



Verification scheme FAQs

The following frequently asked questions have been developed to help organisations, interested parties and other stakeholders find out more about the CHS Alliance Quality Assurance Verification Scheme (commonly known as the CHS Verification Scheme). We haven't covered your questions? Then email us at verification@chsalliance.org so we can respond and add your questions to the FAQs.

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OVERVIEW

1. What is the CHS Quality Assurance Verification Scheme?

Verification is a structured, systematic process to assess the degree to which an organisation is working to achieve the CHS. The Verification Scheme is managed by the CHS Alliance. It sets out the policies and rules of the verification process to ensure it is conducted in a fair and consistent manner for all participating organisations.

The Scheme offers three verification options with different degrees of rigour and confidence in the results. These are validated CHS self-assessment, independent verification and certification. The indicators used in the verification framework are common to all three options.

To avoid potential conflicts of interest and in line with international good practice, the audits for independent verification and certification are undertaken by ISO accredited conformity assessment bodies, independent from the CHS Alliance, the CHS standard setting process and the organisations it audits. Currently the only accredited organisation is the Humanitarian Quality Assurance Initiative (<http://www.hqai.org/>).

2. What is the CHS Verification Framework?

To ensure the verification options are coordinated and the data they produce is comparable, all verification tools are derived from the CHS Verification Framework.

The CHS Verification Framework ensures there is a harmonised approach to monitoring, evaluating and reporting the application of the CHS. The indicators included in the Verification Framework are taken directly from the requirements of the CHS Nine Commitments i.e. the 36 Key Actions and the 26 Organisational Responsibilities, making a total of 62 indicators.

3. Who is responsible for establishing the rules for verification against the CHS?

By agreement of all CHS copyright holders¹, the CHS Alliance has taken the lead for issues around verification of the CHS. As such, the Alliance is developing policies, tools and guidelines

¹ Sphere, Groupe URD and the CHS Alliance



on verification to ensure the make sure the integrity of the whole standard system is not compromised by unfounded or misleading declarations of implementation of the standard.

SCHEME REVISION

4. Why has the Verification Scheme been revised in 2020?

The original verification scheme was launched in 2015. Since then, the CHS Alliance has been collecting feedback from users and has identified areas for improvement, including the need to better clarify the purpose and objectives of the scheme, the articulation between the different verification options and their respective primary objectives, amongst others. To confirm and the deepen the analysis it commissioned in 2019 an [external review](#) of the Quality Assurance Verification Scheme, undertaken by KPMG Norway. The findings of this review have fed into the update of the Scheme in 2020.

5. What has changed in the scheme during the 2020 revision?

The 2020 version of the Scheme includes:

- Updated Verification Options available to organisations applying the CHS, with a new Self-Assessment tool and the removal of the Peer Review option.
- Conditions and claims for external recognition for organisations participating in verification, and certificates and stamps issued by the CHS Alliance for external recognition of its members that have completed one of the verification options.
- Clarification on roles and responsibilities for the development, management and oversight of CHS verification, amongst the relevant stakeholders (CHS Alliance, the CHS Alliance board, HQAI).
- The introduction of the Verification Advisory Panel – comprised of experts with a clear mandate to oversee the scheme and ensure that it remains fit-for-purpose. It's also a body that will help resolve interpretation issues for some indicators during verification process when required.

6. What are the new options?

There are three verification options that can be undertaken: self-assessment, independent verification and certification.

- Validated CHS Self-Assessment is a learning exercise. It is completed internally, and helps an organisation gain an understanding of their capacity and performance against the CHS. It is validated by the CHS Alliance.



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- CHS Independent Verification provides organisations with an external, independent assessment of capacity and improvement against the CHS.
- CHS Certification is a process that provides organisations with an independent, external assessment, leading to issuing a certification of compliance against the CHS.

SELF-ASSESSMENT

7. What is the validated CHS self-assessment?

The validated CHS self-assessment process provides guidance and advice for organisations, as well as templates allowing them to collect information, document evidence, and present results. Organisations that complete a validated CHS self-assessment will have a comprehensive picture of their strengths and weaknesses, and a solid basis to focus resources where they are most needed. After the exercise is repeated (every two years), organisations will also be able to measure progress and the impact of capacity development efforts. Self-assessments are meant to identify and recognise good practice as much as they can help identify and address issues and are a learning tool.

8. If I have completed a self-assessment but my results show that there are areas that need improving, can I still get a certificate and stamp?

Yes, you can. The certificate for organisations who have completed a validated CHS self-assessment is related to the efforts they have made to self-assess their performance against the CHS and to build an improvement plan based on these findings.

