

ASI – ACCREDITATION SERVICES INTERNATIONAL GmbH

ASI Advice Note

Subject	Transfer of certificates between certification bodies
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Advice note written by:	Achim Droste
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References	FSC Accreditation Manual, Part 2.4 section 7. Draft ABU document ABU-PD-certificate transfer.
Advice sought on	What procedures must certification bodies follow when a client wants to transfer his certificate from one CB to another within and after the period of validity?
ASI Advice	Summary of terms and definitions

The **preceding certification body** is defined as the certification body that first issued a certificate and that was contract partner until the certification contract was taken over and terminated.

The **succeeding certification body** is defined as the certification body that takes over a certificate from a preceding certification body. Following the transfer process, the succeeding certification body must establish a new contract and becomes the new contract partner of the certificate holder.

Suspension of certificate: The temporary removal by the Certification Body administrative action of all or part of a certificate holder's scope of certification pending corrective action by the certificate holder.

Termination of certificate: cancellation of the certification contract by either party according to contractual arrangements. Also referred to as voluntary withdrawal or cancellation.

Withdrawal of certificate: The irrevocable removal by the certification body of all or part of a certificate holder's certification as a result of noncompliance with certification requirements or contractual commitments.

Expiration of certificate: The certificate reaches its expiry date without being renewed by the issuing certification body.

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Invalid certificate: A certificate that is withdrawn, terminated or expired. A certificate that has been suspended is still a valid certificate (but inactive) and subject to the calculation of the AAF. A certificate may also become invalid if the certification body itself loses its accreditation subject to withdrawal of accreditation. The implications of this are described in a separate document (see ASI-PRO-20-121).

Procedures in detail

1 Expiry of a certificate

1.1 A certificate expires when it reaches its expiry date without being renewed or extended by the issuing certification body.

2 Withdrawal of a certificate

2.1 A certificate is withdrawn when all or part of a certificate holder's certification is irrevocably removed by the certification body.

2.2 Reasons for withdrawal of a certificate may include, but are not limited to:

- a) non-payment of certification fees;
- b) non-compliance with corrective actions or other terms and conditions of issue;
- c) failure to undergo the scheduled surveillance.

3 Termination of a certificate

3.1 A certificate is terminated when the certification contract is cancelled by either party according to the contractual arrangements.

3.2 If a certificate is terminated the client may indicate the date it wishes the certificate to be terminated. To that date all the obligations and rights of both parties shall apply in accordance with the terms and conditions of the certification contract.

4 Issue of a certificate to a former certificate holder after expiry or termination of the certificate

4.1 A FSC-accredited certification body may issue a certificate to a new client at any time after the expiry or termination of the client's existing certificate, based on a full evaluation according to FSC certification requirements.

4.2 If the main audit for this client is conducted within a period of 12 months from the expiry or termination of the former certificate, the succeeding certification body is expected to consider any major or minor CARs which had not been closed at the time of expiry /

termination. ASI may be approached to identify these CARs.

5 Transfer of a valid certificate to a new certification body

- 5.1 The holder of a valid certificate (i.e. a certificate that has not been withdrawn, terminated or expired) may request that the certificate be transferred from its current certification body to a new certification body. Suspended certificates shall not be transferred.
- 5.2 A FSC certificate can only be transferred once within the 5-year's period of validity of the certificate. If a client wishes to change certification body more than once within the 5 years period, a full FSC certification evaluation must take place, in line with Section 4 of this advice note.
- 5.3 Procedures for the transfer of a certificate are as follows:
 - 5.3.1 The period of validity of an FSC certificate shall not exceed five years. Thus, the expiry date of the succeeding certificate shall be the same as the expiry date of the preceding certificate;
 - 5.3.2 all conditions or corrective actions that are applicable to the preceding certificate shall remain applicable to the succeeding certificate, and shall be evaluated by the succeeding certification body according to the defined timelines;
 - 5.3.3 the results of any FSC or ASI surveillance audits regarding the compliance of the client to certification requirements shall be applicable to the succeeding certification body;
 - 5.3.4 A valid FSC certificate can only be transferred if the preceding certification body and the succeeding certification body come to an agreement regarding the transfer of all relevant reports, records or other information that are relevant to the client's compliance with FSC certification requirements. If relevant documentation about the certificate holder cannot be made available to the succeeding certification body, a certificate transfer in the context of this procedure is not possible;
 - 5.3.5 The preceding certification body and the succeeding certification body shall agree with the client a transfer date on which all rights and obligations for maintaining the certificate shall be passed from the preceding to the succeeding certification body. Both certification bodies shall inform ASI of the transfer date at least ten (10) days in advance. ASI will assign the certificate to the succeeding certification body in the FSC certificate data base. On the date of transfer the certificate shall be withdrawn by the preceding certification body and recorded as such in the FSC data base. On the same date the succeeding certification body

shall issue a new certificate that will be recorded in the FSC data base;

5.3.6 The succeeding certification body shall carry out a monitoring audit within three months of the date of transfer. During this first monitoring audit the succeeding certification body shall evaluate the client against the relevant standards and procedures and review all pending CARs which were issued by the preceding certification body.

Basis for advice

1. The FSC accreditation program -managed by ASI- aims to ensure that all FSC certificates meet FSC's requirements. This allows for the mutual recognition of FSC certificates between all accredited certification bodies.
2. FSC and ASI do not encourage the movement of clients between certification bodies, but recognizes that there may be circumstances in which such movement is legitimate and appropriate.
3. FSC's and ASI's objective in such case is to ensure that clients are treated fairly and objectively, whilst ensuring that transfer between certification bodies cannot become a tool by which clients can evade or avoid their obligations to comply with FSC certification requirements.