



GSTC-ACCREDITED
Administered by GSTC
MANUAL

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The Global Sustainable Tourism Council

www.gstcouncil.org

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Document Control

This is version 1.2 of the GSTC-Accredited/GSTC-administered Manual. This is separate and distinct from the GSTC-Accredited/ASI-administered Manual.

Version Notes

This document will be updated from time to time, and users should periodically check for later versions on the GSTC.

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SECTION A: OVERVIEW AND INTRODUCTION

1 Introduction

1.1 GSTC Accreditation of CBs and Recognition of Standards Programs

The GSTC Accreditation of CBs and Recognition of Standards Programs are designed to be applicable to all schemes certifying tourism enterprises for their sustainability management and performance. Relevant certification schemes and the bodies that run them vary from sizeable international operations or national schemes, some with support from government agencies, to small schemes covering local areas or particular types of tourism product.

The GSTC intends to build a long-term relationship with all certification schemes. An aim of the GSTC is to continually increase the percentage of schemes that are GSTC-Accredited.

The GSTC considers it desirable for all sustainable certification standards to be GSTC-Recognized to encourage the application of the four pillars of sustainability found in the GSTC Criteria – environment, social, culture, and management – and to ensure that an overall global baseline is set for sustainable tourism standards. Further, if a CB chooses to gain GSTC Accreditation using their own set of standards for certification, that standard must be GSTC-Recognized as a pre-requisite for Accreditation. These are three reasons for the existence of the GSTC-Recognition Program. See the GSTC Recognition Manual for detailed requirements and information.

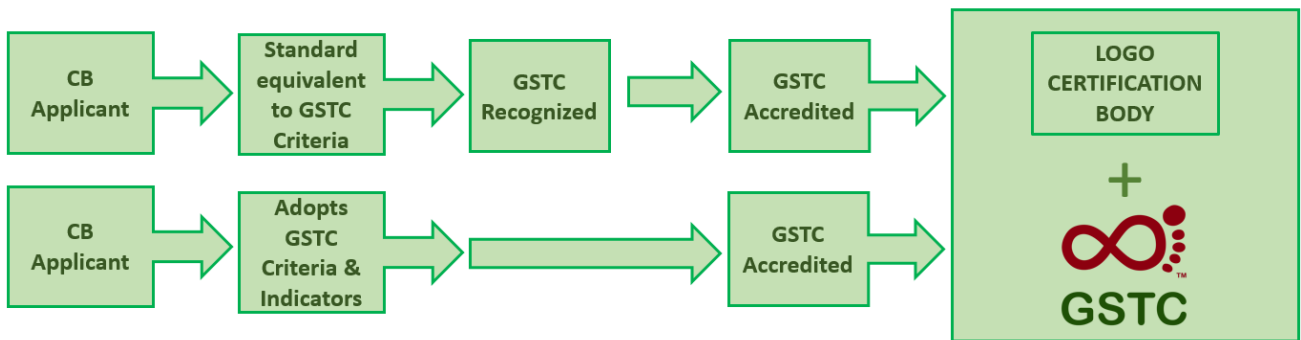
To summarize the three elements of these two sets of programs:

- **GSTC-Recognized:** GSTC recognizes equivalence of a certification body's standard (criteria) against GSTC Criteria (Hotels, Tour Operators or Destinations). See the GSTC-Recognized Manual.
- **GSTC-Accredited / ASI-administered:** Third party accreditation (by ASI) of certification body that either uses a GSTC- Recognized Standard OR certifies directly against GSTC Criteria and Indicators (GSTC-Industry, formerly Hotels, Tour Operators, and/or Destinations). See the GSTC-Accredited Manual.
- **GSTC-Accredited / GSTC-administered:** GSTC accredits the policies and procedures of a certification body that uses a GSTC-Recognized standard or certifies directly against GSTC Criteria and Indicators (GSTC-Industry, formerly Hotels, Tour Operators, and/or Destinations). Eligibility is limited to certification bodies that operate in a single-country; those certification bodies operating internationally must gain their GSTC Accreditation through ASI. This document, the GSTC-Accredited Manual, applies.





Not all certification schemes cover all aspects of sustainability: economic, social, cultural and environmental. For example, a number are solely covering environmental matters and may grant the use of an eco-label. These schemes would only be eligible to become GSTC-Recognized if they first transformed themselves into sustainable tourism certification programs and included all aspects of sustainability. The GSTC encourages certification schemes, where appropriate, to consider this transition.

The diagram below provides a simplified graphical depiction of the pathways of the GSTC Accreditation of CBs and Recognition of Standards

Program and the table on the following pages summarize the processes, key aspects and benefits.



1.2 GSTC Accreditation of CBs and Recognition of Standards Programs - Summary and Benefits

	GSTC-Recognized	GSTC-Accredited GSTC-administered	GSTC-Accredited ASI-administered
Summary			
GSTC recognizes equivalency of certification body's standard (criteria) against GSTC Criteria (Hotel, Tour Operator or Destinations).	✓	✓ ¹	✓
GSTC accredit the policies and procedures of certification body that uses either a GSTC-Recognized standard OR certifies directly against GSTC Criteria and Indicators to certify Destinations, or for certain certification bodies operating within a single country to certify Hotels/Accommodations or Tour Operators.		✓	
Third party accreditation (by ASI) of certification body that uses either a GSTC Recognized Standard OR certifies directly against GSTC Criteria and Indicators to certify Hotels/Accommodations or Tour Operators.			✓
GSTC Logo Usage			
GSTC-Accredited Certification Program or GSTC-Accredited Certification Body may use logo. (subject to license agreement).			
Certified Hotel/Tour Operator/Destination may use logo (subject to license agreement and annual fee – administered by certification body).			
Promotion by GSTC			
Certification Body promoted on GSTC website.		✓	✓
Announcement of achievement in GSTC newsletter, GSTC website and GSTC social media outlets.		✓	✓
Inclusion of Certification Body's logo on all GSTC official presentations, including Annual General Meeting, as well as all other speaking engagements and publications.		✓	✓
Certified hotels, tour operators and destinations will be listed on the GSTC website directory.		✓	✓
Certified hotels, tour operators and destinations will be prominently displayed (with a hyperlink to the individual hotel) on the GSTC website.		✓	✓
Certified hotels, tour operators and destinations have priority search on the GSTC website directory.		✓	✓
Development and publication on GSTC website of case studies (i.e. written blog post, video blog) of individual certified businesses.		✓	✓
Market Access			
Certified hotels (and soon tour operators) included in GSTC database available to online travel agencies (OTAs)		✓	✓
Priority search results when OTA's use GSTC database.		✓	✓

¹ To be GSTC Accredited the certification body's standard must first be GSTC Recognised or it certifies with the GSTC Criteria.

1.3 The Need for Sustainability of Tourism

Travel and tourism account for around 10% of the world's economic activity. It is a rapidly growing sector, with international tourist arrivals forecast to grow from 1.1 billion in 2014 to around 1.8 billion in 2030²

The Sustainable Development Goals adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2015 are aimed at, inter alia, ending extreme poverty, fighting inequality and justice and tackling climate change. The significant relevance of tourism to the 17 SDGs has been recognized. The UNWTO is working with governments, public and private partners, development banks, international and regional financial institutions, UN agencies and international organizations to achieve the SDGs, with a special focus on Goal 8 (economic growth), Goal 12 (sustainable consumption and production patterns) and Goal 14 (marine resources) where tourism has been specifically featured.

The impact of travel and tourism on global and local environments and on host communities can be both positive and negative, providing both opportunities and responsibilities.

Negative impacts and concerns associated with travel and tourism include:

- Its contribution to climate change, being responsible for an estimated 5% of global CO₂ emissions which is growing rapidly;
- Depletion of natural and precious resources, such as the use of land and water;
- Creation of pollution of all kinds;
- Social changes and dislocation of traditional societies;
- Pressure on cultural heritage sites, natural environments and biodiversity;
- Poor labour conditions and exploitation in parts of the sector.

Travel and tourism can also deliver many positive benefits, including:

- A growing opportunity for enterprise development and employment creation, with low barriers for entry;
- Direct and indirect support for local communities, through the provision of jobs, income, services and infrastructure;
- Awareness of natural and cultural heritage and support for their conservation;
- Health, wellbeing and educational benefits for tourists and hosts, which should be accessible to all.

Sustainable tourism requires an approach to tourism development and management that recognises and responds to these responsibilities and opportunities.

Actions that encourage, identify and promote a positive response from enterprises are crucial for the future of the tourism sector and the contribution it can make to sustainable development. The tourism sector is highly fragmented. While there are some important multinational players, many of the providers of tourism services are independent businesses and the majority are small and micro enterprises. Tourism enterprises of all sizes are responding in different ways and to different degrees to the need for sustainable tourism.

² UN World Tourism Organisation, Tourism Highlights 2015 Edition

1.4 The Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC)

GSTC is a multi-stakeholder initiative legally formed in 2010 after its predecessor was formed in 2007, with guidance from the United Nations, including amongst its founding partners UNEP, UNWTO, UN Foundation, Sabre Holdings and Rainforest Alliance, amongst others. It was formed in response to the challenges and opportunities of sustainable tourism, by merging two previous initiatives.³ In 2015, GSTC merged with the Tour Operators' Initiative (TOI).

Over 150 organizations from the public, private and voluntary sectors and from the world of tourism, environmental management and sustainable development have been contributing to the work of the GSTC and its two predecessor bodies.

The GSTC is a Membership Council with a Board of Directors. The Board provides the governance of the organization. However, the Council, which elects the Board, has responsibility for the by-laws of the GSTC, for its principles, criteria and operational guidelines, for admittance of members and for resolving disputes.

The mission of the GSTC is:

“To improve tourism’s potential to be a driver of positive conservation and economic development for communities and businesses around the world and a tool for poverty alleviation”.

The GSTC fulfils its mission by fostering increased knowledge and understanding of sustainable tourism practices and the adoption of universal sustainable tourism principles.

It also works in many other ways to strengthen education, communication, knowledge-sharing and business engagement in the field of sustainable tourism and to achieve improved market access for sustainable tourism products.

