GSTC ACCREDITATION MANUAL FOR

DESTINATION CERTIFICATION BODIES

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2024

Document Control

This is version 2.0 of the GSTC Accreditation Manual for Destination Certification Bodies and replaces any and all previous versions.

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The Global Sustainable Tourism Council

www.gstcouncil.org

To make comments on this document, please email the GSTC at: accreditation@gstcouncil.org

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PART I: SCHEME OVERVIEW

Introduction

Accreditation to certify to the GSTC Criteria is designed to be applicable to all schemes certifying tourism enterprises or destinations for their sustainability management and performance. Relevant certification schemes and the bodies that run these schemes vary from sizable international operations or national schemes, some with support from government agencies to small schemes covering local areas or specific types of tourism products.

The Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) intends to build a long-term relationship with all Certification Bodies (CBs) and certification schemes (CSs). An aim of the GSTC is to continually increase the percentage of schemes that are accredited to certify to the GSTC Criteria.

Certification Bodies may become accredited to certify either with the GSTC Criteria or utilize a standard they own if that standard maintains the "GSTC-Recognized" status for its compliance to the GSTC Criteria.

GSTC Recognition Program	The GSTC recognizes the equivalence of a Certification Body's standard against the GSTC Criteria (Hotel/Accommodation, Tour Operator or Destination). See the GSTC-Recognized Manual. *Please refer to the GSTC Recognized-Manual for further details.* "*GSTC-Recognized Manual*"
GSTC Accreditation Program	Accreditation of a Certification Body that either uses the GSTC-Recognized Standard OR certifies directly against the GSTC Criteria.

Not all CSs 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 accredited after they revise their standard to comply with the GSTC Criteria and gain "GSTC-Recognized" status for their standard.

The diagram below provides a graphical depiction of the option for gaining accreditation to either certify directly to the GSTC Criteria or to the GSTC-Recognized Standard which is to say a standard that is equivalent to the GSTC Criteria. The Certification Body may request the scope of their accreditation to include certification to both the GSTC Criteria plus one or more GSTC-Recognized Standards.

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┌──────────────────┐      ┌──────────────────┐                                              ┌──────────────────┐
│ Certification Body│─────▶│   Adopt GSTC     │─────────────────────────────────────────────▶│                  │
│    Applicant      │      │ Industry Criteria│                                              │                  │
└──────────────────┘      └──────────────────┘                                              │      GSTC        │
                                                                                            │  Accreditation   │
┌──────────────────┐      ┌──────────────────┐      ┌──────────────────┐                    │                  │
│ Certification Body│─────▶│ Apply a National │─────▶│  Gain "GSTC      │───────────────────▶│                  │
│    Applicant      │      │ Standard or other│      │ Recognition of that│                  │                  │
└──────────────────┘      │    Standard      │      │   Standard"      │                    └──────────────────┘
                          └──────────────────┘      └──────────────────┘
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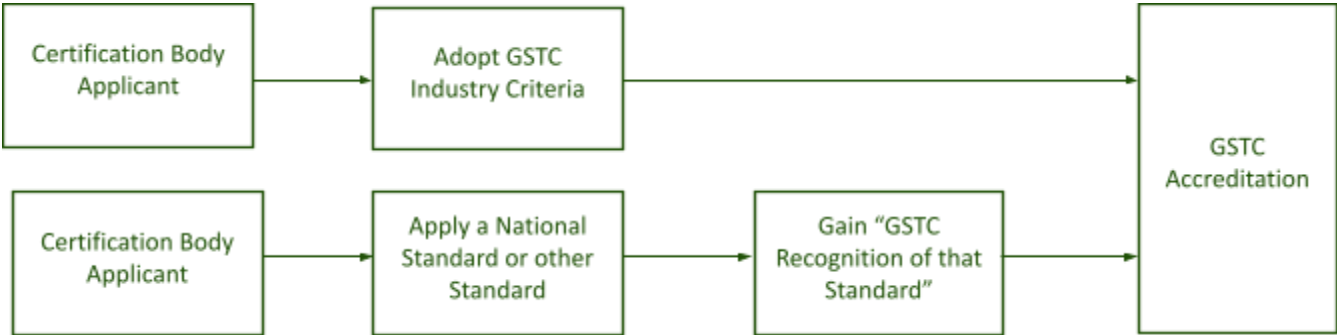
Additionally, "CSs" that commit to subcontracting the certification/audit process to the GSTC-Accredited CBs shall enter the GSTC Licensing Agreement to formally engage in the GSTC market access activities.

