Quality Plan

Section 1

Introduction

ecmk was set up in 1998 and is an accreditation scheme for Energy Assessors and facilitates lodgement of Energy Performance Certificates (EPC), Display Energy Certificates (DEC), and Air Conditioning Reports and quality training for Energy Assessors

Accreditation is available for all strands of Energy Assessment - Domestic, Non-Domestic and Display Energy Certificates,

Based at their state-of-the-art offices in Solihull, UK, ecmk are proud to provide 6 days per week support to customers working in the office and out in the field, Monday to Friday 8am to 8pm and Saturday 9am to 5pm

As a leading independent third-party certification body our assurance business – ecmk - approves and lists energy assessors on the governments register website, accessible to all interested parties.

The ecmk EPBD Certification Scheme operates to a rigorous set of procedures, adapted from The Scheme Operating Requirements (SORs).

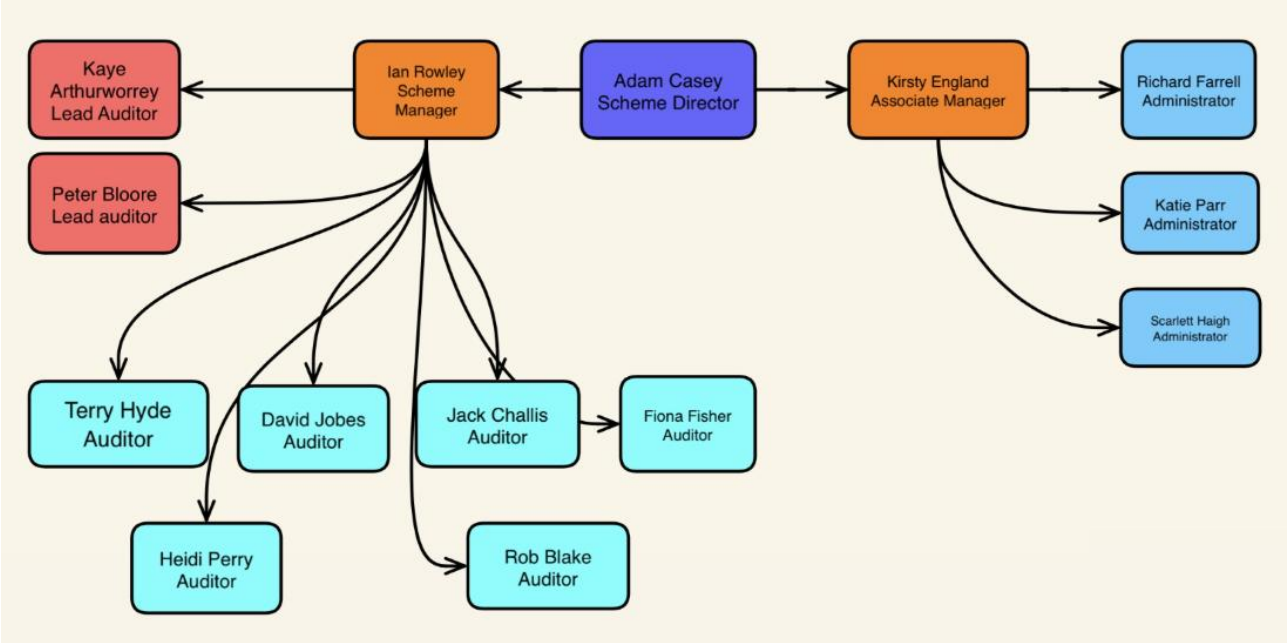
ecmk is committed to continuous improvement and responds to all opportunities to develop the operational effectiveness and quality delivery of the Scheme.

The principal aim of the Scheme is to provide a high standard of quality assurance to protect the interests of all parties that are entitled to rely on the ecmk Energy Assessor Certification Scheme's work.

This Quality Plan is accompanied by Scheme Documents, as listed in Annex A, that together with their associated procedures, govern the way in which the scheme operates.

Organisation and responsibilities

ecmk operational structure



Section 2: Application, membership and review procedures and requirements

2.1 Application process

Following a request to become a member of the Scheme, Energy Assessor applicants are provided with access to membership information which includes:

- ecmk Scheme Code of Conduct for Energy Assessors
- Application Form
- APEL Application Form
- Membership Agreement
- Complaints Procedure Guidance
- Terms and Conditions
- Complaints and Appeals Procedure
- Disclosure Scotland procedure for CRB check (DEA scheme only)

This information is available electronically on a dedicated website and advertised by a variety of means.

Applicants seek membership using the application form which is available upon request; application data is held in the Scheme database. In making an application, members agree to abide by the Terms and Conditions set out in the Membership Agreement and the ecmk Code of Conduct for Energy Assessors.

The completion of the application form together with the required supporting documentation provides the following: – CRB Check (DEA & Retrofit only)

- Confirmation and verification of identity
- Confirmation of attainment of relevant qualifications as defined in the Scheme Operating Requirements (SORs), a colour copy of the Certificate is required.
- Signed confirmation that they have read and agreed to the relevant documents above including the 'Code of Conduct for Energy Assessors' the 'SORs' the Membership Agreement, Terms and Conditions, Complaints and Appeals Procedure and Fee Sheet.
- Enquiries of the applicant and/or their employer regarding previous experience and conduct.
- If transferring from another Accreditation Scheme, we require confirmation of lodgement within the last 1 year and whether or not the applicant is currently subject to heightened audit.
- If transferring APEL membership from another scheme we require evidence of successful APEL completion from that scheme, that the applicant has met MHCLG CPD requirements for the past 12 months, confirmation that the applicant has been active in the last year and that they have not had their membership revoked or are currently suspended.

The online application process is an electronic procedure for submission of the management of applications. Applicants electronically sign the application form and submit to the scheme. In addition to all the other documents required on application, identity is verified by including a head and shoulders photograph of the applicant and a scanned copy of proof of identity such as a passport or photo driving licence with verification of identity certified by an appropriate person following the scheme process.

2.2 Qualification application route process

The minimum qualification needed to be eligible to apply to become an Energy Assessor is confirmation that the applicant has demonstrated competencies in all aspects of the National Occupational Standard for:

Domestic building Energy Assessors
(Using RdSAP software)
Qualification required:
Level 3 Diploma in Domestic Energy Assessment
April 2012 Upskill exam Certificate

Non domestic building Energy Assessors (ISBEM and third party software equivalents)
This includes Diploma qualifications at two levels as follows. Qualification(s) required:
Non Domestic Energy Assessment Diploma
Level 3 or 4 Non Domestic Energy Assessment Diploma

Section 63 Advisor (Scotland Only)
Evidence of qualification route/training. Must be level 4 NVQ/SVQ and/or experienced practitioners are those with at least two years full-time experience of working on construction projects and providing advice on and implementing energy efficiency measures

Newly constructed dwellings Energy Assessors (SAP software) Qualification required:
On Construction Energy Assessment Diploma Level 3

Public Building Energy Assessor (OR Calculator and third party software equivalents)
Qualification required:
Display Energy Certificate Diploma Level 3

Air Conditioning Inspections
Qualification required: Air Conditioning Inspection Diploma Level 3 for simple/packaged systems Air Conditioning Inspection Diploma Level 4 for complex/centralised systems
The scheme is open to anyone who wishes to become an Energy Assessor who holds a relevant qualification satisfying the appropriate National Occupational Standards from an awarding body approved by Ofqual.

