

Mission East

Recertification Audit – Summary Report 2021/11/03

1. General information

1.1 Organisation

Type	Mandates	Verified	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> International <input type="checkbox"/> National <input type="checkbox"/> Membership/Network <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Direct Assistance <input type="checkbox"/> Federated <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> With partners	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Humanitarian <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Development <input type="checkbox"/> Advocacy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Humanitarian <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Development <input type="checkbox"/> Advocacy	
Head office location	Copenhagen, Brussels & Berlin		
Total number of country programmes	8	Total number of staff	240

1.2 Audit team

Lead auditor	Daniel Rogers
Second auditor	Karin Wierenga
Third auditor	-
Observer	-
Expert	-
Witness / other	Elissa Goucem

1.3 Scope of the audit

CHS Verification Scheme	Certification
Audit cycle	Second cycle
Phase of the audit	Recertification
Extraordinary or other type of audit	--

1.4 Sampling*

Randomly sampled country programme sites	Included in final sample	Replaced by	Rationale for sampling and selection of sites	Onsite or remote
Afghanistan	No	Iraq	Afghanistan as Mission East's largest programme was selected as the first country for the remote visit. However, as the country security situation deteriorated early July with the US & NATO troops leaving the country, it was decided to replace Afghanistan with Iraq. Mission East Iraq is the second largest programme and is using a self-implementing modality.	Remote
Armenia	Yes		Covers Mission East work through partners.	Remote
North Korea	No	Syria/Lebanon	North Korea programme is on hold due to country closure as response to Covid.	Remote

			Mission East in Syria/Lebanon is working through partners only and geographical location Middle East gives variety to the country sample selection.	
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Any other sampling performed for this audit:

Sampling risk: Remote techniques have been applied as project visits were not possible, due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Nonetheless, the audit team was able to conduct consultations with community groups remotely through translators who were in the same location as the community members. The auditors were not able to directly observe activities or have face-to-face meetings but regardless, the team has confidence in the sample and the findings they generated.

**It is important to note that the audit findings are based on a sample of an organisation's country programmes, its documentation and observation. Findings are analysed to determine an organisation's systematic approach and application of all aspects of the CHS across different contexts and ways of working.*

2. Activities undertaken by the audit team

2.1 Locations Assessed

Locations	Dates	remote
Head Office Copenhagen, Brussels, Berlin	25 th – 28 th May 2021	remote
Country Office Iraq	2 nd – 10 th August 2021	remote
Syria/Lebanon partner	12 th August 2021	remote
Armenia partner	17 th August 2021	remote

2.2 Interviews

Position / level of interviewees	Number of interviewees		remote
	Female	Male	
Head Office			
Management	5	2	Remote
Staff	2	3	Remote
Country Programme Office(s)			
Management	2	2	Remote
Staff	3	4	Remote
Partner staff (programme manager, technical advisor, director)	4	2	Remote
Others	-	2	remote
Total number of interviewees	16	15	

2.3 Consultations with communities

Type of group and location	Number of participants	

	Female	Male	Onsite or remote
Group discussion – training participants, livelihoods project, Sinjar, Iraq	5	10	Remote
Group discussion - community leaders, WASH project, Tel Afar, Iraq	2	6	Remote
Group discussion - training participants, livelihoods projects, Sinjar, Iraq	6	5	Remote
Total number of participants	13	21	

2.4 Opening meeting

Date	2021/05/25
Location	Copenhagen/Brussels
Number of participants	10
Any substantive issues arising	no

2.5 Closing meeting

Date	2021/09/10
Location	Copenhagen/Brussels
Number of participants	7
Any substantive issues arising	no

2.6 Programme site(s)

Briefing

Date	2021/08/02
Location	Erbil, Iraq
Number of participants	10
Any substantive issues arising	no

De-briefing

Date	2021/08/10
Location	Erbil, Iraq
Number of participants	10
Any substantive issues arising	no

3. Background information on the organisation

3.1 General information

Mission East is an international relief and development organisation, which works to help vulnerable populations, supporting communities' capacities to organize and assist themselves, through activities ranging from disaster relief to development assistance. It was established in 1991 and its original focus was on former Soviet republics in Eastern Europe. Mission East has Head Offices in Copenhagen, Brussels, and Berlin. As at end of 2020, Mission East had 210 staff worldwide and 30 staff at Head Offices.