The GSTC Marks – Summary and Benefits

Background: The Need for Sustainability in 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 continue to grow.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 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 most of 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 present significant challenges and opportunities, and as such, bear responsibility to those impacted by tourism.

Travel and tourism can 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; and
- Health, wellbeing and educational benefits for tourists and hosts, which should be accessible to all.

However, alongside these positive impacts, tourism also has negative consequences for development. Negative impacts and concerns associated with travel and tourism include:

- Its contribution to climate change, being responsible for an estimated 5% of global CO_2 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; and
- Poor labour conditions and exploitation in parts of the sector.

Sustainable tourism requires an approach to tourism development and management that recognizes 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 suppliers 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.

A Sustainable Tourism Destination consists of sustainable tourism businesses, responsible communities, and responsible visitors. Good policies, enforcement of laws and regulations, and implementation of the plan and strategies support and enable sustainable destination development and management.

The Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC)

The GSTC is a multi-stakeholder initiative formed in 2007, 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.[1] In 2014, The GSTC merged with the Tour Operator Initiative (TOI) with TOI's operations and members joining the GSTC organization.

Over 250 organizations from the public, private and non-profit sectors as well as environmental management and sustainable development groups around the world have been contributing to the work of the GSTC and its two predecessor bodies.

The GSTC is a Membership Council governed by a Board, of whom 2/3 are elected by the general membership and 1/3 are appointed by the Board.

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.

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[1] The Partnership for Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria and the Sustainable Tourism Stewardship Council

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 aims [2] 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 (GRI), 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 CSs 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 minimize;

- Local cultural heritage must be respected, and opportunities should be taken to strengthen its integrity and richness; and

- 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.

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[2] UNEP, UNWTO *Making Tourism More Sustainable, A Guide for Policy Makers, 2005*

These principles of sustainable tourism are seen as relevant in all parts of the world and can be reflected in many kinds of tourism enterprises. 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 outlined in this manual.

GSTC Criteria

The GSTC has developed three sets of Criteria and associated indicators:

- The GSTC Industry Criteria (GSTC-I): The GSTC-I is available in two versions, the GSTC Hotel Criteria and the GSTC Tour Operator Criteria, each with their own set of performance indicators. The latest GSTC-I is Version 3 released in 21 December 2016;

- The GSTC Destination Criteria: The latest GSTC-D is version 2 released in 6 December 2019; and

- The GSTC MICE Criteria: The GSTC-MICE has three sub-sectors of venues, event organizers, and event/exhibitions. The latest GSTC-MICE is version 1 released in 29 February 2024.

GSTC Assurance Panel

The GSTC Assurance Panel (AP) is established by the GSTC, bylaws:

The GSTC AP) performs these functions:

a. Declare standards as "GSTC-Recognized Standard", according to the terms of the GSTC-Recognized Manual as approved by the CEO and the Board ;

b. Function as an accreditation decision-making body under GSTC where GSTC does not otherwise have an external partner Accreditation Body in place.

Principles for the implementation of the GSTC Accreditation

The following principles apply to all aspects of the GSTC program – including work performed by Certification Scheme Owners (CSO) and Certification Bodies (CBs):

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 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.

