



# Quality Assurance Guide



## Introduction

The main objective of the SKArating system is to provide environmental good practice benchmarks to the market, and quality assurance on environmental sustainability performance statements and declarations.

The presence of SKArating Assessors on projects and their performance is vital in ensuring the quality and accuracy of SKArating assessed projects. A certificate confirms compliance with all the rules and criteria of the SKArating scheme benchmarks. SKArating Assessors are trained, and then provided with the ability to subscribe on to the accreditation scheme which provides them with the licence to issue certificates on behalf of SKArating.

# Quality Assurance through a Systemic Approach

SKArating wishes to have a supporting and constructive approach towards auditing, and strengthen the market with more capable sustainability professionals. Our auditing is as much to reassure clients and the industry that performance is maintained as it is to assist Assessors with a health check of their service.

Our approach to ensuring good quality Assessors in the market and ensuring the quality representation of project certificates, takes a systemic view and includes the following strategy and actions:

- **Professional competency:** We recognise that professionals have varying levels of knowledge, experience and skills, and some require more time to gain the level of competency required for an assessor role. Our Professional Pathways provide clarity on the quality and competency level accepted for assessors, plus an avenue to gain skills via the Competent Professional pathway.
- **Early support in practice:** All newly qualified Assessors undergo a 'first year' audit at a project's Design Stage assessment. Depending on the results from this audit, a second audit of the same project at Handover Stage will also be requested. These audits are aimed at supporting professionals as they gain initial experience and correct application of knowledge in the first steps.
- **Stepped audit consequences:** We recognise that errors can happen in practical life and our audit consequences have a stepped approach to recognise this.
- **Education first:** As historically the majority of issues are related to lack of knowledge, the consequences drive for increased training before suspension or termination from the scheme is a result.
- **Ongoing support:** To support and re-align Assessor practices over time, there is a requirement to re-sit the assessor exam every 3-years since training was completed. When schemes are updated, Assessors are also required to undertake training on the updated scheme specifics.

# Assessor Audits & Process

To support the quality of service by SKArating Assessors and reassure the market of this ongoing performance, we undertake assessor audits. The audit requirement forms part of the SKArating Assessor accreditation which each professional wishing to act in this capacity and offer the assessor service, needs to subscribed to annually. The tables below show the levels of tolerance for passing an audit or failing one, and the consequences table details what occurs under each audit result.

**TABLE 1: SKARATING ASSESSOR AUDIT BENCHMARKS**

AUDIT THEME REF	LEVEL OF ERROR	AUDITED ACTION	AUDITED ITEM(S)	GRADES & RESULTS
1	MAJOR	Know how to use the <b>sector schemes correctly</b> . Know how to set up parallel assessments to cover the full scope of a project.	Look at online tool and sector scheme and scheme version they have registered project under.	<p><b>PASS:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Used the correct scheme for the sector;</li> <li>b. Used or recommended a parallel assessment for any areas required by the rules of contents scope and facility size.</li> </ul>
				<p><b>ERRORS:</b></p> <p>When each of the below instances occur it will be <b>one major error in each instance</b>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Not used the right scheme for the right sector; and</li> <li>b. Failed to use a parallel scheme for areas (such as a restaurant) when required by the rules of contents scope and facility size.</li> </ul>
2	MAJOR	Know how to audit what <b>measures must be in or out of scope</b> that align with the rules and scope accordingly.	Review all plans and detailed drawings, furniture and services schedules, and Scope of Works and check the relevant measures are all in scope. Check against 10 measures, and a minimum should be the furniture, HVAC and finishes measures. Priority must be given to the Gateway measures in scope.	<p><b>PASS:</b></p> <p>Have checked the project documentation and determined that the following has been achieved:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. the correct scoping of all measures within the scheme; and</li> <li>b. correctly scoped in any additional measures.</li> </ul>
				<p><b>ERRORS:</b></p> <p>When point a. or both a. and b. from the instances below occur, it will be <b>one Major error</b>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. failed to correctly scope in <b>one</b> or more gateway measures or <b>two</b> or more general (threshold) measures that must be in scope; and</li> <li>b. have scoped in additional measures that should not be in scope unless agreed with the project team and recorded as such.</li> </ul>
3	GENERAL	Know how to audit the individual products in <b>scope</b> under each measure, where <b>multiple products</b> are present.	Read finishes drawings and schedules, furniture plans and schedules, light fitting plans and lighting schedules, and HVAC schedules and check that the list of products under each measure is inclusive of all in scope. Priority to be given to gateway measures and check a minimum of 10 measures across 3 or more impact categories.	<p><b>PASS:</b></p> <p>All scoping in of products and materials is correct.</p>
				<p><b>ERRORS:</b></p> <p><b>Each individual error is one General error.</b> An error is an incorrect scoping of one individual product.</p> <p><b>5 or more General errors</b> across all measures will count as one major error.</p>
4	GENERAL	Recognise <b>compliant and non-compliant types of evidence</b> for all GPMs, and confidently communicate with the relevant parties to request additional evidence, or state non-compliance.	Check randomly all the evidence against 10 measures, with a priority to gateways, and across 3 or more impact categories.	<p><b>PASS:</b></p> <p>All assessment decisions are correct.</p>
				<p><b>ERRORS:</b></p> <p><b>Each individual error is one General error.</b> An error is an incorrect assessment decision of one individual instance or product where multiples are present.</p> <p><b>5 or more General errors</b> across all measures will count as one major error.</p>

