ESG by FSG

Global Business Certification

Scheme Rules, Governance & Certification Process

FSG Certification Limited

Company Registration Number: 820829
Rannagh, Liscannor, Co. Clare, Ireland

Version 2.0 – August 2026
Document reference: FSG-CERT-ESGDES-002

About this document

This document sets out the public rules and governance arrangements for the ESG by FSG Global Business Certification scheme. It should be read together with the current published ESG by FSG Certification Standards and Evidence Requirements, which contain the detailed Environmental, Social and Governance criteria and the requirements for Bronze, Silver, Gold and Emerald certification.

FSG Certification Limited is the scheme owner and certification body. Independent monitoring and evaluation of conformity with the scheme requirements is undertaken by Agent4Change, a legally separate third-party organisation. The detailed ESG standards are deliberately not reproduced in this document so they can be inserted and maintained as the controlled standards section.

Contents

1. Scheme Purpose

The ESG by FSG Global Business Certification scheme independently assesses and rganizati organisations that demonstrate conformity with defined Environmental, Social and Governance requirements.

The scheme is intended to provide organisations, customers and other stakeholders with transparent information about the requirements against which the certified rganization has been assessed. Certification confirms conformity with the published scheme requirements within the certified scope and validity period. It does not constitute a general or unlimited statement that every product, service, activity or future commitment of the rganization is sustainable or has a positive environmental or social impact.

2. Scheme Owner and Governance

FSG Certification Limited is the owner and operator of the ESG by FSG Global Business Certification scheme and is responsible for scheme governance, development and maintenance of certification requirements, application review, certification review and decision, issuance of certificates and marks, surveillance, complaints, appeals, suspension, withdrawal and recertification.

Monitoring and evaluation of compliance with the published certification requirements is undertaken by Agent4Change, an independent third-party organisation legally separate from FSG Certification Limited and Fifty Shades Greener Limited.

Outsourcing independent monitoring and evaluation does not transfer scheme ownership or FSG Certification Limited’s overall responsibility for certification issued under the scheme.

3. Scope and Eligibility

The scheme is open to organisations that fall within the published scope of the ESG by FSG standards and are willing and able to comply with the applicable requirements. The scheme assesses rganizational systems, practices, evidence and performance relevant to the Environmental, Social and Governance requirements within the agreed certification scope.

Certification applies only to the legal entity, business activities, locations and scope identified on the certificate. Certification of one entity or location does not automatically extend to subsidiaries, group companies, franchises, brands, products, services or other locations unless expressly included within the certified scope and evaluated accordingly.

Applicants must provide sufficient information for FSG Certification to confirm eligibility, scope, applicable requirements and the resources and competence needed for evaluation before certification activities begin.

4. Fair, Open and Non-Discriminatory Access

The scheme is open on transparent, fair and non-discriminatory terms to all organisations willing and able to comply with the published requirements.

- Access is not conditional on membership of any association, group or network.
- Access is not limited by the number of certifications already issued by FSG Certification.
- Fees may vary proportionately by organisation size and audit complexity, but the certification requirements and decision rules are applied consistently.
- Purchase of training, education or consultancy from Fifty Shades Greener Limited or any related organisation is not a condition of certification and provides no preferential treatment or advantage in evaluation or certification decision-making.

5. Application and Certification Process

The scheme requirements and certification terms are publicly available before application. An optional self-assessment may be used by an uthorizesn to understand its readiness, but self-assessment does not constitute certification, verification or approval and does not determine the certification outcome.

