

## Standard Operating Procedures for Registration of Environmental Consultancy Offices in Abu Dhabi

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Signature on Original		
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* Refer to SG Circular S.G/C-08/12 Concerning Appointment and Responsibilities of the Corporate Management Representative at the Environment Agency – Abu Dhabi.		

# Standard Operating Procedures for Registration of Environmental Consultancy Offices in Abu Dhabi

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# Standard Operating Procedures for Registration of Environmental Consultancy Offices in Abu Dhabi

## 1.0 Introduction

### 1.1 Purpose

The purpose of this standard operating procedure (SOP) is to define the Environment Agency–Abu Dhabi's (EAD's) procedures for evaluating, classifying, and registering Environmental Consultancy Offices (ECOs) working in Abu Dhabi Emirate. ECOs performing work in Abu Dhabi Emirate have to be registered with EAD. Once registered, ECOs are permitted to work in a range of environmental areas of expertise, called Fields of Work (FOWs). ECOs are classified based on a combination of staff education, work experience, completed project work, and, where applicable, the number and quality of environmental reports or studies in the FOWs for which the ECOs apply. The prerequisites for registering with EAD are that an ECO must have an office in Abu Dhabi and must have a trade license from the Abu Dhabi Department of Economic Development. Registered ECOs may provide environmental consultancy services depending on the FOWs registered for at EAD. The individual FOWs that are available for registration are listed in Section 4 of this SOP.

Environmental reports and studies are required as part of the permitting process for a wide range of development and construction projects. Administrative Resolution No. 7 of 2006 promulgated the registration of ECOs that conduct environmental studies on behalf of project owners. Studies submitted by an ECO that is not registered with EAD will not be accepted for review.

Environmental consultants are prohibited from preparing studies, unless there are documented requests from EAD or Sector Regulatory Authorities. Studies not requested by EAD or Sector Regulatory Authorities will not be reviewed. When project owners ask environmental consultants to prepare a study, they should provide the consultants with this SOP. An EAD–registered consultancy that performs a study not requested by EAD is immediately downgraded (see Section 8 of this SOP).

Project designers and project managers are prohibited from providing environmental consulting studies for the projects they are designing or managing. Once the studies are submitted to EAD, the review time is 30 working days.

ECOs can register through the e-Services portal at <https://eservices.ead.ae> or through <http://www.ead.ae> after entering the **Environmental Consultants** link. It is important to note that the application will not be available to EAD unless the registration fee (depending on the type of application) is paid. The application types, and fees, for ECOs are as follows:

- New (500 United Arab Emirates dirham [AED])
- Renewal (250 AED)
- Modification (250 AED)
- Renewal with Modification (500 AED)
- Satisfaction of Condition (no fee)

### 1.2 Applicability of the SOP

This SOP is of interest to the ECOs registered with EAD or to those who want to register to render environmental consulting services in Abu Dhabi Emirate, provided that they are registered with the Abu Dhabi Department of Economic Development.

ECOs applying for registration should be one of the following types of offices (Note: The type of office is determined by the Abu Dhabi Department of Economic Development):

- Local 100%
- Local 51% or “joint venture”
- Foreign (100%)
- Foreign office branch.

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## 2.0 List of Abbreviations

AED	United Arab Emirates dirham
CEMP	Construction Environmental Management Plan
EAD	Environment Agency–Abu Dhabi
ECO	Environmental Consultancy Office
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
FOW	Field of Work
OEMP	Operation Environmental Management Plan
PER	Preliminary Environmental Review
Ph.D.	doctorate
SEA	Strategic Environmental Assessment
SOP	standard operating procedure
TMBS	Terrestrial Marine Biodiversity Sector
TOR	Terms of Reference
UAE	United Arab Emirates
WRM	Water Resources Management

## 3.0 Terms and Definitions

Term	Definition
<b>Evidence of Completion</b>	Documentation that the project has been completed or is still ongoing is required to prove that ECOs have a relevant work history. Acceptable documentation includes invoices, contracts, or official written confirmation from the project owner and should indicate the Scope of Work and the completion date to ensure that the work performed corresponds with the FOWs for which the ECO has applied. The documentation should be for projects completed within the past 6 years or may be ongoing.
<b>Environmental Consultancy Office</b>	A consultancy office that has suitably qualified staff and project experience to provide services in the specified FOWs.