2.3 APEL application route process

Alternative competency assessment for very experienced practitioners is also offered by the Scheme using the Accreditation of Prior Experience and Learning (APEL) process as specified by MHCLG and Asset Skills.

Procedures for the APEL route are described in the following section of this Quality Plan. These applicants will be admitted to the Scheme by recognition of their prior learning and experience and they are required to demonstrate to the Scheme that they meet the competencies set out in the relevant National Occupational Standards.

APEL initial screening of application process

When a Scheme application is received via the APEL route an initial review is conducted in order to verify if the applicant qualifies for APEL. This review determines that the applicant has met all the APEL gateway criteria, which broadly requires confirmation that:

- Applicant has two years of relevant experience within the last five years.
- Applicant is able to demonstrate compliance with 100% of the NOS.
- Determine if top-up training is required, and if so what training is required.

The review is conducted by an APEL assessor or qualified scheme auditor. Once the relevant application route is confirmed the status of applicant is checked by reference to their APEL assessment or certificate of achieving the Diploma qualification. The member is accredited according to the level of their qualification and this is referenced on their certificate of membership and identity card.

The Scheme Manager formally assesses this information and recommends acceptance of an applicant to join the Scheme, or reject the applicant, taking due account of the ‘fit and proper’ and other requirements of the Scheme standards

Applicants who do not meet or continue not to meet the membership requirements are rejected or have existing membership revoked with reasons given and in such cases the Appeals process is available to them.

Comprehensive records of the process and the membership status are maintained and recorded in the secure membership database. The Scheme maintains a register of members and former members and a schedule of membership status and ensures that the Governments Landmark Central Register is kept up to date as required by the Scheme Operating Requirements. This is available to allow customers to establish the legitimacy of an individual claiming to be or having been an accredited EA. Members are issued with an ID card so that all can be assured of the identity of the Energy Assessor.

APEL Assessment of Competence

The process for assessing the competence of applicants for APEL (Accredited Prior Experience and Learning) is outlined in the documents issued with the Scheme Standards.

Non domestic building Energy Assessors (ISBEM and third party software equivalents)

APEL Guide for experienced practitioners APEL assessment template Additional guidance for APEL candidates.

Newly constructed dwellings Energy Assessors (SAP software)

APEL Guide for experienced practitioners APEL assessment template.

Display Energy Certificates

APEL Guide for Experienced Practitioners APEL Assessment Template

Public Building Energy Assessors (OR Calculator and third party software equivalents)

APEL Guide for experienced practitioners APEL assessment template.

Air Conditioning Inspection Scheme

APEL Guide for experienced practitioners
APEL assessment template Note: APEL is not available for Domestic Energy Assessors.
To be eligible for the APEL route to Scheme membership applicants need to demonstrate that they are already very experienced in a relevant field. Broadly this means that the Scheme needs to be satisfied that the applicant:

- Can show competent use of the current methodology appropriate to the provision of ACIRs, EPCs or DECs.
- Has the required skills to survey buildings and collect relevant information.
- Has the skills to meet all the Performance Criteria set out in the NOS.
- Has the Knowledge and Understanding set out in the NOS.

In order to test the eligibility of the applicant for the APEL route they will be asked to submit:

- Outline application form and/or a copy of their CV.
- CPD Record and details of relevant training.

The review of the applicant's initial submission has one of three outcomes:

- Qualification and experience criteria are met. The applicant will be accepted straight into assessment.
- Qualification and experience criteria are partly met. The applicant will have to undertake specified additional training before they can enter the assessment process.

- Key requirements for qualification, experience, skills and knowledge are not met. The applicant will be refused entry to APEL and will need to undertake a relevant vocational qualification before they can be considered for accreditation.

If the candidate is accepted for APEL they will be asked to complete all 8 sections of the Application form as outlined in the Asset Skills document 'Energy Assessors Experienced Practitioner Accreditation Framework'. They will also complete the APEL Template to confirm how they have met the full range of Performance Criteria and Knowledge and Understanding set out in the relevant National Occupational Standards.

The majority of those applying for Scheme membership through APEL are members of a professional institution such as CIBSE, RICS or IMechE. To achieve membership of such institutions, particularly at grades conferring Chartered Engineer status, applicants must demonstrate a broad range of management and professional skills in addition to specialist technical competence. These professional skills closely match those required by the National Occupational Standards for Unit 1 only. Full recognition is given to these already demonstrated competencies and appropriate professional memberships are key considerations when accepting Scheme applications through an APEL route.

The professional entry requirements of all relevant professional institutions are mapped against Unit 1 of the National Occupational Standards and give full recognition to these when assessing applications for Scheme entry through APEL. In this context the key institutions are likely to be CIBSE, IMechE, Energy Institute and RICS. If applicants wish to take advantage of this option then the submission will require the following:

- Proof of membership.
- Summary of Continued Professional Development record.

2.4 Membership Review Process

Membership is reviewed annually whereupon the scheme will check that the member has lodged in the last 12 months, if this is not the case, the scheme reserves the right to terminate membership unless the member has been on maternity or paternity leave, or long term sick leave. In addition, if the member has more than one membership number with ecmk we will review if this is necessary. If an additional membership number is unnecessary it will be removed. Additional numbers are considered unnecessary when they are for administrative benefits or where multiple postal addresses have been registered to represent an inaccurate range of locations where the member works.
In the event of disagreement with a membership decision the membership appeals procedure will be applicable as defined in the Scheme Document and the Complaints and Appeals Procedure for Energy Assessors ACC-112.

Co-ordination with other accreditation schemes
We recognise the need for co-ordination with other schemes to respond to enquiries and to make available details including:

- Membership and disciplinary status of applicants and Scheme members with regard to suspension and withdrawal from membership.
- Investigation of potential fraud.

2.5 Suspension

Membership may be suspended for a number of reasons including, but not exclusively, lack of CPD, failure to respond to an audit or disciplinary reasons. If membership is suspended this will prevent the member from lodging reports and where the member also has membership with other Accreditation schemes, the scheme will be notified of the suspension via Landmark. Whilst suspended, the member will have access to the relevant sections of the members' area to enable them to update their records where necessary.

Suspension may be lifted if the member resolves the outstanding issues. If issues resulting in suspension are not resolved, suspension will remain until the renewal date and then if not resolved the membership status will be set to LEFT SCHEME. Where membership is withdrawn the individual will have to complete a new application in order to re-join the scheme. Struck off status will remain indefinitely until the reason for suspension has been rectified by the assessor.

Members may withdraw membership from the scheme at any stage however they may not leave the scheme until they have submitted all outstanding audit and EPC/ DEC/ACIR re-issue requests. If a member wishes to withdraw membership from the scheme they must provide us with a request via email.

Section 3: Quality Assurance Procedures

3.1 Requirements

Auditing the quality of members' work is a key function and responsibility of the Energy Assessors Accreditation Scheme. A high standard of quality assurance is needed to protect the interests of all parties that are entitled to rely on the Energy Assessor's work. The procedure for quality audit is summarised below and follows the MHCLG Scheme Operating Requirements (SORs). The results of the audits will be reviewed by the Scheme Audit Team and will be used to inform decisions about disciplinary or other actions which might be taken against the assessor.

