Global Sustainable Buildings Guide - Hong Kong

Green Certification

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# Is there a nationally adopted and recognized form of certification for buildings? What is it and is it mandatory for all new buildings and refurbished buildings?

**BEAM Plus**

Building Environmental Assessment Method (BEAM) Plus is the leading environmental assessment tool for buildings in Hong Kong. The local BEAM scheme was established in 1996 and was largely based on the UK's BREEAM. In November 2009, the scheme was revamped and renamed BEAM Plus.

BEAM Plus is a voluntary private sector initiative administered by the BEAM society and recognized by the Hong Kong Green Building Council (HKGBC), an industry-wide platform to drive the market transformation for sustainable buildings in Hong Kong. BEAM Plus has separate assessment tools for New Buildings (NB), Existing Buildings (EB), Interiors (BI), Neighborhood (ND), Data Centers (DC) and Existing Schools (ES). Generally, there are four ratings available for a project (i.e., Platinum, Gold, Silver or Bronze) after completing the assessment.

BEAM Plus NB: BEAM Plus NB covers the demolition, planning, design, construction and commissioning of a new building of any type. It can also be applied to major renovations of existing buildings. Its predecessor, BEAM for NB, was first introduced in 2004. The latest version, BEAM Plus NB V2.0, was launched in 2019 and assesses a building's performance on the following seven aspects: (i) Integrated Design and Construction Management; (ii) Health and Wellbeing; (iii) Sustainable Sites; (iv) Materials and Waste; (v) Energy Use; (vi) Water Use; (vii) Innovations and Additions. NBs have to undergo a provisional assessment and a final assessment, with four ratings (i.e., Platinum, Gold, Silver or Bronze) available for each stage of assessment.

BEAM Plus EB: BEAM Plus EB covers existing buildings of all types and all ages and may be applied at any time during a building's operational life. Its predecessor, BEAM for EB, was first introduced in 2004. The latest version, BEAM Plus EB V2.0, was launched in 2016 and assesses a building's overall environmental performance throughout its life cycle by considering the following seven aspects of sustainability: (i) Site Aspects; (ii) Management; (iii) Materials and Waste Aspects; (iv) Energy Use; (v) Water Use; (vi) Indoor Environmental Quality; and (vii) Innovations and Additions. BEAM Plus EB V2.0 allows applicants to apply for a Comprehensive Scheme or a Selective Scheme according to their needs, budget and technical capabilities. Under the Comprehensive Scheme, there will be a holistic review of the building, and four ratings (i.e., Platinum, Gold, Silver or Bronze) are available for a project after completing the assessment. Under the Selective Scheme, the applicant may apply for an individual assessment of each aspect, and four ratings (i.e., Excellent, Very Good, Good, Satisfactory) are available for an aspect after completing the assessment.

BEAM Plus BI: In 2013, BEAM Plus BI was first introduced in response to strong marketplace demand for a localized benchmark for interior fit-out, renovation and refurbishment works. It was designed specifically for Hong Kong and is targeted at assessing the fit-out, renovation and refurbishment projects of nondomestic and occupied spaces, such as office and retail premises, hotel rooms and function rooms, restaurants, educational facilities, and institutional facilities. In 2023, the updated version, BEAM Plus BI V2.0 – Non-Residential, was launched, and the tool also expanded its assessment scope to include residential spaces with the launch of BEAM Plus BI V2.0 – Residential. Under BEAM Plus BI V2.0 – Non-Residential, four ratings (i.e., Platinum, Gold, Silver or Bronze) are available for a project after completing the assessment. Under BEAM Plus BI V2.0 – Residential, two ratings (i.e., Green or Green+) are available for a project after completing the assessment.

BEAM Plus ND: BEAM Plus ND was launched in 2016 and focuses on the design of the space between buildings and the socioeconomic elements of a development. Assessment aspects of BEAM Plus ND consist of (i) Community Aspects, (ii) Outdoor Environmental Quality, (iii) Site Aspects, (iv) Materials and Waste Aspects, (v) Energy Aspects, (vi) Water Aspects, and (vii) Innovations and Additions. Four ratings (i.e., Platinum, Gold, Silver or Bronze) are available for a project after completing the assessment.

BEAM Plus DC: With the sharp rise in demand for data centers in Hong Kong and the huge power consumption associated with it, BEAM Plus DC was launched in 2021. It assesses the design and construction of new data centers, as well as the operations and maintenance of existing data centers, with slight differences in the assessment aspects. Four ratings (i.e., Platinum, Gold, Silver or Bronze) are available for a project after completing the assessment.

BEAM Plus ES: BEAM Plus ES was launched in 2022 to assess existing primary and secondary schools. The assessment framework of BEAM Plus ES comprises the following five categories: (i) Sustainable Leadership and Learning; (ii) Efficient Use of Resources; (iii) Sustainable Campus Environment; (iv) Health, Comfort and Happiness; and (v) Innovations and Additions. A school achieving an overall score of 50 will be awarded a rating of "Green" (while an "Unclassified" rating would be given to a school if its overall score does not reach 50).While certification is voluntary, the Hong Kong government has been leading by example. Since 2009, all new government buildings with a construction floor area of more than 10,000 square meters have been aiming to achieve at least a Gold rating under BEAM Plus. From October 2015, this target was further expanded to cover all new government buildings with a construction floor area of more than 5,000 square meters and with central air-conditioning. Additionally, new government buildings serving as landmarks will need to consider achieving a Platinum rating whenever possible. Green concepts have also been incorporated into public housing developments. From 2015-2016, all new public housing projects have aimed to attain the performance equivalent to BEAM Plus Gold or above.

As of March 2024, more than 2,500 projects have been registered or certified with BEAM Plus in Hong Kong.

**LEED**

In addition to BEAM Plus, the US Green Building Council's LEED is also used in Hong Kong as an alternative certification standard. Local developers are attracted by LEED's global popularity, as it appeals to multinational tenants seeking to occupy green buildings in Hong Kong.

**Zero-Carbon-Ready Building Certification Scheme**

In furtherance to the carbon emission reduction and energy use reduction targets set by "Hong Kong's Climate Action Plan 2050" released in 2021, the HKGBC launched the Zero-Carbon-Ready Building Certification Scheme in June 2023 to help the building sector to benchmark energy performance and set decarbonization targets.

The Zero-Carbon-Ready Building Certification Scheme has three categories of certification, namely the Energy Performance Certificate, Target Setting Certificate and Progress Certificate. The scheme aims to allow building owners to do the following:

Benchmark and report the energy performance of their buildings

Set their targets for carbon neutrality and tracking their progress

Justify their improvement projects for green financing

**Net-Zero Building Certification Scheme**

Following the success of the Zero-Carbon-Ready Certification Scheme, in March 2024, the HKGBC introduced the Net-Zero Building Certification Scheme. By issuing a Net Zero Building Certificate, the scheme aims to recognize buildings whose renewable energy produced in-situ is not less than its energy consumption.

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