

Supplier Qualification Checklist

Ref: SNS-SQL-2026-01 · v1.0 · April 2026

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Purpose

This document describes the qualification checklist Sinospect applies to Chinese manufacturers before they enter a client's supplier shortlist. Qualification is technical and commercial — not only commercial — because the cheapest quote is often the most expensive choice when execution, documentation and after-sales performance are factored in.

The process is designed to be repeatable and auditable: every check produces a documented finding that the client or their compliance team can review. Qualification categories are scored independently — a strong result in one area does not compensate for a failure in another.

Legal and Structural Verification

The first filter verifies that the manufacturer is a legitimate, stable entity with the legal standing to fulfil an export contract:

- Valid business registration and current operating licence — verified against Chinese government registry records (National Enterprise Credit Information Publicity System or equivalent).
- Export licence status and customs registration for the relevant product categories, including any export control restrictions that may apply to specific equipment types.
- Ownership structure and identification of beneficial owners, including related-party relationships with trading companies, agents or other entities in the supply chain.
- Tax registration status and evidence of active filing — not dormant, suspended or recently reconstituted entities that may indicate financial instability.
- Years in operation under the current legal entity, with verification that the entity has not been reconstituted to reset its track record or shed liabilities from prior operations.
- Disclosure of any ongoing legal disputes, sanctions exposure, regulatory enforcement actions or debarment from government or multilateral procurement programmes.

Production Capability

Production capability review assesses whether the manufacturer can actually produce the equipment to the required specification, volume and timeline. Factory visits are conducted when the project scope warrants it:

- On-site factory visit with documented walkthrough of production lines, raw material storage, finished goods areas, testing facilities and worker safety conditions.
- Equipment inventory with age and maintenance records for key machines — CNC machining centres, welding stations, assembly cells, painting facilities and test benches.
- Observed production lines running at the time of visit — not only idle capacity claims or showroom floor arrangements. Production volume is cross-checked against shipping records.
- Capacity benchmarks: monthly and annual throughput for the relevant product type, supported by production logs, shipping records or verifiable order backlogs.
- Raw-material sourcing arrangements — identification of key sub-suppliers, single-source dependencies, buffer stock practices and material quality control at incoming goods.

- Subcontracting arrangements — which processes are performed in-house and which are outsourced, with identification of subcontractors for critical operations (e.g., heat treatment, surface finishing, specialised testing).

Quality Management

Quality management assessment goes beyond checking for a certificate on the wall. The focus is on whether the quality system actually functions in daily operations:

- ISO 9001 certification status (or equivalent quality management system), with verification of the certifying body's accreditation and the scope of the certificate.
- Sector-specific certifications where applicable — IEC for electrical equipment, CE marking for EU-destined goods, UL listing where specified, ASME for pressure equipment.
- QC department staffing levels relative to production volume — number of dedicated inspectors, their reporting structure and their authority to halt production on quality grounds.
- Inspection and test plan (ITP) capability — ability to produce and execute a project-specific ITP aligned with contract requirements, including hold and witness points.
- Calibration records for measurement and testing equipment, with evidence of a systematic calibration schedule and traceable calibration standards.
- Measurement equipment audit — verifying that the instruments used for acceptance testing are appropriate for the tolerances specified and that their accuracy class matches the requirement.

Export and Reference Experience

A manufacturer's export history — particularly to the target region — is one of the strongest indicators of their ability to deliver against the documentation, packaging and compliance requirements that international procurement demands:

- Export track record to Africa or the target region — volume, frequency and product types shipped in the past three years, with destination countries and verifiable shipping references.
- Reference installations at similar scale and specification, with verifiable project names and end-client contacts (subject to confidentiality agreements). Site visits to reference installations are arranged when feasible.
- After-sales and spare parts handling history — demonstrated ability to supply replacement parts after the original order, including response times, packaging quality and pricing consistency.
- Behaviour on past escalations — how the manufacturer has responded to warranty claims, quality disputes, delivery delays or contract variations, based on Sinospect's direct experience or verifiable references from other buyers.
- Documentation quality on past exports — whether manuals, test reports and certificates met the importing country's requirements without rework or repeated submissions.

Commercial Qualification

Commercial qualification assesses whether the pricing, terms and post-sale commitments are realistic and sustainable — not just whether the headline number is attractive:

- Price positioning relative to market benchmarks for the product category — flagging quotations that are significantly below (possible scope reduction) or above (possible inflation) the expected range.
- Payment terms and bank references — creditworthiness indicators, willingness to accept standard trade-finance structures (L/C, documentary collection) and banking relationship stability.
- Contract structure and liability positioning — review of the manufacturer's standard terms, warranty clauses, limitation-of-liability language and willingness to accept client-side amendments.
- Warranty period offered and the practical mechanisms for warranty execution — local agent support, return-to-factory arrangements, on-site field service or remote technical assistance.

- Post-shipment support commitment — documented willingness and demonstrated capability to provide remote technical support, commissioning assistance, training or field service engineering.

Shortlist Decision

Qualification typically starts with 10 or more manufacturers identified through Sinospect's supplier database, industry directories and direct sourcing. The qualification process narrows the pool to 2–3 shortlisted suppliers whose evidence supports the project requirements across all six categories above.

A supplier that scores well commercially but fails on production capability, quality management or reference experience is not shortlisted. Equally, a supplier preferred by the client is rejected from the shortlist if the qualification evidence does not support it — and that recommendation is communicated to the client with documented reasoning.

The shortlist is presented to the client with a qualification summary for each manufacturer, including strengths, risks and any conditions. The client makes the final selection; Sinospect provides the evidence base and recommendation.