## 4.0 Fields of Work

The following is a list of areas of expertise with FOWs available for registration:

1. Environmental studies
2. Remediation
3. Waste management
  - a. Liquid waste

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- b. Solid waste
- c. Hazardous waste
4. Environmental monitoring and associated reporting
  - a. Air quality
  - b. Surface and ground water quality
  - c. Soil quality
  - d. Ecological
  - e. Marine and coastal environment
5. Water resources (water well drilling)
6. Environmental compliance auditing

ECOs applying for first-time registration should select at least one of the previously mentioned fields and are expected to prove sufficient working experience in the respective FOW. ECOs must provide this experience by uploading evidence of project completion or proof that a project is ongoing into the application. Acceptable documentation includes invoices, contracts, or official written confirmation from the project owner. The project completion evidence should include the completion date of the project, the Scope of Work, the project owner's name, and the ECO's name. Project completion dates must be within the past 6 years. In addition, ECOs should indicate the applicable Abu Dhabi Environment, Health, and Safety Management System Regulatory Framework Sector for each FOW and project combination.

### 5.0 The Mechanism of Evaluating the Application

1. The application is submitted online through the e-Services portal at <https://eservices.ead.ae> or through EAD's Web site at <http://www.ead.ae>. The user's guide for the registration system and an updated list of registered ECOs are available at this link. A list of all required documentation for EAD review is provided in Section 5.1 of this SOP.
2. When the fee has been paid, the application will be reviewed. A committee consisting of staff from respective EAD sectors will evaluate the application, when required.
3. If the registration has been denied, then the ECO will be notified of the rationale for denial.
4. The committee issues its recommendation. If the registration is approved, then a certificate is issued with the classification of the office (Class A, B, or C), or it is unclassified if the office is registered for water resources (water well drilling) only. Section 6 of this SOP describes the classification criteria for each of these classes. Section 7 of this SOP describes the functions that consultants are permitted to perform under the respective classes. The registration is valid for 1 year.
  - Renewal applications should be submitted within 6 months after the expiry date of the registration. However, the ECO's name will already be removed from the list 2 months after expiry. If the renewal application is not submitted within 6 months after the license expires, the registration will not be renewed (Administrative Resolution No. 7 of 2006), and the ECO would have to apply as a new office.
  - A renewal application will not add or remove FOWs.
  - If a new, 100% locally owned ECO is unable to provide proof of the required experience for any class, then the office is placed in Class C on the condition that the company has at least one expert staff with a bachelor's degree and a minimum of 10 years of experience in the FOWs requested, or a master's degree and a minimum of 7 years of experience, or a doctorate (Ph.D.) and a minimum of 5 years of experience.
  - ECOs can modify FOWs by submitting a modification application, which includes the documents as per the specific class requirements discussed in Section 6 of this SOP. It is important to note that a modification application is not a request for a renewal.

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5. A newly registered office is added to EAD's list of approved ECOs; however, if there are any conditions on the EAD license, then these must be satisfied within 6 months via a "Satisfaction of Condition" application, otherwise the ECO will be removed from the registered list.
6. For applications that include water resources and the marine and coastal environment fields, the mechanism of reviewing, approving, and registering ECOs in these two fields is as follows:
  - Water Resources Management (WRM) and the Terrestrial Marine Biodiversity Sector (TMBS) will be informed of any first-time applicants in the water resources and marine environment fields, respectively.
  - The WRM and TMBS will review and inform the Environmental Quality Sector of approvals and rejections.
  - If approved, a registration certificate will be issued, which includes these FOWs.