5	<b>GENERAL</b>	<p>Know how to correctly audit the <b>scope and assessment of linked measures</b>.</p>	<p>D20 Timber with M05 Hardwoods D20 Timber with all timber containing measures M05 with all hardwood containing measures Overarching Materials measures with the individual measures linked under each. Insulation related measures and pipework when present. Heat pumps and all refrigerant related measures. Water based works (taps, cisterns, boilers, showers) and scoping in leak detection and isolation measures. Any electrical related measures and scope in relevant metering and monitoring. Any water related measures and scope in relevant metering and monitoring. Any HVAC related measures and the correct assessment of D03. For each Material measure in scope the equivalent waste/Resource Management measures where they exist are in scope. Cycling and transport related measures are correctly scoped.</p>	<p><b>PASS:</b> Have checked the linked measures within each scheme and they are: <b>a.</b> correctly scoped in when linked, <b>b.</b> correctly assessed as compliant/not compliant when linked and, <b>c.</b> when overarching measures in a category or linked measures are correctly assessed reflecting the rules.</p> <p><b>ERRORS:</b> <b>Each individual error listed below is one General error in each instance.</b> An error is an instance where linked measures have been found to be non-compliant due to one or more of the following instances: <b>a.</b> failed to check the linked measures within each scheme for both scoping accurately a project and accepting as achieved linked measures when products/materials are connected, <b>b.</b> failed to correctly assess overarching measures in a category or linked measures when not achieved <b>c.</b> or missed when achieved. <b>5 or more General errors</b> across all instances will count as one major error.</p>
6	<b>GENERAL</b>	<p>Know <b>additional types of evidence</b> that can be accepted for each assessment stage.</p>	<p>Recording the reasoning of why they accepted alternative criteria and how the criteria was of equal or higher performance as existing criteria.</p>	<p><b>PASS:</b> Clearly explained reasoning behind all alternative criteria and evidence used. All of it is relating correctly to the scheme, the specific measure's objectives and criteria's performance level.</p> <p><b>ERRORS:</b> <b>Each individual error listed below is one General error in each instance.</b> An error is an instance where a decision is made where one of the following is found to be the case: <b>a.</b> have no evidence on the reasoning behind accepting alternative evidence, or <b>b.</b> where reasoning is provided show lack of clarity and correct understanding on the alignment between the existing measure objectives and of that accepted, and <b>c.</b> where reasoning is provided show lack of clarity and correct understanding on the alignment between the existing criteria performance and of that accepted. <b>5 or more General errors</b> across all instances will count as one major error.</p>
7	<b>GENERAL</b>	<p>Know how to make an <b>assessor-based assessment decision</b> on a project.</p>	<p>Recording the reasoning of why an assessor decision was made and how this was aligned with the SKA philosophy, aligns with the objectives of the measure, and aligns with current measure performance.</p>	<p><b>PASS:</b> All decisions are made to promote a true environmentally sustainable outcome for the project's specific situation, which aligns with the SKArating scheme, measure's objectives and criteria performance levels.</p> <p><b>ERRORS:</b> <b>Each individual error is one General error in each instance.</b> An error is an instance when a decision is made to circumnavigate the scoping rules of the scheme and the criteria within it. <b>5 or more General errors</b> across all instances will count as one major error.</p>
8	<b>GENERAL WARNING</b>	<p>Know when a <b>Pilot assessment</b> can and should be undertaken, what it involves, the outcomes and what is required from the process.</p>	<p>Provide the Pilot assessment report.</p>	<p><b>PASS:</b> Provided a report that contains all required sections.</p> <p><b>ERRORS:</b> Did not provide a report and did not consult the SKA technical committee.</p>

