

Guidelines for Certification and Registration of Environment Auditors through Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) for Environmental Clearance (EC), Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ), Island Coastal Regulation Zone (ICRZ) and Island Protection Zone (IPZ) Clearance related Audits under the Environment Audit Rules, 2025

(Issued under rule 7, rule 8 and rule 18 of the Environment Audit Rules, 2025)

1. Background and Rationale

- i. The Environment Audit Rules, 2025 have been notified under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986 with the objective of institutionalizing a structured and standardized environmental audit mechanism for projects, activities and processes governed under the applicable environmental, forest and wildlife laws.
- ii. The Environment Audit Rules, 2025 provide for a systematic process of verification, inspection and audit of projects and activities to assess compliance with the environmental, forest and wildlife safeguards and conditions stipulated under Environmental Clearance (EC), Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) Clearance, Consent to Establish (CTE), Consent to Operate (CTO), authorisations under the Waste Management Rules, forest and wildlife clearances, and other approvals, permissions and compliances, as applicable, under the Acts, rules and regulations administered by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC).
- iii. In accordance with clause (i) of rule 7 of the Environment Audit Rules, 2025, the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) mode is introduced to recognize the existing domain knowledge, professional competence and field experience of professionals who have been actively engaged in environmental compliance, monitoring, auditing and related activities.
- iv. These Guidelines provide the framework for certification and registration of auditors in respect of Environmental Clearance (EC), Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ), Island Coastal Regulation Zone (ICRZ) and Island Protection Zone (IPZ) Clearance related Audits. They prescribe the eligibility criteria, certification and registration process and broad operational modalities for ensuring transparency, consistency and credibility in the conduct of audits relating to compliance with approvals issued under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986.
- v. These Guidelines prescribe the procedure for certification of individual environment auditors as Certified Environment Auditors (CEAs) and for registration of such CEAs as Registered Environment Auditors (REAs). An REA may be an individual, a firm or a body corporate comprising two or more CEAs.
- vi. These Guidelines are issued in exercise of the powers conferred by rule 18 of the Environment Audit Rules, 2025 and shall come into force on the date of their issue.

2. Definitions

Unless the context otherwise requires—

- a. "Act" means the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986;
- b. "Applicant" means any individual or entity applying for certification or registration under these Guidelines;
- c. "Auditee" means the project proponent or the owner, operator or occupier of the project, activity or process that is the subject matter of an environment audit;
- d. "Category I" means the category of environment audits relating to Environmental Clearance (EC), Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ), Island Coastal Regulation Zone (ICRZ) and Island Protection Zone (IPZ) Clearances to which these Guidelines apply;
- e. "CEA" means a Certified Environment Auditor certified under these Guidelines;
- f. "Code of Conduct Guidelines" means the Guidelines on Code of Conduct for Certified Environment Auditors and Registered Environment Auditors issued under rule 11 of the Rules;
- g. "CRZ Clearance" means a clearance granted under the applicable Coastal Regulation Zone Notifications;
- h. "ICRZ Clearance" means a clearance granted under the applicable Island Coastal Regulation Zone Notifications;
- i. "IPZ Clearance" means a clearance granted under the applicable Island Protection Zone Notifications;
- j. "EADA" means the Environment Audit Designated Agency notified under the Environment Audit Rules, 2025;
- k. "EADA Portal" means the online platform designated and maintained by EADA for the purposes of these Guidelines;
- l. "EC" means Environmental Clearance granted under the EIA Notification, 2006 and amendments thereto;
- m. "Fee Guidelines" means the Guidelines for Fee Structure under Recognition of Prior Learning mode issued under rule 14 of the Rules, as amended from time to time;
- n. "REA" means a Registered Environment Auditor registered under these Guidelines;
- o. "Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)" means the Recognition of Prior Learning Mode provided under clause (i) of rule 7 of the Environment Audit Rules, 2025;
- p. "Rules" means the Environment Audit Rules, 2025;
- q. "Steering Committee" means the steering committee constituted under rule 15 of the Rules.