The vision of Mission East is to empower people and communities in crisis affected countries to lift themselves out of poverty and marginalization. Mission East works in response to community needs in Disaster Response and Rural Community Development. As well as direct implementation, Mission East works with and through local and international partners. Mission East's 'Values in Action' are honesty, integrity, compassion, valuing the individual and respect for all people. In its

work, Mission East follows three key operational approaches: Inclusion; Resilience and Accountability & Partnership. Mission East key sectors are Emergency Relief, Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH), Food Security, Livelihoods, Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) and Disability and Inclusion.

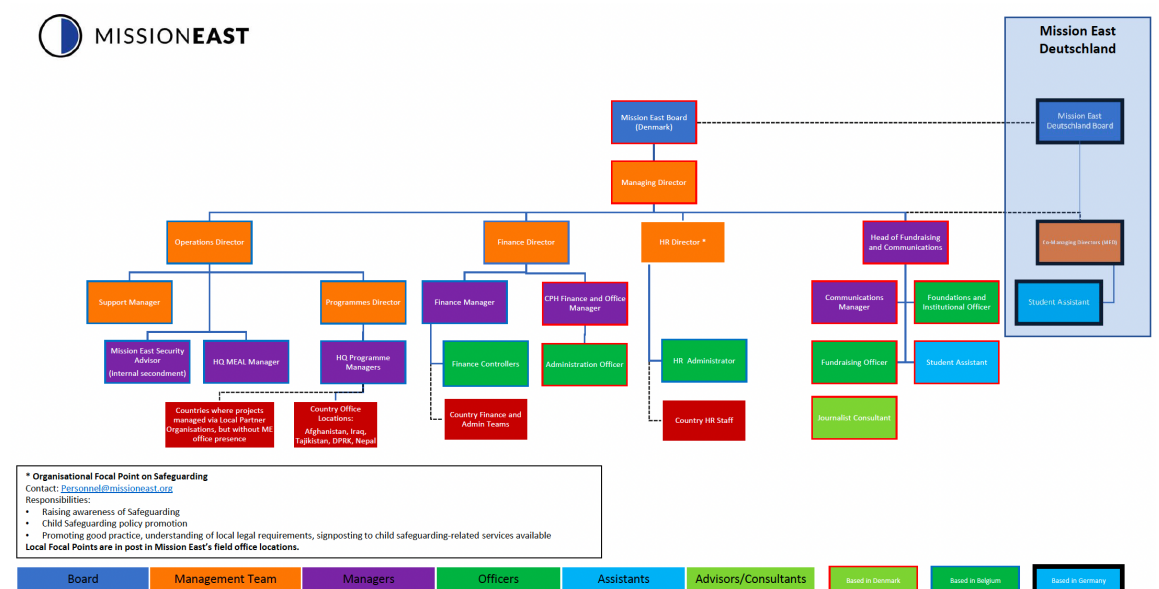
3.2 Governance and management structure

Mission East is governed by a Board headed by a chairman with five members who were newly elected at the Mission East Annual General Meeting in 2020 for a two-year period. The new Managing Director was appointed by the Board in January 2021 and reports to the Board. A new Programme Director was also recently appointed.

The organisational structure has not significantly changed since the last audit. The Management Team consists of: Managing Director, Programme Director, Operations Director, HR Director, Finance Director, Support Manager and Managing Director Mission East Germany. Mission East's Head office has staff in 2 locations: Copenhagen and Brussels. There is a separate Mission East sister organisation in Berlin that focuses on fundraising in Germany.

Mission East's Operations Team in Brussels oversees the programme work of field offices and partners. Portfolios are divided geographically between country-focused Head Quarters Programme Managers, with cross-cutting programme support provided by other team members. Mission East's Team in Copenhagen consists of Administration, Finance, Communications and Fundraising staff.

Mission East has established field offices which operate humanitarian programming and which, in some contexts, support development programming through providing capacity building, monitoring and technical assistance to partners and/or running development programmes directly with communities. Mission East field teams contain both international and national staff and are in most cases managed via a Country Director. In 2021, Mission East has field offices in Afghanistan, Iraq, Nepal and Tajikistan, with programmes in other country locations (Armenia, Myanmar, Syria/Lebanon) implemented by partners under remote management from Mission East HQ. Operations in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea) have been put on hold due to country closure in response to Covid-19.



