose in providing a guiding framework to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the HS certification scheme.	72% of scores 4 and 5 7% of score 3 21% of score 2
1.2	The strategies and activities are adequate to achieve the proposed outputs, vision and impacts.	69% of scores 4 and 5 8% of score 3 23% of score 2
Section 2 – Scope of the Standard		
2.1	The standard scope is clearly defined.	64% of scores 4 and 5 22% of score 3 14% of score 2
Section 3 – Scoring methodology and rating system		
3.1	The standard’s minimum and advanced performance requirements are clearly explained.	57% of scores 4 and 5 14% of score 3 29% of score 2
3.2	The scoring methodology and rating system are adequate in recognising, incentivising and rewarding project performance against the HS Standard.	57% of scores 4 and 5 14% of score 3 29% of score 2
Section 4 – Name and labels		
4.1	The Project Certification status and associated labels (Certified, Certified-Silver, and Certified-Gold) are adequate in recognising, incentivising and rewarding project performance against the HS Standard.	64% of scores 4 and 5 14% of score 3 22% of score 2
4.2	The standard name is appropriate to represent a global hydropower sustainability standard.	60% of scores 4 and 5 20% of score 3 13% of score 2 7% of score 1
Section 5 – Roles and responsibilities		
5.1	The roles and responsibilities of HS Secretariat, HS Council, Accredited Assessors and Project Proponents in the HS certification scheme are clearly defined.	77% of scores 4 and 5 8% of score 3 15% of score 2
5.2	The roles and responsibilities are adequate to the independent and transparent implementation of the HS certification scheme.	79% of scores 4 and 5 21% of score 2

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Section 6 – Certification process		
6.1	The project eligibility requirements are clearly defined.	85% of scores 4 and 5 15% of score 2
6.2	The information provided on certification process is adequate to support project proponents in making a decision to get started with the certification.	64% of scores 4 and 5 14% of score 3 22% of score 2
6.3	The certification award, including the minimum requirements to receive any certification, as well as the "Seeking Certification" status is clearly explained.	77% of scores 4 and 5 8% of score 3 15% of score 2
6.4	The certification duration, re-certification, re-assessment and harmonisation processes are appropriately defined and clearly explained.	46% of scores 4 and 5 31% of score 3 15% of score 2
Section 7 – Independent third-party assessments		
7.1	The assessment process, including roles and responsibilities, is clearly explained.	85% of scores 4 and 5 15% of score 2
7.2	The assessment process is appropriate to certify a project that meets the requirements of the HS Standard.	64% of scores 4 and 5 14% of score 3 22% of score 2
Section 8 – Implementing and supporting the Assurance system		
8.1	The assurance system is adequate in providing quality control for the HS certification scheme, and does provide measures that give confidence to users and stakeholders.	65% of scores 4 and 5 14% of score 3 14% of score 2 7% of score 1
Section 9 – Complaints, appeals and disciplinary proceedings		
9.1	The complaints and appeals mechanisms are adequate to ensure fair, timely and objective resolution of complaints and appeals relating to HS certification.	64% of scores 4 and 5 14% of score 3 22% of score 2
Section 10 – Communications and claims		
10.1	The communications and claims rules are clearly explained.	82% of scores 4 and 5 8% of score 2
Section 11 – Monitoring and evaluation system		
11.1	The Monitoring and evaluation system supports the monitoring and evaluation of short- and long-term outcomes and impacts of the HS certification.	77% of scores 4 and 5 15% of score 3 8% of score 1

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Section 12 – General comments on the Standard		
12.1	The standard covers all relevant topics to constitute a robust global hydropower standard.	71% of scores 4 and 5 7% of score 3 22% of score 2
12.2	The information presented in the HS Standard and HS Assurance System is clear and comprehensive.	72% of scores 4 and 5 14% of score 3 14% of score 2

Summary of additional open-text comments

Respondents had the option to provide open-text comments on the recommendations and suggest alternative methods or approaches. Some of the comments included:

- A need to refine the Theory of Change to include outcomes and highlight the business case for hydropower developer and operators to get certified.
- Concerns around the duration of certifications, especially for older projects in operation.
- Simplification of the scoring methodology and clarification on the rating system.
- Clarification around costs of the Assessment and Certification, and whether this would disincentivise smaller projects from pursuing Certifications.
- Concerns around independence and governance to be resolved through consultation with ISEAL.
- Request for transparent data collection systems in case of complaints or external audits.
- A need to include cascade systems that meet a specific set of criteria as part of the eligible projects for HS Certification.
- A clear graphical representation of the relationship between the HS Standard and the existing Hydropower Sustainability Tools and supporting resources.
- A need to confirm that the HS Secretariat allocates and issues HS Certifications while the HS Council and its Governance Committee are in place to handle governance issues.
- Explanation of how the Standard links to national legislation.
- The importance of including the scientific community in the HS Council and basing updates to performance requirements on up-to-date knowledge and science.

Comments on the consultation matters, as well as other material issues raised, are summarised in the synopsis below.

Building on the feedback received, the Working Group has finalised the design of the Standard and Assurance System and provided these to the Hydropower Sustainability Governance Committee for approval.

COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

This section illustrates the options and recommendations, anonymises and summarises the open-text comments received, and provides a response to each material issue raised. If two or more comments express the same issue, the comments are regrouped and/or summarised, then responded to as a single issue. Comments and responses to comments presented in this paper have been approved by the Hydropower Sustainability Governance Committee and are considered a matter of public record.

Section 1 – Theory of Change

Public Comment Issue Raised	Response
<p>Resourcing and implementation: The theoretical basis is sound however there is no information on how it will be applied and resourced which is critical to its effectiveness.</p> <p>ThoCh text can only provide "headers" and achievements will heavily depend on the practical implementation of activities.</p>	<p>The implementation and resourcing of the Theory of Change (ToC) is described in Section 10 of the HS Assurance System. It explains the Monitoring and Evaluation System of the HS Certification scheme which uses the Theory of Change as its guiding framework. Key performance indicators (KPIs) will be developed to monitor, evaluate and report on the progress in achieving short- and long-term outcomes and impacts. This will also include monitoring the effectiveness of the HS Secretariat, including periodic audits and quarterly reporting on Secretariat KPIs to the HS Council.</p>
<p>Impact on ecosystems: It remains very unclear how the ToC would lead to hydro projects enabling healthy ecosystems. The environmental community will strongly question this claim if the phrasing is left this way. Suggested rephrasing: "projects will contribute to restore ecosystems and invest and secure in forest, river and other ecosystem conservation and restoration. Consult the How to Guides and other good sources for concrete examples."</p>	<p>The wording in the ToC has been updated to include "projects contribute to restore ecosystems and invest in forest, river and other ecosystem conservation and restoration" and "projects apply the mitigation hierarchy to support biodiversity conservation and preservation". References to How-to Guides were not directly included in the ToC but are mentioned in Table 1, Section 1 (Introduction) of the HS Standard.</p>
<p>Innovation and new technologies: I would like to encourage the inclusion of language that references the embrace of innovation and new technology.</p> <p>I think specifically, under the "Policy" section (p. 18) Section S1 says to "Instigate a cultural shift in hydropower companies toward sustainability" The "Activities section could be modified to read, "Lead the dialogue with industry and influential international organisations (e.g. IEA, IRENA, UNEP) toward valuing sustainability and embracing newer methods toward attaining it."</p>	<p>The wording in the ToC has been updated to consider innovation and new knowledge. The modified text reads as follow: "Maintain performance requirements that are up-to-date based on state-of-the-art knowledge and science."</p>