Stakeholder Engagement in Continuous Review and Improvement of the GSTC Accreditation

Certification Bodies that are accredited or are interested in accreditation, and other stakeholders interested in the GSTC Accreditation Program, are invited to submit comments on any aspect of the program and this Manual and to submit any requests for clarification of requirements addressed in this Manual or email to accreditation@gstcouncil.org for further information and questions.

PART II: ADMINISTRATION OF ACCREDITATION

1.   Manual Structure

The Manual covers both the requirements of and accreditation processes to be implemented by GSTC, and for Certification Bodies, the certification processes they shall implement and the requirements and process for their accreditation.

This Manual is arranged in four parts:

●   Part I introduces an overview of the GSTC, the GSTC Criteria and Accreditation;

●   Part II sets out the manual structure, normative reference and requirements for GSTC in the accreditation of Certification Bodies;

●   Part III set out the requirements for CBs to become accredited and the market access benefits; and

●   Part IV covers the glossary and annexes.

2.   Normative Reference

The following documents contain provisions that, through reference in this text, become part of the GSTC Accreditation 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 into how the document has changed and to consider whether or not to implement the latest changes. For documents without dates or version numbers, the latest published edition of the document referred to applies.

ISO / IEC 17065:2012	Conformity Assessment Requirements for bodies certifying products, processes, and services.
ISO 19011:2018	Guidelines for quality and/or environmental management system auditing.
IAF MD 1:2018	IAF Mandatory Document for the Audit and Certification of a Management System Operated by a Multi-Site Organization.
IAF MD 4:2022	IAF Mandatory Document for the Use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) for Auditing/Assessment Purposes.
IAF MD 5: 2019	Determination of Audit Time of Quality, Environmental and Occupational Health & Safety Management System
ISEAL	Code of Good Practice Assuring Compliance with Social and Environmental Standards.
GSTC Checklist	Certification Scheme - Certification Body Framework.

3.   GSTC Accreditation Management

3.1.   The GSTC shall administer the accreditation for certification bodies for Destination certification.

   3.1.1.   The GSTC-endorsed National Accreditation Body (NAB) shall administer accreditation in the mutually agreed-upon countries, including EU countries.

3.2.   The GSTC shall administer the complaints, appeals, and disputes related to the accreditation or the certification process.

   3.2.1.   The GSTC-endorsed NAB shall administer complaints, appeals, and disputes related to the accreditation or certification process in the mutually agreed-upon countries, including EU countries.

3.2.1.1.   A copy of the formal notice of the outcome of any complaints and appeals shall be sent to the GSTC, to accreditation@gstcouncil.org within 5 days of the complaint or appeal being officially closed.

PART III: ACCREDITATION - REQUIREMENTS FOR CERTIFICATION BODIES

This section sets out requirements for CBs certifying that clients conform to the GSTC-Recognized Standard and/or the GSTC Criteria. In addition to the GSTC specific requirements for certification of sustainable tourism, this section uses ISO 17065:2012 as a basis with additional or specific the GSTC requirements set out against specific clauses of ISO 17065.

4. Introduction

4.1. To become accredited to certify to the GSTC Criteria and/or GSTC-Recognized Standard, a CB shall:

    4.1.1. Gain accreditation from GSTC or by the GSTC-endorsed NAB in mutually agreed-upon countries, including EU countries.I; and

    4.1.2. Enter into a license agreement as set out in Part III for the use of the GSTC name, marks and/or logo.

4.2. All CBs are required to meet the minimum requirements that are set out in Part III of this Manual:

    4.2.1. All CBs will be subject to an assessment of their conformity to these requirements by the GSTC.

4.3. 4.3 The CB for initial GSTC accreditation shall have experience in the operation of its conformity assessment system, including at least one internal audit and management review conducted and at least one conformity assessment activity completed (including simulated conformity assessment).