### 5.1 Documents Required to Be Uploaded into the Online Application

The following documents must be uploaded into the online application form:

- The current EAD registration certificate for renewing and modifying ECOs. For new offices, documentation containing evidence of project completion or evidence that a project is still ongoing must be attached (Note: Project completion dates should be within the past 6 years; for more information about completion evidence, see Section 6.1 of this SOP).
- Copies of degrees and curriculum vitae of the authorized manager and environmental, engineering, and/or natural resources specialists (also referred to as "specialists")
- Copies of valid passports of the manager and environmental, engineering, and/or natural resources specialists showing valid residencies in the case of foreign employees
- The trade license of the office, obtained from the Abu Dhabi Department of Economic Development
- For ECOs already registered with EAD, the last EAD license must be uploaded into the application form.

If the applying ECO is a joint venture of two or more companies, and if the joint venture does not appear in the trade license, then a duly signed and authenticated agreement (depending on the types of each of the companies as categorized by the Abu Dhabi Department of Economic Development).

If a registered ECO intends to subcontract work to another consultancy office, then the registered ECO needs to ensure that the subcontracted consultant is qualified.

Copies of all documents submitted should bear the office stamp. The authenticity of all information and documents submitted will be checked when required; therefore, EAD reserves the right to request originals of all documents submitted so the copies can be authenticated.

Local offices that do not have the required company experience may be placed in Class C on the condition that the combined staff experience is a minimum of 10 years (one staff may suffice if he or she has a minimum of 10 years of experience).

## 6.0 Classification Criteria

This section lists the education and experience requirements for each class for which the ECO can potentially qualify. Section 7 of this SOP describes the functions that consultants are permitted to perform under the respective classes.

### 6.1 New Applicants

New ECO applicants are classified based on a combination of staff education and staff and company experience.

If an ECO is applying for multiple FOWs and does not have experience and staff education in each FOW, then the lowest classification will be applied.

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For an ECO registered with EAD with a conditional license, the condition must be satisfied within 6 months (by applying through a "Satisfaction of Condition" application), or the name of the company will be removed from EAD's list of registered consultancies.

## 6.1.1 Class A Offices

For Class A offices, the qualifications of staff and project evidence required are as follows:

1. The manager must have a valid United Arab Emirates (UAE) residency under the registering consultancy. The manager must also have an academic degree and a minimum of 10 years of experience, or a master's degree and a minimum of 7 years of experience, or a Ph.D. and a minimum of 5 years of experience.
2. Three environmental, engineering, and/or natural resources specialists who must have valid UAE residency under the registering consultancy. Each specialist must have a minimum of 3 years of environmental experience and a total experience of at least 20 years related to the FOWs for which the ECO is applying.
3. Seven projects must be submitted with evidence of completion or proof that the project or assignment is ongoing for each FOW for which the ECO is applying. Documentation older than 6 years will not be considered.

## 6.1.2 Class B Offices

For Class B offices, the qualifications of staff and project evidence required are as follows:

1. The manager must have a valid UAE residency under the registering consultancy. The manager must also have an academic degree and a minimum of 10 years of experience, or a master's degree and a minimum of 7 years of experience, or a Ph.D. and a minimum of 5 years of experience.
2. Two environmental, engineering, and/or natural resources specialists who must have valid UAE residency under the registering consultancy. Each specialist must have a minimum of 3 years of environmental experience and a total experience of at least 15 years related to the FOWs for which the consultancy office is applying.
3. Five projects must be submitted with evidence of completion or proof that the project or assignment is ongoing for each FOW for which the ECO is applying. Evidence older than 6 years will not be considered.

## 6.1.3 Class C Offices

For Class C offices, the qualifications of staff and project evidence required are as follows:

1. The manager must have a valid UAE residency under the registering consultancy. The manager must also have an academic degree and a minimum of 10 years of experience, or a master's degree and a minimum of 7 years of experience, or a Ph.D. and a minimum of 5 years of experience.
2. At least one environmental, engineering, and/or natural resources specialist who must have a valid UAE residency under the registering consultancy. The specialist must also have a minimum of 10 years of environmental experience, which includes experience in the FOWs for which the ECO is applying.
3. Three projects must be submitted with evidence of completion or proof that the project or assignment is ongoing for each FOW for which the ECO is applying. Evidence older than 6 years will not be considered.

