



Moving to the New FSC Forest Stewardship Standard

The transition to the new FSC national forest stewardship standard for the UK – the move from UKWAS 3.1 to 4 – begins formally on 1 April 2018 when the new standard becomes effective.

This factsheet lays out the transition arrangements and also summarises the main changes in standard requirements.



Transition to the new standard

The transition period runs for twelve months from 1 April 2018.

During this period, all certificate holders and new applicants for certification must be audited against the new standard.

It is possible to be audited against the old standard during the transition period, for example if your next scheduled audit falls shortly after 1 April and you do not feel you have had time to adapt to the new standard requirements; however, if that is the case, you must then bring forward your next scheduled audit so that you are evaluated against the new standard before the end of the transition period.

During the transition period, certification bodies may grant extensions of up to six months to close major corrective action requests (CARs) when these are issued as a result of non-compliance with entirely new standard requirements (not reworded existing requirements).

The FSC Principles and Criteria ordered version of the standard is the formal basis for auditing and any disputes, but standard users may choose to work with the more user-friendly UKWAS version*.

New or substantially changed standard requirements

The following are some of the more significant changes to the standard, with references to where they appear in both the FSC and UKWAS ordered versions of the standard*. Some are due to changes in FSC requirements, while others are the result of input from stakeholders:

- The role of guidance has been clarified to ensure that it provides useful support to standard users rather than creating an extra layer of requirements.
- Some requirements have been removed, such as the ‘forestry by numbers’ requirements for species proportions and coupe size limits, or game management requirements already covered by best practice.
- There is now an explicit requirement to set out a long term policy and management objectives which are environmentally sound, socially beneficial and economically viable (FSC 7.1.1/UKWAS 2.1.1).
- Deadwood requirements have been clarified and expanded (FSC 6.6.4 & 6.6.5, UKWAS 4.6.4), and veteran tree requirements have been separated out and expanded (FSC 6.6.3/UKWAS 4.6.3).
- PAWS requirements have been radically simplified now that more published guidance is available (FSC 9.3.5 & 9.3.6/UKWAS 4.3.1).
- Several other conservation requirements have been teased apart for clarity (FSC 6.5/UKWAS 4.4).



- An explicit requirement has been added to develop strategies to maintain or enhance high conservation values (FSC 9.2.1 & 9.2.2/UKWAS 2.11.2), and a requirement has also been added which requires operations to cease or relocate if they damage sites or features of conservation value or of special cultural and historical significance, or if they reveal previously unknown sites or features (FSC 9.3.10/UKWAS 3.1.4).
- The section on workers’ rights has been expanded to include equality issues (FSC 2.2.1/UKWAS 5.6.1), grievance procedures (FSC 2.6.1 & 2.6.2/UKWAS 5.6.1) and living wages (FSC 2.4.1/UKWAS 5.6.1).
- Various legal issues have been separated out and addressed explicitly, including legal authority to carry out specific operations (FSC 1.1.2/UKWAS 1.1.3), conformance to guidance on anti-corruption legislation (FSC 1.7.1/UKWAS 1.1.6), and compliance with legislation on transport and trade of forest products (FSC 1.5.1/UKWAS 1.1.7).

* For an explanation of the relationship between the official FSC Principles and Criteria ordered national forest stewardship standard and UKWAS, as well as FSC-specific certification requirements, see the factsheet *Forest Management Standards in the UK*.