1. Application and scope review: the uthorizesn submits a Certification Application Form. FSG Certification reviews the legal entity, requested scope, activities, locations, size and structure, applicable requirements, relevant legal and regulatory obligations, existing certifications, available resources and known impartiality risks.
2. Acceptance or rejection: FSG Certification formally records whether the application is accepted. Where information is incomplete or unclear, further information is requested before proceeding. An application may be declined where it is outside scheme scope, adequate competence or resources are unavailable, information is materially incomplete or inaccurate, or an impartiality risk cannot be acceptably managed.
3. Certification agreement and preparation: accepted applicants agree to the scheme terms and receive the certification pack, evidence guidance, templates where useful, and the planned audit timetable. Applicants may submit evidence in their own format where it adequately demonstrates conformity.
4. Independent desk evaluation: Agent4Change assigns a suitably competent and conflict-checked auditor to evaluate the submitted evidence against the published ESG requirements. The auditor may request clarification or additional evidence.

5. Independent site audit: the certification process includes an on-site audit to verify implementation, interview relevant personnel, inspect operations and corroborate evidence. The scope and duration are proportionate to the uthorizesn's size, complexity, locations and risk.
6. Audit report: the auditor documents findings, non-conformities where applicable, and a recommendation regarding conformity. The auditor does not make the final certification decision.
7. Independent review and decision: a competent Reviewer/Decision Maker who has not participated in the audit reviews the audit report and supporting evidence and decides whether certification is granted, refused, or whether additional evidence, corrective action or further evaluation is required.
8. Certification issuance: where approved, FSG Certification issues the applicable Bronze, Silver, Gold or Emerald certificate and authorizes use of the corresponding certification mark within the certified scope and validity period.

6. Independent Third-Party Monitoring

Agent4Change undertakes independent third-party monitoring and evaluation of conformity with the scheme requirements. Assigned auditors must meet FSG Certification's documented requirements for competence, confidentiality, impartiality and conflicts of interest.

- Auditors assess only against the applicable published certification requirements and controlled scheme procedures.
- Auditors must declare actual, potential or perceived conflicts of interest before accepting an assignment and whenever circumstances change.
- Auditors must not have a commercial interest in the certification outcome and must not be remunerated according to whether certification is granted or the level achieved.
- Auditors must not make, promise or imply the final certification decision.
- Auditors must not have provided conflicting consultancy to the applicant where this would compromise, or reasonably appear to compromise, independence or impartiality.
- FSG Certification shall not instruct or pressure an auditor to alter findings or recommendations for commercial, financial or reputational reasons.
- Where competence, independence or impartiality cannot be demonstrated, another auditor must be appointed.

7. Evidence Requirements

Certification findings must be supported by sufficient, relevant, current and verifiable objective evidence. The published ESG standards and evidence guidance identify the information expected for the applicable criteria.

- Evidence may include policies, procedures, records, invoices, utility or emissions data, HR and governance records, risk assessments, training records, supplier documentation, contracts, photographs, interviews, site observations and other verifiable material.
- Verbal statements alone will not normally be sufficient where documentary, physical or digital evidence would reasonably be expected.
- Evidence must relate to the rganization and scope being certified and must cover an appropriate period to demonstrate implementation, not merely intention.
- The auditor may use sampling proportionate to the size, complexity and risk of the rganization and may request additional evidence where information is incomplete, inconsistent or insufficient.
- Applicants must not falsify, manipulate or materially misrepresent evidence. False or misleading evidence may result in refusal, suspension or withdrawal of certification.

8. Certification Review and Decision

Evaluation and certification decision-making are separate functions. The audit report and supporting evidence are independently reviewed before a certification decision is made.

The Reviewer/Decision Maker must be competent to understand the applicable ESG certification requirements, must not have participated in the audit being reviewed, and must declare any actual, potential or perceived conflict of interest.

Possible outcomes include:

- certification granted at the applicable level;
- certification refused;
- additional evidence requested;
- corrective action required before a decision can be finalised;
- further evaluation or site verification required.

Certification decisions are based solely on objective evidence of conformity. No person involved in selling or delivering training or consultancy to the applicant may influence the audit findings or certification decision relating to that applicant.