## 6.2 Renewal Applicants

For renewal applications, the expiring license and all documents required for new applications must be submitted with the exception of project evidence which does not need to be uploaded. For the environmental studies FOW, ECOs are classified based on the quality of the environmental reports or studies for projects, which were presented to EAD during the last renewal year. At the end of this SOP is an example of an environmental study evaluation form used by EAD to evaluate and score environmental studies or reports.

ECOs must not modify their application 2 months prior to renewal time. A renewal must be submitted, followed by a modification application.

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Details about the renewal requirements per class are discussed in Sections 6.2.1 through 6.2.3 of this SOP.

## 6.2.1 Class A Renewing Offices

For Class A renewing offices, the qualifications of staff and project evidence required are as follows:

1. The manager must have a valid UAE residency under the registering consultancy. The manager must also have an academic degree and a minimum of 10 years of experience, or a master's degree and a minimum of 7 years of experience, or a Ph.D. and a minimum of 5 years of experience.
2. Three environmental, engineering, and/or natural resources specialists who must have valid UAE residency under the registering consultancy. Each specialist must have a minimum of 3 years of environmental experience and a total experience of at least 20 years related to the FOWs for which the ECO is requesting renewal.
3. The quality of average studies and reports should be "excellent"<sup>1</sup> (only applicable to the environmental studies FOW). If the average quality of studies is rated less than excellent, then the ECO will be demoted at renewal.
4. The application must be submitted within 6 months of the expiry date of the registration. If the ECO does not apply for renewal within 2 months from the expiry date of the license, then the ECO is dropped from EAD's list of registered consultancies. If the ECO does not apply for renewal within 6 months from expiry of the license, then the ECO will have to apply as a new office.

## 6.2.2 Class B Renewing Offices

For Class B renewing offices, the qualifications of staff and project evidence required are as follows:

1. The manager must have a valid UAE residency under the registering consultancy. The manager must also have an academic degree and a minimum of 10 years of experience, or a master's degree and a minimum of 7 years of experience, or a Ph.D. and a minimum of 5 years of experience.
2. Two environmental, engineering, and/or natural resources specialists who must have valid UAE residency under the registering consultancy. Each specialist must have a minimum of 3 years of environmental experience and a total experience of at least 15 years related to the FOWs for which the consultancy office is requesting renewal.
3. The quality of average studies and reports should be "good"<sup>1</sup> (only applicable to the environmental studies FOW). If the average quality of studies is rated as less than "good," then the ECO will be demoted at renewal.
4. The application must be submitted within 6 months of the expiry date of the registration. If the ECO does not apply for renewal within 2 months from the expiry date of the license, the ECO is dropped from EAD's list of registered consultancies. If the ECO does not apply for renewal within 6 months from expiry of the license, then the ECO will have to apply as a new office.

## 6.2.3 Class C Renewing Offices

1. The manager must have UAE residency under the registering consultancy. The manager must also have an academic degree and a minimum of 10 years of experience, or a master's degree and a minimum of 7 years of experience, or have a Ph.D. and a minimum of 5 years of experience.
2. At least one environmental, engineering, and/or natural resources specialist who must have a valid UAE residency under the registering consultancy. This specialist must also have a minimum of 10 years of environmental experience, which includes experience in the FOWs for which the ECO is requesting renewal.

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<sup>1</sup> Environmental studies or reports submitted to EAD are given grades A (90%–100% = Excellent), B (80%–89% = Good), C (60%–79% = Satisfactory), or F ( $\leq 59\%$  = Unsatisfactory), depending on the quality of the report and adherence to regulations and guidelines. The study grades will be informed to the ECO through an environmental study review response.