Mission East is in a process of new strategy development that includes inputs from all levels of the organisation as well as from the communities, sought via online meetings with the Managing Director.

3.3 Internal quality assurance mechanisms and risk management

Mission East has well established internal quality assurance systems. Internal governance, internal procedures, and internal quality assurance mechanisms have not changed significantly in the past period – except for the impossibility to conduct in-country visits due to the Covid travel restrictions. The HQ Programme Managers have an important role in quality assurance through the country planning and reporting cycle and project approval system. The functions of the previous Quality and Learning Department have been delegated to the HQ MEAL Manager who provides support to the country programmes to strengthen MEAL awareness and practice based on the ME MEAL policy. Mission East continues to conduct annual reporting against its Quality Commitments Framework, semi-annual reporting on complaints mechanisms, monthly or bimonthly review of project workbooks, refresher trainings, workshops, and coaching to field staff to ensure that staff are aware of and can apply quality standards.

Risks are monitored and reported both in workbooks and in separate country risk analysis. ME maintains an organizational Risk Register which identifies the top risks faced by the organization and mitigating actions, the risk register is regularly reviewed at senior management meetings and at every board meeting.

3.4 Work with partner organisations

There have been no major changes in how ME works with its partners since the Mid Term Audit (MTA). Mission East works with partner organisations under specific agreements and strives to ensure long-term relationships with them, which enables capacity building and transparent partnership in pursuit of shared goals.

Mission East works with and through 30 partner organisations and these represent a wide range of civil society organisations in the countries in which it has programming. Mission East sometimes chooses to directly implement some of its humanitarian responses and this decision is usually based on whether it can find local partners that can respond quickly and to the standards required. Similarly, Mission East directly implements some non-humanitarian programming where, according to its assessment, there are no local partners with the required capacity to implement the project to the levels required. Partnership arrangements are governed by Partner Grant Agreements, Terms and Conditions, and Strategic Partnership Commitments. Mission East has standard templates for these documents to ensure consistency.

Mission East strives to build the capacity of the local organisations with which it works. Partner capacity building is based on gaps identified through detailed partner assessments and ongoing monitoring. Mission East has developed specific induction material to introduce partners to the Mission East Code of Conduct and Accountability, Safeguarding and PSEAH policy. Whilst ME generally achieve capacity building through ongoing work, a number of observations are made in relation to its approach to building capacities, as detailed in Commitment 3.

4. Overall performance of the organisation

4.1 Effectiveness of the governance, internal quality assurance and risk management of the organisation

Mission East has gone through complex governance issues in 2020/21, when the founder and former Secretary General stepped down from his position. Mission East is now led by a new, Secretary-General since 1st January 2021 and the organisation is focusing on developing a new strategy for the coming years. In the past 12 months Mission East has adopted new accounting policies and new articles of association.

Mission East is a relatively small organisation and as such it has no specific internal audit function, nor an audit and risk committee at board level. However, the board reviews organisational risks at their regular meetings. ME has short communication lines which contributes to quick decision making. There is a move towards more decentralisation, to give the Country Directors more responsibility for country programme implementation, supported by HQ Programme Managers. Quality assurance at CO level is done by monitoring and reporting, data management and analysis, quarterly review, and annual programme planning and reporting. Head office provides quality control and monitoring, support and capacity

development. Mission East has an online platform available, the Knowledge Centre, that provides all ME essential knowledge for staff. ME staff are aware of relevant quality assurance policies and procedures.

4.2 How the organisation applies the CHS across its work

Mission East continues to show high commitment to and overall high compliance with the CHS. The organisation takes the CHS certification seriously and has systems in place through which it ensures any Observations or Corrective Actions are addressed. This is reflected at HO and at field level. Country-specific CHS improvement plans are used for embedding good practice and for addressing Corrective Actions and Observations arising from CHS audits. The plans are reviewed regularly and jointly by the country teams and HQ. The HQ MEAL Manager is responsible for managing the CHS certification processes, including through direct support to the country teams in developing their CHS Improvement Plans. CHS is also a component of the organisation's Quality Commitment Framework Annual assessment.

At the end of the first cycle of CHS certification, Mission East had 1 minor CAR (2.3), related to the structural referral of unmet needs. This has now been closed as the effective implementation of a functioning referral system has been observed at country and field level.