9. Certification Levels and Published Standards

The ESG by FSG scheme contains 50 published standards: 24 Environmental, 13 Social and 13 Governance. The detailed standards and any associated evidence requirements are maintained in the controlled ESG by FSG Certification Standards and Evidence Requirements.

Level	Current award rule
Bronze	12 Environmental + 6 Social + 6 Governance standards
Silver	18 Environmental + 9 Social + 9 Governance standards
Gold	All 50 standards
Emerald	Available from Year 2 where the organisation demonstrates improvement in at least 40% of the measured metrics, in addition to satisfying the applicable certification requirements.

Only the certification level formally approved by the Decision Maker and stated on the certificate may be represented by the certified organisation. Where the standards document is revised, the current controlled version of the published award rules applies.

Environmental Standards		
No	**Criteria**	**Alignment to SDGs**
1	Measure and record the organisation's energy use monthly.	7,9,12,13
2	Have an energy management plan to reduce energy which is reviewed monthly (including switching to renewable energy).	7,9,12,13,14,15
3	Have a time-bound plan that aims to measure all relevant categories of Scope 3 emissions.	7,9,12,13,14,15
4	Measure and record the organisation's waste production and its different streams monthly.	2,7,9,12,13,14,15
5	Comply with all waste and water treatment legislation and any other environmental licensing/legislation relevant to your organisation/industry.	3,6,7,9,12,13,14,15

6	Have a waste management plan to reduce waste production which is reviewed monthly.	2,7,9,12,13,14,15
7	Measure and record the CO_2 emissions of organisation-related travel annually (including employee commuting and business travel).	7,9,12,13
8	Calculate and record the organisation's Scope 1 and Scope 2 CO_2 emissions annually.	7,9,12,13
9	Analyse how the organisation interacts with water, including how and where water is withdrawn, consumed, and discharged, and the water-related impacts the organisation has caused.	6, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14
10	Have a water management plan to reduce water use which is reviewed monthly.	6,7,9,12,13,14,15
11	Measure the percentage of local suppliers and upstream transportation methods annually.	2,9,10,11,12
12	Have an action plan that is time-bound to improve the percentage of local purchases and emissions from the transportation of products that are reviewed bi-annually.	2,9,10,11,12
13	Analyse the environmental impact of products when used/disposed of by the customer and include recommended actions to customers on the use and disposal method of the product.	6, 11, 12, 13, 14 & 15
14	Have an action plan which is time-bound to reduce emissions from employee commuting and business travel.	3,9,11,13
15	Analyse if the organisation's operations originate significant emissions to air (e.g., oil & gas, energy, transportation, chemical, including ozone-depleting substances).	2,3,6,9,12,13,15

16	Analyse the organisation's products and services to observe circular economy principles and develop justifications for products and services that don't meet these principles.	3,6,9,12,13,15
17	Measure and analyse the environmental impact of all raw materials and develop an action plan to replace some/all materials with eco/organic materials.	2,3,6,9,12,13,15
18	Analyse the environmental impact of all packaging and develop an action plan to replace and reduce packaging.	2,3,6,9,12,13,15
19	Assess the organisation's impacts and risks on nature and ecosystems (local to global) which includes deforestation and land degradation.	3,6,9,12,13,15
20	Engage with suppliers on their sustainability mission and ensure they are attempting to reduce their carbon footprint and address ecosystems and biodiversity impact.	3,9,11,12,13,15,17
21	Examine if there are any risks of soil/water contamination resulting from the activities of the organisation.	3,6,9,12,13,14,15
22	Have an action plan that is time-bound to address the organisation's impact on nature and ecosystems (local to global) which is reviewed annually (e.g. certified eco-cleaning products).	3,6,9,12,13,14,15
23	Act in accordance with the safe use, storage and disposal of hazardous/toxic chemicals and substances.	3,9,12,13,14,15
24	Have a sustainability training programme in place for all employees, including the formation of an internal ESG team that meets regularly.	2,3,9,12,13,14,15,17
Social Standards		