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<p>Strategies and activities:</p> <p>All of the activities are dependent on the first activity being achieved and it is not clear how the first activity will be achieved - "Establish the use of the Standard as an expectation of industry".</p> <p>Some of the Strategies vs outputs and impacts do not line up. For example, in the component on 'Promotion' - proactive communications and social media presence support practitioners to meet requirements do not line up with increased investment in sustainable hydropower through improved recognition. Similarly, for the 'Practice' component - strategies and activities focused on creating a credible certification process and assessor capacities will not lead to greater transparency and inclusivity.</p> <p>The TOC could be greatly strengthened by taking out the more detailed activities that would normally go in a workplan and focusing on the higher level of "if this strategy is implemented, then this will happen (outputs and then ultimately outcomes/impacts)".</p>	<p>The ToC has been updated to improve the causal links and relationships between the different components of the results chain (i.e. to ensure that strategies, outputs and impacts line up). The detailed activities were removed and will be modified to be included in the implementation plan. A new "outcomes" section was added and linked to the strategies and outputs. The modifications to the ToC also took into account the need to highlight and strengthen the business case for hydropower developers and operators to get certified. The vision and impacts were modified only slightly as per the comment on "impact on ecosystems".</p>
<p>Outcomes and vision: 'Outcome' appears to be missing between what has been labelled as 'Outputs' and 'Vision/Impacts'. As we understand it, this would be the main motivator and driver of the development of the standard. This ultimate Outcome is "hydropower projects are more sustainable".</p>	<p>A new "outcomes" section has been added and linked to the strategies and outputs. The modifications to the ToC also took into account the need to highlight and strengthen the business case for hydropower developers and operators to get certified. The vision and impacts were modified only slightly as per the comment on "impact on ecosystems".</p>
<p>Structure and scope: The TOC currently does not address motivations for existing plants to be certified, nor elements of how they will use the Standard to drive continuous improvement. This means that the TOC seemingly covers only the preparation and implementation phases, but not the operational one.</p> <p>There is not enough clarity on many points and it does not take into account or duplicate the requirements of the legislation of the countries in which it will be applied.</p> <p>At the impact level, what about the economic and financial sustainability of the projects? Is it assumed that this is in any case pursued by the hydropower</p>	<p>The ToC has been modified to highlight the business case for hydropower developers and operators to get certified, and the pathway to drive continuous improvement, especially for existing plants. The modifications include: (1) strategy "Incentivise, recognise and acknowledge higher sustainability performance through prizes, labels and healthy peer competition" and (2) outcome "Industry peers encourage one another to get certified and publish results in the public domain."</p> <p>The Theory of Change and wider HS Certification scheme do not intend to replace national legislation. The relationship between the requirements of the HS Standard and country regulation will vary country-by-country. The HS Secretariat will work</p>

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<p>developers and operators and therefore not explicitly mentioned? What about public entities acting as developers and operators?</p>	<p>directly with country governments to seek alignment between the sustainability principles and requirements of the HS Standard and national guidance on hydropower.</p> <p>The HS Standard focuses on the environmental, social and governance (ESG) aspects of hydropower development and operation. The aim is for the HS Standard to be embedded into financing mechanisms to help address the ESG concerns related to project financing and incentivise hydropower developers and operators, both public and private, to seek certification to access climate-aligned financing.</p>
<p>Link to wider clean energy agenda: There is no mention at all about achieving/contributing to energy security in the impacts, considering this is a hydropower Standard. Demonstrating the need for the project is one of the HSAP requirements.</p> <p>I suggest adding that hydro can help increase penetration of solar and wind.</p>	<p>The context paragraph for the ToC has been updated to link hydropower development to wider energy security issues (i.e. demonstrated need) and the increased grid penetration of solar and wind energy.</p>

Section 2 – Scope of the Standard

Public Comment Issue Raised	Response
<p>Link to Hydropower Sustainability Tools: The Hydropower Standard assessment tool must be clearly defined in relation of the suite of hydropower sustainability tools. Is this what we know as the HESG gap analysis tool?</p> <p>In this chapter, a short overview should be given (text and graphical) about the differences between an assessment according HSAP, HESG and the HS Standard and also how the certification fits into the whole picture.</p> <p>Include somewhere a section that clarifies what is the difference between the protocol and this standard.</p> <p>My understanding before was that the global standard will be an additional award for those with high scores in the protocol or any other project that is doing good work in its construction or operation and that will become interested to apply for this certification. With this proposal, the number of projects will be limited to only those which have</p>	<p>A diagram illustrating the relationship between the Standard, the Standard assessment tool and the Hydropower Sustainability Tools has been included in Section 2 of the HS Standard.</p> <p>Certification against the HS standard is open to all hydropower projects, not just projects that have been assessed using the Hydropower Sustainability Assessment Protocol (HSAP) or Hydropower Sustainability Gap Analysis Tool (HESG). Though, a process has been put in place to harmonise an HSAP and HESG assessment to a Standard Certification (see Section 3.8 of the HS Assurance System).</p>

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<p>applied the protocol which are already very few.</p>	
<p>Legacy issues: Legacy Issues seems to acknowledge that some older facilities may come with pre-existing problems and that this is to be factored into the assessment. I would again suggest that technology now exists to solve many issues that may have been problematic earlier in the life of a project.</p> <p>The legacy issue is yet to be adequately addressed. It remains unclear how the certification process will differ, or define criteria, for existing operating dams with legacy issues, which may want to go for certification. There is no cut-off date established to segregate new and existing dams or any guidance on what an “ongoing issue” is, making it prone to interpretation by the assessor. It is crucial to provide clarity on what ongoing issues are.</p> <p>It is stated that projects are required to be responsible for their own impacts. It should be clarified that responsibility remains with the project, no matter whether, for example, the developer and operator are different entities, or have changed over time.</p> <p>It should be clearly spelled out that legacy issues pertain to environmental and social issues.</p>	<p>The Theory of Change has been updated to include references to the importance of innovation and the use of new knowledge. This also applies to how legacy issues are dealt with, especially in cases where technology has advanced significantly.</p> <p>Generally, the approach of the HS Standard is similar to that of ISO 14001, in that the existing condition is taken as the baseline, and risks are assessed against that condition. It is difficult to establish a cut-off date for legacy issues as the decision to address a legacy issue is less about the date of incidence, and more so about the significance for or impact on the community. The performance requirements of the HS Standard look in many cases to see if any ongoing or emerging issues have been identified. Ongoing issues refer to unresolved issues associated with the operation of the hydropower facility that have been of concern for a period of time. These could be legacy issues. Emerging issues could be those arising from changes to policies, legislation, standards, stakeholder expectations, or physical changes to the environment in which the facility operates.</p> <p>The section on legacy issues has been updated to highlight its pertinence to environmental and social issues. The modifications include: “Legacy issues often pertain to sensitive social and environmental issues.”</p>
<p>Project life cycle stages: We see a potential issue with a project certified in the operational stage that would not have passed the assessment in the previous phases. This highlights how important it is to resolve how environmental and social issues are treated.</p>	<p>In the Operation stage, the performance requirements of the HS Standard look in many cases to see if any ongoing or emerging issues have been identified. Ongoing issues refer to unresolved issues associated with the operation of the hydropower facility that have been of concern for a period of time. These could be legacy issues and will be assessed as part of the HS Certification. If the issues are significant, the project would not meet the minimum performance requirements of the HS Standard and would not be certified.</p>
<p>Refurbishments: Needs supporting text defining the line between what is a major and what is a minor refurbishment - as this has significant impacts on how we deal with a specific project.</p> <p>Why include “transmission network re-optimisation”</p>	<p>The section on refurbishments has been updated to provide more clarity and transparency on the distinction between minor and major refurbishments. The text has been updated to align with the HS Assurance System as follows: “Major refurbishments and modernisation exercises for</p>