4.3 PSEA

ME ensures that programmes take into consideration needs and risks, identify potential negative effects and work with partners to implement strategies and guidance to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse. Safeguarding focal points are in place at CO level to monitor PSEA awareness and ensure training. ME shows an organisational culture where complaints are taken seriously and are acted upon according to defined policies and procedures. The partners interviewed in this audit have a Code of Conduct and complaints handling system in place, but Mission East does not always monitor the functionality and effectiveness of the systems. Specific information regarding expected staff behaviour is not always shared with communities by Mission East and partners.

4.4 Localisation

ME is committed to the Grand Bargain commitments, and has a clear focus on supporting local organisations, and of coordinating and complementing the work of others in order to ensure interventions are well targeted, efficient, and avoid duplicating the work of others. Mission East does not consistently build the capacity of local partners in terms of their financial and technical capacity, as detailed in Commitment 3.

Mission East does not consistently develop exit/transition strategies for the countries in which it is working, as detailed in Commitment 3.

The organisation has an Environment Policy, but this has not yet been fully mainstreamed across ME's country programmes.

4.5 Gender and diversity

ME is committed to diversity and gender equality, and scores highly in this area. This is very much in line with ME's rights based approach which guides its programming and ensures that the most vulnerable people are targeted, including in many cases a specific focus on vulnerable women and girls.

ME has seven directors and senior managers of whom four are female including the Managing Director, as well as the Managing Director for Mission East Germany.

4.6 Organisational performance against each CHS Commitment

Commitment	Strong points and areas for improvement	Feedback from communities	Average score*
Commitment 1: Humanitarian assistance is appropriate and relevant	ME continues to perform well against the organisational responsibilities and key actions of this indicator. ME has a strong commitment to impartial assistance and inclusion of vulnerable groups. Context and need assessment processes are systematically	Interviews with sampled communities in Iraq confirm that ME consults them to identify capacities, vulnerabilities, and priorities. Furthermore, that ME	3.0

	<p>implemented and risks are considered throughout the project cycle. Projects and programmes are periodically reviewed by ME together with partners and adapted to changing needs and circumstances. Targeting criteria and selection of project participants are set jointly with community representatives and local government.</p>	<p>focuses on the most vulnerable people in their communities and that ME seeks their input to ensure that the support is relevant.</p>	
<p>Commitment 2: Humanitarian response is effective and timely</p>	<p>ME continues to perform well against the organisational responsibilities and key actions of this indicator. ME structurally undertakes stakeholder, market, and vulnerability assessments that facilitate the identification of constraints and capacity gaps of communities. Activities, outputs, and outcomes are systematically monitored, and include disaggregated data. Technical standards are used. Flexible funds are available to provide rapid response in emergencies.</p>	<p>Sampled communities state that ME assistance is timely and ME staff has the right skills to do the work. Input and feedback of project participants is actively sought in many ways.</p>	3.0
<p>Commitment 3: Humanitarian response strengthens local capacities and avoids negative effects</p>	<p>ME continues to perform well against the organisational commitments and the majority of key actions of this indicator. ME has a strong policy framework guiding its programming to avoid negative effects. ME takes a proactive approach to tracking its performance against its own policy commitments and quality and accountability commitments including those of the CHS.</p> <p>ME programmes are built on local capacities and work to build the resilience of communities and people affected by crisis. ME systematically conducts vulnerability assessments. ME systematically assesses the capacity of partner organisations. However, ME does not always support the systematic capacity development of partner organisations, and partner's capacity development and training plans are not always jointly developed and systematically followed-up. Mission East works in some extremely difficult contexts, and makes efforts to build local capacity. Transition plans and exit strategies are generally in place.</p>	<p>Sampled communities state that ME programmes are designed in response to their stated needs and generally build on and strengthen existing capacities.</p>	2.9
<p>Commitment 4: Humanitarian response is based on communication, participation and feedback</p>	<p>ME continues to be committed to ensure that communities are consulted and engaged in the identification of their priorities and risks at all stages of its work. There is inclusive representation of communities, and feedback on people's satisfaction is received in many ways, such as surveys, focus groups and through complaints systems. ME provides information to communities on a regular basis and in contextualised ways in languages that people understand. Information on for instance the complaints mechanism is usually translated into local languages to facilitate dissemination across communities (for example through posters and complaints cards). ME shares general aspects on PSEAH with communities, however, information regarding ME Code of Conduct and staff behaviour is not structurally shared and this is also not part of partner monitoring.</p>	<p>Sampled communities know about ME mission to help vulnerable people, the project aims and scope and how to contact ME in case of an issue.</p> <p>Communities also confirm that ME works in a participatory way and engages people throughout the project. Communities have not been informed on how ME expects its staff to behave.</p>	2.7