Words and expressions used in these Guidelines and not defined herein, but defined in the Act or the Rules, shall have the meanings respectively assigned to them therein.

3. Scope and Applicability

- i. These Guidelines shall apply to environment audits relating to Environmental Clearance (EC) and Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ), Island Coastal Regulation

Zone (ICRZ) and Island Protection Zone (IPZ) Clearances as per notifications issued under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986. This category of audits is referred to in these Guidelines as Category I.

- ii. The scope of such environment audits includes verification of compliance with the conditions of the applicable approvals, implementation of the Environmental Management Plan (EMP), compliance with the prescribed mitigation measures, and assessment of environmental performance with reference to the approved baseline environmental conditions.

4. Eligibility Criteria for CEA under RPL Mode

4.1 Citizenship

The Applicant for certification as a CEA shall be an Indian citizen. The eligibility of a firm or body corporate for registration as an REA Firm is provided in paragraph 8.

4.2 Educational Qualifications

An applicant seeking certification for the category of EC, CRZ, ICRZ and IPZ Clearance related audits shall possess a Bachelor's degree/Master's degree/ Doctoral degree (Ph.D.), or an equivalent qualification in any of the relevant discipline(s) specified in Annexure I, awarded by a university or institution recognized by the Central Government, State Government or the University Grants Commission (UGC) or the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE), as applicable.

4.3 Professional Experience (Post Qualification)

The applicant shall, in the areas as specified in **Annexure II**, possess the minimum post-qualification professional experience as per Table 1 below.

Table 1: Minimum Post-Qualification Professional Experience

S. No.	Qualification	Minimum Qualification Professional Experience*	Post-
1.	Bachelor's Degree in Science (Annexure-I)	12 years	
2.	Master's degree related to science discipline; or Bachelor's Degree in Engineering or Technology; or Bachelor of Science in Engineering	10 years	
3.	Doctoral Degree (Ph.D.) in science discipline	8 years	

*Out of this, the applicant must possess a minimum of 5 years of field experience in the areas as specified in **Annexure II**.

4.4 Maximum Age Limit

The applicant shall not have attained seventy years of age as on the date of submission of application.

Provided that a CEA who attains the age of seventy years during the currency of a valid certification or registration shall continue to hold the same until its expiry.

4.5. Eligibility of Retired Government Employees

A retired Government employee seeking certification under the RPL mode shall submit the application in accordance with the provisions governing post-retirement commercial employment contained in the Central Civil Services (Pension) Rules, 2021, and the instructions issued thereunder by the Government of India, as amended from time to time, wherever applicable. The applicant shall, where such permission is required under the said Rules or any corresponding provision applicable to the applicant, furnish a copy of the permission granted by the competent authority.

The applicant shall furnish a self-declaration, in such form as may be specified by the Environment Audit Designated Agency (EADA), including but not limited to information regarding vigilance status, disciplinary proceedings, criminal proceedings, and the correctness of the information furnished in the application.

5. Documents Required

The applicant shall, in addition to any other document required so by the EADA, submit the following documents along with the application, for processing and evaluation of the applicant's candidature:

- i. Self-attested copies of the educational qualification certificates, including the degree certificate or, where the degree certificate has not been issued, the final year or final semester mark sheet.
- ii. Documentary evidence of the post-qualification professional experience claimed by the applicant, including experience certificates, service records, consultancy assignments, project assignments and other relevant documents demonstrating experience in the areas specified in Annexure-II.
- iii. A copy of a valid Government-issued photo identity proof, such as Aadhaar Card, Permanent Account Number (PAN) Card, Passport or Driving License etc.
- iv. A self-declaration that the applicant has not been convicted of any offence involving moral turpitude or under any environmental law, and is not presently debarred, suspended or blacklisted by the Central Government, any State Government, any Pollution Control Board or Committee, or any other public authority.
- v. An undertaking to abide by these Guidelines, the Code of Conduct Guidelines and the Fee Guidelines.
- vi. Any additional documents as may be required by the EADA during the screening process.