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<p>here?</p> <p>Please add text from Assurance document regarding "major refurbishments". Please note that major refurbishment does not necessarily have any impact changes (e.g. turbine replacement is major but does not affect flows).</p>	<p>operating hydropower projects are typically assessed using the Preparation Stage and Implementation stage tools. Minor works to increase efficiencies, replace equipment and rectify ageing infrastructure issues could be considered normal asset management practice for operations and normally would not instigate a changed project stage unless causing significant changes for sustainability issues."</p> <p>In addition, "transmission network re-optimisation" has been deleted.</p>
<p>Project eligibility: There are no eligibility restrictions on size, location OR AGE.</p> <p>I agree that certification itself should be issued on a powerplant-by-powerplant basis. However, we should be open to having 2 or more powerplants certified using the same assessment process and visit assuming some basic ground rules, such as same owner, same permits etc.</p> <p>The urgent need to develop a system to include hydropower cascades into the scheme.</p>	<p>The text on project eligibility has been updated to include no restrictions on age.</p> <p>The text on project eligibility has also been modified to include scope for the certification of cascade systems. The modified text reads as follows: "It is possible for the certification of multiple power stations, which were designed to function in cascade or as a complex, to result from a single assessment. For example, when the power stations are at the same life cycle, have the same owner, and the evaluation of all performance requirements can be achieved through assessment of the same documentation, interviews and site visit for all power stations."</p>
<p>Topic relevance: Needs some mention of the "+5" approach in scoring, as that is a highly relevant part of a description of how Topic Relevance is dealt with.</p>	<p>Based on the feedback from the second consultation, the total score approach was replaced by a simplified methodology based on a minimum percentage per relevant topic. The +5 for Not Relevant topics is no longer applicable or needed.</p>
<p>Missing requirements for Indigenous Peoples: The performance standard is put forward as being based on the Sustainability Tools however the standard is missing the stakeholder support requirements. For Indigenous Peoples this results in FPIC not being included which is a major flaw and out of keeping with other international standards.</p>	<p>The requirement of achieving the free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) of Indigenous Peoples is included in the minimum requirements for HS Certification under the Indigenous Peoples topic. The omission of the FPIC requirement for Indigenous Peoples was a layout mistake and will be rectified in the final version of the Standard.</p>
<p>Regional approaches and links to existing standards: Most of the positions, proposed for an independent assessment according to the Standard, are carried out without fail in accordance with Russian legislation at all stages of the lifecycle of a hydropower facility.</p> <p>The FSC moved to regional standards reflecting the</p>	<p>The HS Standard and Certification scheme do not intend to replace national legislation. The relationship between the requirements of the HS Standard and country regulation will vary country-by-country. The HS Secretariat will work directly with country governments to seek alignment between the sustainability principles and</p>

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<p>unique social and environmental conditions in different regions of the world. There are some pros and cons to this (some regions adopted easier standards than others) but specific regional standards allowed for more consensus to be built on what is deemed acceptable rather than leaving it to auditor/assessor discretion. I think this may eventually be an issue or problem for the HS Standard. But frankly the Standard needs to become popular and commonplace enough where there is enough market demand to justify this further development. I don't think the Hydropower sector is there yet. Rather it is best at this point to try to get as much uptake with the Standard by projects, producers, utilities, etc. as possible.</p> <p>Could be possible in the introduction or someplace to add that this global standard incorporates principles and approaches of the Environmental and Social safeguard and Standards from the IFIs and the mitigation hierarchy.</p>	<p>requirements of the HS Standard and national guidance on hydropower.</p> <p>The development of the HS Standard included a peer review of existing standards for hydropower and clean energy, as well as ISEAL certified standards for different sectors, and IFC and WB environmental and social safeguards. Allocating regional weights to topics was considered but was deemed not appropriate at this stage in the development of the HS Standard.</p> <p>The text in the introduction of the HS Standard has been updated to include references to the international financial institutions' (IFI) environmental and social safeguards and the mitigation hierarchy. The modified text reads as follows: "The HS Standard is aligned with the environmental and social safeguards of key lenders (e.g. IFC and World Bank) and puts particular emphasis on applying the mitigation hierarchy throughout the project life cycle. The HS Standard and Certification scheme do not intend to replace national legislation. The relationship between the requirements of the HS Standard and country regulation will vary country-by-country. The HS Secretariat will work directly with country governments to seek alignment between the sustainability principles and requirements of the HS Standard and national guidance on hydropower."</p>
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Section 3 – Scoring methodology and rating system

Public Comment Issue Raised	Response
<p>Legibility: The performance requirements are difficult to read for practitioners or policy makers. They should be summarized in the text and referred to an annex. The rating methodology, involving the identification of gaps against good international practice should be explained and illustrated in an example.</p> <p>Format- the font is too small/light in both documents. I recommend to increase the font or change it since it is hard to read.</p>	<p>The performance requirements represent the core information of a Standard and should not be moved to an annex. It is also crucial they are not modified or summarised in any way. Any modifications to the exact wording may lead to misinterpretations of the HS Standard. Each topic has a principle and scope statement which provide an overview of the expectations, limits and boundaries of the topic assessment.</p> <p>The font and colour have been modified to improve readability of the text.</p>
<p>Performance requirements: Some of the "minimum" requirements of the Standard seem</p>	<p>There may be overlap between topics. For example, hydrologic resource is significantly influenced by</p>

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<p>redundant, they may be performed under the “Advanced” level. For example, public health system capacities (4.4. Community impacts and infrastructure safety) and independent verification of GHG emissions (4.12. Climate change mitigation and resilience).</p> <p>A standard document sets out clear expectations, limits and boundaries. The expectation thresholds and baselines require strengthening.</p> <p>There needs to be clarity as to what is considered negative impacts and what are some of the hard boundaries/expectations, such as our previous inputs around avoiding Protected Areas, High Conservation Value areas etc.</p> <p>The general understanding is that projects should not infringe on human rights and they have a responsibility to ensure this through assessment and understanding of their project impacts. Human rights should be included as basic good practice and not just seen as best practice.</p> <p>The scoring and rating methodology is still too ambiguous to be effectively and consistently implemented in rating projects. Criteria for improved outcomes were not strengthened as proposed in our previous submission.</p>	<p>climate change while climate change resilience is significantly impacted by hydrological resource. HS Accredited Assessors are trained to consider and assess overlap between sections when conducting assessments.</p> <p>Each topic’s advanced performance requirements (best practice) build off the minimum requirements (good practice) in a logical and sequential approach. Minimum performance requirements focus on identifying and assessing project related impacts and managing those impacts through application of the mitigation hierarchy. Advanced performance requirements consider wider risks and opportunities and take on broader considerations.</p> <p>Each topic has a principle and scope statement which provide an overview of the expectations, limits and boundaries of the topic assessment.</p> <p>The performance requirements in HS-1 Environmental and Social Assessment and Management on demonstrated need and strategic fit, and siting and design in the Preparation stage help ensure that projects with significant negative impacts would not achieve certification against the HS Standard. For example, projects that impact high-value protected areas and are not compatible with the value/objectives of that protected area will most likely not meet the HS-1 minimum performance requirements and thus not achieve Certification. Assessment of ongoing and emerging issues help ensure that significant legacy issues would be addressed as part of the assessment. For example, a project that has significant legacy issues with Indigenous Peoples who still oppose the project will most likely not meet the HS-7 minimum performance requirements and thus not achieve Certification.</p> <p>All comments on the wording of performance requirements will be recorded and included as part of the Standard’s formal review.</p>
<p>Scoring methodology: It doesn't seem to make sense to have two requirements for Silver and Gold label each and I recommend to simplify the scoring/rating. If e.g. the Silver label requirement to meet at least 30% of the advanced requirements on each topic is fulfilled the second requirement to have an advanced requirements score higher 30 is</p>	<p>To achieve “Certified” status, a project needs to meet the minimum performance requirements (good practice) of the HS Standard. A project with “significant flaws” against good practice will not meet the minimum performance requirements of the HS Standard and thus not achieve Certification.</p> <p>For higher recognitions (i.e. Silver and Gold), the</p>

