



## **Recognised Ecolabel: Third-Party Assessor and Independent Expert Requirements**

Date: January 2026

Supersedes: None

Scheduled revision date: January 2027

To ensure the credibility and integrity of the Recognised Ecolabel program, all Applications undergo an independent Third-party Assessment.

Additionally, all Whole-of-business Applications and a sample of Product Applications undergo Independent Expert Review of the assessment outcome. This two-tiered process is designed to ensure objectivity and consistency in assessing conformity to the Recognised criteria, and independence from the Program Operator.

This document sets out the requirements for the Third-party Assessor and Independent Expert in relation to the Recognised Ecolabel program. These requirements align with internationally recognised best practices (ISO 17065 and ISO 14024).

### **A. Third-party Assessor requirements**

#### **Summary of responsibilities**

The Third-party Assessor is responsible for all activities relating to the Screening and Assessment of Applications, including:

- establishing and documenting protocols and processes relating to Recognised Screening, Assessment and Independent Review
- maintaining the online Application portal
- liaising with Applicants in relation to:
  - maintaining records relating to Screening and Assessment applications and outcomes
  - notifying Applicants and Accord of application progress and outcomes
  - invoicing Applicants for all Screening and Assessment fees
- ensuring the protection of proprietary information, including formulation details and associated data
- coordinating the Independent Review of the Assessment process and outcome
- nominating external providers of third-party assessment services, subject to these Requirements and the terms of the Services Agreement
- providing notifications to Accord
- complying with all terms of the Services Agreement with Accord

#### **Legal obligations**

The legal obligations of the Third-party Assessor regarding the responsibilities above are set out in the Services Agreement with Accord. This must be finalised before the Third-party Assessor can commence any Screening or Assessment assessments in relation to the Recognised Ecolabel program. The legal obligations include:

- performing the Services to the standard of care and skill expected of a provider of toxicology services who regularly acts in the capacity in which the Third-party Assessor is engaged and who possesses the knowledge, skill and experience of a toxicologist qualified to act in that capacity
- providing all professional skill and advice required for carrying out the Services with due expedition and without delay, and in accordance with the Recognised Ecolabel Rules

- complying with all directions of Accord and regularly consulting with Accord regarding the carrying out of the Services (other than in respect of conducting and reaching conclusions with regard to Screenings and Technical Assessments)
- employing or sub-contracting Services, which may include the Third-party Assessment and Independent Review, to personnel with suitable qualifications and experience, subject to the terms of the Services Agreement
- as soon as practicable after becoming aware of any matter or circumstance which may adversely affect or has adversely affected the scope, timing or carrying out of the Services, give written notice to Accord detailing the matter or circumstance and its anticipated effect on the Services and the program
- complying with all legislative requirements in carrying out the Services
- maintaining the confidentiality of all Confidential Information of Accord and Applicants
- maintaining the security of data and information provided by Applicants and instituting security measures (which must be pre-approved by Accord) to protect the data and information from unauthorised use and disclosure, including the requirement that sub-contractors enter into a confidentiality agreement before undertaking any work
- doing all things necessary and necessarily incidental for the proper performance of the Third-party Assessor's obligations under the Services Agreement
- not acting in a manner that will bring Accord or the Recognised Ecolabel program into disrepute.

## Essential requirements

Accord will assess the fitness of a Third-Party Assessor in relation to the requirements below before engaging their services in relation to the Recognised Ecolabel program.

### *Independence and impartiality*

Third-party Assessors must operate with full independence from the Applicant, Accord, and the Independent Expert in relation to conducting Whole-of-business and Product assessments. They must:

- not have been involved in the design, manufacture, marketing or consulting of the Applicant's product within the previous three years
- not have been an employee of an Applicant within the previous three years
- be free from any commercial, financial or organisational interest in the Applicant, its products, or competitors
- be functionally and structurally independent from Accord's licensing activities
- disclose any actual or perceived conflicts of interest to Accord before signing the Services Agreement or commencing a Screening or Technical Assessment, and recuse themselves from screening/assessment where such conflicts exist
- conduct Screenings and Technical Assessments objectively, in accordance with the *Recognised Ecolabel Standard*, and free from external influence or bias
- avoid any activities that could compromise objectivity.