The audit process considers the key risk areas affecting the quality of the EPC/ DEC/ACIR:

- Level of experience of individual EAs.
- Professional behaviour in dealings with other parties.
- Professional competence in preparing EPCs, DECs and ACIRs.
- Compliance with laid down standards, particularly the ecmk Code of Conduct for Energy Assessors and the 'SORs'.
- Potential for fraud by EAs or their employers.

Any error between the Energy Assessor and the QA assessor will be defined as the sum of the absolute errors associated with each data field to avoid self-cancelling errors leading to an acceptable score. If the

sum of the absolute errors for all of the data fields exceeds the specified tolerance (as detailed in Table 1), the EPC/DEC/ACIR must be replaced when any one of the following conditions is met:

- The sum of the absolute errors between the energy assessor's and QA assessor's rating exceeds the accuracy requirement (as detailed in Table 1).
- Errors in the building's description result in a change in the recommendations made.
- The building's description is sufficiently inaccurate that it brings into question the accuracy of the rating by the seller. 'Sufficiently inaccurate' is taken to mean information on the EPC/DEC/ACIR which is demonstrably incorrect subject to an ability to change the description in the software to account for what the assessor has seen.

Table 1 below:

Domestic (DEA)	Shall be within 5 SAP points as determined by the QA assessor No change in recommendations to the report No change in the description on the report
Non Domestic (NDEA)	Shall be within +-10% of the BER rating as determined by the QA assessor Shall be within +- 5 points of kg CO_2/m2/Per annum
On Construction (OCEA)	Shall be within 4% of the DER as determined by the QA assessor or with +- 1kg CO_2/m2/Per annum
Display Energy Certificates (DEC)	Shall be within +- 5% or 5 points of the OR rating as determined by the QA assessor

3.2 Procedures for QA and APEL assessors

The Scheme uses expert assessors for QA purposes

The Accreditation Scheme uses expert assessors to carry out the review of reports and records. These assessors are occupationally competent and appropriately qualified.

The audit role requires specialist technical expertise and the Scheme has a team of expert assessors. All staff working in the audit role operate to ecmk procedures and complies with the ecmk Code of Conduct.

To ensure that consistency of assessment is achieved a process of moderation is undertaken, all ecmk assessors are required to attend quarterly moderation workshops in order to maintain their assessor status and to ensure that all assessments are consistent across all assessors. Attendance at these workshops is mandatory and is recorded on a Scheme register, any assessor not attending these workshops will not receive any further assessments until they have met this criteria.

We also run Audit Workshops at least monthly but when necessary could be more frequent.

Assessors must complete the required CPD for the strand for which they undertake audit work. This requires the assessor to return a completed CPD log each year for review by the Scheme.

3.3 Scheduling of Random Audits - how the Scheme selects EPCs/DECs/ ACIRs for auditing New registered members

These are new entrants to the Scheme whether they are newly qualified, new to the Scheme, or re-joining the Scheme after a break in membership. All new members will be on the first available certificate. Following this the sampling rate for newly registered members must be at least 5% of lodged Certificates during the first six months of their membership. If the member can supply us with evidence that they were not subject to heightened audit at their previous scheme and have lodged in the last 6 months, they will not be subject to heightened audit in their first six months of ecmk membership.

3.4 Scheduling of Audits – how the Scheme selects EPCs for auditing

In addition to random audits, there are some other instances where audits will be instigated, these are classified as follows.

Periodic Random audits

These audits are to ensure that all members are audited over a defined time period and Energy Certificates are randomly selected – this will help to maintain the overall quality of Energy Certificates, ensure members are audited at an appropriate frequency and highlight new issues that may lead to the introduction of new 'smart' audits as a result.

Non Periodic Random audits
Audits of randomly selected Energy Certificates – this will help to maintain the overall quality of Energy Certificates and highlight new issues that may lead to the introduction of new 'smart' audits as a result.

Excessive use of help desk
The Scheme will identify individuals who make unusually high use of the help desk (typically members making in excess of 8 helpdesk calls per month would constitute excessive), or who in the opinion of the help desk, the nature of the question is such that they are at a high risk of producing EPC/DEC/ACIRs which will need replacing. In these cases as a minimum the auditing of an Energy Assessor's work should be brought forward to the next available certificate, and will result in the Scheme increasing its sampling rate of that individual to 10% and, if deemed necessary, compulsory CPD to be completed

Complaints Audits

A complaint is any statement, in whatever form of communication, from a person regarding comments about the behaviour of a person or organisation associated with the production or outcome of an EPC. A query is defined as correspondence or discussion which is a point of clarification rather than concern with the member's conduct or issues with the EPC.

All consumer complaints and queries must be logged by the member and details must be provided to the Scheme.

Instances where this will not be the case will be:

- Where the complaint refers to an aspect of the software used by the Energy Assessor which is outside of the assessor's control or
- A complaint which reflects a demonstrable lack of the customer's understanding of the requirements of the EPC rather than any failing on the part of the Energy Assessor.

Re-lodgement Audits

Audits that are undertaken due to a defective Energy Certificate being identified and the 'replacement' certificate is audited to ensure it is now correct.

Schemes must ensure that members re-lodge an Energy Certificate where an earlier Energy Certificate was found to be defective.

The member must ask their Accreditation Scheme to mark the defective Energy Certificate as 'Not for Issue'.

If an Energy Certificate is still found to be defective after it is re-lodged the member must re- lodge the Energy Certificate until it is correct. The Member must ensure the earlier defective Energy Certificate is marked as 'not for issue'.

Smart audits

A smart audit is a 'risk based' audit based on pre-defined set of criteria. 1. A smart audit is designed to find potentially defective Energy Certificates.

2. A smart audit will focus on the data items and associated evidence related to the smart rule(s) that the lodgement has triggered.

3. If a smart audit fails for a reason other than the smart audit rule that it triggered, then the subsequent follow on audit should be based on the same criteria that caused the fail.

4. If a lodgement is called for smart audit and triggered multiple smart audit rules then it should be audited against them all but only counted as one smart audit.

5. If a smart audit has a volume set, e.g. 10 or more in a month, then Accreditation Schemes will select one of them to audit.

6. If a member passes a smart audit, then in a subsequent month, they trigger the same smart audit trigger (rule number) then they do not need to be audited, as they have demonstrated their competence on the issue.

7. Smart Audits should aim to ensure that the incidence of erroneous 'multi lodgements' on the same property are minimised.

Follow on audits

These audits are a consequence of failure of another audit type.

1. Accreditation Schemes will request a specific future lodgement for audit to ensure that the

member has understood and is applying the knowledge/advice from the feedback provided.

2. A follow on audit as a result of a random audit failure can be a randomly selected audit or an audit appropriate to the failure of the original random audit.

3. A follow on audit as a result of a smart audit failure should be a lodgement that triggers the same smart audit rule. The follow-on audit will be carried forward until such a lodgement takes place in a subsequent month.

4. A follow on audit as a result of a new entrant failure can be a randomly selected audit or an audit appropriate to the failure of the original audit.