NOTE: Simulated conformity assessment means that a conformity assessment activity has been completed following the CB's service procedures from the start (e.g. submission of certification

application) to the end (e.g. issuance of certificate), based on a virtual scenario for conformity assessment.

5. Scope of Accreditation

5.1. The applicant CB shall specify the scope of accreditation based on the following aspects:

    5.1.1.   The GSTC accreditation service is limited to the certification granted to:

        5.1.1.1.   Tourism Destination.

        5.1.1.2.   GSTC-endorsed NAB provides the GSTC Accreditation service for Destination Certification in mutually agreed countries, including EU countries.

    5.1.2.   The Reference Standard against which the certification will be granted:

        5.1.2.1.   The GSTC Criteria (alternative A). In this case, all the GSTC Criteria are requirements and, therefore, mandatory for compliance.

        5.1.2.2.   The GSTC-Recognized Standard (alternative B). In this case, all the requirements in the standard that allow for its recognition by the GSTC are requirements and, therefore, mandatory for compliance.

        5.1.2.3.   A CB can be accredited for alternative A, alternative B, or both alternatives. In the case of alternative B, a CB can be accredited for more than one GSTC-Recognized Standard.

            5.1.2.3.1.   The GSTC-Recognized status shall be granted following the GSTC-Recognized Manual.

            5.1.2.3.2.   A CB can be accredited for one or more than one GSTC-Recognized Standard upon scope extension request to the GSTC, according to its rules.

5.1.2.3.3. The GSTC equivalent criteria and indicators in the GSTC-Recognized Standard shall be edited in the same order as the GSTC Criteria for efficient accreditation assessments.

a. For the GSTC Accreditation Assessment, it is required to prepare an audit report using the GSTC-Recognized Standard in the order of GSTC Criteria. This applies to all types of assessments, including initial, surveillance, re-certification, and scope expansion assessments.

5.1.2.3.4. The CB shall follow the GSTC Checklist: Certification Scheme - Certification Body Framework when applying for the scope extension to provide auditing and certification services against the GSTC-Recognized Standard owned by a Certification Scheme.

NOTE: The GSTC Checklist: Certification Scheme -Certification Body Framework is presented in Annex A.

5.1.3. The geographic area to which the accreditation will apply:

5.1.3.1. A CB can be accredited to grant certification worldwide or to a reduced geographical scope. In this case, the geographical coverage to which the accreditation is valid shall be clearly defined.

5.1.3.2. The geographic area of a CB accredited to certify against the GSTC-Recognized Standard shall be aligned with the geographic coverage of the GSTC-Recognized Standard.

5.2. In its communication to the public and with tourism destinations, the CB shall make its accreditation scope clear.

5.3. Reliance on Legislation:

5.3.1. Reliance on Legislation is applicable to a CB that certifies against the GSTC-Recognized Standard;

5.3.2. Where a CB operates only in one country or a region that can be considered as one legal jurisdiction, it may demonstrate that:

    5.3.2.1. Accreditation Requirements are covered by legislation;

    5.3.2.2. The specific law(s) shall be identified; and

    5.3.2.3. The laws are enforced.

5.3.3. Acceptable evidence may include:

    5.3.3.1. A requirement for a legally binding sworn statement by the organization to be certified with respect to compliance with specific named laws and regulations; and

    5.3.3.2. Text from the CBs manual or standard indicating that compliance with specific, named laws and regulations will be verified during the assessment.

5.3.4. When a CB operates only in one country, or a region considered as one legal jurisdiction, the GSTC-Accredited status will only apply to the CBs area of operation.

6. Languages

6.1. Language for Accreditation

6.1.1. The language used for the GSTC accreditation service is English. All information requested by the GSTC shall be submitted in English.

6.1.2. If a CB wishes to receive accreditation services in a language other than English, the CB shall provide interpretation and translation services, and the CB shall ensure that the services are fair and impartial. It is the responsibility of the CB to cover the expenses of translation and interpretation services.

