

Unilever Audit Requirements

Updated – May 2025

Background

Launched in 2022, the Unilever Responsible Partner Policy (RPP) replaced our Responsible Sourcing Policy (RSP) which was introduced in 2014 and refreshed in 2017. The RPP is the policy document defining the requirements of our Responsible Business program.

All third-party business partners regardless of size, type or risk, are required to go through initial and then re-registration on an annual basis in the Unilever Supplier Qualification System (USQS) database. The registration consists of three elements:

1. **Declaration** – made by partners confirming that they have read the RPP and commit that they have their own codes, policies, procedures and practices in place to ensure that they can meet or exceed the Mandatory Requirements contained in the RPP's Fundamental Principles.
2. **Self-Assessment Questionnaire (SAQ)** – partners are asked to complete an SAQ providing further information about the partner's business and relationship with Unilever.
3. **Audit** – a risk analysis will be performed based on the responses provided in the SAQ and audits by a third-party auditor may be required for certain types of partners.

Audit types

Based on the risk assessment (evaluating; type and size of business, the goods or services supplied, and location) Unilever may require an audit of your company or sites. Unilever currently uses two types of audits based on the type of product or service delivered by the partner. In general:

- **Partners handling or supplying raw materials and finished goods** (includes; Collaborative Manufacturing sites, warehouse and logistics providers): will need to register their sites and based on risk assessment conduct an on-site social compliance audit using the following standard:
 - [SEDEX SMETA \(4 Pillar\) audit](#)
- **Partners providing equipment or services to Unilever:** partners meeting certain criteria will be required to conduct a remote/desk-top social compliance assessment. Unilever recognises the following for remote/desk-top assessments:
 - [EcoVadis Sustainability assessment](#)

The SEDEX SMETA (4-pillar) audit and EcoVadis assessments are industry leading audit methodologies commonly used within the industry for social/ethical audits. For any new on-site audits, partners must use the SMETA (4-pillar) audit and it must be conducted by one of the currently approved audit companies (see list below). Where partners have an existing audit, Unilever may in some cases accept this during the first year of business.

Cost of Audits

Partners are expected to cover the cost of the audit and may use the output of the audit for the requirements of any of their other customers without any further approval from Unilever. The transactional and financial relationship is between the partner and the audit company; however, Unilever must have access to the full audit report and supporting documentation from the audit.

Validity and Remediation Periods

Audits have a validity of 1, 2 or 3 years based on the outcome of the audit, with a new audit required prior to the expiry of the previous validity period. Any non-conformances found during an initial on-site audit must be remediated by the partner and closed out through a follow-up audit conducted **within 90 days of the initial audit. Please take the potential need for a follow-up audit into account when contracting the services of an audit company** and ensure your **follow up audit is booked and conducted** within 90 days of the original audit date.

Input and update of details

Both audit companies and partners have responsibilities to input and update the Sedex and EcoVadis systems with the outcome of the audit. Audit companies need to upload audit documentation and the outcome of the initial and follow-up audits, while partners are required to input corrective actions against each non-conformance identified as soon as possible and within less than 90 days.

Support and implications

Further details can be found on www.unilever.com at www.unilever.com/responsible-partner-policy and on our [Supplier Centre](#). For questions, please contact our Help Desk through this link: [Unilever - Supplier Helpdesk](#)

Unilever has made a commitment to only source from partners who are compliant with the requirements of the RPP. Please note: Unilever will check compliance with the RPP every time we create new vendors or initiate new Purchase Orders (PO) in our procurement systems. **Failure to maintain your compliance to the requirements of our Responsible Sourcing Program may risk our ability to do business with you.**

These changes bring a simplification to how Unilever evaluates audits. This has removed additional work required from auditors and make the audit findings easier to understand and address between Unilever and its partners.

May 2025

Sedex SMETA 7.0 requirements

Background

Sedex updated their audit standard from SMETA 6.1 to SMETA 7.0 in September 2024 with a major change to the categories and issues providing a greater focus on those elements that have an impact on the human rights issues affecting workers in our supply chain.