6. Steps for Certification through RPL Mode to be done by EADA

6.1 Mobilization of Applicants

Applications shall be invited through a public notice issued by EADA and hosted on the EADA Portal as well as the official website of MoEF&CC, ensuring wide dissemination through official websites, newspaper publications, and digital media platforms as deemed appropriate.

6.2 Screening and evaluation of Applications

EADA shall establish a mechanism for appropriate verification of documents submitted by the applicant.

- i. EADA shall meticulously screen and evaluate the documents and information submitted by the applicant to ensure its correctness and authenticity. EADA shall carry out due diligence and ensure that only eligible candidates are considered for further processes. Applications found incomplete or not meeting eligibility conditions shall be rejected as per screening/shortlisting mechanism devised by EADA.
- ii. The EADA shall be solely responsible to ensure a transparent, professional and fair screening, evaluation, certification and registration process.

6.3 Certification of Individual Applicant

Upon successful completion of screening and evaluation, the eligible applicant shall be issued a category-specific CEA certificate by the EADA, bearing a unique CEA identification number, and the particulars shall be entered in the online register maintained under clause (x) of rule 5 of the Rules.

6.4 Orientation Programme

EADA shall design and conduct a structured orientation programme for CEAs. All CEAs shall undergo a structured orientation programme covering, inter alia, the following:

- Provisions of Environment Audit Rules, 2025
- Applicable Environmental, Forest & Wildlife laws and CRZ, ICRZ and IPZ regulations
- Roles, responsibilities, and ethical obligations of auditors
- Sector-specific environmental compliance requirements
- Audit methodology, evidence gathering, sampling protocols and reporting formats
- Government rules and regulations issued from time to time.

The orientation programme may be conducted through online modules comprising inter alia recorded sessions, physical programmes, workshops or any other mode as determined by EADA. If required, the EADA may associate appropriate academic, research and expert agencies to conduct the same.

Every CEA and REA shall additionally undergo such annual refresher or continuing professional development programme as may be specified by EADA, and completion of the same shall be a condition for renewal of certification and registration. The fee for such programmes shall be as provided in the Fee Guidelines.

7. Registration of Individual CEAs as REA

CEAs shall be registered by EADA as REAs in accordance with Rule 8 of the Rules. A unique REA ID shall be issued to each REA and a record of the same shall be maintained in the online register as per provisions of the Rules.

7.1 Eligibility Criteria

- i. The REA applicant shall possess a valid CEA certificate.
- ii. The REA shall have access to laboratory support for sampling and analysis, either (a) through its own in-house laboratory facility; or (b) through an external laboratory recognised by MoEF&CC under section 12 of the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986 or recognised by the concerned State Pollution Control Board / Pollution Control Committee or accredited by the National Accreditation Board for Testing and Calibration Laboratories (NABL) as applicable.
- iii. The REA should have access to the hardware, instruments and software etc. required for carrying out environment audits in a scientific and professional manner, either through its own resources or through hired facilities.

7.2 Registration process

- i. An applicant seeking registration as a REA shall submit an application through the EADA Portal in the prescribed form, selecting Registration in the application form, and shall pay the prescribed fee in accordance with the Fee Guidelines, as amended from time to time.
- ii. The applicant shall, in the application, specify its primary location for undertaking environmental audit assignments and indicate the additional State(s) and Union Territory(ies) in which the applicant is willing to undertake environmental audit assignments. Any modification to such selection after registration shall be made only upon submission of a request through the EADA-designated portal and with the approval of EADA.
- iii. The applicant shall accept all terms and comply with all conditions, including the Fee Guidelines, the Code of Conduct Guidelines, and the requirements relating to prevention of conflict of interest or any other guidelines or instructions issued by EADA from time to time.

7.3 Screening and Evaluation by EADA

EADA shall screen and evaluate the documents and information submitted by the applicant appropriately as per provisions of Para 6.2 above.

7.4 Issuance of Registration

Upon successful completion of screening and evaluation of the application by EADA, the applicant may be registered as REA in accordance with Rule 8 of the Rules. A unique REA ID shall be issued to each REA and recorded in the online register maintained by EADA.