Other risk factors

Where the Scheme forms a view, for whatever reason that a particular energy assessor may be at high risk of providing an erroneous certificate, the auditing of an Energy Assessor's work should be brought forward to the next available certificate and depending on the level of risk the sampling rate of that person's work will be increased to 10%.

Audits undertaken for the above reasons can contribute to the 2% annual target provided that other minimum sampling rates and requirements identified required under the heading of "random sampling" are met.

3.5 Additional QA checks for High Lodgement rates

Where an Energy Assessor is lodging an unusually high number of certificates in any calendar month which have not been lodged using permitted multiple certification/sampling and cloning techniques, additional checks will be implemented to provide assurance that the Energy Assessor has indeed visited the properties.

High lodgement rate thresholds are as follows:

- Domestic existing dwellings EPCs – 120 per month
- Non Domestic EPCs Level 3/4 – 25 per month
- ACIR -25 per month

3.6 Types of audit – overview of requirements

Call in of records

Expert review of an Energy Assessor's records is a powerful tool for assessing the quality of an EPC/DEC/ACIR. The Scheme has developed guidance documents for Scheme members that includes details of the information, evidence and photographs to submit for audit purposes; these can be found in the Scheme members' area.

Witnessed assessments

The Scheme is required to undertake a witnessed assessment of 5% of Assessors lodging Level 4 ACIR each year. For other Assessors, a witnessed assessments will be required as part of the QA escalation procedures of the SORs. In these cases targeted witnessed assessments are undertaken by an expert assessor who directly observes the performance of the Scheme member during the assessment. This allows the full range of competencies to be checked, including soft skills such as courtesy and cleanliness as well as the technical skills associated with producing the EPC/DEC/ACIR. Since the assessor will have had access to the property and /or information at the time of the inspection, he or she is then able to judge the quality of the inspector's records and completed EPC/DEC/ACIR based on direct experience rather than just inference. The expert assessor may not need to accompany the EA for the entire duration of the assessment, but will be there for as long as is necessary to see the member in action and collect enough independent data to counter check the production of the EPC/DEC/ACIR and thereby assess its accuracy.

3.7 Quality Assurance for use of Data Collectors and Data Gatherers

For existing dwellings (domestic) EPCs the use of data gatherers or data collectors is not permitted. However, for the rented sector provision is made within the Scheme software requesting confirmation if the DEA has used landlord's data or a sampling approach, as permitted by MHCLG. This is then highlighted during the standard QA process so that the audit process can be extended to verify that the procedure as detailed in Annex A has been followed.

For Level 4 non-domestic EPC, DEC and ACIR lodgements, Assessors are required to provide details of all sources of information and of any data gatherers (in-house staff or subcontractors) used. Evidence of a site visit and the direct supervision of data gatherers by the Assessor lodging the certificate/report is also a requirement. The EA who lodges the report shall take full responsibility for the findings in the report, including information recovered by others engaged by the EA.

3.8 Quality Assurance escalation procedure for failed audits.

Where the result of an audit is recorded as a failure, this will result in the following procedure being implemented:

1. the Accreditation Scheme will agree with the Member suitable corrective actions to prevent re-occurrence,
2. the Accreditation Scheme will consider the likelihood that this is a recurring problem,
3. the Accreditation Scheme will liaise with the member to consider the implications on other Energy Certificates issued and

4. the Accreditation Scheme will identify defective Energy Certificates and follow the process in 4.4 Replacement of defective Energy Certificates.

The Scheme will audit one further EPC 'follow on audit' after the point of the initial audit feedback. If the Scheme member passes the follow on audit they will revert back to the normal audit regime.

If the Scheme member fails the 'follow on audit', the membership will be suspended, and the assessor requested to complete an audit review with a scheme auditor. Further training and audits may be required as a result of the review

If the error on the certificate indicates fraudulent practises, the member will be suspended immediately pending further investigation.

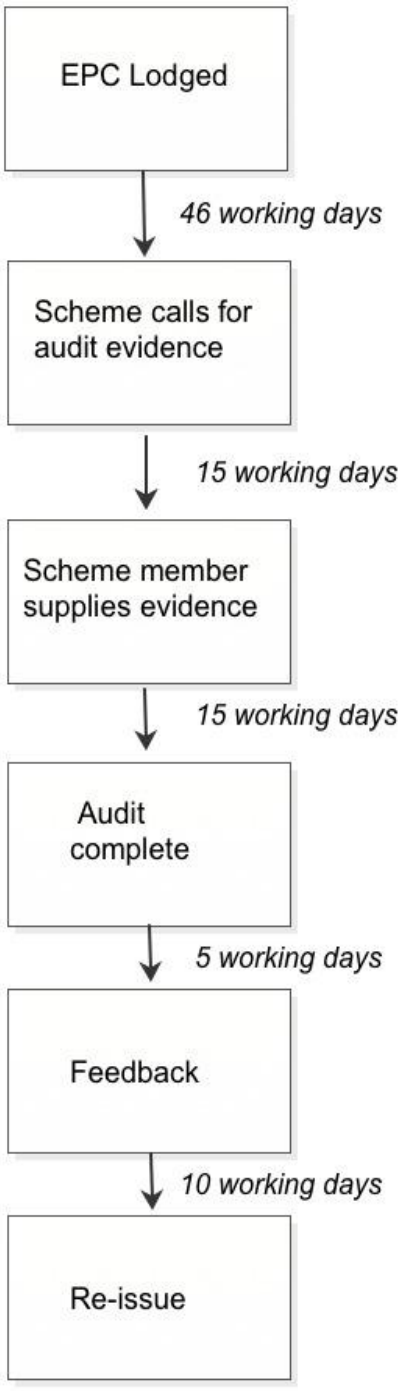
3.9 Appeals process for audit result

Any Scheme member wishing to appeal against an audit result is able to do so by using the audit appeal facility on Assessor Hub with the nature of the appeal; this process is detailed in process map PM4 below.