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3. The quality of average studies and reports should be “satisfactory”<sup>1</sup> (only applicable to the environmental studies FOW). If an ECO within Class C submits studies that, when averaged, are less than a “good” rating for two consecutive years, then the ECO will be restricted from re-applying for 1 year.
4. The application must be submitted within 6 months of the expiry date of the registration. If the ECO does not apply for renewal within 2 months from the expiry date of the license, then the ECO is dropped from EAD’s list of registered consultancies. If the ECO applies after 6 months from the expiry of the license, then a fee of 500 AED will be charged for the renewal.
5. If the studies submitted to EAD for review average to be below “satisfactory” at renewal, the ECO will be restricted from re-applying for 1 year.

## 7.0 The Functions of the Classes

### 7.1 Class A

Environmental studies and Environmental Management Plan FOWs: ECOs are eligible to undertake all types of studies for industrial projects and the development and infrastructure sectors (e.g., Environmental Impact Assessments [EIAs], Strategic Environmental Assessments [SEAs], environmental surveys, Preliminary Environmental Reviews [PERs], Action Plans, Construction Environmental Management Plans [CEMPs], and Operation Environmental Management Plan [OEMPs]).

Non-study/report-related FOWs: ECOs are eligible to perform all FOW-related work if they meet experience, education, and competency requirements.

### 7.2 Class B

Environmental studies and Environmental Management Plan FOWs: ECOs are eligible to undertake CEMPs for the development sector and all types of environmental studies for the industrial sector (new and existing facilities) except for SEAs, EIAs, and Terms of Reference (TORs).

Non-study/report-related FOWs: ECOs are eligible to perform all FOW-related work if they meet experience, education, and competency requirements.

### 7.3 Class C

Environmental studies and Environmental Management Plan FOWs: ECOs eligible to undertake CEMPs for the development sector and Action Plans (for existing industrial facilities only).

Non-study/report-related FOWs: Consultancy offices are eligible to perform all FOW-related work if they meet experience, education, and competency requirements.

## 8.0 Cases for Upgrade, Downgrade, Temporary Restriction, and Annulment of Registration

### 8.1 Cases for Upgrade

- If the average grade of overall environmental studies submitted to EAD within the previous renewal year is higher than the ECO’s current grade (provided staff requirements pertaining to upper grade are met).

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- An ECO can be upgraded after a downgrade at renewal, if three consecutive studies of a higher grade are submitted. If the ECO satisfies this requirement, the ECO should apply for a technical modification through eServices.ead.ae

### 8.2 Cases for Downgrade

- If average grade of overall environmental studies submitted to EAD within the previous renewal year is lower than ECO's current grade
- If the ECO submits a study not requested by EAD where it is proven that this action was initiated by the ECO
- If the ECO sends a study that can only be prepared by those in a higher class.

### 8.3 Cases for Temporary Restriction of Registration

- If the studies submitted to EAD for review average to be below "satisfactory" at renewal, the ECO will be restricted from re-applying for 1 year.

### 8.4 Cases for Annulment of Registration

- If EAD receives false documentation from the ECO.

## 9.0 Sample of a Study Evaluation

Evaluation of an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Report		
Project Title:		
Consultant's Name:		
Reviewer's Name:		
Instructions		
Fill out this evaluation form electronically for an automatic calculation of a score.		
Fill in the Rating box beside each criterion using a 1, 2, 3, or 4 rating scale.		
The rating numbers for each question are automatically weighted, and a numerical score is calculated.		
The overall grade and letter rating will be automatically calculated at the end of the evaluation.		
Rating Scale for Each Criteria		
Complete/excellent: Fully meets requirements and expectations.		4
Minor inadequacies: Requirements and expectations are met, but with minor inadequacies or omissions and/or insufficient detail or description.		3
Major inadequacies: Requirements and expectations are met, but with significant inadequacies or omissions and/or insufficient detail or description.		2
Unacceptable: Requirements and expectations are not met; criteria are not addressed or omitted.		1
Review Criteria	Rating	
Submittals and Report Organization	Ratings	Scores
Developed by an Environment Agency–Abu Dhabi (EAD)–approved consultant, and the package includes four hard copies and two soft copies		0
Contains a complete list of abbreviations and definition of terms used in the document		0
Follows the format for content outlined in the latest guidance; logical organization with easy-to-review components, including annexes		0

