Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) Policy

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1. Purpose

The United Kingdom Accreditation Service (UKAS) is appointed by UK Government as the UK's National Accreditation Body through the Accreditation Regulations 2009. Our role is to provide confidence in the competence, impartiality and consistent operation of conformity assessment activities and, in doing so, to act in the public interest.

We recognise that responsible environmental, social and governance practices are an important part of how UKAS operates, makes decisions and delivers its responsibilities.

This policy sets out our commitment to operating responsibly and sustainably, maintaining high standards of integrity and social responsibility, and embedding appropriate consideration of environmental, social and governance matters within our management and decision-making.

It supports the commitments established in the UKAS Quality Policy and forms part of the UKAS management framework.

Accreditation supports the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which aim to enhance prosperity, eradicate poverty and protect the planet. Many of the conformity assessment activities accredited by UKAS contribute to these goals. We recognise the importance of reflecting these principles in our own strategy, policies and practices.

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2. Scope

This policy applies to UKAS and to our activities as an organisation. Everyone working for or on behalf of UKAS has a role in supporting its principles, where relevant to their responsibilities.

We will also consider ESG-related factors, where appropriate, in our relationships and arrangements with suppliers, contractors and other organisations working on our behalf.

3. Our ESG principles

UKAS will take a proportionate and risk-based approach to ESG, focusing on those matters over which we have influence and those that are most relevant to our purpose, activities, people and stakeholders.

We will seek to integrate ESG considerations into established governance, risk management, business planning, procurement and management-system processes rather than treating ESG as a separate activity.

3.1 Environmental responsibility

UKAS recognises that its activities have an impact on the climate and wider environment. We are committed to understanding and, where practicable, reducing that impact and to supporting responsible use of natural resources.

We are committed to:

- monitoring and seeking to reduce the environmental impact arising from our operations
- achieving carbon neutrality by 2030 and working towards net zero by 2050, supported by science-based emissions reduction targets
- using energy and other resources responsibly and seeking opportunities to reduce waste
- minimising the environmental impact of business travel through use of alternative methods of engagement and assessment where they are appropriate and do not compromise the effectiveness or integrity of our activities
- encouraging employees, contractors and suppliers to support appropriate environmental practices
- supporting confidence in environmental and sustainability-related claims through the effective use of accredited conformity assessment where this falls within UKAS's role

UKAS is also committed to supporting the global transition to net zero by promoting confidence in environmental and sustainability-related claims through accredited conformity assessment and international mutual recognition arrangements.

UKAS will establish and periodically review appropriate environmental objectives and measures to support these commitments.

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3.2 Social responsibility

UKAS's public-interest role places people and society at the heart of our purpose. We are committed to providing an inclusive, respectful, safe and supportive environment for those working for and with UKAS and to conducting our activities in a socially responsible manner.

We will:

- protect and promote the health, safety and wellbeing of our employees and others who may be affected by our activities
- promote equity, diversity, inclusion and a culture in which people are treated with dignity and respect
- support the development, competence and wellbeing of our people
- respect internationally recognised principles relating to human rights and take appropriate measures to address the risks of modern slavery and exploitation
- seek responsible and ethical practices within our supply chain
- engage constructively with relevant stakeholders and consider the broader impacts of our decisions
- support our wider public-interest purpose by maintaining confidence in accreditation and accredited conformity assessment

These commitments are complemented by UKAS policies and arrangements relating to health and safety, equity, diversity and inclusion, employment and modern slavery.

3.3 Governance

Strong governance, impartiality and integrity are fundamental to UKAS and to confidence in accreditation. We are committed to ethical behaviour, responsible decision-making, transparency and accountability.

We will:

- maintain effective governance and oversight appropriate to UKAS's responsibilities, with annual appraisals of Board effectiveness and skills (under Corporate Governance Code)
- protect impartiality and identify and manage conflicts of interest
- comply with applicable legal, regulatory and other requirements to which UKAS is committed
- identify, assess and manage risks that could affect UKAS, our stakeholders or achievement of our objectives
- maintain appropriate controls to prevent bribery, corruption, fraud and other unethical conduct
- support responsible procurement and financial decision-making
- comply with applicable UK and UN sanctions requirements
- protect information, personal data and organisational records
- encourage concerns to be raised and addressed appropriately
- apply appropriate governance to significant technological, operational and organisational change

ESG considerations will be incorporated, where relevant, into existing UKAS governance and decision-making arrangements.

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4. Implementation and accountability

The UKAS Executive is responsible for promoting responsible environmental, social and governance practices and for ensuring that appropriate arrangements are established to support this policy.

Leaders and managers are responsible for considering relevant ESG matters within their areas of responsibility and for supporting implementation of agreed objectives and actions.

Everyone working for or on behalf of UKAS is expected to act consistently with this policy and relevant supporting policies and procedures.

Specific responsibilities, objectives, measures and actions will be established, as appropriate, through the UKAS management system, business planning, risk management processes and other relevant corporate arrangements.

5. Objectives, monitoring and continual improvement

UKAS will identify appropriate ESG objectives and measures and review performance against them.

We will use relevant information from monitoring, risk management, internal review and other sources to identify opportunities for improvement and inform decision-making.

Relevant ESG performance information and significant ESG-related risks and opportunities will be considered through established organisational reporting and review arrangements.

We will seek continual improvement in our ESG performance, taking account of our purpose, impacts, risks, opportunities and available evidence.

6. Periodic review

This policy will be reviewed periodically and when significant changes to UKAS's activities, commitments, applicable requirements or strategic direction make an earlier review appropriate.

Supporting objectives, measures and plans may be reviewed and updated independently of this policy to ensure that UKAS's ESG activity remains relevant, proportionate and effective.

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