6.2. Language for Certification

6.2.1.   A CB shall certify using languages for which there is the GSTC Criteria or the GSTC-Recognized Standard formally translated in that language.

    6.2.1.1.   The audit team shall be proficient in that language.

6.2.2.   If a destination being audited speaks mainly another (local) language, the audit team may undertake the Audit accompanied by a capable translator (who shall not be a staff member of the destination management organization being audited).

6.2.3.   If the destination uses local language documents, these may be translated to the language of the GSTC Criteria and/or the GSTC-Recognized Standard by the destination for the auditors' review.

6.2.4.   When the audit team does not speak the language of the destination, an audit may be completed only with a certified translation of documents and using a capable translator during the audit (who shall not be a staff member of the destination management organization being audited).

6.2.5.   Where a CB works in a language other than English, it will provide translated documents in English as required for initial accreditation and ongoing requirements by the GSTC.

6.2.6.   Any required reporting and correspondence with the GSTC shall be in English.

NOTE: Certified translation of documents is a translation of documents by an authorized legal translator who states that translated documents are an accurate representation of the original text.

7. Accreditation Expiration and Renewal

7.1.   Accreditation status will apply to a CB until the earlier of:

7.1.1.   The majority ownership of the CB changes.

7.1.2.   The CB becomes insolvent, bankrupt, or enters receivership, dissolution, or liquidation.

7.1.3.   The CB is in breach of the GSTC License Agreement.

7.1.4.   If 5.1.2.2. applies, the standard used by the GSTC-Accredited CB is no longer GSTC-Recognized.

7.1.5.   Five years from the initial GSTC-Accredited status.

Amendment of Accreditation Requirements

7.2.   The GSTC shall give due notice, at least 90 days, of any changes to its requirements for accreditation. The GSTC takes into account the views expressed by interested parties before deciding on the precise form and effective date of the changes.

7.3.   Following a decision on and publication of the changed requirements, the GSTC shall verify that each GSTC-Accredited CB conforms to the changed requirements within the transition time determined by the GSTC.

Amendment of the GSTC Criteria

7.4.   The GSTC shall inform all applicants and the GSTC-Accredited CBs of any changes in the requirements of the GSTC Destination Criteria:

7.4.1.   The GSTC shall establish a transition implementation plan for GSTC-Accredited CBs. The transition implementation plan shall include

7.4.1.1.   The dates when the revised GSTC Criteria will enter into force;

7.4.1.2.   The measures adopted to inform society, the GSTC-Accredited CBs, and current applicants for accreditation;

7.4.1.3.   Prescriptions on how and when to conduct assessments for accreditation and certification purposes; and

7.4.1.4.   How to deal with eventual non-conformities.

7.4.2.   The transition implementation plan shall be established in consultation with the GSTC-Accredited CBs and other relevant interested parties.

Amendment of the GSTC-Recognized

7.5.   When the GSTC-Recognized Standard is amended by the standard owner, the GSTC shall be informed following the GSTC-Recognized Manual:

    7.5.1.   Once the GSTC confirms the maintenance of the recognition status of the revised standard, the GSTC shall inform the GSTC-Accredited CBs that have in their accreditation scope that standard, in order to establish the process to set up a transition period;

    7.5.2.   The GSTC shall establish a transition implementation plan for accredited certifications according to the GSTC-Recognized Standard. The transition implementation plan shall include:

        7.5.2.1.   The dates in which the revised version will enter into force for accredited certification purposes;

        7.5.2.2.   Prescriptions on how and when to conduct assessments for accreditation and certification purposes; and

        7.5.2.3.   How to deal with eventual non-conformities.

    7.5.3.   The transition implementation plan shall be established in consultation with the standard owner, the GSTC-Accredited CBs and other relevant interested parties.

7.6.   If a standard is no longer Recognized by the GSTC, the standard owner must communicate clearly with any affected stakeholders .