3.10 Quality Assurance Procedures

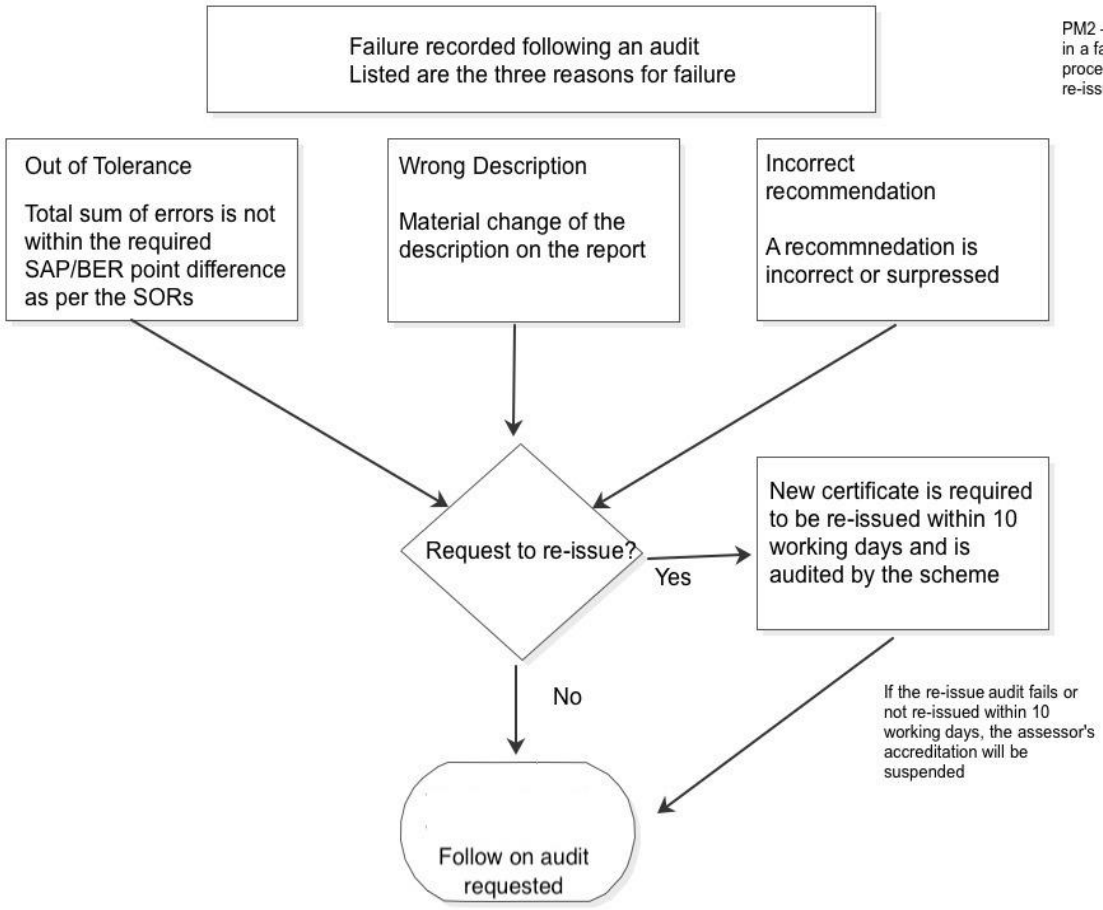
Process Maps Procedures for quality assurance are detailed in the following process maps:

- PM1 – Procedure for requesting audit submissions and escalation procedure for non-submittal of audits.
- PM2 – Procedure for audits result in a fail being recorded and process for EPC/DEC/ACIR re-issue.
- PM3 – Escalation procedure for audits resulting in a fail – 'target audit'
- PM4 – Procedure for Scheme members to appeal against a "failure" audit result.

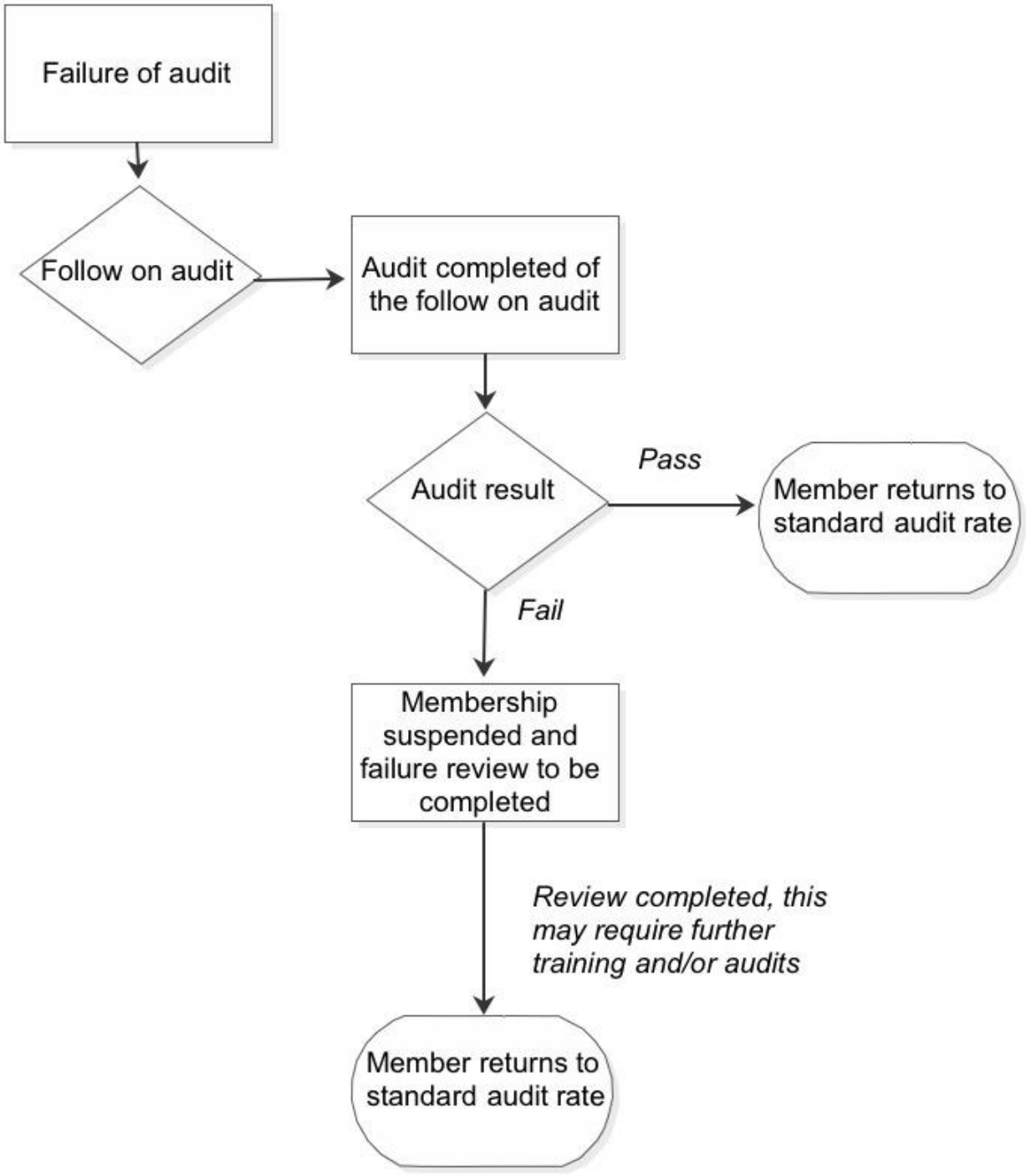


PM1 – Procedure for requesting audit submissions and escalation procedure for non-submittal of audits.