### *Competency and qualifications*

Third-party Assessors must demonstrate relevant expertise, for example, in environmental science, sustainability, life cycle assessment, risk assessment and relevant industry practices, to ensure the Assessment is based on a high level of scientific rigour and specific knowledge. Assessors must:

- possess qualifications and/or demonstrated professional experience appropriate to the assessment of the environmental and human health impacts of commercial and I&I cleaning, hygiene and related products; this could include but is not limited to, environmental chemistry, toxicology and ecotoxicology

- possess an understanding of the chemistry of cleaning and hygiene products, including formulation principles, common ingredients and relevant hazards
- demonstrate understanding of the *Recognised Ecolabel Standard*, *Recognised Ecolabel Rules* and related protocols
- be familiar with applicable national and international regulations relating to commercial and I&I cleaning, hygiene and related products
- be able to review and interpret test reports, safety data sheets, certification documents, technical dossiers, policies and other relevant forms of evidence
- demonstrate competence in evaluating conformity against multi-criteria environmental standards using documented, objective methods
- understand quality assurance and data validation principles
- be able to write clear, evidence-based assessment reports, in a standardised form, that justify findings and conclusions
- maintain ongoing professional development in areas related to environmental certification.

### *Quality management and assurance*

Third-party Assessors must operate under a quality system that includes:

- documented procedures for conducting assessments, handling evidence, reporting and making recommendations
- documented procedures for managing and recording complaints and appeals
- systems for recording and tracking Application submissions and progress, and notifying Applicants and Accord regarding progress/outcomes
- a clear internal review process for ensuring the quality and consistency of assessment reports.

### *Conduct*

Third-party Assessors must conduct all assessments using sound, transparent and consistent methods. Assessors must:

- adhere to all documented assessment procedures
- meet all documented assessment timeframes
- review all documentation submitted by applicants thoroughly and objectively
- ensure that suitable evidence/supporting information is provided, for every criterion, in support of an Application, in line with the *Recognised Ecolabel Standard*
- publish and adhere to all published Screening and Assessment Fees
- maintain professional, timely and respectful communication with both the Applicant and Accord.

### *Reporting and record keeping*

Third-party Assessors must:

- prepare a formal assessment report using the standard Recognised template
- provide the Independent Expert with all materials relating to an assessment, including the notifications
- maintain all submitted documents, correspondence and assessment for a minimum of 12/seven years (for Whole-of-business/Product assessments)
- cooperate with external audits
- cooperate with oversight activities by Accord or external organisations to ensure compliance and continuous improvement.

### *Confidentiality*

The Third-party Assessor must adhere to the confidentiality requirements of the Recognised Ecolabel program, as outlined in the *Services Agreement* and *Recognised Communication Protocol*. This protects the Applicant's proprietary and sensitive information, maintains Accord's independence from

the Screening and Technical Assessments, and protects the integrity of the Recognised Ecolabel program. Assessors must:

- maintain all information submitted by an Applicant in an Application as confidential (except the Applicant name, product name and product category), for use exclusively for the purpose of assessment
- handle and store all confidential information securely
- only divulge confidential information when required under relevant laws, in the manner required under the relevant law.

## B. Independent Expert requirements

### Summary of responsibilities

The Independent Expert is responsible for the Independent Review of the Third-party Assessment process and outcome. This includes:

- ensuring that the Assessment process followed established procedures and protocols
- confirming that the Third-party Assessor's conclusions are evidence-based, well-reasoned and aligned with the requirements of the *Recognised Ecolabel Standard*
- checking for consistency across Applications, especially where professional judgement or interpretation of criteria has been applied
- ensuring the protection of proprietary information, including formulation details and associated data
- complying with all terms of the *Contractor Agreement* with the Third-party Assessor.

The Independent Expert must operate under a formal *Contractor Agreement* with the Third-party Assessor.

### Essential requirements

#### *Independence and impartiality*

The Independent Expert must operate with full independence from the Applicant organisation, Accord and the Third-party Assessor. They must:

- not have been involved in the design, manufacture, marketing or consulting of the Applicant's product within the previous three years
- be free from any commercial, financial or organisational interest in the Applicant company, its products, or its competitors
- be functionally and structurally independent from Accord's licensing activities
- be functionally and structurally independent of the Third-party Assessor conducting the technical assessment and not have contributed to the assessment or decision-making
- disclose any actual or perceived conflicts of interest to the Third-party Assessor before signing the *Contractor Agreement* or commencing an Independent Review, and recuse themselves from conducting an Independent Review where such conflicts exist
- conduct the Independent Review in accordance with the *Screening and Technical Assessment Procedure*, free from external influence or bias
- avoid any activities that could compromise objectivity.