1.5 A Common Agenda for Sustainable Tourism

The challenges of sustainable tourism articulated earlier encompass economic, social and environmental impacts. This broad spectrum of concern is increasingly recognized by bodies promoting sustainable tourism. UNEP and UNWTO identified an agenda for sustainable tourism based on twelve functional aims⁴ and showed how there are economic, social and environmental dimensions to each of them. The dimensions are seen as interrelated.

In the private sector, in tourism as well as in other economic spheres, enterprises and investment projects are encouraged to consider a triple bottom line. Many companies report on corporate social responsibility policies and actions, which address a broad range of economic, social and environmental impacts and initiatives beyond straight financial reporting. Some companies use the guidelines of the Global Reporting Initiative, the world’s most widely used sustainability reporting framework (www.globalreporting.org).

The GSTC program is in line with this broad approach to sustainable tourism and encourages certification schemes to move beyond a more mono-dimensional, often environmental focus.

The principles for sustainable tourism behind the GSTC program are that:

- Sustainability objectives should be defined and actions coordinated by an effective management system
- Tourism should bring the greatest possible social and economic benefits to local communities and any negative impacts on them should be minimised

³ The Partnership for Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria and the Sustainable Tourism Stewardship Council

⁴ UNEP, UNWTO *Making Tourism More Sustainable, A Guide for Policy Makers, 2005*

- Local cultural heritage must be respected and opportunities should be taken to strengthen its Accreditation of CBs and Recognition of Standards and richness.
- Impacts on the global and local environment, through pollution and depletion of natural resources, should be minimised and support should be given to the conservation of local landscapes and biodiversity.

These principles of sustainable tourism are seen as relevant in all parts of the world and can be reflected in many different kinds of tourism enterprise. The overall agenda remains the same. However, key concerns about tourism impact and priorities for improving sustainability will vary from place to place. It is hoped and expected that sustainable tourism standards will be adapted to local and industry sector conditions and that they will far exceed the minimum requirements set out in the GSTC Criteria.

1.6 GSTC Criteria

The Global Sustainable Tourism Council has developed two sets of criteria and associated indicators:

- **GSTC-Industry:** the Global Sustainable Tourism Industry Criteria (version 3, December 2016). At this stage, GSTC-Industry is available in two versions, GSTC-Hotel and GSTC-Tour Operator, each with their own set of performance indicators;
- **GSTC- Destinations:** The Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria for Destinations

The development of GSTC-Industry allows the GSTC to develop sub-sector specific Indicators for this broader set of criteria, for example MICE, cruise, attractions.

1.7 GSTC Accreditation Panel

The GSTC Accreditation Panel is established by the GSTC by-laws:

The GSTC Accreditation Panel (“the Panel”) will operate the recognition, approval and accreditation program under the umbrella of GSTC. The Panel will:

1. Establish the requirements for recognizing standards, approving certification programs, and validating the accreditation of conformity assessment bodies, through Manuals for Recognition, Approval, and Accreditation; guidance documents, and other documentation of procedures;
2. Determine whether a contractor is qualified to review a standard’s conformity with the GSTC Criteria; review certification program procedures and processes; or award accreditation;
3. Declare standards to be “GSTC-Recognized”;
4. Declare certification programs to be “GSTC-Accredited”;
5. Validate and provide surveillance of accreditation body declarations of “GSTC-Accredited certification bodies”;

The Panel shall operate independently of the GSTC Board and executive staff. While appointed by the GSTC Board, the members of The Panel shall disregard any instructions from the Board or executive staff that they feel may jeopardize their independence and impartiality.

The GSTC Board shall have the discretion to accept or reject any of the Panel’s recommendations or decisions. If GSTC rejects one of the Panel’s recommendations or decisions, it is obligated to provide an explanation for doing so to the Panel. The Panel may choose to raise the matter at the next annual Membership Council Meeting.

1.8 Principles for the implementation of the GSTC Accreditation of CBs and Recognition of Standards Programs

The following principles apply to all aspects of the GSTC program – including to work performed by certification scheme owners, CBs and Accreditation Bodies.

1 Integrity

Integrity should be demonstrated in every aspect of the process, requiring honesty, fairness and consistency throughout.

2 Credibility

The process should spread confidence in certification as a meaningful way of identifying and stimulating good sustainability practice in the tourism sector.

3 Impartiality

The process should not be open to any forms of influence which might raise doubts about the objectivity of the decisions taken.

4 Accessibility

Recognition of standards and accreditation should be as accessible as possible to all relevant certification schemes and certification should be as accessible as possible to all tourism enterprises. There should be no discrimination on grounds of size and location and financial barriers should be minimized.

5 Comprehensiveness

All recognized sustainable tourism standards covering sustainable tourism should address all aspects of sustainability, including socio-economic, cultural and environmental impacts.

6 Rigorousness

Accreditation and certification should be robust processes and require high standards and levels of sustainability to be met.

7 Effectiveness

The process should be impacts-driven and shaped to help as many tourism enterprises as possible achieve maximum change towards sustainability. The accreditation programme should strengthen the impact of the certification schemes.

8 Transparency

The standards required and processes adopted should be transparent and available for scrutiny by stakeholders.

9 Diversity

The process should recognize and encourage the diversity of local, regional and sectoral certification schemes, including their criteria and standards, provided there is no loss of sustainability outcomes.

10 Achievability

The accreditation process must be practicable and sustainable over time and not place burdens on certification schemes that they could not meet.

1.9 Overview of GSTC-Accredited process for Certification Bodies

This document sets out requirements for the operation of the Global Sustainable Tourism Council's (GSTC's) program for conferring **GSTC-Accredited status** on the activities of bodies certifying conformity to GSTC-Recognized sustainable tourism standards, which are hereafter referred to as "Certification Bodies"⁵.

"**GSTC-Accredited**" signifies that a certification program is using a GSTC-Recognized Standard where all GSTC-equivalent criteria are mandatory and is following processes and procedures that have been reviewed and accredited by the GSTC.

Certifying Bodies that use a GSTC Recognized standard in their certification process are encouraged, though not required, to apply for Accreditation. Another optional approach is for them to apply for GSTC Accredited in place of Accredited status, but only if they meet one of the following criteria:

1. The standard has been GSTC Recognized for use in only one country, OR
2. The standard has been GSTC Recognized as applying to multiple countries but the certification or award program is operating on a small scale on a regional basis and not a global basis (the definitions of "small" or "regional" to be determined by GSTC Secretariat on a case-by-case analysis and evaluation, with any disputes to be settled by the Accreditation Panel)

In broad terms it means that the GSTC has recognized that the standard used for certification is equivalent to the **Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria** (GSTC-Recognized), that all equivalent criteria are mandatory and that the certification procedures largely meet international standards for transparency, impartiality, and competence. Businesses and activities certified by a GSTC-Accredited certification program or GSTC-Accredited certification body ("clients" or "certificate holders") can also be licensed to use the GSTC language and logo.

In order to ensure the credibility of a certification program in the absence of full accreditation, the body responsible for the program is expected to comply with the following, among other, requirements:

1. That it is a **legal entity** with rights over the use of the certification standard and associated trademarks and labels, as well as for making final decisions on the granting, maintaining, extending, suspending or withdrawing of certification.
2. It assesses the conformity of a client's tourism services with a **GSTC-Recognized Standard** of clearly defined scope and where all GSTC-equivalent criteria are mandatory.
3. Its policies and procedures are **non-discriminatory** and available to all applicants whose activities fall within its declared field of operation.
4. It has documented measures to reduce risks to **impartiality** and potential conflicts of interest, including those arising from **consultancy** to existing or potential clients.
5. It has the **financial resources** required for the operation of a certification system.
6. It ensures the **competency** of its personnel, internal and external, to perform the functions ascribed to them.
7. It has **documented processes and procedures** for the granting, renewal, monitoring, and termination of certification.
8. It conducts **site audits** of all certified services prior to granting certification.
9. It has procedures to handle **complaints and appeals**.

The process of assessing a certification program for GSTC-Accredited consists of a remote desk audit of documents provided by the program. The assessor may recommend to the Accreditation Panel an audit

⁵ "Certification Body" is defined here as an organization with a "certification scheme/program" that requires conformity with a GSTC-Recognized Standard to award certification and that conducts certification to its own GSTC-Recognized standard or to the GSTC Criteria. For the purposes of GSTC, a certification body may evaluate conformity to its own standard or to any other GSTC-Recognized standard. A certification body does not need to own a standard.

of a certification audit, hereafter referred to as a witnessed audit. In the case that the Panel requires a witnessed audit, the applicant will be required to pay the travel costs and professional fees of the GSTC-designated auditor.

2 Normative References

The following documents contain provisions that, through reference in this text, become part of the GSTC Accredited Manual.

For documents that specify a date or version number later amendments or revisions of that document do not apply as a normative requirement. Readers are encouraged to review the most recent editions and any guidance documents available to gain further insight about how the document has changed, and to consider whether or not to implement latest changes.

For documents without dates or version numbers, the latest published edition of the document referred to applies.

- a) ISO/IEC 17065:2012 Conformity assessment — Requirements for bodies certifying products, processes and services
- b) ISO/IEC 17067:2013 Conformity assessment — Fundamentals of product certification and guidelines for product certification schemes
- c) ISO/IEC 17011: 2004 Conformity assessment — General requirements for accreditation bodies accrediting conformity assessment bodies
- d) ISO 19011:2011 Guidelines for auditing management systems
- e) ISO/IEC 17021-1:2015 Conformity assessment -- Requirements for bodies providing audit and certification of management systems
- f) ISO/IEC 17000:2004 Conformity assessment — Vocabulary and general principles
- g) ISO/IEC Guide 2: 2004 Standardization and related activities — General vocabulary
- h) Accreditation Audit Practice Group (AAPG) Guidance Documents:
 - i. ISO/IAF AAPG Auditing the CB Impartiality Committee
 - ii. ISO/IAF AAPG Key Criteria for assessing the competency of CBs and their ability to deliver credible results
- i) ISEAL Code of Good Practice for Setting Social and Environmental Standards.