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<p>anyhow always also fulfilled. For Gold, with the requirement to meet at least 60% of the advanced requirements on each topic the second requirement to have a score higher 70 might theoretically not be always fulfilled but these cases will be very seldom and I don't see the added value. I recommend to keep only the requirement of 30% resp. 60% on each topic. Thus the scoring would be more straight forward.</p> <p>The methodology isn't clear enough. The range between the labels looks like huge. If a proponent reaches the minimum score to take the silver label, for example, other proponent reaches the maximum score, it takes the same label. It doesn't seem correct</p> <p>The way points up to 100 are assigned is not clear as it is not obvious how to translate advanced requirements into scores. This does not allow a proper interpretation of the various certification levels. It is not possible to understand whether a silver or gold level may be assigned even when there are significant flaws in the project.</p>	<p>scoring methodology has been simplified by removing references to a total score. The new scoring methodology requires that the project meet at least 30% of advanced performance requirements per relevant topic to achieve Silver and at least 60% for Gold. The addition of a total score requirement did not provide much added value and led to confusion among respondents.</p> <p>The other option would have been to simplify the scoring methodology by only focusing on a total score (30-70 for Silver and >70 for Gold). The minimum percentage of advanced performance requirements met per topic was the preferred approach to avoid situations where a project only meets advanced requirements in one or two topics but receives recognition as an overall high-performing project. The higher recognitions of the HS Standard aim to incentivise continuous improvement across all relevant sustainability topics, and not just on a select few. The gap between thresholds (i.e. 30 to 70) was also significant and raised questions regarding the range of scores under a single Certification status.</p>
<p>Rating system: The rating of performance is adequate but it is not clear whether it will incentivise improved performance.</p> <p>The rating system is too complicated.</p> <p>There is still doubt whether the classification beyond a simple "certified" label isn't even counter-productive. The industry shouldn't leave "third parties" like ECAs to interpret which projects are more "sustainable" than others and eventually sort out certified and silver projects from a portfolio that include also gold projects.</p> <p>The multi-tiered labelling is questionable as the lower two levels cannot be considered good practice given the dire condition and rapid deterioration of freshwater ecosystems.</p> <p>I'd like to submit that the three levels of certification ("Certified" "Certified Silver" and "Certified Gold" should be adjusted a bit. As they are currently worded "Certified Silver" implies that you didn't attain the highest status, it is secondary to gold. However, the lower ranking of "Certified" doesn't carry any comparative implication and in the eyes of the general public may seem better or higher than</p>	<p>Many discussions were had on whether a tiered or binary approach would be most suited for the HS Certification scheme. This was also a matter for consultation during the first consultation on the HS Standard. It was decided that a tiered approach was preferable to incentivise continuous improvement beyond good practice, yet also allowing a strong minimum threshold for certification. Feedback on the proposed tiered approach led to simplification from four to three tiers, removing the Platinum status.</p> <p>Modifying the Certified label to Certified – Bronze was considered but not incorporated as it may imply that meeting the minimum performance requirements of the Standard is weak or not good enough. All projects should aim to meet the minimum performance requirements (good practice) of the HS Standard. Silver and Gold labels are provided to incentivise project proponents to aim beyond good practice and provide recognition for high performing projects (i.e. hydropower projects that meet advanced performance requirements, or best practice).</p> <p>The tiered approach is common among standards.</p>

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<p>"Certified Silver" Maybe change "Certified" to "Certified Bronze." Just an observation.</p> <p>Creating different performance levels (gold, silver and standard) may be problematic.</p>	<p>For example, it is used by the LEED Building Standard, B Corp Certification and the Water Stewardship Standard. Should Export Credit Agencies (ECAs) or other financial institutions choose to require higher recognitions for their investments, they have the right to do so. Though, the Certified status (i.e. achieving good practice) should be enough to warrant climate-aligned finance, as is the case with the Climate Bond Initiative's hydropower criteria.</p>
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Section 4 – Name and labels

Public Comment Issues Raised	Response
<p>Minimum requirements for certification: It is not clear with the scoring system that projects are required to meet the Good Practice outcomes for all criteria in order to be considered Certified - that needs to be a minimum requirement. A clearer evaluation system of whether or not the Outcomes were achieved for each criteria (i.e., Yes or No) would be a much more transparent way to evaluate projects and provide confidence that projects that perform well on one issue but fail on another are not being certified.</p>	<p>To achieve "Certified" status, a project needs to meet the minimum performance requirements (good practice) of the HS Standard. This means that a project must meet the good practice outcomes of all relevant topics to achieve Certification. A project that performs well on one topic but does not meet the minimum performance requirements of another topic will not be certified.</p>
<p>Name: A name that does not refer to sustainability would be much more appropriate as already stated in the previous comments. The reference to sustainability is highly controversial and will likely lead to a backlash against the IHA and the Standard as NGOs and broad parts of civil society are not ready to accept the concept of sustainable hydropower. Furthermore, as already commented, measuring sustainability requires the evaluation of all options and alternatives which the current version of the standard does a poor job of addressing. It would significantly help to refer to measuring 'impact' or good practice, or stewardship 'towards more sustainability'.</p>	<p>A number of names were considered for this Standard as a result of the first consultation. These were discussed by the Global Standard Working Group. Hydropower Sustainability Standard was selected and recommended to the Hydropower Sustainability Governance Committee as it remains on brand with the wider Hydropower Sustainability (HS) programme established over 10 years ago and concisely portrays the vision of the Standard and its Theory of Change: a world where sustainable hydropower is the norm.</p> <p>While some backlash may be expected with the launch of any sustainability Standard, it is hoped that, through the multistakeholder approach to decision making and transparent assurance processes, the HS Standard can provide the framework to assess and certify sustainability in hydropower based on up-to-date knowledge and science.</p>

