



BRIEFING NOTE: INFORMATION FOR PROSPECTIVE HCV ASSESSORS



About the Assessor Licensing Scheme (ALS)

The High Conservation Value (HCV) approach is widely used for identifying and maintaining the most important environmental and social values in production scenarios (e.g. forestry and agriculture). As a result, more and more practitioners are undertaking HCV assessments in a wide variety of countries and contexts. However, until now there has been very little assurance of the competence of HCV assessors, which has resulted in considerable variability in the quality of the HCV assessments undertaken and the resulting management guidelines adopted. To address this issue, the Steering Group¹ of the HCV Resource Network (HCVRN) decided to develop the Assessor Licensing Scheme (ALS). The HCVRN Secretariat has implemented this decision working closely with users of the HCV approach.

The ALS promotes assessor competence and more consistent implementation of the HCV approach through

- a. the provision of guidance and standard templates for HCV assessors,
- b. licensing and monitoring HCV assessors based on the quality of HCV assessment reports.



¹ To read about the Steering Group and its members, please visit: <http://www.hcvnetwork.org/resource-network/history>

Benefits to HCV assessors

1. Improve their understanding of the HCV approach
2. Demonstrate their competence to carry out HCV assessments and peer review HCV assessment reports
3. Be qualified to conduct HCV assessments when HCVRN licensed assessors are required
4. Be showcased in the HCV assessor database and become part of a highly-qualified group of HCV global experts
5. Have access to a forum of HCV practitioners and experts

Who can apply?

The ALS is aimed at professionals who wish to lead third party HCV assessments. The ALS is open to applicants worldwide and is recognized by several sustainability certification schemes.

This scheme will replace the current HCV assessor registration system of the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO). The RSPO will require licensed assessors in new plantings contexts.

When will the ALS be open for applications?

The ALS will be open for applications in **October 2014**. Applications will need to be done in the ALS web portal, which will be accessible via the HCVRN website.

Application Requirements

Applicants will be required to provide basic information, as well as evidence of:

- Participation in at least **3 HCV assessments** as a team leader or a team member.
- Participation in at least one **HCV training course**. In the future, undertaking an **'HCV Assessor Training Course'**² recognized by the HCV Resource Network will be mandatory, but in 2014-2015 evidence of undertaking other general HCV training courses will be accepted.
- **Academic and professional qualifications**, which will serve as proxy to assess subject matter knowledge and technical expertise, ability to conduct research, ability to synthesize data/information, and writing skills.

If applicants have other HCV experience, such as participating in national interpretation processes, HCV working groups, and HCV policy work, this will be taken into account when assessing HCV-relevant knowledge but is not required.



² The HCV Resource Network has developed a syllabus to guide the creation of HCV Assessor Training Courses by training providers. The syllabus will be available on the ALS web portal, as well as a list of organizations providing HCV Assessor Training using the ALS syllabus.

The Licensing Process

PHASE 1

Application to obtain a provisional licence

Applications need to be made online at the ALS web portal, on www.hcvnetwork.org from **October 2014**. Applicants will be required to open a personal account at the ALS web portal and provide the required information and supporting documentation.

Once an application is completed and a non-refundable application fee is paid (see information on fees below), the **Quality Panel**, will assess the applicant's experience and qualifications and decide whether a **provisional licence** should be issued.

The application process will take no longer than 3 months. If an application is unsuccessful, applicants can reapply after adequately addressing the feedback received from the Quality Panel.

PHASE 2

Obtaining a full licence

To obtain a full licence, assessors holding provisional licences must sign the **HCV Assessor Code of Conduct** and submit **two** HCV assessment reports of adequate quality for review by the Quality Panel. These reports need to be submitted within three years of receiving the provisional licence.³

Each HCV assessment report must be peer reviewed before it can be submitted. After addressing comments from the peer review, the HCV assessment report should be submitted with the **peer review report**⁴ and a **letter of confirmation** from the peer reviewer that their comments have been adequately addressed.

A **public summary** of each HCV assessment report will also be required, as well as the payment of a **Tier 1 report fee** for each HCV assessment report submitted.

PHASE 3

How to maintain a full licence?

To maintain a full licence, assessors must:

- Submit **all HCV assessment reports** for monitoring by the Quality Panel.
- For **Tier 1** HCV assessment reports, submit a **peer review** report, which will need to be accompanied by a **letter of confirmation** from the peer reviewer that comments from the peer review have been adequately addressed.
- Submit a **public summary** of each HCV assessment report.
- Pay **Tier 1** or **Tier 2** report fee for each HCV assessment report submitted to the system for review

Compliance with procedures and policies

Provisional and fully licensed assessors must comply with HCVRN procedures and policies and use the templates provided by the HCVRN. Cases of non-compliance can result in the deactivation or revocation of licences.

³ If the assessor fails to submit two adequate reports to the Quality Panel, the provisional licence will be deactivated and the assessor will have to reapply.

⁴ A pool of peer reviewers will be available on the ALS web portal for assessors to choose from. Peer reviews will have to be directly arranged between assessors and peer reviewers. HCV assessors holding a full licence will be able to apply to become peer reviewers. Peer reviewers will have relevant expertise, language skills and regional knowledge and will be required to follow the new HCVRN ALS Peer Review guidance and follow a Code of Conduct.



Fees and Costs

- a. **Application fee:** An application fee will be charged to cover the costs of processing each application.
- b. **Annual renewal fee:** An annual renewal fee will be charged to all account holders to help maintain the ALS web portal and information services.

Category	Fee (USD)
Application fee	\$500
Annual renewal fee	\$250
Report evaluation fee	
TIER 1	\$2,000
TIER 2	\$900

- c. **HCV assessment report evaluation fee:** Every time an assessor submits an HCV assessment report for **monitoring**, a fee will be charged to cover the cost of monitoring the quality of reports. Two types of report fees will be charged: **Tier 1** and **Tier 2**. The ALS portal will have a section designed to help HCV assessors determine the Type of their report. The ALS will provide assessors with guidance on how to adequately budget for HCV assessments to make sure ALS costs are considered in advance in HCV assessment proposals submitted to companies.



Languages

During the launch phase, the ALS web portal and all supporting documents and guidance will be available in two languages: **English** and **Bahasa Indonesia**. In the future, the ALS web portal and supporting documents and guidance will also be available in **Spanish, French and Portuguese**.

About the Quality Panel

Monitoring of HCV assessment reports will be undertaken by a **Quality Panel**, which will verify that assessors follow good practice as set out in the **HCV Assessment Manual** and supporting documents, that findings are clearly documented, justified and presented following HCVRN guidance, and that there is an adequate public summary of the HCV assessment report.

The Quality Panel will be composed of experts with capacity to review materials in English, Spanish, French, Bahasa Indonesia and Portuguese. The Quality Panel will follow strict procedures for report review and will be bound by a Code of Conduct that includes commitments to confidentiality. All reports submitted to the ALS will be confidential and will only be utilized by the Quality Panel to verify that assessors have followed HCV assessment best practice and comply with HCVRN guidance.

Complaints

The ALS has a procedure to address complaints from interested stakeholders.



More Information

For questions regarding the ALS visit our website www.hcvnetwork.org or contact secretariat@hcvnetwork.org