#### *Competency and qualifications*

The Independent Expert must have appropriate qualifications and/or demonstrated expertise, for example, in ecotoxicology and risk assessment, to ensure the Independent Review can effectively evaluate the Assessment outcome. The Independent Expert must:

- possess qualifications and/or demonstrated professional experience appropriate to the assessment of environmental and human health impacts of commercial and I&I cleaning, hygiene and related products.
- possess an understanding of the chemistry of cleaning and hygiene products, including formulation principles, common ingredients, and relevant hazards.
- demonstrate understanding of the *Recognised Ecolabel Standard*, *Recognised Ecolabel Rules* and related protocols, including, before their first review, undertaking a dedicated Q&A session with the Third-party Assessor on the *Recognised Ecolabel Standard*, review framework, expectations and responsibilities
- be familiar with applicable national and international regulations relating to commercial and I&I cleaning, hygiene and related products
- be able to review and interpret test reports, safety data sheets, certification documents, technical dossiers, policies and other relevant forms of evidence
- understand quality assurance and data validation principles

### *Review conduct*

The Independent Expert must conduct the Review with care, diligence and professional skill, in accordance with the *Contractor Agreement*. This includes:

- conducting a thorough, impartial and methodical review
- maintaining strict confidentiality of all data, materials and information shared during the review process, according to the terms of the Confidentiality Agreement
- following the Third-party Assessor's *Screening and Technical Assessment Procedure*, a standardised process
- notifying the Review outcome to the Third-party Assessor and Accord via the standard checklist
- ensuring a clear audit trail of the review process and its findings.

### *Confidentiality*

Independent Experts must adhere to the confidentiality requirements of the *Recognised Ecolabel Program*, as outlined in the *Contractor Agreement*. These include:

- protecting proprietary and sensitive information of the Applicant
- maintaining Accord's and the Third-party Assessor's independence from the Independent Review.

## C. Definitions

*(For additional definitions, see the Recognised Ecolabel Rules)*

**Applicant:** A manufacturer/brand owner of commercial and I&I cleaning, hygiene and related products that has submitted an Application for Accreditation under the Recognised Ecolabel program.

**Application:** The evidence/information submitted by an Applicant to the Third-party Assessor, based on the requirements specified in the *Recognised Ecolabel Standard*, for assessment against the *Recognised Ecolabel Standard*.

**Assessment:** The evaluation of an Application (Whole-of-business or Product) for Accreditation under the Recognised Ecolabel program against the requirements of the *Recognised Ecolabel Standard* by the Third-party Assessor.

**Cleaning products:** Products with the primary function of removing visible matter (soil) and odours (often in conjunction with physical action). Examples are detergents, cleansers and soaps.

**Commercial and I&I products:** Products designed primarily for use in workplaces, public facilities, institutions, warehouses and industrial facilities.

**Criteria:** The requirements within the *Recognised Ecolabel Standard* that must be met before Accreditation under the Recognised Ecolabel program is possible.

**Formulated (product)/Formulation:** A chemical product made from a carefully selected and proportioned mixture of substances (which may also include live microorganisms) that do not chemically react, but that each play a part in the properties of the finished product. 'Formulation' also refers to the act of formulating a formulated product, or all ingredients within a formulated product.

**Hygiene products:** Products with the primary function of killing and/or deactivating microorganisms.

**I&I:** 'Industrial and institutional'; that is, products specifically designed for cleaning and maintenance in non-household environments, including in large-scale commercial, manufacturing and institutional environments, such as factories, schools, hospitals and food processing plants.

**Independent Expert:** A suitably qualified and experienced professional engaged by the Third-party Assessor to provide an impartial review of the Third-party Assessment process and decision.

**Independent Review:** The impartial review of the Third-party Assessment process and decision by a suitably qualified and experienced professional engaged by the Third-party Assessor.

**ISO:** International Organization for Standardization

**Licensing:** Granting of legal permission to an Applicant to promote their product as accredited under the Recognised Ecolabel, in accordance with the terms of the *Recognised Licence Agreement*.

**Microorganisms:** Organisms of microscopic size, including bacteria, fungi, viruses and protozoa.

**Notification:** Formal communications provided by the Third-party Assessor to the Applicant or Accord at critical milestones throughout the Recognised application process to advise on progress.

**Screening:** The preliminary review of an Application (Whole-of-business or Product) under the Recognised Ecolabel by the Third-party Assessor to confirm eligibility, completeness of documentation and readiness for Assessment against the *Recognised Ecolabel Standard*.

**Program Operator:** The organisation (Accord Australasia Ltd) responsible for developing and maintaining the Recognised Ecolabel program.

**'Related products':** Products that complement the action of commercial and I&I cleaning and hygiene products, without a cleaning or hygiene function, and that are supplied with commercial and I&I cleaning and hygiene products and used in commercial and I&I cleaning and hygiene settings. Examples are skin moisturisers and barrier creams.

**Third-party Assessment:** The evaluation of an Application for Accreditation under the Recognised Ecolabel program against the requirements of the *Recognised Ecolabel Standard* by a party distinct from the Program Operator.

**Third-party Assessor:** The individual/organisation responsible for the Third-party Assessment process, independent of the Program Operator.