See also Section E Glossary for terms and definitions

SECTION B: REQUIREMENTS FOR GSTC-ACCREDITED PROGRAMS

This section sets out the basic structural and procedural requirements to be met by a certification program (CB) in order for it to be awarded GSTC-Accredited status.

3 Structure and Responsibility

- 3.1 The CB shall be, or shall be part of, a legal entity.
- 3.2 The CB shall be able to show that it owns, or has the right to use, a GSTC-Recognized certification standard and any associated trademarks and labels.
- 3.3 The CB shall document its governance and operational structure. Documentation shall identify the board, committee or personnel responsible for:
 - a) Development of policies and procedures;
 - b) Supervision of implementation of procedures;
 - c) Supervision of finances;
 - d) Performance of evaluation activity;
 - e) Making decisions on certification;
 - f) Delegation of authority and contractual arrangements;
 - g) Handling of complaints and appeals.
- 3.4 The CB shall be responsible for decisions on the granting, maintaining, extending, suspending or withdrawing of certification.
 - 3.4.1 Authority to take decisions on these matters may be delegated to individuals or a committee.
- 3.5 The CB shall have a legally enforceable certification agreement with its clients, which:
 - 3.5.1 Sets out the responsibilities of the CB, including:
 - a) Carrying out an effective and impartial certification procedure
 - b) Communicating any changes in the standard and requirements to clients
 - c) Providing information to clients on its certification procedures.
 - 3.5.2 Sets out the responsibilities of the client, including:
 - a) Conformity with the recognized standard and relevant certification requirements;
 - b) Correct communication of the meaning of the certification, avoiding misleading claims and withdrawing reference to certification following any termination;
 - c) Recording, handling, and informing the CB of complaints and corrective actions taken relating to compliance with the certification requirements;
 - d) Telling the CB of any changes that may affect compliance with certification requirements within ten days of them occurring;
 - e) Provision of all necessary information and arrangements for the certification audit process;
 - f) Allowing the CB and the GSTC access to the client's premises, personnel and records for the purpose of audit.
 - 3.5.3 Is signed by both parties prior to initiating the certification process.

4 Scope and Accessibility

- 4.1 The CB shall assess the conformity of the client's tourism services against the requirements of a GSTC-Recognized Standard.
 - 4.1.1 All criteria in the GSTC-Recognized Standard which are equivalent to the GSTC Criteria must be mandatory for conformity.
- 4.2 A CB may certify against the GSTC-Recognized Standard that it owns or has the right to use.
- 4.3 The CB shall define the scope of the certification, specifying those services and locations that have been assessed against the recognized standard.
- 4.4 Where a client provides multiple tourism services, the certification document will identify the services that have been certified, and the CB will ensure that the client limits its claims of certification and use of logos and marks to the certified services.
- 4.5 The policies and procedures adopted by the CB shall be non-discriminatory.
- 4.6 The CB shall make its services available to all applicants whose activities fall within its declared field of operation.
 - 4.6.1 Access to certification shall not be conditional upon the size of the client or membership of any association or group

5 Impartiality and Conflict of Interest

- 5.1 The CB shall have a written policy that expresses its commitment to impartiality, confidentiality, and the objectivity of its activities.
- 5.2 All personnel and committees, either internal or external to the CB, who could influence certification activities, shall declare that they will act impartially and not allow any commercial, financial or other pressures to compromise their impartiality.
- 5.3 All personnel, internal or external, shall be required to reveal any situations that may present them or the CB with a conflict of interest
- 5.4 The CB shall document an assessment of risks to impartiality and potential conflicts of interest, together with measures taken to eliminate or minimise these risks and conflicts.
- 5.5 The organizational structure of the CB shall include a mechanism, to ensure implementation of the CBs impartiality policy.
- 5.6 Neither certification evaluations nor certification decisions shall be undertaken by anyone whose impartiality may be compromised by having provided consultancy to the client.
- 5.7 Prior to and during the certification process the CB shall not give prescriptive advice to a client in a form and to a level of detail that could compromise its ability to undertake an impartial certification.
- 5.8 The CB may provide general information to assist tourism service providers strengthen the sustainability of their operations and to understand and comply with the GSTC-Recognized Standard, through publications, seminars, training courses and other activity, provided this is not seen as part of the certification process and is open to all existing or potential clients.

6 Financial Stability and Liability

- 6.1 The CB shall be able to demonstrate that it has the cash flows required to remain in business for the life of certificates issued.
 - 6.1.1 Cash may come from operations and subsidy from government or other sources.
 - 6.1.2 Where financial stability depends on subsidy, this should be covered by documented agreement.
- 6.2 The CB shall evaluate its liability risks and demonstrate that it has adequate arrangements to cover liabilities arising from its operations.

7 Professional Capacity

- 7.1 The CB shall ensure that personnel, internal and external, used in the certification process are competent to perform their functions and shall document how this is achieved.
- 7.2 The CB shall use auditors who have professional qualifications and experience in certification, auditing and in sustainable tourism. Auditors shall:
 - 7.2.1 Have an undergraduate degree in environmental, sustainability, management and/or tourism disciplines, or have a minimum of five years' experience in an environmental discipline and/or sustainable tourism;
 - 7.2.2 Have qualifications in environmental auditing, or have at least 5 years' experience in developing and/or managing a sustainable tourism certification program; and
 - 7.2.3 Have at least five years' experience in sustainable tourism or an awareness of sustainable tourism (e.g. from training provided by the GSTC, the CB or other suitable training program).
- 7.3 Auditors must have documented awareness of the GSTC-Recognized standard.
 - 7.3.1 Such documentation may be provided by the CB as a result of training provided by the CB or through work as an assistant auditor for the CB.
- 7.4 A CB must provide suitable evidence of its auditors' qualifications and experience:
 - 7.4.1 < 5 auditors: Where a CB has less than five auditors, a resume (curricula vitae) and certificates/qualifications of existing auditors shall be provided as evidence. The selection criteria/qualification requirements and any in-house training/awareness program shall be submitted for engagement of new auditors.
 - 7.4.2 5 or more auditors: Where a CB has 5 or more auditors, the selection criteria/qualification requirements and any in-house training/awareness program shall be submitted for engagement of new auditors. A table summarizing existing auditors' qualification against 7.2 is required and resumés (curricula vitae) and qualifications of three auditors are required.
 - 7.4.3 CBs are encouraged to implement capacity building among auditors, including sharing of information and developing new auditors.
- 7.5 Auditing personnel may be employed directly by the CB or be independent personnel working under contract to the CB.
- 7.6 The CB shall only outsource certification activities to an external body that fulfils the same requirements specified in this section of GSTC-Accredited Manual as the CB itself, or that complies with the GSTC-Accredited Manual requirements for a certification body. This includes outsourcing to an external body to provide auditing services. The CB shall:

- 7.6.1 Take responsibility for all outsourced activities
 - 7.6.2 Have legally enforceable agreements with all bodies that provide outsourced services
 - 7.6.3 Have procedures for checking that such bodies are adhering to this agreement and for taking any necessary corrective action.
- 7.7 Personnel involved in the certification process shall sign a document that commits them to abide by the rules of the CB, including matters relating to confidentiality and conflict of interest.
- 7.8 The CB shall identify the training needs of personnel and provide training to ensure that they are competent to fulfil their functions. Personnel shall understand the GSTC-Recognized standard used and other requirements for certification.
- 7.9 The CB shall establish procedures for monitoring personnel performance. This should involve review of audit reports, feedback from clients and observation of audits. The results of this monitoring shall be communicated to auditors together with any recommendations to improve performance.
- 7.10 The CB shall maintain a record of all personnel used, including their relevant qualifications, level of experience, training received and, for organizations with 20 or more employees, performance appraisals.

8 Information and Confidentiality

- 8.1 The CB shall make publicly available and easily accessible, without charge, information on the following:
- 8.1.1 The CB, its location(s) and contact details
 - 8.1.2 The rules for granting certification and the evaluation procedures and certification process
 - 8.1.3 A description of the charges made to clients
 - 8.1.4 A description of the rights and duties of certified clients in how they should refer to the certification and identify themselves with it
 - 8.1.5 Information about how to make complaints and appeals and how these will be handled.
- 8.2 The CB shall identify the GSTC-Recognized Standard(s) to which certification is offered.
- 8.2.1 The CB may restrict access to documentation which reveals the proprietary systems used in audits.
- 8.3 The CB shall provide certified clients with a formal, signed certification document which identifies:
- 8.3.1 The name and address of the CB and of the client
 - 8.3.2 The services covered by the certification
 - 8.3.3 The GSTC-Recognized Standard(s) to which the services comply
 - 8.3.4 A unique record number or code
 - 8.3.5 The dates of granting and of expiry of the certification.
- 8.4 The CB shall provide clients with rules on references to the certification that can be made by clients and the use of any certification mark or logo.
- 8.5 Any mark or logo shall be traceable to the CB.
- 8.6 The CB shall monitor and control the use of any mark or logo and any references made to the GSTC-Recognized Standard and shall take action to deal with any incorrect or misleading use.
- 8.6.1 Monitoring and control shall address any use of the certification logo or mark by un-certified parties, and discontinuation of use where certification has been terminated or withdrawn.

- 8.7 The CB shall keep up to date a directory with details of all services certified by them and shall make this publicly available and easily accessible.
- 8.8 The CB shall develop and implement a written policy which expresses its commitment to confidentiality. This shall include:
- 8.8.1 Informing its clients of the information it intends to make public
 - 8.8.2 Requiring all personnel to abide by the confidentiality policy
 - 8.8.3 Informing the clients of any information that it may be required to make available by law
 - 8.8.4 Agreeing with the client on the release of any information required for other purposes, such as handling complaints.