25	Measure & record employee satisfaction & well-being bi-annually.	3,8
26	Measure & record employee turnover rates, new hire rates, promotion rates and return to work from parental leave rates by gender bi-annually.	1,3,8,10
27	Design strategies to reduce employee turnover and improve talent retention.	1,3,8,10
28	Measure & record customer satisfaction bi-annually.	3,8,11
29	Measure the % of employees that have received performance and career development reviews and offer opportunities for CPD.	1,3,4,8
30	Measure gender equality within the workforce (% split of genders and salaries).	1,3,5,8,10
31	Measure diversity (race, sexuality, religion and/or culture) within the workforce.	1,3,5,8,10
32	Pay a minimum of the national living wage to all employees and subcontractors and ensure all employees have formal contracts of employment.	1,3,5,8,10,11
33	Analyse health and safety standards of all employees (full-time, part-time, contractors…) and consumers regularly and provide training on H&S.	1,3,8
34	Analyse possible risks of violations of human rights when dealing with people: employees, customers, contractors, supply chain, and the wider community (including analysing the forced and child labour risks and the rights of indigenous people).	3,5,8,10,11,17

35	Measure and report workplace incidents and accidents (including discrimination incidents), and corrective actions taken.	3,8,10
36	Measure the social impact (positive or negative) that the organisation has on the local community and develop a plan to improve annually.	1,3,5,8,10,11
37	Conduct risk assessment for employees, suppliers, and customers.	3,8,9,3,10
38	Have a well-being/benefits programme for all employees (full-time, part-time, temporary) which at a minimum includes all employee rights/policies in the organisation's country (parental leave, sick leave, retirement, health insurance…).	1,3,8,10
Governance Standards		
39	Have an environmental policy which includes annual targets commitments and measurable goals.	6,7,9,13,14,15
40	Have a detailed policy ensuring the health and safety of customers and employees (including casual workers, and volunteers).	1,3,8,10
41	Have a detailed policy for data protection, privacy, and security.	3,8,10
42	Have a comprehensive policy that identifies and addresses human rights, labour standards, sexual harassment, indigenous people's rights, and modern slavery risks.	1,3,5,8,9,10,11

43	Follow all the mandatory compliance concerning product service information and labelling.	9,12,13
44	Have a code of ethics that includes human rights and animal welfare and a responsible purchasing policy for suppliers.	9,12,13,17
45	Be transparent about ethical financing, where taxes are spent and practice responsible transparency and accountability to all stakeholders (including tax strategy, report of political contributions, direct economic value generated and distributed, financial assistance received from the government…).	1,9,11,12,13,17
46	Ensure no involvement in any illegal practices in the past three years (corruption, fraud, bribery), have an anticorruption policy and offer training about anti-corruption procedures.	1,8,12
47	Ensure no conflicts of interest when choosing the board members and analyse the board diversity and gender equality.	3,5,8,9,10,11
48	Communicate ESG/sustainability/CSR values and targets on the website/annual report.	3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11,13,14,15,17
49	Have a policy that supports freedom of association, the right to organise, and collective bargaining.	1,3,8,10
50	Have a policy for innovation and ensure all newly developed products or services follow ESG standards.	6, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15

There is a total of 50 standards:

- 24 environmental standards
- 13 social standards

- 13 governance standards

Emerald – Year 2 - when not only reporting but actually improving on at least 40% of all measured metrics.

Gold – achieves all 50 standards

Silver – achieves 18 Env – 9 Social – 9 Governance

Bronze – achieves 12 Env - 6 social – 6 Governance

10. Certification Validity and Recertification

Certification is valid for 12 months from the date of issue unless a different validity period is expressly stated on the certificate. Certification is subject to continued conformity with the scheme requirements.