<p>Commitment 5: Complaints are welcomed and addressed</p>	<p>ME has a strong commitment towards accountability reflected in its complaints procedures and mechanisms accessible across the organisation. The complaints system covers programming, SEAH, and other abuses of power. In at least one Country Office, ME has developed country specific SOPs which clearly show the internal pathways for different kind of complaints. There are country complaints focal points in place to raise awareness on the complaints system and ensure training of staff.</p> <p>Planning and reporting on complaints system is done, and ME publishes a Complaints Handling Report on its website on the number of complaints handled and closed at country and HQ levels.</p> <p>ME requires its partners to have a complaints system, however it does not systematically monitor how its partners manage complaints.</p>	<p>Sampled communities know that they can contact ME with any kind of complaint without visible fear for repercussions. Communities interviewed had not been involved in consultations on the complaints system themselves, but were happy with the options offered.</p>	2.6
<p>Commitment 6: Humanitarian response is coordinated and complementary</p>	<p>ME continues to perform well against the organisation commitments and key actions of this indicator. ME has a strong commitment to ensuring that assistance is coordinated and complementary. ME share information through both formal and informal coordination mechanisms. ME engages in joint needs assessments, and is an active member of the cluster system at various levels.</p> <p>ME has strong relationships with local actors, at national, regional and local level as well as working in partnership with international, national and local NGOs and CBOs. These relationships enable ME to take the work of others into account when designing, planning and implementing their programmes.</p>	<p>Sampled communities reported that ME's work is coordinated with that of other organisations. Communities did not report any duplication of work with other organisations.</p>	3.0
<p>Commitment 7: Humanitarian actors continuously learn and improve</p>	<p>ME continues to have policies and procedures in place to ensure it is able to continually learn and improve. ME has a well-functioning and accessible Knowledge Centre which is used by staff to share and learn. ME's MEAL policies and processes encourage systematic processes for reflection and learning are built into programme design and implementation. ME staff at all levels have a genuine desire to learn from and improve their work.</p> <p>ME does not engage in many external evaluations or reviews of its work.</p>	<p>Sampled communities reported seeing specific improvements made to projects based on feedback, they also reported good engagement with ME staff and involvement in end of project learning workshops.</p>	2.8
<p>Commitment 8: Staff are supported to do their job effectively, and are treated fairly and equitably</p>	<p>ME continues to have policies and procedures in place to ensure its human resources support the delivery of its programming.</p> <p>ME staff is aware of ME policies and procedures, accessible through the Knowledge Centre and introduced at induction or through training. Staff policies are considered fair, transparent, and non-discriminatory and</p>	<p>Communities interviewed were generally appreciative of the expertise, behaviour and competence of ME staff that worked in their communities.</p>	2.8

	<p>compliant with local law. ME HR is currently reviewing the staff performance management systems in close consultation with staff.</p> <p>Code of Conduct and safeguarding policies are in place and well understood by staff and partners. Staff know how to report a complaint. New templates have been developed to include safeguarding commitments in job descriptions and advertisements. ME has a comprehensive security management framework.</p>		
<p>Commitment 9: Resources are managed and used responsibly for their intended purpose</p>	<p>ME continues to have policies and procedures in place to ensure a responsible use of resources. ME has a clear policy on accepting and allocating resources, and strong anti-fraud and corruption policies which are known and followed by staff. ME has robust finance systems and processes for monitoring the use of funds.</p> <p>ME has a recently updated Environmental Policy which aims to mainstream environmental considerations in ME operations and projects, minimize ME's environmental footprint and support community resilience and protect natural resources. While some aspects of the policy are being rolled out, the process of mainstreaming the policy is still underway.</p>	<p>Sampled communities did not report any waste or inefficiencies in ME's work.</p>	2.5

* *Note: Average scores are a sum of the scores per commitment divided by the number of indicators in each Commitment, except when one of the indicators of a commitment scores 0 or if several scores 1 on the indicators of a Commitment lead to the issuance of a major non-conformity/ weakness at the level of the Commitment. In these two cases the overall score for the Commitment is 0*