9 Certification Process

- 9.1 The CB shall have a consistent, systematic and documented process for conducting evaluation of clients and determining whether or not to grant certification.
- 9.2 Upon receipt of an application for certification, the CB shall:
- 9.2.1 Ensure that the client is fully aware of the process and costs
 - 9.2.2 Clarify the certification required and the scope of activities to be covered
 - 9.2.3 Obtain initial information about these activities, relevant to planning the evaluation
 - 9.2.4 Reach agreement to proceed
 - 9.2.5 Plan the evaluation process.
- 9.3 The CB, or sub-contracted body, shall select personnel to carry out the evaluation.
- 9.3.1 Personnel shall not be selected by the client, but clients shall be given the opportunity to raise any objections about personnel selected, for example on grounds of conflict of interest.
- 9.4 Audit personnel shall obtain documentary evidence from the client on its policies, activities and performance concerning the different components of the standard.
- 9.4.1 Audit personnel should draw any significant concerns about the conformity of documentation to the client, and may request further information.
 - 9.4.2 A period may be allowed for non-conformities to be addressed and reported to the CB.
- 9.5 Audit personnel shall conduct a visit to the premises of the client.
- 9.5.1 The visit shall involve:
 - a) Interviews with key personnel
 - b) Obtaining objective evidence that demonstrates conformity or non-conformity with the GSTC-Recognized Standard and other certification requirements
 - c) Observation of the premises where the tourism service is delivered.
- 9.6 Audit personnel may undertake consultation with stakeholders within or external to the client to clarify aspects of the client's activity and performance.
- 9.6.1 Audit personnel should undertake consultation where there is significant doubt about the sufficiency, quality, or veracity of information supplied by a client.
 - 9.6.2 The client shall be informed in writing about any stakeholder consultation undertaken.
- 9.7 At the end of the visit, Audit personnel shall have a closing meeting with the client to present the findings of the audit process. Audit personnel should:
- 9.7.1 Explain any observed non-conformity with the GSTC-Recognized Standard and other requirements or areas where improvement could be made

- 9.7.2 Seek clarification and comment from the client, and a commitment as to when any non-conformities identified are to be addressed
- 9.7.3 Explain to the client that this exchange of information does not pre-determine the outcome of the certification decision.
- 9.8 Audit personnel shall prepare a written report of audit which:
 - 9.8.1 Sets out the process of the audit, including dates, documents scrutinised and interviews held
 - 9.8.2 Identifies areas of non-conformity with the standard
 - 9.8.3 May include comments and recommendations relevant to the decision on whether to grant certification
 - 9.8.4 Provides sufficient detail to enable a certification decision to be taken
 - 9.8.5 Is made available to the client, in full or in summary form.
- 9.9 The CB shall invite the client to correct any non-conformity identified within a specified time period and inform the CB when this rectification has been completed.
 - 9.9.1 The CB shall then implement a suitable re-evaluation process to verify conformity in these areas.
- 9.10 The CB shall assign one or more individuals to review all information and results from the evaluation and make a decision on whether or not to grant the certification.
 - 9.10.1 This decision shall be documented.
 - 9.10.2 Individuals involved in making this decision shall not include those involved in undertaking the audit.
- 9.11 The CB shall communicate to the client the results of the decision.
- 9.12 Audit Frequency and Intensity
 - 9.12.1 Audit Procedure – The CB shall define and document procedures for audits and shall require these procedures to be followed by assurance providers consistently across the CB’s system. The procedures shall include at least the following:
 1. Frequency and intensity of audits
 2. Sampling protocol for audits (unless 100% sample is used)
 3. Structure of the audit team (if audit team is used);
 4. Minimum set of issues that need to be checked in every audit;
 5. Time needed for an audit;
 6. Documentation to be reviewed;
 7. Timelines for submission of completed reports, following audits;
 8. Minimum content of audit reports, including a requirement for auditors to explain their rationale for their choice of samples in the audit
 - 9.12.2 Audit Plan - The CB shall plan on-site and off-site audit activities and duration taking account of:
 1. The proposed or actual scope;
 2. The management system used by the client;
 3. The Standard the client will be audited against;
 4. The need to allow sufficient time to verify the effectiveness of the client’s management system for the proposed scope;
 5. Opportunities to synchronize and combine audits with other audits where possible and appropriate.
 6. The CB shall determine the number and type of sites to be audited as follows:
 - a. For single and multi-site certificates, every site shall be audited.
 - b. For Group certificates, sites shall be audited according to section “Eligibility for Group certification”

7. The CB shall plan an audit duration of at least 1 day on-site for single and multi-site clients that:
 - a. Are in a country with a score below 41 in Transparency International's latest Corruption Perception Index (<http://Cbi.transparency.org>);
 - b. and in special circumstances, the planned audit duration for a company may be less than 1 day. In these cases, the CB shall document a justification for the reduced audit time in the audit checklist considering as well the size and scope of the organization being audited.

9.12.3 Frequency and Intensity – The CB shall set the audit frequency and intensity to be employed. Where a CB uses a risk based approach to determine audit frequency and intensity, the CB shall develop a procedure that identifies the risk factors to assess the risk level of clients, the overall risk categorization, and the resulting audit frequency and intensity associated with each risk category.

DEFINITIONS

1. **Audit Duration:** Audit duration for all types of audits is the effective time measured in auditor days required to carry out auditing activity.
2. **Auditor Day:** The duration of an auditor day is normally 8 hours and may or may not include travel time or lunch depending upon local legislation.
3. **Risk Category:** For sustainability management systems, the provisions specified in this document are based on two primary risk categories relating to the type and sensitivity of the environment.

Risk categories to determine audit frequency and intensity

The provisions specified in this document are based on two primary risk categories relating to the likelihood and consequence of the environmental impacts of an organization that fundamentally affect the auditor time, frequency and intensity of the audit.

These are:

High Risk – environmental impacts with significant likelihood and consequence (typically organizations with significant environmental impacts);

- **Minimum Frequency & intensity:** Full Onsite audit once every two years, plus a Full desk audit each year on between.
 - Onsite – Desk Audit – Onsite.

Low Risk – environmental aspects with low likelihood and consequence (typically organizations in an existing urban environment with few or minimum environmental impacts);

- **Minimum Frequency & intensity:** Full Onsite audit every two years.
 - Onsite – Surveillance - Onsite

9.12.4 Risk Assessment

1. Each CB before performing audits, must define the level of risk of the organization.
2. The organization must identify its level of environmental risk and document an effective sustainability approach, appropriate to the scope of its operations.
3. If an organization is located in a Sensitive Area, this organization will be categorized as 'high' risk.
4. Sensitive areas include but are not limited to world heritage listed areas, areas set aside for environmental and/or cultural protection, marine parks, beaches, rivers, lagoons, wetlands/swamps, alpine/artic areas, tropical islands/coral reefs, national/state parks, areas set aside for indigenous people or specific national and state or regional environmental, social and cultural legislation requirements.

5. If an organization's environmental risk is categorized as "high" a documented Environmental Management System (EMS) is required.
6. If an organization's environmental risk is categorized as "low" a documented Risk Assessment and Environmental Action is required.
7. All levels of risk are subject to ratification by the CB.

Note: The Risk category of the company is determined by the above and not by company size, financial turnover (revenue), or other financial aspects.

9.12.5 Sampling within the Audit

1. The CB shall define the sampling procedure that auditors shall use during the audit and shall provide this direction to assurance providers. The procedure shall require that the auditor, rather than the client, chooses the sample. The sampling procedure shall include, at minimum:
 2. A description of when sampling is to be employed in the audit; and
 3. Guidelines for the type of sampling and size of the samples to be employed in each instance.
 4. Guidance: Sampling in the audit can include choosing which documents or records to review, which sites to visit, or what issues to focus on. Sampling procedures on-site cannot be strictly dictated ahead of time as auditors must be free to use their judgment in choosing samples. Standards system owners therefore need to provide detailed guidance that will lead to consistent on-site sampling procedures

Recommendation:

- To include audit duration and/or sampling sizes requirements in all certification requirements.

Certification Options

- There may be several certification options available to an applicant.
- The CB shall evaluate each applicant to determine which certification option(s) the applicant is eligible or and which option will be best suited to their needs.

Options for Certification

	Certification options	Applies to
1	Single	Organizations operating out of one site (a single location with one physical address)
2	Multi-Site	Organizations at more than one location (physical address). All sites are individually audited against the GSTC Standard, although not all requirements would necessarily apply to all sites.
3	Group	Organizations with numerous locations – this could be a group of individual enterprises or one company with numerous sites. Under this option, the group designates a central office function that establishes internal controls and is responsible for site compliance. The CB audits the central office and a sample of sites against the Group GSTC Standard, instead of every site receiving an audit as in a multi-site certificate.

- 9.12.6 Eligibility for Group certification - The CB shall determine that an applicant is eligible for group certification against the GSTC Standard if all the following criteria are met:
- 1 The proposed group's central office is a legal entity with whom a contract can be made.
 - 2 All sites undertake substantially similar activities
 - 3 The entire group operation is within one geographic region; or if they are not, the group can be stratified for sampling.
 - 4 The same written language is used at all sites and can be read by all site managers or, if translations are provided, adequate document control procedures are in place to ensure version consistency across different languages.
 - 5 The proposed group's central office is capable of objectivity in audit and decision making.
 - 6 The proposed group's central office can demonstrate through their application an understanding of the GSTC Standard such that it is likely that they will be able to qualify for certification.
- 9.12.7 Ineligibility for certification - The CB shall check if applicants for GSTC certification:
1. Have had their certificate withdrawn within the last 2 years.
 2. The CB shall not issue a new certificate until at least 2 years from the date that the certificate was withdrawn.
 3. Have had their certificate suspended within the last 6 months:
 - a. The CB shall not issue a new certificate until at least 6 months from the date of suspension.
 - b. Where the certificate holder has cancelled their certificate during suspension, the CB shall not issue a new certificate until at least 6 months from the date of suspension.
 4. The CB shall require the applicant to declare any association to entities that have been successfully prosecuted for forced labor and environmental violation.
 5. If an entity belonging to or currently contracted by an applicant has been successfully prosecuted for violations of laws on forced labour and environment in the last 2 years, this entity shall not be allowed to continue in the GSTC certification process.
- 9.12.8 Certification program with multilevel award system.
If a certification program gives the option to obtain an award based on the performance level or compliance, the lower award level must comply with all GSTC Criteria and hold a valid and current Recognized status in GSTC.
Example: Certification programme X award hotels in 3 levels: Bronze, Silver, and Gold. The Bronze level of this certification program must comply with all GSTC Criteria and hold a valid and current Recognized status in GSTC.