Certification does not renew automatically. An organisation wishing to continue certification must complete the applicable recertification process before expiry. Recertification includes updated evidence and independent evaluation appropriate to the scope, review of previous non-conformities and surveillance outcomes, and a new certification review and decision. Emerald status is not automatic in Year 2 and must be supported by verified evidence against the applicable Emerald improvement rule.

11. Surveillance and Site Audits

FSG Certification may undertake surveillance during the certification period to confirm continued conformity. Surveillance may include requests for updated evidence, review of material changes, investigation of complaints, monitoring of certification-mark use, remote verification or additional independent audit.

The ESG by FSG certification process includes an independent site audit as part of initial certification. Further site audits may be required during surveillance or recertification where risks, material changes, complaints, evidence inconsistencies or the nature of the certified scope make additional on-site verification necessary.

During a site audit, the auditor may:

- interview relevant management, employees, contractors or other persons within scope;
- inspect buildings, operational areas, products, services and processes within scope;
- review records, policies, systems and supporting evidence;
- corroborate evidence previously submitted;
- sample relevant ESG practices, controls and performance data.

The organization must provide reasonable access to relevant locations, personnel, systems and records. Audit scope, duration, travel and any additional site-audit costs will be communicated in advance where applicable.

12. Non-Conformities and Corrective Action

Where a certification requirement is not met, the auditor will document the non-conformity and the objective evidence supporting the finding. The applicant will be informed of required corrective action and the timeframe for response.

Corrective action must be supported by appropriate evidence and independently verified before closure where closure is required for certification. Certification will not be granted or maintained where unresolved non-conformities prevent conformity with the applicable scheme requirements.

13. Suspension, Withdrawal and Reduction

FSG Certification may suspend, withdraw or reduce certification where an organisation:

- no longer meets applicable certification requirements;
- fails to resolve required corrective actions within the stated timeframe;
- refuses required surveillance or access for independent verification;
- provides false, manipulated or misleading evidence;
- misuses the certification mark or certification status;
- makes materially misleading environmental, social or sustainability claims linked to the certification;
- undergoes a material change affecting certified scope or conformity and fails to notify FSG Certification;
- seriously breaches the certification agreement or scheme rules; or
- requests voluntary withdrawal.

Where certification is suspended, withdrawn or reduced, the organisation will be formally notified and must cease or amend use of the relevant certification mark and certification claims in accordance with the Certification Mark Rules. FSG Certification will update certification records and any public register of certified organisations where applicable.

14. Complaints

Complaints may be submitted by applicants, certified organisations, consumers, employees, suppliers, stakeholders or other interested parties in relation to certification activities, auditor conduct, use of certification marks, certified organisations, or the impartiality and integrity of the certification process.

Complaints will be handled impartially and, wherever possible, by persons who are not directly involved in the matter complained about. Appropriate investigation and corrective action will be taken where a complaint is substantiated. The current Complaints Procedure and contact route are published by FSG Certification.

15. Appeals

An applicant or certified rganization may appeal a certification decision, including refusal of certification, the certification level awarded, suspension, reduction, withdrawal or refusal of recertification.

Appeals are considered by a person or panel independent of the original audit, review and certification decision. No person involved in the original audit, review or decision may decide the appeal. The appeal outcome and rationale will be documented and communicated to the appellant.

16. Certification Mark and Claims Rules

Certification authorises the organisation to use the applicable ESG by FSG Certification mark only within the certified scope and validity period and only at the level formally awarded.

- The mark may be used only by the certified organisation and for the legal entity, locations and scope identified on the certificate.
- The mark must not be altered, adapted or used in a misleading manner.
- The mark must not imply that products, services, subsidiaries, locations or activities outside the certified scope have been certified.
- The mark must not be used after expiry, suspension or withdrawal.
- Certification does not authorise broader environmental, social or sustainability claims that are not supported by the certification scope or other appropriate evidence.
- A certification level must not be presented as evidence that every aspect of the organisation’s ESG performance is positive or that the organisation has no adverse impacts.
- Certified organisations remain responsible for ensuring that environmental and sustainability claims in their commercial communications comply with applicable consumer-protection legislation.