**TABLE 2: SKArating ASSESSOR AUDIT CONSEQUENCES**

CONSEQUENCE LEVEL	1	2	3	4	5	6
<b>Audit Result</b>	NO ERRORS OR UNDER LEVEL	1-4 GENERAL ERRORS	1 MAJOR ERROR	2 MAJOR ERRORS	3 MAJOR ERRORS	NON-COMPLIANCE WITH ACCREDITATION T&CS
<b>AUDIT OUTCOME</b>	PASS	PASS WITH RECOMMENDATIONS	FAIL & SCHEME RE-TRAINING	FAIL & SCHEME ACCREDITATION SUSPENSION	FAIL & 2 YEAR ACCREDITATION SUSPENSION	FAIL & LIFE BAN
<b>AUDIT CONSEQUENCE</b>	Given a Gold star!	Assessor is given recommendations for themes to study in detail to help prevent repeat of errors.	Assessor has the ability to request a second project's audit at assessor's own cost. If 2nd audit receives a pass then assessor continues practicing as normal.	Assessor has the ability to request a second project's audit at assessor's own cost. If 2nd audit receives a pass then assessor continues practicing as normal.	Assessor is given a 2 year strike off from all accreditation schemes. If they wish to return to this role they need to undertake re-training from Foundation level onwards and in each scheme they wish to be accredited in.	If an accreditation term and condition is breached then their accreditation is removed for ever.
<b>2ND AUDIT REQUEST AT ASSESSOR'S COST</b>	N/A	N/A	YES	YES	NO	NO

**Failure of first audit and no 2nd audit, or failure also of 2nd audit will require the below:**

<b>RE-TRAINING AT ASSESSOR'S OWN COST</b>	N/A	N/A	Re-training required in the Assessor training course of the scheme audited and failed in.	Starting from the beginning with re-training from the Foundation level and again in each scheme the candidate desires accreditation in.	Starting from the beginning with re-training from the Foundation level and again in each scheme the candidate desires accreditation in.	N/A
<b>ACCREDITATION IMPACTS</b>	N/A Supports move towards Authoritative competency level and inclusion into the Auditor pool.	N/A	Existing annual accreditation of audited scheme is not affected.	Accreditation suspended of audited scheme. Suspension lifted after retraining is successfully completed if within accreditation year. If accreditation lapses due to year end before they complete re-training, renewal of accreditation is processed as normal after training is successfully complete.	Accreditation is removed of all schemes. Renewal process is allowed only upon successful completion of training in each scheme.	Not allowed to re-join accreditation schemes again.
<b>NEXT AUDITING</b>	Normal auditing level.	Normal auditing level. If 3 audits in a row have same performance then it moves to consequence level 3.	Normal auditing level. If 3 audits in a row have same performance then it moves to consequence level 4.	Audit of both the Design and Handover stages of their next project assessment. If 3 audits in a row have same performance then it moves to consequence level 5.	Audit of both the Design and Handover stages of their next project assessment. If 3 audits in a row have same performance then it moves to consequence level 6.	N/A
<b>SCHEME BAN AND DURATION</b>	N/A	N/A	N/A	If audits fail again then a 1 year strike off from all accreditation schemes will be applied, and upon return there will be a requirement to undertake re-training from Foundation level onwards and in each scheme wishing to be accredited in.	If next audit also fails the person is not allowed back onto any of the accreditation schemes again.	Not allowed to re-join accreditation schemes again.

To make the Assessor audits most effective and accurate, we are sourcing auditors from the existing Assessor pool. Assessors with an Authoritative level of Competence will be invited to undertake audits on behalf of SKArating.

Should a project's audit fail and the certificate level be found invalid, the certificate is not removed from the client. The consequences of a failed audit will remain the responsibility of the Assessor.

## ONGOING REVIEWS AND IMPROVEMENTS

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Audit outcomes are monitored by SKArating not simply for Assessor performance; we always aim to improve the schemes, quality of content, and delivery of assessments. Results are used to inform scheme updates, improve Assessor training contents or update terms and conditions of the scheme itself.

For example; past errors on rules found during audits frequently have been corrected by the functionality of the online tool; clarification on the levels of competency for Assessors now prevent those not yet capable being put in such a position before they are ready and this has been supported through the SKArating Pathways.

A public list of certified projects is frequently discussed and this remains on the agenda for future review and action if it is deemed necessary for quality issues or if the market and industry request it.

## CONTACT US

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If you have any queries on aspects of our quality assurance process or wish to report concerns about your experience with an Assessor's quality against the scheme's rules, please email us at [accreditation@skarating.org](mailto:accreditation@skarating.org).



The SKArating logo is displayed in a bold, green, sans-serif font. The 'S' and 'K' are significantly larger than the 'A', 'r', 'a', 't', 'i', 'n', 'g'. A registered trademark symbol (®) is positioned at the top right of the 'g'. The background of the entire page is a dark green cityscape with glowing green lines and patterns, suggesting a digital or data-driven environment.

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