9. What's the difference between self-assessment and validated CHS self-assessment?

The validated CHS Self-Assessment replaces what's currently the self-assessment. The process is supported by the CHS Alliance, which validates an organisation's commitment to adopting and integrating the CHS into their organisational processes and practice. Validation is only available to CHS Alliance Members.

10. Can non CHS Alliance members undertake a self-assessment?

Any organisation can take the CHS Verification Framework and conduct its own evaluation of its performance, but only the members of the CHS Alliance can do it using the methodology and tools developed by the CHS Alliance and presented in the CHS Validated Self-Assessment manual.



STAMPS & CERTIFICATES

11. How to use the stamps?

The intention of these stamps is to provide more recognition for the efforts of CHS Alliance members which have demonstrated their commitment to the CHS' Nine Commitments by undertaking the process of verification and subsequently improving the quality and accountability of their programmes based on their results.

By using the new verification stamps and accompanying certificates, organisations will gain greater public recognition for their efforts and will show that they are part of a community of like-minded organisations who are committed to making aid work better for people affected crisis.

12. Who is eligible for the stamps and certificates?

The CHS Alliance issues these for its members only, upon completion of a validated CHS self-assessment, independent verification or certification. Each different verification option has its own stamp and certificate, which are issued with the organisation's name and the validity period. The certificate also includes the claim that organisations can use in relation to their verification type.

13. What do the changes mean for:

- **Self-assessed organisations?**

If you have completed a self-assessment in the last two years, you will receive a certificate to promote the fact that you are a CHS Alliance member and completed the self-assessment process.

If your organisation completed a self-assessment more than two years ago, you're encouraged to renew it using the 2020 version of the self-assessment. This revision is intended to make the process considerably easier for organisations to complete.

- **Independently verified organisations?**

If you are a member of the CHS Alliance, you will receive a stamp and certificate that you can use publicly.

- **Certified organisations?**

If you have completed certification, you will still receive the stamp and certificate from your accredited conformity assessment body, HQAI. If you are not a member of the CHS Alliance, this will be your only certificate. If you are also member of the CHS Alliance, you will also



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receive a stamp and CHS Alliance certificate, which we encourage you to promote alongside the HQAI certificate.

- **Non verified CHS Alliance members?**

All CHS Alliance members that have not undertaken a verification option are required to complete an annual CHS Alignment Statement. They will be encouraged to undergo one of the verification options.

14. Will organisations have to pay an additional cost for access to the self-assessment or the verification scheme in general?

No. No additional cost will be required from our members for using the verification scheme and benefiting from the services offered by the CHS Alliance secretariat.

VERIFICATION DATA

15. What does the verification data show?

At the organisational level, the verification data shows where the strengths and the areas for improvement are for each organisation that has completed a verification option. It also shows how this organisation is benchmarking against the average results of other organisations in the sector.

At the collective level, the verification data shows how the group of verified organisations is performing on quality and accountability, what progress is being made as well as which of the CHS commitments are more challenging.

16. Who owns the verification data?

The data produced by the self-assessment is owned by the CHS Alliance. It is managed in a way that ensures confidentiality and security.

The data produced by third party verification option is owned by the Conformity Assessment body, currently HQAI only. The CHS Alliance encourages its members undergoing third-party verification to share their reports with us as well. This allows the organisation to benefit from the Tableau online dashboards produced to illustrate these results, as well as for the CHS Alliance to feed the data into the collective analysis, which aggregates the results from all verification options.

ADVISORY PANEL



17. Who is responsible for establishing the rules for verification against the CHS?

By agreement of all CHS copyright holders, the CHS Alliance has taken the lead for issues around verification of the CHS. As such, the Alliance is developing policies, tools and guidelines on verification to make sure the integrity of the whole standard system is not compromised by unfounded or misleading declarations of implementation of the standard.

In order to support the CHS Alliance in its role and ensure that the Scheme remains up to date and fit for purpose, the CHS Alliance has introduced a Verification Advisory Panel to oversee and regularly review the Scheme and different options proposed to the users

18. What is the Verification Advisory Panel?

The Verification Advisory Panel is a body comprised of experts of both the aid and the certification sector. It oversees the Verification Scheme to ensure that it remains fit for purpose, and can answer interpretation questions raised during verification processes. It is an advisory body that makes recommendations to the CHS Alliance board to implement.

19. Who are the members of the panel?

The panel is comprised of five to ten experts from both the aid and / or certification sector, volunteering to take part in this activity. It also has one sit for a representative of the Conformity Assessment body (HQAI). Members of the panel apply based on interest and the CHS Alliance then interviews and select the best candidates.