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<b>Evaluation of an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Report</b>		
Clearly written (i.e., uses minimal technical terms, adequate and appropriate use of graphics, and text could be understood by non-specialists)		0
<b>Executive Summary, Introduction, and Legal Framework</b>	<b>Ratings</b>	<b>Scores</b>
Executive Summary describes the proposed project and identifies the main environmental impacts and the ways in which they will be resolved		0
Introduction contains contact details and information about the project proponent and consultants		0
Introduction contains a description of the project and justification and chronology for the development of the EIA Report		0
Includes applicable laws, standards, protocols, and guidelines; identifies the source(s) of the pollutant and contaminant standards limits adopted by the EIA Report		0
<b>Project Description</b>	<b>Ratings</b>	<b>Scores</b>
Description of the economic and social benefits of the proposed project		0
Maps and descriptions of the location and scale of the proposed project		0
Adequate description of the project, including utilities, wastes, chemicals, raw materials, pollutants, and disturbances associated with all phases		0
Identification of project activities that are likely to cause significant impacts to the environment, including detailed descriptions		0
Contains a project status and schedule and project organizational chart		0
<b>Environment, Impacts, Mitigation, Monitoring, and Risk Assessment (The following criteria should be included for each environmental component)</b>	<b>Ratings</b>	<b>Scores</b>
Complete descriptions of the current environmental conditions (baseline conditions) for all applicable environmental components and adequate details regarding the data source or methodology used to collect new data		0
Descriptions of all potential environmental impacts associated with all phases of the project for each environmental component		0
Documentation of the cause-and-effect relationships between planned project activities and environmental impacts		0
Includes an assessment of the significance of the impacts (magnitude, reversibility, permanence, and cumulative effects), including EIA impact matrix		0
Description of the potential cumulative environmental impacts		0
Acknowledgement and description of residual impacts		0
Detailed descriptions of the potential and selected mitigation measures to reduce or offset damaging environmental impacts, including their appropriateness and justification for selection		0
Description of the mitigation measures to address cumulative environmental impacts		0
Description of the schedule and person(s) responsible for implementing the mitigation measures		0
Detailed description of the monitoring program for selected mitigation measures		0
Description of a monitoring program for cumulative impacts and for residual, non-mitigated impacts		0
Description of the sources of human-health and accidental environmental impact risks and the procedures to be implemented to minimize these risks and potential impacts		0
Provides a detailed summary of the Hazards and Effects Register; a Control of Major Accident Hazards Report, if applicable; and the Occupational Health Risk Assessment		0
Description of the Environmental Management Framework that will be conducted to meet the objective and targets of the mitigation measures and monitoring program		0

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Evaluation of an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Report		
Adequately uses maps and other visual materials to support the descriptions of the baseline conditions, environmental impacts, mitigation measures, and monitoring program		0
Project Alternatives and Statement of Commitments	Ratings	Scores
Alternatives to the current proposed project, including discussion of “no development” and “alternative location” options		0
Objective comparison of the alternatives and reasons for the selection of the current proposed project		0
Commitment to minimizing the environmental impacts of the proposed project		0
Commitment to develop Environment, Health, and Safety and Environmental Management Plans		0
<b>Total Score</b>	<b>0</b>	
Letter-Grade Determination		
	90–100	A
	80–89	B
	60–79	C
	≤59	F
Final Numeric Grade:	0	
Final Letter Grade:	F	
Signature:		
Date:		

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### 10.0 Document Change History

Document Number	Revision Number	Revision Date	Revision Description	Page Number	Approved by
EAD-EQ-PCE-SOP-06	00	5 September 2012	First Issue		SG
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