10 Renewal, Monitoring and Termination of Certification

- 10.1 The certification's validity shall be not greater than three years from the date on which it was granted as shown on the certification document.
- 10.1.1 Should the certification validity be greater than two years, the CB shall undertake at least one on-site visit to monitor the performance of the client during this period.
- 10.2 The CB should notify the client of the need for renewal of certification in sufficient time for a re-certification process to be carried out prior to the end of the current validity period.
- 10.3 Certification renewal shall follow the requirements for certification set out in this manual.

- 10.4 If certification has not been renewed by the expiry date, the CB shall terminate the certification.
- 10.4.1 The CB shall inform the client that it is no longer certified and require that it remove all references to its previous certification.
 - 10.4.2 The CB shall monitor the client's conformity with instructions in 10.4.1 for a period of twelve months or longer.
 - 10.4.3 The CB shall adjust its records and make publicly available information to reflect this termination.
- 10.5 The CB shall carry out monitoring of a certified client's activities to check that conformity with the standard is being maintained.
- 10.5.1 Monitoring shall include a requirement that the client undertakes an annual self-assessment and prepares a report and statement of compliance.
- 10.6 Should the CB have any concerns about the client's conformity with the standard, as may arise from monitoring, notified changes, complaints (see section 11) or other information received, it should investigate the situation and if necessary instigate a re-certification process.
- 10.7 The CB shall have the right to suspend or terminate the certification upon finding any non-conformity. The CB shall inform the client of the reasons for suspension or termination and take action as specified in 10.4.

11 Appeals and Complaints

- 11.1 The CB shall record all appeals and actions taken to resolve them.
- 11.2 The CB shall have a documented appeals procedure for receiving, evaluating and making decisions about appeals made by clients against the certification decision. This procedure shall include:
- 11.2.1 Acknowledging receipt of the appeal
 - 11.2.2 Investigating the appeal in a timely manner
 - 11.2.3 Gathering any necessary information
 - 11.2.4 Making a decision on the appeal, which should be approved by an individual(s) not involved with the original certification decision
 - 11.2.5 Informing the appellant of the outcome of the appeal
 - 11.2.6 Taking all necessary actions to resolve any issues arising.
- 11.3 The CB shall record all complaints and actions taken to address them.
- 11.4 The CB shall have a documented complaints procedure for receiving, evaluating and making decisions about complaints against the CB or against a client. This procedure shall include:
- 11.4.1 Acknowledging receipt of the complaints
 - 11.4.2 Confirming whether the complaint relates to the certification scheme
 - 11.4.3 Investigating the complaint in a timely manner
 - 11.4.4 Drawing the complaint to the attention of any client involved
 - 11.4.5 Gathering any necessary information
 - 11.4.6 Making a decision on the complaint, which should be approved by an individual(s) not involved with certification activities related to the complaint
 - 11.4.7 Informing the complainant and client of the outcome of the complaint
 - 11.4.8 Taking all necessary action to resolve issues arising.

12 Management System

- 12.1 The CB shall have a management system that is described in a manual or a set of linked documentation, which:
- 12.1.1 Is appropriate to the size and complexity of the organization.⁶
For small organizations, a complex system is not required, but the seven basic areas of ISO/IEC 17065⁷ should each have policies and procedures.
 - 12.1.2 May be in any form of media.
 - 12.1.3 Should include the CBs objectives and the policies and procedures for managing and operating it.
The policies and procedures should not impose an excessive burden on the certification program, but must ensure that records of all actions taken with respect to clients are documented and that these documents are handled according to established policies and procedures, as well as the records of training, decisions, appeals, etc.
- 12.2 Shall be accessible to relevant personnel and be understood by them.
- 12.3 The CB shall have procedures for the control of documents. These shall cover the adequacy, updating, changing, identity, legibility, use, distribution, removal and disposal of documents.
It is essential, even for the smallest organization, that all documents are properly managed.
- 12.4 The CB shall have procedures for the control of records. These should cover the identification, storage, protection, retrieval, retention and disposal of records.
Records can be digital or on paper.
- 12.5 The CB shall conduct a regular internal audit of its procedures to verify that the management system is effectively implemented.
- 12.5.1 Internal auditors shall not audit their own work.
 - 12.5.2 Results of internal audits shall be made known to personnel with the responsibility for the areas that have been audited.
For very small organizations, this can be conducted as a group effort of all personnel. ISO 19011 provides guidelines for conducting internal audits.
- 12.6 The CB shall review the continuing suitability of its management system at least once every 12 months. The review shall be based on information from a variety of sources, including internal audit, inputs from personnel, feedback from clients, complaints and appeals.
For very small organizations, this can be conducted as a group effort of all personnel.
- 12.7 The CB shall take action to address actual and potential weaknesses in its operations, including non-conformities with the requirements of this section. The actions taken and the results achieved shall be recorded.
- 12.8 The CB should gather and record evidence on the impact that the presence of the certification scheme has had on its clients and their sustainability policies and actions.

⁶ Guidance on management system requirements for very small organizations is shown in italics. For further guidance, see ISO/IEC 17065.

⁷ According to ISO/IEC 17065, section 8, a certification body must: EITHER have a management system that addresses: a) general management system documentation (e.g., manual, policies, definition of responsibilities (8.2); b) control of documents (8.3); c) control of records (8.4); d) management review (8.5); e) internal audit (8.6); f) corrective actions (8.7); and g) preventive actions (8.8) OR have established and maintain a management system, in accordance with the requirements of ISO 9001.

13 Languages

- 13.1 A CB may only certify using languages for which there is a GSTC-Recognized standard.
- 13.1.1 The auditor must be proficient in that language.
- 13.2 In the event an enterprise or destination being certified has a business language for which there is a GSTC-Recognized standard, however a sizable proportion of the staff of the enterprise/destination being audited speak mainly another (local) language, the auditor may undertake the Audit accompanied by a capable translator.
- 13.2.1 In this event it is expected that the vast majority of documents are in the language of the GSTC-Recognized standard, and only spoken word translation is required. The enterprise/destination may use local language documents for training/awareness/management purposes with its staff and stakeholders, these may be translated to the language of the GSTC-Recognized standard by the enterprise/destination for the auditor's review.
- 13.3 In the event an auditor does not speak the language of the enterprise/destination an audit may be completed only with certified translation of documents and using a qualified translator during the audit.

SECTION C: PROCESS FOR ASSESSING APPLICATIONS FOR GSTC-ACCREDITED

14 GSTC-Accredited Application

Application Form

14.1 An application for GSTC-Accredited must be made by a CB on the current version of the GSTC-Accredited Application, based on this GSTC-Accredited Manual v.1.2.

Documentation Requirements

14.2 A formal statement, signed by the CB chief executive officer (CEO) or board/committee chairperson, ensuring that all the GSTC-Accredited Requirements and other aspects of this Manual are met and that the Certification Program assumes formal responsibility to remain in conformity with the GSTC-Accredited Requirements.

14.3 An overall description of the CB.

14.4 The rules of the CB (the formal document that establishes the program)

14.5 Documentation describing how the CB demonstrates its compliance with the GSTC-Accredited Requirements of this Manual referring to:

14.5.1 Structure and responsibility (clause 3 of this Manual)

14.5.2 Scope and accessibility (clause 4 of this Manual)

14.5.3 Policies and practices about impartiality and conflict of interest (clause 5 of this Manual)

14.5.4 Financial stability and liability (clause 6 of this Manual)

14.5.5 Professional capacity (clause 7 of this Manual)

14.5.6 Policies and practices for information and confidentiality (clause 8 of this Manual)

14.5.7 Description of the certification process (clause 9 of this Manual)

14.5.8 Procedures for renewal, monitoring and termination (clause 10 of this Manual)

14.5.9 Procedures to deal with appeals and complaints (clause 11 of this Manual)

14.5.10 Description of the management system it has implemented (clause 12 of this Manual)

14.5.11 Procedures for handling certification in a non-standard language (clause 13 of this Manual)

14.5.12 Description of policies and procedures to use and protect its certification marks, including licensing

14.6 Curriculum vitae or a description of the competence, qualification, education and experience of the CEO and relevant personnel involved in the management of the CB

14.7 Documentation describing how the CB ensures and demonstrates compliance with the professional capacity required for a CB as set in clause 7 of this Manual shall include:

14.7.1 Competence criteria for personnel involved in the certification process

14.7.2 A description of the procedures to manage and perform audits

14.7.3 How competence of the personnel is managed and monitored

14.8 CV or a description of competence/qualification, education and experience of the personnel responsible for the technical management of the CB. This documentation can be single specific documents, or the information can be in different documents and records. In the latter case, a simple cover document is required, describing the relationship among the other documents submitted.

Properly Made GSTC-Accredited Application

14.9 A GSTC-Accredited Application will be considered properly made when a completed GSTC-Accredited Application, with attached required documents and the appropriate fee has been received by the GSTC. The Panel will determine whether or not a witnessed audit is required. For that reason, the costs of conducting a witnessed audit are NOT included in the published price of the GSTC-Accredited application, and the applicant will be liable to cover the additional expenses of the GSTC auditor's travel expenses plus professional fees if the Panel requires the audit.

15 GSTC-Accredited Process

Process for Evaluation

15.1 This section describes how a Certification Program (CB) will be evaluated to determine whether it meets the GSTC-Accredited Requirements to achieve GSTC-Accredited status. Criteria to be Applied

15.2 A CB may certify against either:

15.2.1 A GSTC-Recognized Standard that it owns.

15.2.2 The GSTC Criteria and their Indicators and Guidance (e.g. GSTC Hotels and Tour Operators; and/or GSTC Destinations).

GSTC-Recognized Standard

15.3 In the case of 15.2.1, the CB shall be able to show that it owns a GSTC-Recognized certification standard and any associated trademarks and labels.