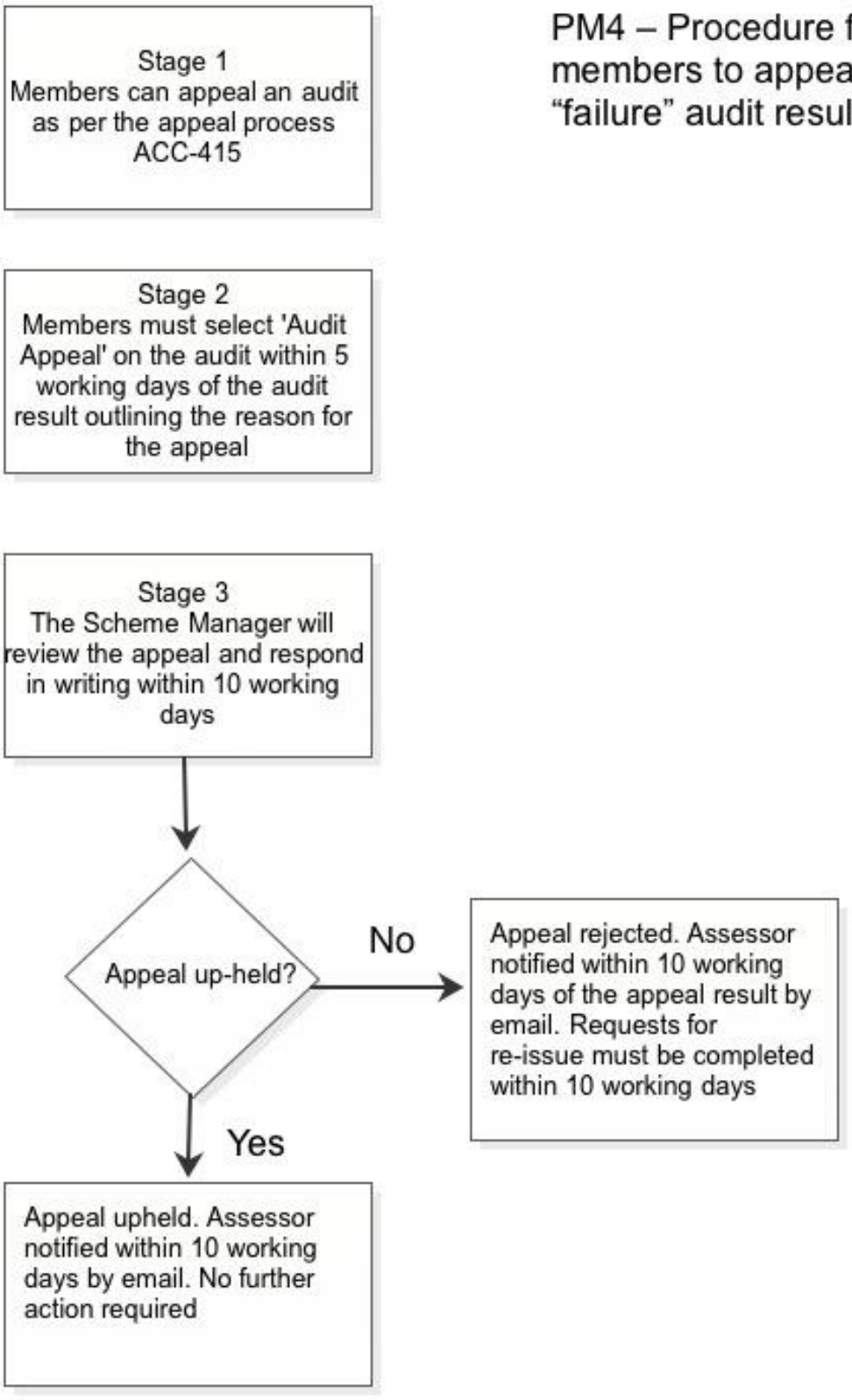
PM2 – Procedure for audits result in a fail being recorded and process for EPC/DEC/ACIR re-issue



PM3 – Escalation procedure for audits resulting in a fail – “follow on audit”.



PM4 – Procedure for Scheme members to appeal against a "failure" audit result.



Section 5: Continuous Professional Development (CPD)

Energy Assessors are required to undertake a specified number of hours of Continuous Professional Development (CPD) per year to maintain and update their skills in the light of changes in the profession.

The Scheme recommends from time to time that EAs undertake programmes of CPD to maintain these skills in accordance with the National Occupational Standard and checks that this has been undertaken by the EA as a continuing condition of Scheme membership.

CPD can take a variety of forms including courses, reading, seminars and workshops. The CPD must be evidenced and certificates must be provided, or a CPD planner indicating the learning outcomes is required. The Scheme will provide recommendations for Continuous Professional Development, so that all EAs are aware of the issues that need their attention. CPD Requirements – categories for all Scheme members CPD is categorised in three separate tiers, as detailed below:

1) Changes in requirements

Any 'Change in Requirements' CPD which carries a 'to be completed by' date (such as software change training) shall be completed by the specified date. Failure to undertake CPD within the specified dates may result in suspension from the scheme.

2) Disciplinary Procedure requirements

No set level – as required following disciplinary action. This may include attendance at a suggested CPD session, completion of an online knowledge check or, a structured telephone interview with a member of the technical team.

3) Other Professional Development

Minimum of ten hours CPD per year plus five hours per additional EPBD qualification. Scheme members must develop personal development plans
ecmk provide members with an online system to log your CPD, however, if you choose to keep your own CPD records or keep them elsewhere please be advised that you may be required to provide them to us for an audit of your CPD records. Ecmk are required to audit 5% of all members CPD records; if you cannot provide us with evidence of your CPD on request, membership will be temporarily suspended until the CPD has been completed.

CPD for multi strand Scheme members

Where a Scheme member is accredited in more than one strand, they must undertake an additional five hours CPD for each additional strand in the other professional development category.

CPD audit

An audit of 5% of Energy Assessor's Continuous Professional Development records (as entered onto the Scheme web interface) will be undertaken each year. Energy Assessors who do not maintain their

Continuous Professional Development, or do not reach the continuing competence levels, will be referred to the disciplinary process.

Disciplinary CPD does not count towards the yearly CPD hours count.

CPD process map ACC104

Section 6: Insurance

Members of the Scheme are required to have appropriate professional indemnity insurance (PI) in place to cover their work as Energy Assessors. This is to protect the consumer; the minimum terms set by MHCLG are defined in the Scheme Standards and apply.
The ecmk scheme for Domestic Energy Assessors, EPCs for non-dwellings, EPCs for newly constructed dwellings, Display Energy Certificates and Air Conditioning Inspections Reports provide a block policy of Public Indemnity (PI) and public liability (PL) insurance which will cover all Domestic EPCs and DECs, non-domestic EPCs and air-conditioning inspections carried out at Level 3 and 4. This provides cover in excess of the requirements of the Scheme standards.

The ecmk Accreditation Scheme maintains records and evidence of checks and audits on these policies as follows:

Checks that valid indemnity insurance is in place at point of membership and kept in force:

- The results of regular audits of EAs' insurance to ensure that the insurance information provided is up to date and that the insurance remains valid.
- Lodgement of an EPC, DEC and ACIR is blocked unless the insurance details are validated.

The Accreditation Scheme also establishes links with MHCLG (through the Landmark register) to determine if a member is suspended or withdrawn for a breach of the 'Code of Conduct for Energy Assessors' and the 'SORs', namely failure to ensure that all EPCs undertaken by them are covered by adequate and appropriate indemnity insurance cover.

Section 7: Handling of complaints and queries

The Scheme ensures that all complaints from clients or others relying on the certificates or affected by the work of the members are dealt with in a consistent, fair, open and timely manner in accordance with Scheme procedures with due regard to all relevant legislation including that relating to discrimination, data protection and human rights. The process to be adopted in making a complaint and the rights of the consumer are fully explained to the complainant.

Energy Assessors who are members of the Scheme must initially operate under their own or their employer's complaints handling process. This process must try to resolve complaints first before escalating them to the Scheme in accordance with the ecmk Scheme Code of Conduct for Energy Assessors' and the 'SORs'.