Resources to understand the new SMETA 7.0 can be found through Sedex's learning Academy [Visit the SMETA Audit Academy](#)

Approved Audit Companies for SMETA audits

Approved Audit Companies (in alphabetical order):

- ARCHE Advisors
- Bureau Veritas (BV)
- Control Union (CU)
- Det Norske Veritas (DNV GL)
- Deutsche Gesellschaft für Nachhaltigkeit (DQS)
- Elevate/LRQA
- Intertek
- Partner Africa - **for use in Africa only**
- SGS
- Social Compliance Service Asia Ltd. (SCSA) – **for use in Asia only**

N.B. This list is valid as of May 2025 and subject to change

Changes to Unilever audit requirements

In line with the launch of SMETA 7.0, Unilever has aligned with the Sedex standard and now uses the same approach in our Unilever Supplier Qualification System (USQS). This will result in the following changes:

1. System alignment and linking to Unilever

- We upgraded our system to use an API interface between the Sedex platform and the USQS system so that partners and auditors will no longer need to upload audit findings to the USQS system but maintain most audit data only in the Sedex platform.
- In the Sedex platform, please **establish a link to 'Unilever PLC'** using our identification number **ZC1079742** which will allow us to view your audits on the Sedex platform.

2. Issue titles:

- Unilever now uses the same Issue titles as in SMETA 7.0. This has eliminated the need for an auditor to convert the SMETA findings to the old URSA issue titles.

3. Criticality of issues:

- Unilever has moved from our own classification of the criticality of issues to the use of the Sedex's classification.
 - Unilever uses the Sedex terminology of non-compliances as:
 - Minor
 - Major
 - Critical
 - Business Critical
 - Collaborative Action Required (CAR)

4. Key Incidents

- Our approach and requirements for **Key Incidents** will continue for those issues identified as **Business Critical** or **CAR** (and where there is an absence of fire alarms/smoke detectors – issue 192).
- Any Key Incident will require a corrective action plan to be created within 7 days from the date of the initial audit. It is advised to discuss and review your corrective action plans with our Responsible Business team prior to upload to Sedex.

5. Required remediation period and verification method

- Unilever requires that all non-compliances have a Corrective Action Plan implemented and verified through a follow up audit **within 90 days from the date of the initial audit.**
- Unilever will follow the verification method as advised through the SMETA audit to determine if the verification can be done via a desktop review or requires an on-site follow up audit.
- It is understood that for some CAR findings that the implementation of the corrective action may take longer than 90 days to fully implement. Unilever will review the content of the corrective action plan to determine if the plan is sufficient and includes time-bound actions.

6. Audit validity period

- Unilever will score audits based on the criticality of findings and the audit validity period will be based on the scoring of the initial audit.
 - Scoring is as follows for each issue finding:
 - Minor = 10
 - Major = 30
 - Critical = 100
 - Business Critical and CAR = 1000
 - Validity period will be based on the sum of issue scores with the validity period from the date of the start of the initial audit:
 - 0-50 Score = **3-year validity**
 - 60-90 Score = **2-year validity**
 - 100+ Score = **1-year validity**

EcoVadis Assessment

Requirements

1. Sharing your assessment

- Once completed, please share your scorecard in the Ecovadis systems with **Unilever**.

2. Scoring and Assessment validity period

- Unilever uses the scoring resulting from the EcoVadis assessment as follows:
 - Insufficient = below 25
 - Partial = 25 - 44
 - Good = 45 - 64
 - Advanced = 65 - 84
 - Outstanding = 85 - 100
- Validity period will be based on assessment scoring of the most recent assessment based on the published date:
 - Advanced/Outstanding = 65+ Score = **3-year validity**
 - Good = 45-64 Score = **2-year validity**
 - Insufficient/Partial = 0-44 Score = **1-year validity**

3. Required remediation and Score improvement

- Partners with a score falling in the Insufficient or Partial ranges must take actions to improve their score as follows:
 - Insufficient –
 - Use the EcoVadis Academy resources to help you develop suitable corrective actions to address all “High Priority” corrective action areas. Partners **MUST submit a Corrective Action Plan** in the EcoVadis system within **90 days** of publishing the assessment.
 - **Must improve to Partial** (or above) in the 2nd year assessment.
 - Partial –
 - Use the EcoVadis Academy resources to help you develop suitable corrective actions to address all “High Priority” corrective action areas
 - **Must improve score in the following year** assessment compared to previous year.