7.5 Validity of Certification and/or Registration

- i. The certification and/or registration granted under the RPL mode shall remain valid for a period of five years from the date of issue or until the expiry of the CEA certificate, whichever is earlier, unless revoked earlier in accordance with Rule 11 of the Rules.

- ii. The certification and /or registration of CEA/REA may be renewed in accordance with the provisions of the Rules, subject to the fulfilment of criteria prescribed by EADA, and an application for renewal shall be made not later than sixty days before the date of expiry.
- iii. A CEA or REA may surrender the certification or registration by an application to EADA, and such surrender shall take effect only upon completion or lawful transfer of all audit assignments then pending with the CEA or REA.

8. Registration of a Firm or Body Corporate as a REA Firm

A firm or body corporate, including a technical or research or academic institution comprising two or more CEAs may apply for registration as an REA in accordance with the provisions of the Rules, and procedures specified hereunder.

8.1 Eligibility Criteria

A firm or body corporate seeking registration as a REA Firm shall meet the following eligibility criteria:

- i. The firm or body corporate shall be a legally constituted entity in India. Eligible entities shall include a company incorporated under the Companies Act, 2013 (18 of 2013) or the Companies Act, 1956 (1 of 1956), a limited liability partnership registered under the Limited Liability Partnership Act, 2008, a partnership firm constituted under the Indian Partnership Act, 1932, a society registered under the Societies Registration Act, 1860 or any corresponding State law, a trust constituted under the applicable law, an institution established under an Act of Parliament or a State Legislature, or any other entity constituted or registered under any law for the time being in force and having a distinct legal identity. Alternatively, the applicant may be a Central Government, State Government or local government institution, laboratory, institution of national importance established under any prevalent law, or any Government-recognized academic or research institution engaged in the areas specified in **Annexure II**.
- ii. The applicant shall possess valid documentary evidence of its legal status, including, as applicable, the certificate of incorporation or registration, memorandum of association, trust deed, partnership deed, gazette notification, or any other constitutive document, together with proof of its registered office, Permanent Account Number (PAN), and GST registration, wherever applicable.
- iii. The firm or body corporate shall have at least two full-time CEAs on its payroll . An application for registration may be submitted where the persons concerned have applied for CEA certification and the applications are pending, but registration shall be granted only after at least two such persons hold valid CEA certificates, so as to conform to clause (j) of sub-rule (1) of rule 2 of the Rules.
- iv. The firm or body corporate shall maintain a functional office with a verifiable address and contact details, and shall intimate any change therein in accordance with paragraph 8.6.

- v. The registration category(ies) should correspond to the certification category(ies) held, or applied for, by two or more of the CEAs or CEA applicants of the firm or body corporate.
- vi. The firm or body corporate should have access to laboratory facilities for sampling and analysis, either through its own laboratory or through an external laboratory, provided that such laboratory is recognized under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986, or by the concerned State Pollution Control Board/ Pollution Control Committee, or accredited by NABL, as applicable.
- vii. The firm or body corporate shall comply with these Guidelines and any guidelines or directions issued by EADA from time to time.

8.2 Process of Registration

- i. A firm or body corporate seeking registration as an REA Firm (hereinafter referred to as the "Applicant") shall submit an application on the EADA-designated portal in the prescribed form, together with at least two (2) valid CEA certificates or with requisite details of application for CEA certification, as applicable, and payment of the prescribed registration fee, as per the Fee Guidelines.
- ii. The applicant shall, in the application, specify its primary location for undertaking environmental audit assignments and indicate the additional State(s) and Union Territory(ies) in which the applicant is willing to undertake environmental audit assignments. Any modification to such selection after registration shall be made only upon submission of a request through the EADA-designated portal and with the approval of EADA.
- iii. The applicant shall furnish complete and accurate particulars of its annual turnover, in-house or external laboratory facilities, project experience, and such other information as may be specified in the prescribed application form.
- iv. The applicant shall accept all terms and comply with all conditions, including the Fee Guidelines, the Code of Conduct Guidelines, and the requirements relating to prevention of conflict of interest or any other guidelines issued by the EADA from time to time.