FSG Certification may require correction or removal of any use of the mark or related claim that is inaccurate, misleading, outside scope or inconsistent with the Certification Mark Rules.

17. Changes to Scheme Requirements

FSG Certification may revise certification requirements following periodic review, consultation with relevant experts and stakeholders, regulatory or legislative change, technical developments, new evidence or ecognized changes in good practice.

Material changes are subject to appropriate governance and document control. Relevant certified organisations and applicants will be informed of material changes and, where appropriate, any implementation or transition arrangements. The current published version of the scheme requirements will identify its version and effective date.

18. Fees

Certification fees are structured by organisation size to support proportionate and fair access. Fees are exclusive of VAT unless stated otherwise.

Organisation size	Initial certification fee	Additional audit following unsuccessful assessment
50 or fewer employees	€3,500	€1,500
100 or fewer employees	€5,000	€2,500
500 or fewer employees	€11,000	€6,000
More than 500 employees	€25,000	€10,000

The initial certification fee includes certification administration, independent third-party desk evaluation and site audit by Agent4Change, certification review and the certification decision process, subject to the agreed scope. Any exceptional travel, accommodation, multi-site or additional audit costs will be agreed in advance where applicable.

Fees and auditor remuneration are not contingent on certification being granted or on the certification level achieved. Payment does not guarantee certification.

19. Confidentiality and Data Protection

Information submitted during certification is treated as confidential and is accessible only to uthorized persons involved in the certification process, including the independent monitoring/audit provider and Reviewer/Decision Maker where necessary.

All persons involved in certification activities are subject to appropriate confidentiality obligations. Information will not be disclosed to other parties except where uthorized, necessary for certification, required by law, required by a competent authority, or necessary to investigate a complaint or protect the integrity of certification. Where disclosure is legally permitted to be notified, the client will be informed as appropriate.

Personal data will be handled in accordance with applicable data-protection legislation and FSG Certification's data-protection and records-management procedures.

20. Impartiality and Related Organisations

FSG Certification actively identifies, assesses and manages risks to impartiality arising from ownership, governance, shared directors, commercial relationships, training or consultancy, personal relationships, auditor-client relationships and other interests that could influence or appear to influence certification activities.

FSG Certification Limited and Fifty Shades Greener Limited are separate legal entities. Fifty Shades Greener Limited provides sustainability training and education services. Purchase or completion of those services is not a prerequisite for ESG by FSG certification and provides no preferential treatment or advantage.

Personnel involved in selling or delivering training or consultancy to an applicant shall not influence independent audit findings or certification decisions relating to that applicant. Any individual participating in certification review or decision-making must satisfy the applicable competence, independence and conflict-of-interest controls in the FSG Certification Quality Assurance system.

21. Regulatory and Quality Framework

The scheme is designed to operate consistently with the certification-scheme requirements introduced by Directive (EU) 2024/825 on empowering consumers for the green transition, including publicly available scheme terms and requirements, transparent and non-discriminatory access, development of scheme requirements in consultation with relevant experts and stakeholders, procedures for non-compliance and suspension or withdrawal of the sustainability label, and objective monitoring by a competent and independent third party.

FSG Certification's certification processes are designed and operated in alignment with the principles and applicable requirements of ISO/IEC 17065 for bodies certifying products, processes and services. FSG

Certification does not claim accreditation to ISO/IEC 17065 unless and until such accreditation is formally obtained.

The detailed ESG by FSG standards, Quality Assurance Manual, Certification Mark Rules, complaints and appeals procedures, and other current public certification information should be read together where relevant.

Important

The ESG by FSG certification mark confirms conformity with the published requirements within the certified scope, level and validity period. It must not be used to imply broader sustainability performance, environmental benefit, social benefit or future performance that has not been independently assessed or otherwise substantiated.