

Briefing paper: Ska - the environmental assessment tool for sustainable fit-outs



Ska Rating helps organizations achieve more sustainable fit-outs. Anybody interested in fitting out an office or administrative building or a retail space (retail bank, food retail, restaurant or non-food retail) in a more environmentally sustainable way can use the method to:

- Carry out an informal self-assessment of the environmental performance of a fit-out;
- Commission a quality assured assessment and certificate from an RICS accredited Ska assessor;
- Obtain clear guidance on good practice in fit-out and how to implement it;
- Benchmark the performance of fit outs against each other and the rest of the industry

Over 500 projects are currently registered for certification using Ska Rating.

What are the benefits of using Ska Rating?

Ska Rating will help organizations make informed decisions about fit out projects in the context of the growing importance of sustainability on the corporate agenda and a burgeoning statute book. It is designed to be of particular use for occupiers but has benefits for other property stakeholders including landlords, developers, consultants, fit out contractors and the supply chain.

For occupiers/tenants

- Measure sustainability impact accurately: whether you are a tenant of a single office doing a one-off fit out or a major corporate occupier Ska Rating is the first system designed to measure 100% of the sustainability of your fit out and decide what is most important. The rating is influenced entirely by what you choose to do, not by what has been done in the past.
- Manage the bottom line: By following good practice occupiers will be able to reduce costs, for example utilities bills, facilities' staff time, paper and travel. Using energy efficient methods and appropriate recycling should lead to a reduction in resource consumption and improved efficiency. Ska is a decision-making tool which ranks the different aspects of a fit out based on what will have the biggest impact on sustainability. It can therefore be used to help the design team achieve maximum sustainability for a given budget. Many Ska energy and water measure also link to Enhanced Capital Allowances – giving your project tax benefits.
- Follow good practice: Environmental sustainability is already a point of compliance for the majority of SMEs and all corporates and Government entities. However there is no method available to them for fit outs to help achieve any measure of sustainability.
- Legal/Statutory compliance: Corporate Responsibility is a key emerging area for companies, led by legislation. Under Section 172 of the Companies Act 2006 - company directors are required to promote the success of the company and must have 'regard to the impact of the company's operations on the community and the environment'. Occupiers face board-level demand for sustainability.
- Helps decision making process: Ska is based on robust guidance which dispels a lot of myths: sustainability not just a luxury for big companies who can afford it. Ska rates what is actually important and makes the biggest impact in terms of sustainability and adds another dimension beyond cost and quality to assess fit out projects...
- Are you ISO 14001 accredited? A Ska certificate helps you ensure that a fit out project is rated accurately and can be used to support your environmental management system
- Customer, investor and stakeholder perception: A Ska Rating certificate can help an organization demonstrate that it takes sustainability seriously and has achieved a standard with its property. This can feature in annual reports, environmental policy or tender documentation or be displayed in a building.
- Employee engagement: many employees (whether existing staff members or potential recruits) increasingly place a value on a company's green credentials as well as wishing to work in high quality spaces. A Ska Rating can be used to reinforce staff morale and complements other CSR activity.

For developers and landlords

- Attract and engage tenants by providing sustainable 'CAT A' office space
- Use Ska Rating to set targets, then use the formal assessment process to assure yourself that target performance standards are met, and finally use the certificate to report their performance to stakeholders. Then benchmark the sustainability of fit outs across a portfolio of buildings.
- Include the use of the RICS Ska Rating in license to alter and Green Lease provisions to help drive up the sustainability of properties or protect a building already certified under a whole building assessment method.
- Sustainability increasingly makes good business sense. Research demonstrates an expected increase in the asset value of labelled low carbon buildings compared with standard speculative buildings.