15.4 The CB shall assess the conformity of the client's tourism services against the requirements of a GSTC-Recognized Standard.

15.4.1 All criteria in the GSTC-Recognized Standard which are equivalent to the GSTC Criteria must be mandatory for conformity.

15.5 The CB shall define the scope of the certification, specifying those services and locations that have been assessed against the recognized standard.

Adopting GSTC Criteria

15.6 In the case of 15.2.2, a CB must develop a guideline/application/evaluation tool (evaluation tool) which fully adopts the relevant GSTC Criteria and Indicators (and any published GSTC guidance) as in force at the time.

15.6.1 The evaluation tool shall set out guidance for compliance and assessment of each GSTC criterion and indicator.

15.6.2 The evaluation tool shall be supported by guidance on types of evidence required and measures expected to meet criteria and indicators for the sectors to be audited.

15.6.3 If the CB operates within specific jurisdictions/countries/climates specific guidance on local application of the criteria may be included within the guideline/evaluation tool.

15.7 In the case of 15.2.2, the CB must ensure all criteria are applied as mandatory. Any exceptional circumstances where a criterion is not applied must only be in the circumstances set out in the "criteria application" section of the relevant GSTC criteria.

Omission of Requirements

15.8 GSTC-Accredited Requirements may be omitted without prejudice to GSTC-Accredited status only where the Requirement is not applicable, given the scope of the certification program.

Reliance on Legislation

15.9 In some situations, where a CB is used in only one country or a smaller region (i.e. one legal jurisdiction), the applicant may choose to demonstrate that a GSTC-Accredited Requirement is fully covered by legislation. In such a case:

- a) the specific law(s) must be identified;
- b) evidence must be provided that the relevant law(s) are enforced; and
- c) the CB's manual must require tourism enterprises to demonstrate compliance with applicable laws.

15.10 Acceptable evidence may include:

15.10.1 a requirement for a legally-binding sworn statement by the organization to be certified with respect to compliance with specific, named laws and regulations;

15.10.2 text from the CB's manual or standard indicating that compliance with specific, named laws and regulations will be verified during the assessment.

15.11 In this case the GSTC-Accredited status will only apply for the standard in that area of legal jurisdiction.

GSTC-Accredited Application

15.12 CBs wishing to have their certification program GSTC-Accredited, if the CB complies with the requirements established in point 1.9, shall download, or otherwise obtain copies of, the GSTC-Accredited Manual v1.2 and associated GSTC-Accredited Application documents which provide details of the process.

15.13 The CB shall complete all sections of the form "GSTC-Accredited Application".

15.14 The CB shall indicate the degree of correspondence between its own program and the GSTC-Accredited Requirements, through completing a matrix provided in the GSTC-Accredited Application. This involves mapping the program's policies, practices and procedures against each GSTC-Accredited Requirement, including a summary of compliance and reference to specific clauses in attached documents.

15.15 The CB:

15.15.1 May be required to justify their belief that any or all of the aspects of its program correspond to all GSTC-Accredited Requirements.

15.15.2 Shall justify any variations between their program and the relevant GSTC-Accredited Requirement.

15.16 Where a CB believes that there is justification for non-inclusion of a GSTC-Accredited Requirement, it may indicate this. In all such cases, it shall provide a written, evidence-based justification for this non-inclusion.

15.16.1 Evidence shall demonstrate that the element is not an issue for the sustainability of tourism in any of the countries and types of tourism enterprise certified by the CB.

15.16.2 Justification shall not be based on a difference in the meaning and coverage of sustainable tourism between the CB and the GSTC.

15.17 In the form "GSTC-Accredited Application", the certification program shall undertake to:

15.17.1 Complete the sections of the form "GSTC-Accredited Application" relating to the ownership and operations requirements for the scheme.

- 15.17.2 Give the GSTC all updated versions of their GSTC-Recognized standard within 10 days of it being updated or in any way changed.
 - 15.17.3 Give the GSTC all updated versions of any documentation relied on for the GSTC-Accredited status within 10 days of it being updated or in any way changed.
 - 15.17.4 Abide by GSTC's requirements for GSTC-Accredited status.
 - 15.17.5 Follow the GSTC-Accredited Manual processes in the event of a complaint or an appeal.
 - 15.17.6 Inform the GSTC of any substantial changes to the ownership and/or management of the CB.
- 15.18 The GSTC will not reveal the names of certification programs that have applied for GSTC-Accredited, but have not completed the process, have been GSTC-Accredited or which have not achieved GSTC-Accredited status. The results of the evaluation of the CB are confidential, with the results available only to the GSTC Secretariat and Accreditation Panel. Only those CB's that are GSTC-Accredited will be publicly identified.

GSTC Assessment of Applications

- 15.19 The CB must pay the relevant application fee before a GSTC-Accredited Application will be assessed.
- 15.20 The completed GSTC-Accredited Application form together with all the documentation requested shall be reviewed for completeness by GSTC technical staff, who may request further information and documentation.
- 15.21 Once satisfied that the application is complete, GSTC will appoint a reviewer to undertake the assessment. The reviewer may be a GSTC staff member permanently appointed to review all CB's, except in cases of conflicts of interest or the appearance thereof.
- 15.22 The appointed reviewer(s) shall undertake an assessment of the equivalency of the CB against the GSTC-Accredited Requirements. The reviewer(s) shall:
- 15.22.1 Draw the attention of the CB to any GSTC-Accredited Requirement where the program appears not to address the requirement, and ask for further clarification or evidence if required.
 - 15.22.2 Write an evaluation report based on the assessment of the compliance of the program to the GSTC-Accredited Requirements.
 - 15.22.3 Submit the report to the CB owner for comment, with a request to either correct any areas where compliance has not been established (prior to further consideration); or seek agreement to addressing potential conditions to correct any areas where compliance has not been established.
 - 15.22.4 Update the report on receipt of the requested information from the CB.
- 15.23 The reviewer(s) shall make a recommendation on whether or not GSTC-Accredited status should be granted in a final evaluation report.
- 15.23.1 A positive recommendation shall be made if the reviewer(s) involved believes that the CB addresses all GSTC-Accredited Requirements.
 - 15.23.2 A negative recommendation shall be accompanied by a summary of which areas are felt not to be compliant with the GSTC-Accredited Requirements, and of the views of the certification program on compliance of those areas.
 - 15.23.3 A recommendation of the requirement for a witnessed audit shall be made if the reviewer(s) believes that further evidence is required prior to reaching a decision.
- 15.24 The reviewer shall forward to the Chair of the GSTC Accreditation Panel a copy of the final evaluation report, including the recommendation.

- 15.25 When requested by the Accreditation Panel, GSTC shall arrange and undertake an audit of a certification audit chosen randomly from those scheduled in the relevant time period. The auditor may or may not be the same person as the desktop reviewer of the application.
- 15.26 The CB will be required to meet to costs of the witnessed audit.
- 15.27 The appointed auditor shall prepare a report of the witnessed audit, covering the following areas: audit preparation; communication with client; gathering and use of evidence, including observation and document review; identification of non-conformities; knowledge and skills of auditor(s) and ability to apply in audit situation; overall assessment of application of CB procedures. A GSTC form will standardise and document the audit process. The appointed auditor will submit the report to the Chair of the Accreditation Panel.

GSTC Accreditation Panel Decision

- 15.28 The Chair of the GSTC Accreditation Panel shall appoint a sub-group of three Panel members.
- 15.29 The GSTC Accreditation Panel shall review the evaluation report, together with a report of a witnessed audit if requested, and make a decision on whether or not to grant GSTC-Accredited status for the CB.
- 15.30 The Panel may decide to grant GSTC-Accredited (Conditional) status if there are a limited number of GSTC-Accredited Requirements which the Certification Panel consider can be rectified by the CB.
- 15.31 The Chair of the GSTC Accreditation Panel shall inform the certification program of the Panel's decision on granting GSTC-Accredited status:
- 15.31.1 If the decision is not to grant GSTC-Accredited status, the GSTC Accreditation Panel shall specify what if any steps the certification program must take before GSTC-Accredited can be granted.
 - 15.31.2 Should the certification program subsequently submit further information or a revised GSTC-Accredited Application, the process shall recommence.
- 15.32 If the decision is to grant GSTC-Accredited with conditions to be met by a specified date, the certification program shall:
- 15.32.1 Commit to meet the conditions by the specified date.
 - 15.32.2 Acknowledge that no publicity or claims may be made about the GSTC-Accredited (Conditional) status.
 - 15.32.3 Acknowledge that GSTC-Accredited (Conditional) status will be withdrawn if the conditions have not been met by the specified date.
 - 15.32.4 Agree to submit evidence to the GSTC that the conditions have been met prior to the specified date.
- 15.33 A fee may be applicable for re-lodgement and re-assessment of a CB which has received GSTC-Accredited (Conditional) status.
- 15.34 If the decision is to grant GSTC-Accredited status with or without conditions, the GSTC shall provide the certification program with a letter (or similar document) regarding claims that can be made, and the terms upon which they may be made

16 Expiry and Renewal Process

Expiry of GSTC-Accredited Status

- 16.1 GSTC-Accredited status will apply to a certification program until the earlier of:
- 16.1.1 The certification program amends their policies, procedures or practices
 - 16.1.2 The majority ownership of the certification program changes
 - 16.1.3 The standard used by the GSTC-Accredited program is no longer GSTC-Recognized
 - 16.1.4 Two years from granting of initial or previous renewal of GSTC-Accredited status.

Renewal of GSTC-Accredited Status

- 16.2 If the GSTC-Accredited status of a CB has expired, the CB may apply for a renewal (preferably three months prior to the expiry).
- 16.2.1 If there have been changes to the ownership, management or any policies and procedures a new GSTC-Accredited Application may be required to be completed; or
 - 16.2.2 If there have not been changes to the ownership, management or any policies and procedures a GSTC-Accredited (Renewal) Application may be completed.
 - 16.2.3 GSTC Accreditation Panel can request, at any time, in the renewal process a witness audit to the CB.