Section 5 – Roles and responsibilities

Public Comment Issues Raised	Response
<p>HS Council: HS Council is illustrated in the introduction but a reference should be made to this illustration in this chapter.</p> <p>We are concerned about the high status and authority of The Hydropower Sustainability Council. This independent body, whose international status and formation mechanism are not indicated, claims a position that will be higher than the position of state authorities and authorised regulatory state agencies of the countries in which it is supposed to conduct an independent assessment.</p> <p>Reiterate the invitation to stakeholders to join the Council/Chambers and to be involved and active. We see a particular need in general for broad and diverse representation, science, and local or international organisations. A stronger scientific community would be an asset.</p>	<p>The HS Standard and Certification scheme do not intend to replace national legislation and the Hydropower Sustainability Council, in no way, intends to supersede the authority of state governments and regulators. The relationship between the requirements of the HS Standard and country regulation will vary country-by-country. The HS Secretariat will work directly with country governments to seek alignment between the sustainability principles and requirements of the HS Standard and national guidance on hydropower.</p> <p>The description of the HS Council in Section 2.1 has been updated with a reference to the illustration in the inside cover page.</p> <p>Following the launch of the Standard, the HS Council will undergo a governance review aimed to promote broad and diverse representation, including more involvement of the scientific community, project-affected communities, and local and international organisations.</p>
<p>Accredited assessors: It should be better explained who selects the AA for an "official" assessment (i.e. the project proponent) and why the AA is nevertheless independent and unbiased in its assessment report.</p> <p>A key role for the HS secretariat is missing which is to ensure that assessors do not have a conflict of interest.</p> <p>We speak many times on the need to open this certification to more people - outside the accredited assessors - local experts which can verify the good and best practices. to leave it to only the accredited assessors – similar to the protocol - will become the same bottleneck that has limited the application of the protocol globally.</p> <p>The document indicates that "The Accredited Assessor determines a project's eligibility" again, this will limit the interest of companies and governments to seek the application of this standard, I think that different alternatives should</p>	<p>Accredited Assessors must adhere to accreditation rules and the HS conflict of interest policy (see sections 6.2 of the Assurance System). Accredited Assessors have been specifically trained by the HS Secretariat to deliver quality and uniformity in HS Assessments. Local experts are welcome to apply to become Accredited Assessors but only individuals who have passed the accreditation training and who hold a valid licence can conduct Assessments as part of the HS Certification Scheme. The credibility of HS Certification Scheme hinges on the quality and independence of the third-party Accredited Assessors.</p> <p>The responsibilities of the HS Secretariat include to accredit third party assessors, conduct HS Assessments in line with accreditation rules and criteria, and monitor their performance over time. This includes ensuring that assessors do not have conflict of interest.</p>

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<p>be offered.</p>	
<p>Independent governance: The governance arrangement for the assurance system will be considered most credible when seen as a truly independent governance body.</p> <p>Independence and impartiality is of critical importance to grant acceptance from a broader range of stakeholders. We recommend to clearly announcing an audit of the HS certification scheme in the light of ISEAL certification.</p>	<p>Following the launch of the Standard, the HS Secretariat will aim to apply for ISEAL Community Membership and will look to guidance from ISEAL to identify further measures it can incorporate to increase credibility, avoid concerns of partiality, and to show independence from the hydropower industry.</p>
<p>Certifying entity: The breadth of representation on the HSGC is excellent across key stakeholder sectors. To strengthen the credibility of the certification system, it would be fantastic if the organisations represented would formally commit by associating their brand with the system and commit to it. This will add weight to the certification system, particularly with financial, market and government stakeholders. This strong and credible third-party endorsement is also likely to enhance the value proposition for proponents and developers in their respective jurisdictions.</p> <p>The final approval of certification should not lie with the Council as it leaves the stakeholders in the Council in the unacceptable position of certifying. Their role and responsibility is governance. A clear separation/ distinction is required.</p> <p>One of the roles of the HS secretariat is to "propose the certification status to the HS Council for approval" but the role of approving certification is missing under HS Council.</p>	<p>As listed in Section 2.2, one of the responsibilities of the HS Secretariat is to allocate and issue HS Certification to hydropower projects based on the findings of Assessments conducted by Accredited Assessors and resolutions of the HS Governance Committee. The HS Council, through its Governance Committee, oversees the allocation of HS Certifications by the HS Secretariat to hydropower projects. The Council or its individual members do not issue certification. The role of the HS Council is governance.</p> <p>The process is described under Process Step 4: Certification in Section 3.2 as follows: Should the Project meet the minimum requirements for HS Certification and all process requirements are confirmed as met, the HS Secretariat notifies the Governance Committee of its intention to certify the project. The HS Secretariat will then issue the certification if no objection or concern is raised by the Governance Committee. Should a member of the HS Governance Committee have a concern about the allocation of HS Certification for the project, the Governance Committee chair will determine a process by which the Governance Committee can inform itself about the concerns and provide clarity to the HS Secretariat regarding the issuing of the HS Certification.</p>
<p>Data collection and transparency: Making evidence justifications available is key to transparency so we suggest stressing that all justification documents collated by the assessors will be made available to the Council or other stakeholders for potential screening.</p>	<p>In line with the Complaints and Appeals Mechanism described in Section 8.1, the HS Council, through a duly convened sub-committee, has the right to request further documentation or evidence and/or bring in an independent Accredited Lead Assessor (ALA), who was not involved in any way with the Assessment, to provide their own independent</p>

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	<p>review and advice to the HS Secretariat and HS Governance Committee.</p> <p>In addition, the text in Section 2.4 of the Assurance System was updated to clarify Assessor record keeping duties. The modified text reads as follows: Maintain a repository of evidence throughout the duration of certification to be made available to the HS Council in case of complaints.</p>
<p>Audit requests for quality control: The Council should be given the option of calling for an audit of a certification process in case there is a member that raises a doubt on the quality of the certification process.</p>	<p>In line with the Complaints and Appeals Mechanism described in Section 8.1, the HS Council, through a duly convened sub-committee, has the right to request further documentation or evidence and/or bring in an independent Accredited Lead Assessor (ALA), who was not involved in any way with the Assessment, to provide their own independent review and advice to the HS Secretariat and HS Governance Committee.</p> <p>In addition, in line with Process Step 4: Certification in Section 3.2, should a member of the HS Governance Committee have a concern about the allocation of HS Certification for the project, the Governance Committee chair will determine a process by which the Governance Committee can inform itself about the concerns and provide clarity to the HS Secretariat regarding the issuing of the HS Certification.</p>
<p>HS Governance Committee: specify by whom the elected Governance Committee is composed.</p>	<p>This is specified in the description of the Hydropower Sustainability Council in inside cover page of the HS Standard and Assurance System.</p>

Section 6 – Certification process

Public Comment Issues Raised	Response
<p>Project eligibility: It is in the interest of the standard that toxic projects are not even considered for certification hence we suggest making it more clear in the pre-assessment phase (project eligibility assessment) that these projects will definitely be rejected (e.g. projects in high conservation value areas, projects with legacy issues etc).</p>	<p>As described in Section 3.1.2 of the Assurance System, in determining project eligibility, Accredited Assessors are encouraged to have discussion with Project Proponents on system boundaries and any red flags which could halt a project's path towards HS Certification. These could include significant external conflicts (civil war, interstate disputes), criminal records of key players, and legacy issues beyond resolution.</p> <p>In addition, as described under Process Step 4: Certification in Section 3.2, a member of the HS</p>