5. Summary of non-conformities

Corrective Action Requests (CAR)*	Type	Resolution due date	Date closed out
2021- 4.1: ME does not systematically ensure that information about how the organisation expects its staff to behave is communicated to communities and people affected by crisis.	Minor	2022/10/25	
Total Number	1		

6. Sampling recommendation for next audit

Sampling rate	Based on the standard sampling rate it is recommended that 3 country programmes are included in the Maintenance Audit (MA).
Specific recommendation for selection of sites	As per HQAI procedures


7. Lead auditor recommendation

<p>In our opinion, Mission East has demonstrated that it continues to conform with the requirements of the Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability.</p> <p>Based on the evidence obtained, we confirm that we have received reasonable assurance that the organisation has implemented the necessary actions to close the minor CARs identified in the previous audit and continues to meet the requirements of the Core Humanitarian Standard.</p> <p>We recommend maintenance of certification.</p>	
<p>Name and signature of lead auditor:</p>  <p>Daniel Rogers</p>	<p>Date and place:</p> <p>25th October 2021 Brighton, UK</p>

8. HQAI decision

Certificate:	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Certification maintained <input type="checkbox"/> Certificate suspended	<input type="checkbox"/> Certificate reinstated <input type="checkbox"/> Certificate withdrawn
Next audit: Surveillance audit before October 25 th 2022	
<p>Name and signature of HQAI Executive Director:</p>  <p>Pierre Hauselmann</p>	<p>Date and place:</p> <p>November 3rd, 2021</p>

9. Acknowledgement of the report by the organisation

Space reserved for the organisation	
<p>Any reservations regarding the audit findings and/or any remarks regarding the behaviour of the HQAI audit team:</p> <p><i>If yes, please give details:</i></p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
<p>Acknowledgement and Acceptance of Findings:</p> <p>I acknowledge and understand the findings of the audit</p> <p>I accept the findings of the audit</p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
<p>Name and signature of the organisation's representative:</p> <p>Peter Drummond Smith Operations Director</p> 	<p>Date and place:</p> <p>25 November 2021 Brussels, Belgium</p>

Appeal

In case of disagreement with the decision on certification, the organisation can appeal to HQAI within 14 days after being informed of the decision. HQAI will investigate the content of the appeal and propose a solution within 10 days after receiving the appeal.

If the solution is deemed not to be satisfactory, the organisation can inform HQAI in writing within 30 days after being informed of the proposed solution, of their intention to maintain the appeal.

HQAI will transmit the case to the Chair of the Advisory and Complaint Board who will constitute a panel made of at least two experts who have no conflict of interest in the case in question. These will strive to come to a decision within 30 days.

The details of the Appeals Procedure can be found in document PRO049 – Appeal Procedure.

Annex 1: Explanation of the scoring scale*

Scores	Meaning: for all verification scheme options	Technical meaning for all independent verification and certification audits
0	Your organisation does not work towards applying the CHS commitment.	<p>Score 0: indicates a weakness that is so significant that the organisation is unable to meet the commitment. This leads to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Independent verification: major weakness; • Certification: major non-conformity, leading to a major corrective action request (CAR) – No certificate can be issue or immediate suspension of certificate.
1	Your organisation is making efforts towards applying this requirement, but these are not systematic.	<p>Score 1: indicates a weakness that does not immediately compromise the integrity of the commitment but requires to be corrected to ensure the organisation can continuously deliver against it. This leads to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Independent verification: minor weakness • Certification: minor non-conformity, leading to a minor corrective action request (CAR).
2	Your organisation is making systematic efforts towards applying this requirement, but certain key points are still not addressed.	<p>Score 2: indicates an issue that deserves attention but does not currently compromise the conformity with the requirement. This leads to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Independent verification and certification: observation.
3	Your organisation conforms to this requirement, and organisational systems ensure that it is met throughout the organisation and over time – the requirement is fulfilled.	<p>Score 3: indicates full conformity with the requirement. This leads to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Independent verification and certification: conformity.
4	Your organisation's work goes beyond the intent of this requirement and demonstrates innovation. It is applied in an exemplary way across the organisation and organisational systems ensure high quality is maintained across the organisation and over time.	<p>Score 4: indicates an exemplary performance in the application of the requirement.</p>

* Scoring Scale from the CHSA Verification Scheme 2020