Energy Assessors and/or their employer, who are members of the scheme are required to demonstrate that they have a workable process for complaints and that they notify the Scheme of all complaints and keep a history of each complaint in a separate file and inform the scheme of each complaint.

Members must ensure that the process includes a formal escalation procedure and that escalation to the Scheme is comprehensively reported in the file.

Members must in their process ensure that a complainant is advised that they can escalate their complaint to the Scheme at any time.

As soon as a complaint is received, the scheme member must advise the scheme, within 2 weeks of the compliant, by submitting a complaint log which must be kept up to date as the complaint progresses.

Complaints that are escalated to the Scheme are logged and dealt with in accordance with the complaint's procedure set out in the Scheme Document and the Complaints Procedure. Records of complaints will be held in the secure database.

Complaints received directly by the Scheme are logged and passed to the member concerned unless they are of a criminal nature or unlikely to be most appropriately dealt with by the member. Where relevant the complaint will be reported to the Police.

All complaints are investigated and dealt with at no cost to the complainant.

Appeals

Where this process does not resolve the complaint, it is referred to a third party independent of the Scheme concerned which will consist of three members who:

- have not been directly involved in the decision under appeal and
- have no direct interest in the decision.

The Scheme Manager will provide secretarial services to the Appeal Panel but will have no voting rights.

Queries

A query is defined as correspondence or discussion between a customer and Energy Assessor that is a point of clarification rather than a concern with the member's conduct or issues of accuracy of the EPC/DEC/ACIR.

Scheme members must maintain a record of queries they receive and retain any associated correspondence.
The scheme will require members to grant access to these records on request.

Section 8: Disciplinary Procedure

This section outlines the Accreditation scheme's disciplinary procedure. Please also refer to the ecmk Scheme Code of Conduct (to which you will have given signed agreement) and the Scheme Operating Requirements document issued by MHCLG.

Understanding of this suite of documents will ensure you are fully aware of the standards of professional conduct which is expected of you and the sanctions which will be applied if the standards are not met.

The disciplinary process is conducted in a consistent, fair, open and timely manner in accordance with Scheme procedures with due regard to all relevant legislation including that relating to discrimination, data protection and human rights.

A member and their employer (where relevant) might be referred to the disciplinary process for a number of reasons including:

- a breach of the 'Code of Conduct for Energy Assessors' and the 'SORs'
- when a complaint has been upheld
- as a result of an investigation or the quality audit process
- failure to maintain continuing professional development (CPD)
- discovery of material errors or omissions in the information given by a member at the application stage
- failure to keep adequate records (including complaints and queries)
- acting in conflict of interest

The process includes the establishment of an independent disciplinary panel operating under separate governance from the Scheme, within which the Energy Assessor and their employer (where relevant) has the right to attend and make representations at any hearing and has the right to full legal representation. All relevant documents will be made available to the Energy Assessor for examination at least 28 days before a hearing.

The Energy Assessor must have received:

- A notice informing them of the time and place of the hearing
- A list of the allegations that the disciplinary panel will consider and
- A copy of the information that the Scheme will use at the hearing

The panel can impose a disciplinary tariff, which could include:

- Issuing a formal warning against an Energy Assessor
- Imposing certain conditions on the Energy Assessor's membership of the Scheme. This may include a requirement for the Energy Assessor to undertake a period of retraining and possibly reassessment
- Issuing a fine or an order for costs and/or
- Suspending or withdrawing the Energy Assessor's membership

In respect of a minor non-conformity the member is initially to be given a period of time in which to show that he or she can and does meet the requirements. If the member fails to do this there then follows a period of suspension from practising until such time as the member can show that he or she can and does meet the requirements.

In respect of a serious non-conformity, the member initially faces a period of suspension until he or she can show that he or she can and does meet the requirements. If the member fails to do this and depending on the severity of the issues involved, the disciplinary process may withdraw membership.

Full comprehensive and accurate records of the whole disciplinary process are maintained and stored in the secure database. The Scheme formally advises Energy Assessors who are subject to a disciplinary case about the extent of the disciplinary panel's powers and shall not imply that it is in any way a court of law.

Regular performance reporting information will be provided as required by MHCLG, including previously agreed targets as required by the standard.

The names of Energy Assessors and their employer (where relevant), whose membership has been suspended or withdrawn will be made available to other Schemes if requested through MHCLG.

8.1 Energy Assessor Code of Conduct violation procedure

Membership of the ecmk Accreditation Scheme requires all Scheme members to operate under the Scheme code of conduct (as detailed in Annex C). All Scheme members must ensure that they continue to comply with the code of conduct in order to maintain membership.

Failure to comply with the code of conduct will be subject to Scheme escalation procedures and depending upon the category of failure to comply, may result in suspension from the Scheme.

Categories of failure to comply with the Scheme code of conduct are as follows.

Minor transgression.
No significant impact on customers or other stakeholders (eg Estate Agent who procures the service on behalf of a vendor) associated with the transgression. This level of transgression would involve the Scheme informing the Scheme member of the nature of transgression and checking that the behaviour changes.
Example: a misunderstanding of an element of the code of conduct occurs which does not result in a significant impact on the householder or other stakeholder.

Significant transgression.
Significant impact on a householder or other stakeholder. This category falls between "Minor" and "Major" transgression. Depending on the nature of the transgression the Energy Assessor may be required to undertake additional training to modify their behaviour whilst being allowed to continue to lodge certificates, and may be subject to suspension until a period of training has been completed.
Example: Feedback from clients as part of a standard Scheme user feedback exercise indicates a significantly higher than usual level of discontent with the assessor's behaviour, but where there is no actual complaint to the Scheme.

Major transgression.
Compelling evidence that an energy assessor has failed to meet the code of conduct, in a way which has had a major impact on the client or other stakeholders. This would result in the Scheme member being suspended pending a disciplinary hearing.
Example 1: The Scheme member has provided specific advice to a householder, outside of the remit of an energy assessor, which is aimed at securing additional work.
Example 2: Failure to disclose the Scheme complaints mechanism to the householder, or other stakeholder, on request from the householder or other stakeholder

Code of conduct auditing

In order to ensure that Scheme members are complying with the code of conduct the Scheme will contact individuals at random who have commissioned EPCs/DECs/ACIRs from those properties visited which were occupied at the point the EPC was issued, on a monthly basis to achieve a response from at least 1% of clients. Scheme members will be required to provide a client email address for each lodged report, the scheme will then email a link to a Code of Conduct survey to the client.

Section 9: Appeals

The Scheme provides an appeals process to deal with all decisions made by the Scheme in the event that decisions are disputed or challenged. The Appeals process will apply the Standards in a consistent, fair and open manner and will comply with all relevant legislation including that relating to discrimination, data protection and human rights.

Appeals can include Audit failure, CPD failure, Disclosure Certificate Failure, Code of Conduct and Insurance

The appeals procedure can include an independent third party if required. The original decision maker will not be permitted to resolve the appeal, for independence. It is referred to in the Scheme Document and fully described in the Appeals Procedure.

Anti-Fraud Policy/Detecting fraud

As a minimum protection against unlicensed individuals passing themselves off as members of the Scheme all members are issued with an identity card that they are required to present to the person in charge of the property during the inspection. We reserve the right to carry out detailed audits of a member's office records and accounts in cases where there are unusual patterns of behaviour that could be indicators of fraud or misconduct.