Ongoing Suitability of a Certification Program

7.7.   If at any time, should the GSTC have reason to be concerned about the ongoing conformity of an already GSTC-Accredited CB against the GSTC Accreditation Requirements, it may require the CB to provide further information, and may, as an ultimate sanction, withdraw the GSTC-Accredited status.

Suspension, Cancelation, Extension, Withdrawal or Scope Reduction

7.8. The suspension, cancellation, extension, withdrawal or scope reduction of accreditation shall be administered by the GSTC, according to GSTC Accreditation Procedure v.2.0.

7.9. In the event of non-compliance with the obligations assumed by the applicant or the GSTC-Accredited CB and depending on the severity in terms of compromising the system in terms of quality and credibility of accreditation-related activities, sanctions can be applied by the GSTC.

7.10. A CB can request an extension or reduction of its accreditation scope. In this case, the CB shall make a formal request to the GSTC. The request shall indicate the reasons for the extension or reduction requested. The request shall be processed as an accreditation application. The assessment of the CB may be simplified and processed in conjunction with the surveillance activities of the accreditation process:

    7.10.1. The GSTC-Accredited CB shall apply for an extension of its scope to provide auditing and certification services to any additional GSTC-Recognized Standard owned by a certification scheme.

7.11. A CB can voluntarily request the withdrawal of its accreditation.

8. Conformity with GSTC Requirements

8.1. The CB shall be accredited with a defined scope as in Section 5:

    8.1.1. The GSTC and the GSTC-endorsed NAB may further limit the technical or geographical scope of certification based on the justification provided or upon request by the CB.

8.2. CB shall comply with the requirements in ISO 17065:

    8.2.1. CBs shall conform to the additional requirements for ISO 17065 set out in Clause 8.5.

    8.2.2. Where no text appears after a Clause of ISO 17065:2012 is referenced, CB shall take this to mean that no additional requirements are provided.

8.3.   The CB shall comply with all normative references in this Manual, where applicable.

8.4.   The CB shall have entered into a licensing agreement with the GSTC prior to being granted accreditation.

NOTE: Licensing agreement requirements are set out in Clause 17.1.

ISO 17065:2012

8.5.   Requirements for the application of ISO 17065:

ISO 17065:2012 – 4 General requirements:

8.5.1.   CBs should note that Accreditation Bodies have been instructed to follow the accreditation auditing guidance contained within the Accreditation Audit Practice Group's document ISO / IAF AAPG Key Criteria for assessing the competency of CBs and their ability to deliver credible results.

ISO 17065:2012 – 4.1.2. Certification agreement:

8.5.2.   The GSTC Requirements to ISO 17065:2012 Clause 4.1.2:

8.5.2.1.   The CB shall through legally enforceable arrangements require that the certified client:

8.5.2.1.1.   Does not make or permit any misleading statement regarding its certification;

8.5.2.1.2.   Does not use or permit the use of a certification document or any part thereof in a misleading manner;

8.5.2.1.3.   Amends all advertising matter when the scope of certification has been reduced;

8.5.2.1.4.   Does not imply that the certification applies to activities and sites that are outside the scope of certification; and

8.5.2.1.5.   Does not use its certification in such a manner that would bring the CB, the GSTC and/or certification system into disrepute and lose public trust.

ISO 17065:2012 4.1.3 Use of license, certificates and marks of conformity:

8.5.3.   The GSTC Requirements to ISO 17065:2012 Clause 4.1.3:

8.5.3.1.   Upon certification, the CB shall issue their client with the:

8.5.3.1.1.   The GSTC Logo; and

8.5.3.1.2.   The GSTC Logo Terms of Use; in accordance with the GSTC Logo Terms of Issuance.

8.5.3.2.   The CB shall require their client to use the GSTC Logo in accordance with the GSTC Logo terms and conditions.

ISO 17065:2012 4.2 Management of impartiality:

8.5.4.   The GSTC Requirements to ISO 17065:2012 Clause 4.2.10:

8.5.4.1.   Personnel who have provided consultancy services for a client shall not be used for auditing or decision-making for that client for a period of a minimum of two years.