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	<p>Governance Committee can object or raise a concern about a certification. Should a member of the HS Governance Committee have a concern about the allocation of HS Certification for the project, the Governance Committee chair will determine a process by which the Governance Committee can inform itself about the concerns and provide clarity to the HS Secretariat regarding the issuing of the HS Certification.</p> <p>Finally, the performance requirements in HS-1 Environmental and Social Assessment and Management on demonstrated need and strategic fit, and siting and design in the Preparation stage help ensure that projects with significant negative impacts would not achieve certification against the HS Standard. For example, projects that impact high-value protected areas and are not compatible with the value/objectives of that protected area will most likely not meet the HS-1 minimum performance requirements of the Standard and thus not achieve Certification. Assessment of ongoing and emerging issues help ensure that significant legacy issues would be addressed as part of the assessment. For example, a project that has significant legacy issues with Indigenous Peoples who still oppose the project will most likely not meet the HS-7 minimum performance requirements of the Standard and thus not achieve Certification.</p>
<p>Public comments: The closing remark on page 19 about the non-requirement of publication of the preliminary report is not understood. It contradicts with statements in chapter 5 (p.32). Is our understanding correct that this statement (p.19) just means the project proponent may at any time interrupt the certification process, e.g. by refusing publication, but then his project will not get certified? If yes, this should be clarified. Otherwise this needs substantial explanation.</p>	<p>The wording at the end of Section 3.2 of the Assurance System has been updated to clarify that publication of the Preliminary Assessment Report is required to be considered for HS Certification. The modified text reads as follows: In such a case, the Project Proponent would not be able to apply for HS Certification. The Project Proponent must complete Step 2 (publication for comments and finalisation of report) in order to submit an application for HS Certification.</p>
<p>Duration: The duration of Certification for ratings is far too short. In particular for plants in the Operation stage five years are very short. There is a significant risk that these short periods will lead to a much lower acceptance and willingness for certifications among project owners. The certification for projects in the operation phase should last at least 10 years and for projects in the other phases the expiration date should be at the</p>	<p>Based on the feedback received from the first public consultation, the Working Group recommended that the duration of the rating is 3 years for Preparation and Implementation stages, and 5 years for the Operation stage. This provides a time period long enough to capture changes in the project's situation regarding the Standard's performance requirements, but short enough to avoid any need for an administrative process around annual audits or</p>

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<p>earliest after 5 years.</p> <p>For small projects the duration in the preparation stage (3 years) might be longer than the whole preparation and implementation phase.</p> <p>2. Duration of certification for operation stage (5 years) seems short in relation of the typical life span of a hydropower project (50 years).</p> <p>This is the least well-developed section in my opinion. I have previously made several comments about both content and wording and these don't need repeating here.</p> <p>I believe that the limitation of 5 year's validity in the Operation stage will severely limit the uptake of the Standard as it, particularly for older projects, will appear overly demanding to re-certify every 5 years.</p> <p>Previously, we considered the duration of Certification for ratings in the Operation stage should be up to 10 years. But after reading the HS Assurance report we fully agree with five years.</p> <p>Certification will last for a period of three years, and require a re-application of the standard. This may be burdensome for some hydropower operators and may preclude rather than encourage its application</p>	<p>certification renewals. The five-year period for operating projects is also in line with the Standard's five-year review period.</p>
<p>Re-certification: Basically, re-certification, re-assessment and harmonisation processes are sufficiently described. Nevertheless, an additional graphical representation would be very helpful in understanding the exact differences in terms of applicability, effort and duration.</p>	<p>A graphical representation will be designed and ultimately added to the HS website.</p>
<p>Assessor availability: Another very critical requirement is that "the re-assessment must be undertaken by the AA who originally assessed the topic in question, or the lead AA... and the results of the Re-assessment must be signed off by the lead AA of the original assessment." Hydropower projects in operation can last for many decades but the availability of the lead AA might change for various reasons including death. We cannot take it for granted that the AA are available also after 3, 5, 10 or maybe 30 years! This has to be changed.</p>	<p>The Re-Assessment Process described in Section 3.7 of the Assurance System is only applicable during the valid period of Certification (or a maximum of 5 years). Though, this section would benefit from more robust assurance processes. The wording has been updated to clarify alternative approaches if the proposed process is not possible. The modified text reads as follows: If this is not possible, the HS Secretariat will suggest an alternative approach in consultation with the advisory body of Accredited Lead Assessors.</p>
<p>Impact for smaller projects: To what extent is the process economically applicable for small projects, taking into account the minimum requirements (ALA+AA) and expected duration of the certification process (32 weeks)? This raises the</p>	<p>As described in Section 3.1 of the HS Standard, there are no eligibility restrictions on size or location. It is crucial that the same comprehensive methodology is used to assess and certify all eligible hydropower projects, irrelevant of their size.</p>

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<p>question whether small hydropower projects or plants could be disadvantaged in the future because of a higher relative threshold for certification (the same standard but much higher costs in relation to assets/investments).</p>	<p>As described in Section 6.6 of the Assurance System, the cost of an Assessment will be greatly influenced by the complexity, size and location of the project. Easy-to-access, smaller and/or less complex projects will have lower costs than larger, more remote and/or more complex projects.</p> <p>The total cost of an HS Certification is usually a small percentage of total project costs (for both large and small projects), yet it may contribute to the prevention of cost overruns and project delays due to poor ESG performance.</p>
<p>Assessment length: The length of the certification process is not adequate and should be enlarged to allow more time for assessment by assessors, screening by the Council and inputs from stakeholders.</p> <p>I am not 100% happy with Table 2 (I have commented on this extensively in earlier rounds), but it can be satisfactorily fixed with fairly minimal editing.</p> <p>It is important to add – an specific consultation for the certification process - the consultation cannot be limited to the few interviews and days the accredited assessor are in the project site- during the application of the protocol or the publication in internet of the draft protocol report. Some affected communities are very far from the main dam or powerhouse or do not have internet. It is fundamental that the standard certification process includes a consultation activity – so any ongoing problem can be identified- before any certification can be challenged by communities or NGOs.</p> <p>We recognize that the standard should be kept agile and feasible, nevertheless the length of the site inspection might be too limited for a thorough consultation of stakeholders, particularly in relation to projects of high complexity. We suggest asking for a longer site inspection in these cases.</p>	<p>As captioned in Section 3.3 of the Assurance System, Table 2 provides an <u>indicative</u> timeline of HS Certification. The length of an Assessment may be shorter or longer depending on the complexity, size and location of the project. An Accredited Assessor may indeed extend the length of the site visit to conduct extensive consultations, especially for project of high complexity.</p> <p>Table 2 has been updated to make the process clearer and more straightforward with regard to the total number of weeks.</p>
<p>Seeking certification: It will be important to ensure there are no loop holes in the system to maintain credibility and drive continuous improvement.</p>	<p>Based on the feedback received from the first public consultation, the Working Group reconsidered the recognition “Sustainability in Progress” and adopted “Seeking Certification”. Projects being assessed as part of the process of seeking certification are able to communicate that they are in an assessment</p>