8.3 Screening and Evaluation by EADA

EADA shall screen and evaluate the documents and information submitted by the applicant appropriately as per provisions of Para 6.2 above.

8.4 Issuance of Registration

Upon successful completion of screening and evaluation, a firm or body corporate may be registered by EADA as REA Firm in accordance with Rule 8 of the Rules. A unique REA ID shall be issued to each REA Firm and recorded in the online register maintained by EADA.

8.5 Validity of Registration

The registration granted under the RPL mode for a particular category shall remain valid for a period of five years from the date of issuance or until the firm or body corporate ceases to employ at least two valid CEAs meeting the prescribed

requirements for that category, whichever is earlier. The registration may also be suspended or revoked earlier in accordance with Rule 11 of the Rules. The registration may be renewed in accordance with the Rules on an application made not later than sixty days before the date of expiry.

8.6 Addition and Removal of CEA(s) / REA(s) in the online register

Every REA Firm shall intimate the EADA, in such form and manner as may be specified by EADA, within fifteen days of—

- (a) the addition or removal of any CEA(s) associated with the REA Firm; or
- (b) any change in its name or legal status; or
- (c) any change in its registered office or principal place of business; or
- (d) any other organizational change affecting the particulars furnished at the time of registration.

Provided that every REA Firm shall ensure that not less than two CEAs per category, remain associated with the REA Firm at all times, failing which the registration of the REA Firm shall stand suspended and the REA firm shall not be allowed to carry forward or undertake any further work of environment audits during such period.

Provided further that such REA Firm may, within a period of sixty days, seek revocation of suspension by fulfilling the necessary criteria as per due procedure prescribed by the EADA, and where the deficiency is not made good within that period, EADA may cancel the registration after affording an opportunity of being heard.

Provided also that on the suspension or cancellation of the registration of an REA Firm, or on the suspension or revocation of the registration of an individual REA, EADA shall re-allocate all audit assignments then pending with such REA or REA Firm in accordance with rule 13 of the Rules, and shall determine the audit cost payable, if any, for the work already performed.

9. Performance Review of CEAs/REAs/ REA Firms

EADA shall periodically review the performance of CEAs / REAs/ REA Firms based on the audit reports submitted by them and such other relevant information as may be considered necessary. The performance review shall be carried out based on assessment of various factors including quality of work delivered, adherence to prescribed timelines, complaints received, compliance with the code of conduct etc.

The outcome of the performance review shall be taken into account for renewal of certification and registration, and EADA may, under clause (vi) of rule 5 of the Rules, issue directions to a CEA, REA or REA Firm on the basis of such review. Where the review discloses conduct amounting to professional misconduct, EADA shall proceed in accordance with the Code of Conduct Guidelines. No adverse consequence shall follow from a performance review without affording the CEA, REA or REA Firm an opportunity of being heard.

10. Field Survey, Site Inspection and conduct of environment audit

- i. Individual REAs may undertake environment audits for ECs of 'Category B' projects as classified in the Schedule to the Environment Impact Assessment Notification, 2006 and CRZ, ICRZ and IPZ Clearances.
- ii. REA Firm may undertake environment audits for ECs of Category A and Category B projects and CRZ, ICRZ and IPZ Clearances.
- iii. The EADA shall prescribe the minimum audit man-days required for conducting Environment Audits, taking into account the project's category, scale, complexity, and associated environmental risks. The audit fee shall be determined based on the prescribed man-days and the applicable fee schedule.
- iv. The EADA shall develop detailed guidelines for procedures and standards governing the functioning of REA as per Rule 5(ix) of the Rules. The team for conduct of audit shall comprise only CEAs or REAs. However, in case of REA firm/ body corporate being a technical or research or academic institution, the Audit team may additionally include, under the direct supervision of a CEA or REA, a postgraduate student or research fellow who has completed a Bachelor's degree in the areas as defined in **Annexure-I**, studying in the institution, provided that the number of such team members shall not exceed one-half of the audit team strength prescribed by EADA for the relevant category of audit.
- v. Every member of an audit team shall be bound by the Code of Conduct Guidelines, and the REA or REA Firm shall be responsible for the acts and omissions of the members of its audit team.
- vi. EADA may specify the maximum number of environment audits that may be undertaken concurrently by an individual REA or an REA Firm, having regard to the man-days prescribed under clause (iii).
- vii. An REA or REA Firm shall not be allocated the environment audit of the same project entity in two consecutive audit cycles, unless no other eligible REA or REA Firm is available, and the reasons therefore shall be recorded in writing.

