

WSAS PROCEDURE FOR CERTIFICATION IN CHINA

INTRODUCTION

Water Stewardship Assurance Services (WSAS) is the mission-driven assurance provider for the Alliance for Water Stewardship (AWS) System.

This document describes the application, audit and certification procedure for organisations seeking AWS certification for sites in Greater China, comprising Mainland China, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Macau, where WSAS collaborates with approved certification partners (CPs) to provide audit services and certification recommendations.

SCOPE

This procedure applies to organisations seeking AWS certification for sites in Greater China.

It applies to single sites and group operations, subject to the eligibility and classification requirements in the current AWS Certification Requirements.

HOW DOES A SITE APPLY FOR CERTIFICATION IN CHINA?

A site in Greater China seeking AWS certification must complete the following two steps to initiate the application process:

- I. Complete the application form available on the WSAS website.
- II. Contact a WSAS-approved CP listed on the WSAS website. The selected CP will serve as the site's primary contact throughout the audit and certification process.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

The CP will request information about the site's activities, processes, structure, size and intended certification level.

After receiving the required information, the CP will issue a certification agreement and fee quotation. The quotation will be calculated in accordance with the applicable Manday and Rate Card for AWS Certification in China, supporting a consistent and impartial approach for AWS certification clients. The CP will provide the Manday and Rate Card to the site upon request.

The certification agreement will be between the applicant organisation and the CP. WSAS is not involved in preparing or negotiating the certification agreement.

HOW DOES THE CP CALCULATE THE CERTIFICATION FEES?

The CP must conduct all certification audits in accordance with the [AWS Certification Requirements](#).

Fees are based on the effort, time and costs required to provide the audit and certification services in accordance with the AWS Certification Requirements. They include audit preparation, audit delivery and reporting, together with the time and costs associated with WSAS technical review and certification approval.

The applicable fees depend on the site's size, structure, audit type and certification level held or sought. Travel and accommodation are not included in the audit fee and are charged separately at cost.

The Manday and Rate Card for AWS Certification in China specifies the applicable fees.

HOW IS THE SITE STRUCTURE DETERMINED?

The AWS Certification Requirements define the eligible certification structures, including single sites and group operations, and the requirements applicable to each. The CP will classify the application using the current eligibility and classification criteria. If the appropriate structure is unclear or a deviation may be required, the CP will seek guidance and approval from WSAS before proceeding.

WHAT HAPPENS BEFORE THE AUDIT?

The CP will coordinate the audit dates with the site and appoint a qualified audit team.

The CP will prepare and publish a stakeholder announcement at least eight weeks before the audit start date. The announcement will identify the site to be audited and invite stakeholders to submit comments. It will be published on the AWS website.

The CP will also provide the site with the stakeholder announcement in the appropriate local language. The site must publish the announcement and share it with relevant stakeholders.

WHO CONDUCTS THE AUDIT?

All auditors assigned by the CP must hold the required AWS System training certificate at Specialist level and meet the qualification requirements for their assigned audit role as specified in the AWS Certification Requirements.

HOW LONG IS THE AUDIT?

Audit duration depends on the audit type, site structure and certification level held or sought. The applicable Manday and Rate Card for AWS Certification in China explains how audit time is calculated.

THE AUDIT PROCESS

The audit team will conduct the audit in accordance with the AWS Certification Requirements and the principles of ISO 19011:2018, Guidelines for Auditing Management Systems.

Audits are conducted on site and include an opening meeting, a site tour, document and record review, staff interviews and a closing meeting. During the audit, the team will assess the site's conformity with each applicable indicator of the AWS Standard.

As part of the audit, the team will also interview relevant stakeholders or stakeholder groups representing interests within the site's catchment.

At the closing meeting, the audit team will present an overview of the preliminary findings to the site. The findings remain preliminary until WSAS completes its technical review.

WHAT HAPPENS AFTER THE AUDIT?

Following the audit, the audit team will prepare an audit report and submit it to WSAS for technical review.

WSAS will conduct a technical review of the report, which may result in revisions to any preliminary findings presented at the closing meeting. Findings confirmed through the technical review are final.

After the technical review is completed, the CP will provide the site with the final audit report reflecting the approved findings. The report will be issued within six weeks of the audit end date.

WHAT HAPPENS IF THE AUDIT IDENTIFIES NON-CONFORMITIES?

If non-conformities are identified, the site must conduct a root-cause analysis and prepare a corrective-action plan addressing each non-conformity in the audit report. The corrective-action plan must be submitted within 10 working days of receiving the audit findings.

All non-conformities must be closed within 90 days of the closing meeting.

The CP will review the corrective-action plan and supporting evidence to verify that each non-conformity has been effectively closed.

Once all applicable closure requirements have been met, the CP will submit a recommendation for certification to WSAS.

WHEN WILL THE SITE BE CERTIFIED?

WSAS will approve or reject the CP's complete certification recommendation within five working days.

If WSAS approves the recommendation, the CP will issue the site's AWS certificate on behalf of WSAS. The certificate will be valid for three years, subject to successful surveillance and continued conformity with applicable AWS requirements.

WSAS will provide AWS with the certification details for publication on the AWS website.

WHEN MAY THE SITE COMMUNICATE PUBLICLY ABOUT THE AWS CERTIFICATION?

The site may communicate publicly about its AWS certification once it appears on the AWS 'List of AWS Certified Sites'. Any certification claims or use of AWS marks must comply with the applicable AWS communications and claims requirements.

SURVEILLANCE

The CP will normally schedule surveillance audits approximately 12 months after the initial audit.

The scope and timing of surveillance audits will follow the current AWS Certification Requirements.

COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS

Sites must submit comments, complaints or appeals concerning the audit or certification process through the CP's complaints and appeals procedure.

The CP will refer to WSAS any complaint or appeal that relates directly to a WSAS decision or process. WSAS will manage such matters in accordance with the [WSAS Complaints and Appeals Procedure](#).