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	<p>process, but this should in no way imply that certification is pending. A project that has been assessed and does not meet the minimum requirements for HS certification will be noted as "Seeking Certification" on the HS website for a period of 12 months. Projects listed as "Seeking Certification" are not able to make any claims until they have achieved "Certified" status.</p>
<p>Value creation: The I-SEAL credibility principles include "value creation" as a requirement and provide a definition of value creation. In its current form the certification for the Standard does not appear to meet this requirement as it does not include a clear business case for its use.</p>	<p>The initial consultation paper included a section on value for user groups. Following the feedback from the first public consultation, the value creation was refined and incorporated into the design of a Theory of Change. The Theory of Change has since been updated with a new "outcomes" section to ensure stronger links to the strategies and outputs, and to provide a clear business case for hydropower developers and operators to get certified.</p>
<p>Additional guidance: The certification process will largely depend on clear guidance which to our judgment is still missing (e.g. how to interpret legacy issues, how to set clear boundaries to assess environmental performance).</p> <p>Some additional guidance can be provided in a separate document and/or as part of training programmes offered on the HSATs in general and the Standard in particular.</p>	<p>The key documents and resources related to the HS Certification Scheme are listed in Section 1 (Introduction) of the HS Standard and Assurance System. These include: HS Assurance System, HS Standard, Assessment Tools, Guidance Documents and Training Manuals.</p>

Section 7 – Independent third-party assessments

Public Comment Issue Raised	Response
<p>Link to national regulation: Most of the positions, proposed for an independent assessment, are carried out without fail in accordance with Russian legislation at all stages of the lifecycle of a hydropower facility.</p>	<p>The HS Standard and wider HS Certification scheme do not intend to replace national legislation. The relationship between the requirements of the HS Standard and country regulation will vary country-by-country. The HS Secretariat will work directly with country governments to seek alignment between the sustainability principles and requirements of the HS Standard and national guidance on hydropower.</p>
<p>Record keeping: Add among the main task of the assessors the need to create a repository of evidence backing his/her judgement that has to be made available to the Council.</p> <p>It is unclear how evidence collected by the</p>	<p>In line with the Complaints and Appeals Mechanism described in Section 8.1, the HS Council, through a duly convened sub-committee, has the right to request further documentation or evidence and/or bring in an independent Accredited Lead Assessor (ALA), who was not involved in any way with the</p>

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<p>assessors will be made available for screening and to whom it will be made available. This is a key aspect as it helps strengthen independence of the assessment and auditing if need be (e.g. in case of complaints).</p>	<p>Assessment, to provide their own independent review and advice to the HS Secretariat and HS Governance Committee.</p> <p>In addition, the text in Section 2.4 of the Assurance System was updated to clarify Assessor record keeping duties. The modified text reads as follows: Maintain a repository of evidence throughout the duration of certification to be made available to the HS Council in case of complaints.</p>
<p>Assessment costs: The cost of assessment needs to be transparent as access may be driven by the cost of assessment. Support may be required where cost is a barrier to access.</p>	<p>The cost of HS Certification is described in Section 6.6 of the Assurance System. Fees are published on the HS website for transparency and accountability. As uptake of the HS Certification Scheme is dependent on the affordability of the Assessment and Certification processes, fees are subject to periodic review to ensure they are up to date with market rates.</p>

Section 8 – Implementing & supporting the Assurance system

Public Comment Issue Raised	Response
<p>Conflicts of interest: Since the certification process is highly dependent on the assessors we suggest that ISEAL provides clear guidance on how to avoid conflict of interest.</p>	<p>Following the launch of the Standard, the HS Secretariat will aim to apply for ISEAL Community Membership and will look to guidance from ISEAL to identify further measures it can incorporate to increase credibility, avoid concerns of partiality/conflict of interest, and to show independence from the hydropower industry.</p>
<p>Assessment length: Time for assessing the site is too limited which may impact on the quality of evidence gathered.</p>	<p>As captioned in Section 3.3 of the Assurance System, Table 2 provides an <u>indicative</u> timeline of HS Certification. The length of an Assessment may be shorter or longer depending on the complexity, size and location of the project. An Accredited Assessor may decide to extend the length of the site visit to conduct extensive consultations, especially for project of high complexity</p>
<p>Record keeping: Evidence of the assessor judgement should be made easily available to stakeholders and the Council (with the limited exception of sensitive data that cannot be released).</p>	<p>In line with the Complaints and Appeals Mechanism described in Section 8.1, the HS Council, through a duly convened sub-committee, has the right to request further documentation or evidence and/or bring in an independent Accredited Lead Assessor (ALA), who was not involved in any way with the Assessment, to provide their own independent review and advice to the HS Secretariat and HS Governance Committee.</p>

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	In addition, the text in Section 2.4 of the Assurance System was updated to clarify Assessor record keeping duties. The modified text reads as follows: Maintain a repository of evidence throughout the duration of certification to be made available to the HS Council in case of complaints.
Governance: The bodies involved in the certification process are missing the science sector, whose representation should be strengthened. In particular, the environmental scientific community needs to be more involved to ensure that certification criteria correspond to state-of-the art scientific standards.	Following the launch of the Standard, the HS Council will undergo a governance review aimed to promote broad and diverse representation, including more involvement of the scientific community, project-affected communities, and local and international organisations, to ensure that certification criteria correspond to up-to-date knowledge and science.

Section 9 – Complaints, appeals & disciplinary proceedings

Public Comment Issue Raised	Response
Resourcing: Depending on the number of assessments, certifications and complaints, the HS Secretariat and the HSGC might be overwhelmed with activity.	The HS Secretariat will ensure that its staffing and recruitment policies are adequate to meet the resource demands of the HS Certification Scheme. The upcoming governance review can aim to address potential HSGC bottlenecks related to the implementation of the HS Certification Scheme.
Third-party input: The one thing I have a slight problem with is the ability to use a so-called independent ALA (paragraph 4 on page 42) as long as the ALA group is as limited as it is in 2021. If the sub-committee really needs external help to review a complaint even after the Proponent and the ALA for the certification audit have given their responses/comments to the complaint(s), the sub-committee should hire a very senior ESIA/ due diligence specialist from outside of the Assessor community	The text in Section 8.1 of the Assurance System has been modified to account for third-party input. The modified text reads as follows: In making this decision, the sub-committee has the right to request further documentation or evidence and/or bring in an independent Accredited Lead Assessor (ALA), who was not involved in any way with the Assessment, <i>or a senior ESIA/ due diligence specialist from outside of the Assessor community</i> , to provide their own independent review and advice to the HS Secretariat and HS Governance Committee.
Complaints against the Project Proponent: Is there no possibility to make appeals/complaints against the Project Proponent (e.g. withholding or forging evidence during the assessment/certification process). Or is this covered in 8.1? There seems to be a minor mistake in the 2nd paragraph of 8.2: "... meeting, but will have put forward reasons, at ..." shall read "... meeting, but	As described in Section 8 of the Assurance System, complaints can be made against an Accredited Assessor (e.g. if an Assessor breached their Code of Ethics), an Assessment finding (e.g. if a Project Proponent forges evidence during the assessment/certification process) and the HS Secretariat (e.g. if the Secretariat manipulates data).