Amendment of GSTC-Accredited Requirements

- 16.3 If the GSTC-Accredited Requirements have been amended by the GSTC, the GSTC Accreditation Panel will give due notice to GSTC-Accredited CBs of any changes made to the GSTC-Accredited Requirements and subsequent actions that they may be required to take upon expiry of their current GSTC-Accredited status:
- 16.3.1 A new GSTC-Accredited Application may be required to be completed; or
 - 16.3.2 A GSTC-Accredited (Renewal) Application may set out the revised or additional requirements in a short form matrix (including the full individual criteria and components).
 - 16.3.3 If the GSTC-Accredited Manual is changed during the period of a CB's GSTC-Accredited status (i.e. up to two years), no action is required of the CB until renewal upon the expiry of the GSTC-Accredited status.

Amendment of a GSTC-Recognized Standard

- 16.4 The GSTC-Accredited status of a CB only applies whilst the standard is GSTC-Recognized.
- 16.5 Should a standard be no longer GSTC-Recognized the certification program has a twelve-month period in which to re-apply or renew the GSTC-Recognized status of the standard in accordance with the GSTC-Recognized Manual.

Ongoing Suitability of a Certification Program

- 16.6 Should the GSTC Accreditation Panel have reason to be concerned about the ongoing conformity of an already GSTC-Accredited program with the GSTC-Accredited Requirements, it may require the certification program to provide further information, and may, as an ultimate sanction, withdraw the GSTC-Accredited status.
- 16.7 GSTC Accreditation Panel can request, at any time, a witness audit to the CB without previous announcement.

17 Appeals Procedure

Complaints

- 17.1 Any complaints made about matters relating to GSTC-Accredited processes shall be submitted to the GSTC.
- 17.2 The GSTC shall forward complaints to the GSTC Accreditation Panel, who will discuss the complaint with the complainant and / or certification program and agree appropriate action.
- 17.3 The GSTC shall record all actions taken and communicate the outcome of the complaint to the complainant.

Appeal by a Certification Program

- 17.4 An appeal by a certification program against an GSTC-Accredited decision may only be due to:
 - 17.4.1 Refusal by the GSTC to accept its application for GSTC-Accredited status
 - 17.4.2 Refusal to proceed with a GSTC-Accredited evaluation
 - 17.4.3 A decision to refuse, suspend or withdraw GSTC-Accredited status and any other action that impedes the attainment of GSTC-Accredited status.
- 17.5 The grounds for an appeal are limited to:
 - a) An appeal based on the grounds that the GSTC has not followed its own procedures or met the GSTC-Accredited Manual; or
 - b) An appeal based on the grounds that the GSTC has incorrectly interpreted the GSTC-Accredited Requirements.
- 17.6 Notifications of appeal shall be received within 30 days of the GSTC Accreditation Panel decision being communicated to the CB, and shall be directed to the GSTC Executive Director (GSTC CEO). The appeal notice does not have a set format but shall:
 - 17.6.1 Be in writing and signed by the appealing certification program or its legal representative
 - 17.6.2 Specify the grounds on which the appeal is made
 - 17.6.3 Be accompanied by relevant documented objective evidence
 - 17.6.4 Indicate what steps were taken to resolve the issue prior to lodging the appeal
 - 17.6.5 Contain an agreement to pay the costs of the appeal process, if and as allocated by the Appeals Panel
 - 17.6.6 Contain an agreement to adhere to all terms and provisions of this procedure.
- 17.7 The GSTC CEO shall verify that the conditions for appeal set out above have been met, and if not, shall so advise the appellant.
- 17.8 If and once conditions have been met, the GSTC CEO shall formally acknowledge receipt of the appeal.
- 17.9 An Appeals Panel shall be established by the GSTC Board and its membership notified to the appellant.
- 17.10 Appeals Panel Terms of Reference and operating procedures are described below, but may be amended in the sole discretion of the Appeals Panel to suit the nature of the appeal.
- 17.11 Copies of the Appeals Panel decision shall be forwarded to the appellant and GSTC personnel as appropriate by the Appeals Panel secretary within seven days of the decision being made.
- 17.12 The GSTC shall be responsible to ensure that the appellant undertakes any required actions, and for taking any actions it is responsible for.

- 17.13 The GSTC shall verify that effective actions have been taken.
- 17.14 The decision of the Appeals Panel shall be binding on all parties and no further appeal on the same matter shall be accepted.
- 17.15 The Appeals Panel secretary shall be responsible for keeping records of the appeal. On the instruction of the Appeals Panel chair, these may be sealed to protect confidentiality.

Review of Appeals

- 17.16 Records of appeals shall be reviewed at GSTC Accreditation Panel meetings.
- 17.17 If the GSTC Accreditation Panel request any action from the GSTC additional to that already taken, or actions of a more general nature, these actions shall be undertaken by the GSTC.

Appeals Panel Terms of Reference

- 17.18 Up to three members will be appointed to each Appeals Panel, invited by the GSTC Executive Director on behalf of the GSTC Board.
- 17.19 Persons not from the Accreditation Panel shall be enrolled as Appeals Panel members to ensure that the Appeals Panel has the expertise, balance of interests and impartiality required to make a decision.
- 17.20 Appeals Panel members shall be independent and impartial (no conflict of interest) to the appeal in question.
- 17.21 Appeals Panel members will be requested to sign a confidentiality agreement if they have not already done so.
- 17.22 The appellant will have opportunity to object to Appeals Panel membership on grounds of them having a conflict of interest. The Appeals Panel shall consider such a challenge, but will not be bound to change its membership.
- 17.23 One Appeals Panel member shall act as chair, appointed by the Appeals Panel members.
- 17.24 Members will have knowledge of accreditation and standards and may seek additional advice as they see fit.

Functions of the Appeals Panel

- 17.25 To decide on the validity of the appeal made by the owner of a certification program (the "Appellant") against a GSTC decision on granting of GSTC-Accredited status.
- 17.26 To make a binding decision on the appeal.
- 17.27 To advise the parties of their final decision(s).

Procedure

- 17.28 The GSTC Executive Director shall appoint a staff member not directly involved with the appeal to act as secretary to the Appeals Panel.
- 17.29 The GSTC Executive Director shall forward all information related to the appeal to the Appeals Panel members.
- 17.30 All parties may be requested by the Appeals Panel to provide additional information, attend in person meetings (at each party's cost) or participate in conference calls as required.

- 17.31 Reasonable efforts shall be made to ensure that all parties have an opportunity to put their case to the Appeals Panel – generally written form is preferred.
- 17.32 The Appeals Panel shall make its own operating rules and procedures as necessary,
- 17.33 The Appeals Panel shall bear in mind the grounds for appeal:
- 17.33.1 Should the grounds for appeal be that the GSTC has not followed procedures, the Appeals Panel shall limit its investigation to whether or not the procedure has been followed.
 - 17.33.2 Where the procedure is unclear or is silent on a matter, the GSTC's interpretation of a GSTC-Accredited Requirement shall prevail unless it is felt by the Appeals Panel to be against standards and/or certification industry best practice, or against the principles of natural justice;
 - 17.33.3 Should the grounds for appeal be that GSTC's has incorrectly interpreted a requirement of its own procedure, GSTC's Accreditation Panel shall be asked to provide an interpretation which shall be binding.
- 17.34 The Appeals Panel chair shall determine the most appropriate method to review the appeal. It may be conducted by conference call, email or by meeting.
- 17.35 Parties may be asked by the Appeals Panel chair to present oral arguments at an in-person review meeting. Use of lawyers for this purpose is not allowed; the parties involved shall represent themselves.
- 17.36 No timescales are defined but it is recommended that the appeal review is held within 60 days of the formation of the Appeals Panel, and the appeal decision be made within 30 days of the Appeals Panel's review.
- 17.37 While a consensus approach to decision making is desirable, if this is not possible the appeal decision shall be made by simple majority vote. In the event of a tied vote, the Chair of the Appeals Panel shall have a casting vote.
- 17.38 The Appeals Panel will communicate their decision to all parties, which will be binding and no further appeal shall be permitted.
- 17.39 Where required the GSTC CEO will take follow-up action.
- 17.40 On completion of the appeal all records will be forwarded to the Appeals Panel secretary for retention.

Costs

- 17.41 The cost of hearing an appeal shall be determined by the GSTC.
- 17.42 The Appeals Panel shall determine the apportionment of the costs of the Appeal.
- 17.43 In apportioning costs, the Appeals Panel shall commence with the assumption that cost should be borne equally between the appellant and the GSTC.
- 17.44 Should the Appeals Panel consider that the appeal is frivolous and without merit, it may require the appellant to pay a proportion of up to 100% of the costs.
- 17.45 Should the Appeals Panel consider that the GSTC has acted in a way that does not display all due diligence, it may require the GSTC to pay a proportion up to 100% of the costs.
- 17.46 In the event that the appellant has been ordered to pay the costs, or part of them, the appellant will be under obligation to pay the amount due to the GSTC within ten days of the date of the decision.

18 Fees

GSTC-Accredited Application

- 18.1 A CB will be required to pay a fee for the process of accrediting its certification program.
- 18.2 Fees must be paid upon application and before the GSTC-Accredited Application is considered.
- 18.3 The fee is set out in the GSTC-Accredited Application.
- 18.4 The Panel will determine whether or not a witnessed audit is required after reviewing the assessment provided to the Panel. For that reason, the costs of conducting a witnessed audit are NOT included in the published price of the GSTC-Accredited application, and the applicant will be liable to cover the additional expenses of the GSTC auditor's travel expenses plus professional fees if the Panel requires the audit.
- 18.5 Fees are available on request to the GSTC.

Pre-Lodgement Advice

- 18.6 A CB (for an agreed fee) may request pre-lodgement support/advice by GSTC technical staff. Technical staff may provide comments on a standard, or comment on a draft GSTC-Accredited Application.
- 18.7 Such advice is offered to support CBs achieving GSTC-Accredited status, however the advice is offered as officer level advice and is not to be considered as GSTC Accreditation Panel policy nor a commitment or liability for positive consideration.
- 18.8 Provision of such advice by a GSTC staff/reviewer is not a conflict of interest for undertaking the subsequent assessment of a lodged GSTC-Accredited Application.