11. Code of Conduct

Every CEA and REA shall comply with the provisions of the Code of Conduct Guidelines, as applicable.

12. Savings and Review

These Guidelines shall be read in conjunction with the provisions of the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986 and the Environment Audit Rules, 2025. Any matter not specifically provided for herein shall be governed by the provisions of the said Act, the Rules made thereunder, and any directions or guidelines issued by the Central Government from time to time. In the event of any inconsistency, the provisions of the Act and the Rules shall prevail.

These Guidelines shall be reviewed by the Central Government on the recommendation of the Steering Committee constituted under rule 15 of the Rules, and may be amended from time to time. If any question arises relating to the

interpretation of these Guidelines, the decision of the Central Government thereon shall be final, in terms of rule 17 of the Rules.

Indicative List of Eligible Disciplines for Category I – Environmental Clearance (EC) and Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ), Island Coastal Regulation Zone (ICRZ) and Island Protection Zone (IPZ) Clearance-related Audits

A. Engineering Disciplines

1. Agricultural Engineering (Environmental Management Specialization)
2. Biotechnology Engineering
3. Chemical Engineering
4. Civil Engineering
5. Coastal Engineering
6. Electrical Engineering
7. Energy and Environmental Engineering
8. Energy Engineering
9. Environmental Engineering
10. Geo-Environmental Engineering
11. Industrial Engineering
12. Industrial Safety Engineering
13. Marine Engineering
14. Mechanical Engineering
15. Mining Engineering
16. Petroleum Engineering
17. Waste Management and Resource Recovery Engineering
18. Water Resources Engineering

B. Science Disciplines

1. Applied Geology
2. Atmospheric Sciences
3. Biodiversity and Conservation Sciences
4. Chemistry
5. Climate Change Studies
6. Coastal and Marine Ecology
7. Coastal Zone Management
8. Earth Sciences
9. Ecology
10. Ecology and Environment
11. Environmental Chemistry
12. Environmental Management
13. Environmental Science
14. Environmental Studies
15. Forestry
16. Geography (Environmental Geography)
17. Geology

- 18. Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM)
- 19. Marine Biology
- 20. Marine Science
- 21. Natural Resource Management
- 22. Oceanography
- 23. Renewable Energy Studies
- 24. Sustainability Science
- 25. Sustainable Development

Annexure–II

Experience Requirements for Category I – Environmental Clearance (EC) and Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ), Island Coastal Regulation Zone (ICRZ) and Island Protection Zone (IPZ) Clearance-related Audits

The applicant shall possess the prescribed minimum post-qualification professional experience in one or more of the following areas:

- Environmental audits, compliance verification, inspection, and related studies under environmental laws, rules and regulations.
- Preparation, appraisal, review or evaluation of Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) reports, Environmental Management Plans (EMP), Environmental Statements, compliance reports and other environmental management or regulatory documents relating to projects requiring statutory clearance.
- Environmental management and monitoring, sampling and laboratory analysis.
- Environmental compliance management, including implementation, monitoring, assessment and improvement of measures relating to pollution control, waste management, resource conservation, environmental safeguards and other environmental management requirements as per the environmental acts, rules and regulations.
- Compliance assessment relating to Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ), Island Coastal Regulation Zone (ICRZ), Island Protection Zone (IPZ) and Integrated Island Management Plan (IIMP), or coastal ecosystem studies.