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will have to put forward reasons, at ..."	The typo in Section 8.2 of the Assurance System has been rectified.
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Section 10 – Communications and claims

Public Comment Issue Raised	Response
<p>Link to Theory of Change: Communication around the standard should be built on the theory of change and not on the previous sustainability tools. Focus should be given to the importance of the tool to contribute to stopping the freshwater biodiversity crisis.</p>	<p>The ToC has been updated to improve the causal links and relationships between the different components of the results chain (i.e. that strategies, outputs and impacts line up). The detailed activities were removed and will be modified to be included in the implementation plan. A new "outcomes" section was added and linked to the strategies and outputs. The modifications to the ToC also took into account the need to highlight and strengthen the business case for hydropower developers and operators to get certified. The vision and impacts were modified only slightly as per the comment on "impact on ecosystems".</p>
<p>Labels: "Certified" can potentially be seen as a higher level than "Certified silver"</p>	<p>Modifying the Certified label to Certified – Bronze was considered but not incorporated as it may imply that meeting the minimum performance requirements of the Standard is weak or not good enough. All projects should aim to meet the minimum performance requirements (good practice) of the HS Standard. Silver and Gold labels are provided to incentivise project proponents to aim beyond good practice and provide recognition for high performing projects (i.e. hydropower projects that meet advanced performance requirements, or best practice).</p>

Section 11 – Monitoring and evaluation system

Public Comment Issue Raised	Response
<p>KPIs and implementation plan: It is difficult to assess without an implementation plan.</p> <p>The system obviously needs additional work on the details, primarily with the KPIs, as described in the text. All M&E systems suffer from similar problems with selection of appropriate and clearly measurable indicators for what are called "impact areas" and "outcomes" here, and I cannot really have an opinion on the M&E system before I have seen the</p>	<p>Key performance indicators (KPIs) will be developed to monitor The Monitoring and Evaluation System uses the HS Theory of Change as its guiding framework to monitor, evaluate and report on progress in achieving short- and long-term outcomes and impacts. It will include monitoring of the effectiveness of the HS Secretariat, including periodic audits and quarterly reporting on Secretariat KPIs to the HS Council.</p>

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<p>KPIs.</p>	
<p>Link to Theory of Change and outcomes: The ultimate objective of a sustainability standard should be to maintain good ecological status and healthy and thriving communities. Since this is missing in the Theory of Change it is hence missing in the M&E.</p>	<p>The ToC has been updated to improve the causal links and relationships between the different components of the results chain (i.e. that strategies, outputs and impacts line up). The detailed activities were removed and will be modified to be included in the implementation plan. A new “outcomes” section was added and linked to the strategies and outputs. The modifications to the ToC also took into account the need to highlight and strengthen the business case for hydropower developers and operators to get certified. The vision and impacts were modified only slightly as per the comment on “impact on ecosystems”.</p>

Section 12 – General comments on the Standard

Public Comment Issue Raised	Response
<p>Link to national regulation: The Standard is too schematic and non-specific now. There is not enough clarity on many points and it does not take into account or duplicate the requirements of the legislation of the countries in which it will be applied.</p> <p>Most of the positions, proposed for an independent assessment according to the Standard, are carried out without fail in accordance with Russian legislation at all stages of the lifecycle of a hydropower facility, namely: 4.3. Water quality and sediments, 4.4. Community impacts and infrastructure safety, 4.11. Hydrological resource and others. But, for some of the requirements, according to the Russian law, Russian hydropower plants do not directly affect the designated processes, including reservoir management and downstream flows (4.11. Hydrological resource), erosion and costal protection (4.3. Water quality and sediments).</p> <p>What requires serious improvement is justification and criteria presented in paragraph 4.12. Climate change mitigation and resilience (including power density and GHG emissions). Due to the extreme importance of the global climate agenda, the requirements of the Standard in this part should be as transparent as possible and should take into account the current state of hydropower in different</p>	<p>The HS Standard and wider HS Certification scheme do not intend to replace national legislation. The relationship between the requirements of the HS Standard and country regulation will vary country-by-country. The HS Secretariat will work directly with country governments to seek alignment between the sustainability principles and requirements of the HS Standard and national guidance on hydropower.</p> <p>The HS Standard focuses on the environmental, social and governance (ESG) aspects of hydropower development and operation. The aim is for the HS Standard to be embedded into financing mechanisms to help address the ESG concerns related to project finance and incentivise hydropower developer and operators, both public and private, to seek certification to access climate-aligned finance.</p> <p>With regard to Section 4.12 of the HS Standard on climate change mitigation and resilience, the criteria are based on the most up-to-date science on greenhouse gas emissions from reservoirs. The thresholds are based on existing academic and scientific literature on the issue and are directly linked to the other international standards and regulations, such as the EU taxonomy on sustainable activities.</p>

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<p>countries that differs greatly in terms of economic, energy, climatic and other conditions. Otherwise, the created Hydropower Sustainability Council can easily become an instrument of economic and political influence on countries that own hydropower facilities.</p>	
<p>Climate change requirements: The main concern we have relates to the level of ambition of the Standard regarding GHG emissions.</p> <p>There is indeed a reference to the 5W/m² (in line with CBI or EU taxonomy), but this threshold does not appear to be a minimum requirement, not at the “basic” nor at the “gold” levels. A mere explanation as to how the project fits in the national strategy seems to suffice to meet the criteria. One may wonder if this is sufficient.</p>	<p>A project must meet all relevant minimum performance requirements (good practice) to achieve HS Certification. For climate mitigation (Section 4.12 of the HS Standard), a project must meet be above 5 W/m². If not, its net GHG emissions (gCO₂e) of electricity generation has to be estimated and independently-verified and below 100 gCO₂e/kWh. If power density is below 5 W/m² and estimated emissions are above 100 gCO₂e/kWh, a site-specific assessment of GHG emissions has been undertaken. In addition, an assessment of the project’s fit with national and/or regional policies and plans on mitigation must be undertaken.</p> <p>These criteria would also need to be met for the Silver and Gold recognitions.</p>
<p>Business case: This needs to be tested with groups not familiar with the Protocol. More is needed to provide a business case for its use to ensure it is comprehensive and can support decision making for the certification process by proponents</p>	<p>The ToC has been modified to highlight the business case for hydropower developers and operators to get certified, and the pathway to drive continuous improvement, especially for existing plants. The modifications include: (1) strategy “Incentivise, recognise and acknowledge higher sustainability performance through prizes, labels and healthy peer competition” and (2) outcome “Industry peers encourage one another to get certified and publish results in the public domain.”</p>
<p>Certification length and costs: The too short duration of the certification for (especially older) Operation-phase projects.</p> <p>Regarding practical implementation one could use some details on the cost, duration and other practicalities (or is that intended to be disclosed on the website?)</p> <p>As aforementioned, it may also be beneficial to review the timeframes for application of the certification methodology and its period of validity. This may be burdensome for some hydropower operators and may preclude rather than encourage its application.</p> <p>The scheme could be better endorsed/adopted by</p>	<p>The cost of HS Certification is described in Section 6.6 of the Assurance System. Fees are published on the HS website for transparency and accountability. As uptake of the HS Certification Scheme is dependent on the affordability of the Assessment and Certification processes, fees are subject to periodic review to ensure they are up to date with market rates.</p> <p>Based on the feedback received from the first public consultation, the Working Group recommended that the duration of the rating is 3 years for Preparation and Implementation stages, and 5 years for the Operation stage. This provides a time period long enough to capture changes in the project’s situation regarding the Standard’s performance requirements,</p>

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<p>Hydropower developers and operators by 'selling' benefits and value of the standard, noting that the cost and effort of certification will not be immaterial. As aforementioned, it may also be beneficial to review the timeframes for application of the certification methodology and its period of validity. This may be burdensome for some hydropower operators and may preclude rather than encourage its application.</p>	<p>but short enough to avoid any need for an administrative process around annual audits or certification renewals. The five-year period for operating projects is also in line with the Standard's five-year review period.</p>
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