

Safety Culture Ladder NEN			
Decision number:	2025-14		
Subject:	2nd REV Decision on 'Interpretation of the weighting of sub-themes SCL 2.0'		
Date:	28.1.26		
Implementation:	Publication on website and in interpretation document for SCL 2.0	Commencement date:	With immediate effect

Background:

Discussion has arisen among SCL auditors about the method of weighting sub-themes in order to determine the assessment of a theme during an SCL audit. This relates to the decision by the SCL CoE to only report on the themes in the audit report, although the various sub-themes must also be addressed.

Paragraphs 7.8.1 and 7.8.2 of the Certification Scheme state that when assessing Preconditions (P), 1 theme may be assessed as “orange” and the rest of the themes as “green”. For Behaviour (B), all themes must be assessed as “satisfactory” (green).

Because each theme consists of several sub-themes (there are a total of 20 sub-themes for the 5 themes), a discussion has arisen among auditors about how to assess a theme when opinions on the sub-themes vary.

The currently available documents, such as the Certification Scheme and the Notes to SCL 2.0, do not provide a clear answer to this question, even though it is of great importance to auditors.

In practice, auditors apply the following rule for B:

The lowest weighting of a sub-theme within a theme determines the weighting of the entire theme. So, 1 “orange” assessment (the descriptions associated with a theme are partially met and efforts are being made to achieve a satisfactory assessment) of a sub-theme results in the entire theme being assessed as “orange”.

Because this does not meet the requirement that all themes must be assessed as “green”, the organisation does not meet the requirement for the relevant step and no certificate/statement will be issued for that step.

This is also an issue in the assessment of P. What will the final assessment be if more than 1 sub-theme within a theme scores “orange”?

Consideration:

The CoE has taken note of the more detailed background information as referred to in document N 171. The CoE is of the opinion;

- that the auditor’s view is decisive.
- the practical situation outlined above is not in accordance with the standard text, where it refers to “to a sufficient extent” (green).

- when assessing a theme on both P and B, the starting point should be that the “overall picture” observed sufficiently corresponds to the level of the step. The following nuances apply here:
 - an organisation must have the opportunity to demonstrably work on a sub-theme in the area of preconditions and behaviour (“orange” score (the descriptions associated with the sub-theme are partially met and efforts are being made to achieve a satisfactory assessment)) without being “punished” for this.
 - in the area of preconditions, 1 sub-theme per theme may be assessed as “orange” without the theme immediately scoring “orange”.
 - in the area of preconditions, an “orange” score on 2 or more sub-themes within the same theme will result in an “orange” score for the theme.
 - in the area of behaviour, 1 sub-theme for each theme may be assessed as “orange” without the theme itself being immediately assessed as “orange”.
 - in the area of behaviour, an “orange” score on a 2nd sub-theme leads to an “orange” score on the relevant theme, which immediately demonstrates that the requirement has not been met.
 - in the area of behaviour, a “red” score on a sub-theme automatically leads to a “red” rating for the theme, which immediately demonstrates that the requirement (all themes must be rated “green”) is not met.
 - for SCL Light and SCL Light for small organisations, organisations must indicate annually what they want to have in place in their organisation as effective behaviour for the following year.

If an organisation scores orange on a sub-theme for SCL Light and SCL Light for small organisations, the organisation must set a target for a behavioural change to be achieved on this sub-theme. The behavioural change must be assessed during the follow-up audit.

Decision:

The SCL CoE has taken the following decisions:

- The auditor’s view is decisive.
- The starting point is that the overall picture of a theme must match the desired step level.
- The following preconditions apply:
 - During an SCL audit, an organisation must have the opportunity to demonstrably work on preconditions and behaviour in relation to sub-themes (“orange” score (the descriptions associated with a sub-theme are partially met and efforts are being made to achieve a satisfactory assessment)) without being “punished” for this.
 - In the area of preconditions, 1 sub-theme per theme may be assessed as “orange” without the theme immediately scoring “orange”.
 - In the area of preconditions, an “orange” score on 2 or more sub-themes within the same theme will result in an “orange” score for the theme.
 - In the area of behaviour, 1 sub-theme for each theme may be assessed as “orange” without the theme itself being immediately assessed as “orange”.
In the area of behaviour, a “red” score on a sub-theme automatically leads to a “red” rating for the theme, which immediately demonstrates that the requirement (all themes must be rated “green”) is not met.
 - In the area of behaviour, an “orange” score on a 2nd sub-theme leads to an “orange” score on the relevant theme, which immediately demonstrates that the requirement has not been met.

- o For SCL Light and SCL Light for small organisations, organisations must indicate annually what they want to have in place in their organisation as effective behaviour for the following year.

If an organisation scores orange on a sub-theme for SCL Light and SCL Light for small organisations, the organisation must set a target for a behavioural change to be achieved on this sub-theme. The behavioural change must be assessed during the follow-up audit.