For consultants and contractors

- Embed Ska Rating in your standard processes to demonstrate that you follow a sustainable specification and procurement process for fit out.
- Use the Ska Rating tool and datasheets to support delivery of professional advice to clients on good practice in sustainable fit out and to assess their designs and projects
- Offer Ska Rating certificated assessments to clients who wish to demonstrate they have achieved more sustainable fit out through the Ska Accredited Assessors scheme

How it works

No matter what your starting point a Ska Rating will enable you to measure 100% of the environmental performance of an office fit-out. Since Ska Rating does not consider the base build it measures only what you do to add value to your property. Key aspects of the rating system are:

- Flexible scoping – match the rating to the scope of the fit-out
- Easy to use, free online tool <https://ska-tool.rics.org/>
- A label that is clear and easy to understand: Bronze, Silver Gold plus % score.
- Formal quality assured scheme for those who require a certificate

ID	Measure	Issue	Targeted	Achieved
+ D06	Demolition salvage plan	Waste	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
+ D01	Efficient lighting	Energy & CO2	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
+ D02	Lighting controllability	Energy & CO2	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
+ D07	Plan to minimise site waste	Waste	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
+ E12	Lower flush WCs	Water	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Assessment summary

Status: **in progress**

Measures in scope: **77**

Gold rating requires
58 measures
14 gateway

Silver rating requires
39 measures
10 gateway

Bronze rating requires
19 measures
5 gateway

Your design rating is **Unrated**
with 0 measures included

Good practice and guidance

Ska Rating for Offices comprises 104 good practice measures across Energy & CO2, Waste, Water, Pollution, Transport, Materials and Wellbeing. Ska Rating for Retail has 112 measures. E.g. when wooden flooring is stripped out it should be sent for re-use to a salvage yard instead to landfill. For a complete list of measures refer to the Good Practice Guidance section

Measures in scope

Each good practice measure is explained in a datasheet explaining the criteria that need to be achieved, the rationale behind the measure and guidance on how to achieve it. Because each fit out project is unique in terms of employers' requirements, the building/ site and scope of works, Ska Rating scores the project on basis only of those measures that are relevant to the project. These are called 'Measures In Scope'. Typically between 30 and 60 measures are likely to apply to most projects. The score is ranked in 3 thresholds Gold, Silver and Bronze. These thresholds are reached by achieving 75%, 50% or 25%, respectively, of the measures in scope.

What are 'Gateway' measures?

Because some measures are more important from a sustainability perspective the measures are ranked from 1 to 99, (1 is the highest and 99 the lowest). To ensure that teams do not just target the easiest measures, the project has to achieve a number of the highest ranked measures in scope in order to score; these are known as Gateway Measures.

The assessment process

As with any fit out project the Ska assessment process is broken into three stages:

1. *Design* At this stage we identify the measures and issues in scope. Once the Measures in Scope are identified the client has the opportunity to prioritise which measures they want to achieve and make a decision against design, cost, programme and benefit, and add them into the scope of works for the project. This will also set the environmental performance standards for how the project is delivered, in terms of waste and energy in use etc. Then if the specification demonstrates that these measures are likely to be achieved they will be reflected in an indicative rating.
2. *Handover*. This involves the gathering of evidence from O&M manuals and other sources to prove that what has been specified has actually been delivered and that the performance and waste benchmarks have been achieved.
3. *Occupancy*. Finally there is the option to review how well a fit out has performed in use against its original brief from a year after completion.

How to become a Ska Accredited Assessor

RICS operates an accreditation scheme to enable qualified professionals to undertake quality-assured Ska Rating assessments on behalf of organizations. Only Ska Accredited Assessors are able to formally certificate projects although anyone is free to use the online Ska Rating tool to informally evaluate a project. Since 2009 RICS has trained 200 accredited assessors.

Accreditation involves attending a one-day Foundations training course, and then completing and passing an online module and exam (one for offices and one for retail) and then joining either the relevant accreditation scheme and register. This training provides an in-depth explanation of the Ska Rating system. The course consists of presentations, exercises and interactive use of the online tool. There is a multiple choice exam at the end of the second day. Successful completion of this exam will enable you to become a qualified assessor.