Ecmk is committed to the prevention, deterrence, detection and investigation of all forms of fraud. Ecmk seeks to reduce the opportunity for fraud and will take prompt action to investigate fully and address any suspected cases. Ecmk requires all staff including contracted staff and all members of any of the ecmk schemes to act honestly and with integrity to safeguard the integrity of the scheme at all times.

It is the responsibility of all staff to read and be familiar with the contents of this policy and any related procedures and to identify and notify ecmk of any suspected cases of fraud or fraud risk.

Due to the robust levels of auditing and auditor training, ecmk will be vigilant and aware of fraudulent practises to prevent any future issues that may arise.

Ecmk will use third party websites, photographic evidence and previous lodged EPCs to assist in the detection of fraudulent practices.

All records of suspected fraudulent activity by assessors and/or companies will be retained by ecmk and shared with other Certification Bodies and relevant third parties such as (but not limited to) MHCLG, BEIS and TrustMark

Ecmk will not accept any level of fraud or corruption and will treat any such matter with the utmost seriousness. Each case will be thoroughly investigated and dealt with appropriately. Investigations may

invoke the disciplinary procedure and could result in removal from the scheme and / or legal action by reporting to the appropriate authorities.

For the purpose of this document the following definitions apply:

Falsifying any documentation in support of an application to join the scheme such as falsifying an identification document.

Deliberately entering false information into any of the scheme's software engines or third-party software programmes to produce inaccurate certificates resulting in financial gain.

Failure to disclose any relevant information in support of an application to the scheme.

Section 10: Technical – Software

Information Technology – Energy rating software

The Energy Assessor Scheme uses specialist technology provider, for lodgements of EPCs, DECs and ACIRs in a live environment using links established with the Central Register operated by Landmark Solutions, producing a Report Reference Number (RRN) on lodgement. Members are advised of the procedures for this upon completion of the application process.

Linked databases are in place to control the membership process, provide a member interface to communicate with the Scheme and to inform the quality assurance process.

Software for the preparation of EPCs and DECs is:
EPCs for existing dwellings:
Assessor Hub
Cotality Assess+ IOS application
EPCs for non-dwellings:
iSBEM, Design Builder and Carbon Checker
Display Energy Certificates:
OR Calculator
Air Conditioning Inspection Reports:
As per standard MHCLG software

Section 11: Measurement, analysis and improvement

Customer satisfaction

We are keen to seek feed-back from Scheme members so that we are able to continue to meet your needs. To help us understand your requirements the Scheme operates an on-line customer satisfaction/feedback system.

Once the on-line survey has been completed feedback received is automatically recorded in a data collection system in order to determine if any trends for satisfaction/dissatisfaction exist allowing the Scheme to target any areas of concern and introduce new features.

Continuous improvement

Continuous improvement is an integral part of the ecmk Management System and we regularly audit our compliance with its policies and requirements. Feedback from customer satisfaction and internal audits are subject to analysis in order to identify potential areas of improvement. The scheme actively seeks suggestions for improvement from Scheme members and have made provision for this in the scheme customer satisfaction procedure.

The Scheme has a clear set of customer service performance standards and targets.

Performance against the standards and targets will be monitored by the ecmk board of Directors and will be reported in the Scheme's annual report. The annual report will also confirm details of the organisation and operational structures of the Scheme to demonstrate continuing separate governance.

Key performance standards and targets are:

- Data relating to membership applications, registrations and annual reviews, including carrying out Fit and Proper checks, etc, as appropriate and making decisions to grant membership of the Scheme and appeals
- Status of members' insurance arrangements - Processing and lodgement of reports
- Quality audit of members' work
- Data on the incidence, outcome and handling of customer complaints - Financial reporting
- CPD
- MHCLG Audit requirements as required
- Administrative and operational procedures performance

Annex A – Further guidance and requirements

Policy for use of data gatherers and data collection

Following guidance received from MHCLG, the policy for use of data gatherers forms part of the term of scheme membership for the ecmk Accreditation Scheme. The MHCLG policy and all Scheme Operating Requirements are located in the 'Scheme Documents' section of the members' area.

Scheme Standards Definitions

Data gatherers: are people who have a contractual relationship with an Accredited Energy Assessor (AEA) or the company employing the AEA to provide professional assistance to an AEA in gathering the information needed to carry out an energy assessment of a building for the purpose of issuing an Energy Performance Certificate.

All data gatherers must be supervised by the Accredited Energy Assessor that lodges the Certificate. This process is not permitted for Domestic Energy Assessors (DEA).

Data collection: is used in this document to mean the practice of AEAs collecting and using existing data that has been gathered by landlords or their agents as part of the process of managing and maintaining portfolios of property in their ownership

Overview of requirements

DEA Scheme – Domestic EPCs: In relation to carrying out one-off assessments of individual domestic properties, the Home buyers and Sellers guide to Energy Performance Certificates (EPCs) and related guidance states that EPCs can only be produced by an accredited energy assessor.
Therefore, the use of data gatherers in producing domestic Energy Performance Certificates is not permitted.

NDEA Scheme – Non-domestic EPCs: In the case of non-domestic EPCs the guidance has identified the situation where assistants work under the supervision of NDEAs, enabling the NDEA to produce EPCs for larger and more complex buildings and portfolios of buildings. However, the NDEA needs to be in a position to verify the data and supervise how and by whom it is collected.

Display Energy Certificates and Advisory Reports

An Advisory Report and the initial DEC should be done from the basis of an assessor knowing a building. The building should be visited by the EA for the purposes of producing an AR and lodging the initial DEC. Whilst DECs can only be generated and lodged by an Accredited Energy Assessor, provision of verified energy bills to an Accredited Energy Assessor, along with a declaration that nothing has changed from the building occupant, their facilities manager or other third party qualified to provide this information, is sufficient to enable subsequent DECs to be produced following the initial assessment. This is only permitted providing that the same DEC assessor who performed the original assessment and therefore has previously visited the property, is undertaking the subsequent DEC assessment.

Annex B – Quality Version Tracking

Ver	Reason for Change	Date	Name
4.5	Staff Changes and anti-fraud policy	01/09/2017	Stephen Farrow
5.0	Implemented of New Scheme Operating Requirements	01/07/2018	Stephen Farrow
5.1	Staff structure changes	01/01/2020	Stephen Farrow
5.2	Staff structure changes	01/07/2020	Stephen Farrow
5.3	Staff structure changes and CRB	01/04/2021	Stephen Farrow
5.4	Staff structure changes	10/08/2021	Joe Mellon
5.5	Staff structure changes & Document review	17/12/2021	Joe Mellon
5.6	Staff Changes and clarification of heightened audit rates	25/04/2022	Joe Mellon
5.7	Staff Changes & Review	04/10/2023	Joe Mellon
5.8	Periodic Review and Staff Updates	05/03/2024	Joe Mellon
5.9	Periodic review and Staff updates	18/10/2024	Ian Rowley
6.0	Periodic review and Staff updates	12/05/2025	Ian Rowley
6.1	Periodic review and Staff updates	17/11/2026	Ian Rowley