SECTION D: LOGOS AND PROMOTION

19 Publicity and Promotion

GSTC Promotion of GSTC-Accredited Certification Programs

- 19.1 The GSTC will make publicly available a list of the GSTC-Accredited certification programs together with a brief summary of each CB, approved for publication by the CB.
- 19.2 The GSTC will make publicly available and implement a clear policy on claims of GSTC-Accredited status of certification programs. This will include surveillance of the use of those claims and taking action against incorrect use.
- 19.3 GSTC may arrange publicity and promotion of GSTC-Accredited programs and tourism businesses/products certified by a GSTC-Accredited certification program.

Promotion by GSTC-Accredited Certification Program

- 19.4 A GSTC-Recognized standard is not entitled to use any specific GSTC logo, but may make general statements that its standard is GSTC-Recognized. It may not use the term "Accredited" or similar implication that GSTC has in any way confirmed the efficacy of the standard owner's certification policies and procedures.

GSTC Promotion and Market Access Benefits

- 19.5 The GSTC publishes a summary of the promotion and market access benefits on www.gstccouncil.org. This is updated as required.
- 19.6 In terms of GSTC logo usage:
 - 19.6.1 A GSTC-Accredited CB may use the GSTC Logo
 - 19.6.2 A Hotel/Tour Operator/Destination certified by a GSTC-Accredited CB may use the GSTC official Logo (subject to a license agreement being in place between the GSTC and the CB and an annual fee paid by the CB).
- 19.7 GSTC-Accredited CBs may receive the following promotion by the GSTC (subject to available resources):
 - 19.7.1 Certification program promoted on GSTC website.
 - 19.7.2 Announcement of achievement in GSTC newsletter, GSTC website and GSTC social media outlets.
 - 19.7.3 Inclusion of Certification Program's logo on all GSTC official presentations, including Annual General Meeting, as well as all other speaking engagements and publications.
 - 19.7.4 Development and publication on GSTC website of case studies (i.e. written blog post, video blog) of individual certified businesses.
- 19.8 The GSTC will endeavour to work with partners to promote GSTC-Accredited CB's and their certified businesses and destination.

20 Use of GSTC Marks

Introduction

20.1 The GSTC logos, marks and trade names are protected by the GSTC.

20.1.1 Trade names and marks include the names GSTCouncil, Global Sustainable Tourism Council, Travel Forever, GSTC-Recognized and GSTC-Accredited.

License Agreement

20.2 Prior to using any of the GSTC's logos, marks or trade names users (e.g. clients, standard owners, CBs and accreditation bodies) must hold a valid license agreement with the GSTC.

Logo Terms of Use

20.3 There are three "Terms Of Use Documents" which are Appendices to the license agreement:

20.3.1 GSTC Accreditation of CBs and Recognition of Standards Program - Terms of Use - GSTC Logo v1.2: Which sets out the rules of a CB's use of GSTC Logo.

20.3.2 GSTC Accreditation of CBs and Recognition of Standards Program - Terms of Issuance – GSTC Logo v1.2: Which sets out the rules for a CB giving the GSTC Logo to their certificate holders.

20.3.3 GSTC Accreditation of CBs and Recognition of Standards Program - Terms of Use – GSTC Logo v1.2: Which sets out rules for use of the GSTC Logo by certificate holders.

20.4 Having signed a license agreement, a GSTC-Accredited CB may:

20.4.1 Use the GSTC Logo in its promotion and marketing of its program.

20.4.2 Use the GSTC Logo only to promote an example of what certified businesses may display.

20.4.3 Distribute the GSTC Logo to its certified businesses only when it is also accompanied by the Terms of Use.

20.4.4 For the use of the GSTC logo, it is subject to a "Chain of Custody" control and identified with a unique number.

20.5 There is a royalty fee for use of the GSTC Logo by certified products. The fee is set out in the license agreement.

20.6 To avoid any doubt, once it has signed the licence agreement

20.6.1 A GSTC- Accredited CB may use the GSTC Logo in its promotion and marketing of its program.

20.6.2 A GSTC- Accredited CB may use a sample of the certificate-holder "chain of custody" GSTC Logo only to promote an example of what certified businesses may display.

20.6.3 A GSTC-Accredited CB may distribute the GSTC Logo only when it is also accompanied by the Terms of Use to its certified businesses.

20.6.4 A GSTC- Accredited CB may distribute the GSTC Logo by certificate holders only in combination with the CB Logo.

20.6.5 A GSTC Logo should be displayed as a supplement to the CB logo and not displayed alone by a certificate holder.

SECTION E: GLOSSARY

21 Terms and Definitions

The following have been written to explain the meaning of terms used in this document, although account has been taken of generic definitions used elsewhere.

For those terms not defined here, the hierarchy of definitions used is

- a) ISEAL Code of Good Practice for Setting Social and Environmental Standards v6
- b) ISO/IEC 17065
- c) ISO/IEC 17067
- d) ISO/IEC 17011
- e) ISO/IEC 17000
- f) ISO Guide 2

Term	Definition
AB	See “Accreditation Body”
Accreditation	Accreditation is the formal declaration by a neutral third party that the certification program is administered in a way that meets the relevant norms or standards of certification program.
Accreditation body	An independent entity that operates in conformity with the standard ISO/IEC 17011 and that is technically competent to accredit CBs to perform conformity assessment using a GSTC-Recognized standard. Abbreviated “AB”.
Audit	A systematic and comprehensive process of investigation through checking documents, conducting interviews, observation and other means
CB	Abbreviation for “Certification Body”
Certificate holder	A tourism enterprise, activity or service that has been certified by a GSTC-Accredited CB or a GSTC-Accredited CB
Certification	Voluntary, third-party assessment, through an audit, of a tourism enterprise for conformity to a standard
Certification body	A body that verifies that specified requirements relating to a product, process, system, person or body are fulfilled. Abbreviated “CB”. In current usage, these are often referred to as “conformity assessment bodies” or CABs, which have a slightly broader mandate. Abbreviated “CB”.
Certification program	GSTC prefers to use the term “Certification body” in place of “Certification program”
Certification scheme	A specific, named program of certification resulting in the granting of a certificate of conformity to a tourism enterprise by a CB along with the right to display a mark associated with the scheme. It is defined by ISO as “[the rules, procedures, and management for carrying out certification] related to specified [services], to which the same specified

	requirements, specific rules and procedures apply.” <i>After ISO/IEC 17067:2013</i>
Certification scheme owner	A person or other legal entity who owns the intellectual property associated with a sustainable tourism certification scheme
Client	A tourism enterprise that purchases a certification service from a CB or CB.
Conflict of interest	A situation where the capacity for objectivity of a person or body is at risk
Conformity Assessment	A process of checking and verifying the extent to which a tourism enterprise or certification scheme meets a specified standard and criteria
Consultancy	The provision, for a fee (directly or indirectly), of expertise to a tourism enterprise or CB on the design, management and operation of their services
Equivalent standard	A standard whose requirements have a direct correspondence with the GSTC Criteria. The standard may differ in presentation, or even in substance, e.g. in providing guidance on how to meet requirements. Equivalency for purposes of GSTC- Recognized includes harmonized, unified, identical, unilaterally-aligned, and comparable standards. (ISO/IEC Guide 2:2004 6.1, 6.2, 6.3, 6.8, and 6.9).
GSTC	Global Sustainable Tourism Council
GSTC Accreditation	Accreditation provided by an accreditation body that is endorsed by the GSTC.
GSTC Accreditation Panel	An independent body of the GSTC that is technically competent and impartial, that will make decisions on recognizing sustainable tourism standards and approving certification programs, and may endorse accreditation body recommendations to accredit CBs.
GSTC-Accredited	A certification program that has been assessed by the GSTC and found to be in conformity with all requirements of the GSTC-Accredited Manual
GSTC-Accredited Application	A correctly completed application made by a CB, requesting GSTC-Accredited status using the GSTC-Accredited Application Form.
GSTC-Accredited Requirements	The set of requirements for a CB to obtain GSTC-Accredited status, see Section B.
GSTC Criteria Components	The elements of each individual GSTC Criterion which are used to assess equivalence of a tourism standard with the principles of sustainable tourism as identified by the GSTC through the GSTC Criteria.
GSTC Criteria	GSTC Criteria are a common understanding of sustainable tourism, and are the minimum that any tourism business should aspire to reach. GSTC produces various sets of Criteria. Current versions are available at www.gstccouncil.org
GSTC-Recognized Standard	A sustainable tourism standard that has been evaluated by the GSTC as being equivalent to the relevant GSTC Criteria and has current, not expired, GSTC-Recognized status.

Impartiality	The ability to make judgements and take decisions that are objective, based strictly on facts and free from other influences
Non-conformity	The absence of, or failure to meet, an element of a standard or performance criteria
Standard owner	A person or other legal entity who owns the intellectual property associated with a sustainable tourism standard
Sustainable tourism standard	A set of rules and guidelines that define the requirements of tourism enterprises in delivering sustainable tourism. For GSTC-Recognized status, the standard shall be equivalent to the relevant GSTC Criteria.
Third-party	Carried out by an individual or body that is independent of the entity being certified or accredited
Tourism enterprise	An entity providing one or more services to tourists.
Unilaterally aligned standard	A standard that is equivalent or comparable to the relevant GSTC Criteria but contains further requirements not contained in the GSTC Criteria.
Witnessed audit	An on-site assessment by a GSTC-appointed reviewer of the conduct of a sample certification audit as part of the evaluation of a CB's application for GSTC-Accredited.
Levels of requirement	
'will'	The body commits to undertake the specified action
'shall'	The body must take the specified action to be in compliance
'should'	The body is expected to take the specified action
'may'	The body is allowed to take the specified action

Appendix A - GSTC-Accredited Application

Appendix A1: GSTC Industry & GSTC-D Accredited Application

A current version of the GSTC-Accredited Application (Matrix) is available from the GSTC on request.

GSTC-Accredited Application Version

This version is version 1.2 and has been approved by the GSTC Accreditation Panel on 10 May 2018.