Contents of the training includes:

1. The Ska Rating philosophy and methodology explained
2. Good practice measures for energy and CO2, water, waste, materials, pollution, transport and wellbeing
3. How to carry out an assessment using the online tool
4. How to work with the design team
5. Exam leading to accreditation

Why should you attend?

- To gain the knowledge required to become a Ska Accredited Assessor
- To obtain an in-depth understanding of the philosophy and method underlying the Ska rating system
- To learn how to apply the system in the context of the design and construction process
- To develop a detailed understanding of the sustainability issues relevant to the office-fit out process.

Who should attend?

The Foundations course is designed for all building professionals who are involved in building and fitting out offices. For example surveyors, building surveyors, project managers, facility managers, construction managers and sustainability

assessors who are involved in office fit-out. The Assessor Modules are suited to those wishing to become active assessors.

The benefits of accreditation

RICS's accreditation scheme exists to quality assure and regulate professionals who wish to offer clients certification using the Ska Rating method on fit-outs.

- Candidates who pass the exam will be enrolled onto an RICS register of accredited assessors
- Gain authority to formally certificate projects for clients
- Simple pay-as-you-go charge when you submit a project for certification includes lodgement, storage and monitoring
- You will automatically join an online community of Accredited Assessors hosted by RICS
- CPD is offered to keep you abreast of changes to the Ska Rating method – there is an annual requirement for assessors.

Frequently asked questions

What is the Ska Rating?

An environmental labelling method designed to rate and compare the environmental performance of fit-out projects initially for office buildings in the UK. Developed by industry for industry, Ska Rating is designed to encourage good practice in fit out work and has been developed collaboratively by consultants, contractors and occupiers.

Why focus on the fit out sector?

The fit out sector is currently underserved with specific benchmarks and labelling although it is a substantial part of the construction industry. Ska Rating is intended to fill this gap. The UK construction industry spent £64.5bn in the years 2003-06; of this £6.9bn was attributed to the fit-out sector. This represents 10% of the construction sector budget. Source: Office for National Statistics

Is sustainability still as important in a worsening economic climate?

The current economic climate is extending real-estate life-expectancy. Occupiers are now more likely to refurbish their existing offices than seek new ones but while there are proven methods for labelling the environmental performance of whole buildings, fit out has remained a sustainability blind spot. Ska Rating aims to rate only the environmental performance related to the scope of fit-out projects.

What about other environmental labels such as BREEAM and LEED?

Ska complements other labelling methods. Ska Rating labels 100% of the environmental performance related to the scope of fit-out projects, irrespective of the base building. It can be used in conjunction with or alongside other 'whole building labels.

How much will it cost to use the Ska Rating?

It has been a principle from the outset that Ska Rating should be free to use. It is designed to be accessible even for the smallest organization. All the information about the rating method, criteria and guidance is available free on the web. Use of the online assessment tool is also free for those who want to self-assess. Those wanting a quality-assured certificate to formally substantiate their performance will need to commission a formal assessment from a Ska

What will a formal assessment and certificate cost?

For businesses seeking the credibility of a professional certificate an assessor can be engaged to rate and certify the project an accredited Ska Rating assessor. Individual accredited assessors are free to set their own assessment fees corresponding to the time required to gather information and complete the assessment record. It is likely that many clients of the formal assessment process will also want additional support and guidance depending on the scope, scale and duration of the fit-out. The fees will include the cost of producing and lodging a Ska Rating certificate with the RICS.

Can Ska rating be used in countries other than the UK?

The principles of Ska Rating can apply to any fit out project but the guidance has been developed in the context of the UK regulatory framework. To contact RICS about adapting Ska for use in a different market please email ska@rics.org

Why is it called 'Ska'?

When the rating system started life as a research project initiated and sponsored by Skansen (an interior fit-out contractor) it quickly gathered the working title 'SKA' based on the first three letters of Skansen's name. We thought about lots of other names but over time the name stuck. We think it's quite catchy and memorable.

Contact us

Email your query to ska@rics.org providing as much detailed information as possible to help us answer your question. Or visit our website www.rics.org/ska to view a range of case studies.