8.5.4.2.   If within a period of two years following an initial audit the CBs personnel involved in the audit or certification decision-making become involved with the client as staff, contractors or consultants, the CB shall review the audit and all decisions arising from it to ensure that there was no conflict of interest at the time of the audit and/or certification decision.

ISO 17065:2012 4.5 Confidentiality:

8.5.5.   The GSTC Requirements to ISO 17065:2012 Clause 4.5:

8.5.5.1. Personnel, including any committee members, contractors, personnel of external bodies or individuals acting on the CBs behalf, shall keep confidential all information obtained or created during the performance of the CBs activities except as required by law.

ISO 17065:2012 4.6 ISO 17065:2012 Publicly available information:

8.5.6. Requirements to ISO 17065:2012 Clause 4.6:

8.5.6.1. The CB shall also maintain public information about:

8.5.6.1.1. Geographical areas in which it operates; and

8.5.6.1.2. Dispute mechanisms including complaints and appeals procedures available in the languages the CB operates.

ISO 17065:2012 5.0 Structural requirements;

8.5.7. The CB shall comply with the requirements of ISO 17065:2012 Clause 5.0.

ISO 17065:2012 6.0 Resource requirements;

8.5.8. The CB shall comply with the requirements of ISO 17065:2012 Clause 6.0.

ISO 17065:2012 7.0 Process Requirements;

8.5.9. The CB shall comply with the requirements of ISO 17065:2012 Clause 7.0.

ISO 17065:2012 7.1 General:

8.5.10. The GSTC Requirements to ISO 17065:2012 Clause 7.1.2:

8.5.10.1. The CB shall define the scope of the certification, specifying the boundary of destination that has been assessed against the Reference Standard:

8.5.10.1.1. During the five-year period, it is required that the scope outlined in the certification documentation accurately

identifies any exclusions that fall outside the scope of the GSTC certification, if there are any.

8.5.10.2. When the Reference Standard is the GSTC Recognized Standard, the CB shall have legal authorization to provide auditing and certification services to the GSTC-Recognized Standard.

8.5.10.3. When a third party owns a certification scheme, the CB shall have legal authorization to use the Reference Standard, marks and logos, and any other intellectual property rights and rules of the scheme.

8.5.10.4. All the requirements in the GSTC-Recognized Standard are mandatory and shall be assessed for conformity.

NOTE: To be awarded GSTC-Recognized Standard not all the GSTC Criteria are mandatory. However, for a CB to become awarded GSTC-Accredited status, conformity with at least one of the criteria matching each of the GSTC Criteria shall be mandatory in order to demonstrate that all certified destinations and activities comply with all the GSTC Criteria.

ISO 17065:2012 7.2 Application:

8.5.11. The GSTC Requirements to ISO 17065:2012 Clause 7.2:

8.5.11.1. The CB shall obtain all the necessary client information to allow proper planning of audits in accordance with the relevant certification scheme. This information shall include at a minimum:

8.5.11.1.1. Information about the client's sustainability management system and performance;

8.5.11.1.2. The Reference Standard (standards and/or other normative documents established by the certification scheme) for which the client is seeking certification;

8.5.11.1.3. The general information of the client, including its name, geographical boundary, population, industry, visitor statistics, description of its process and operations and other information, and any relevant legal authority and obligations;

8.5.11.1.4. General information concerning the client, relevant to the certification for which the audit is conducted, such as the client's activities, its human and technical resources, and its functions and relationship to other regulatory authorities and industries;

8.5.11.1.5. Information concerning all outsourced processes used by the client that will affect conformity to requirements.

NOTE: A variety of media and mechanisms can be used to collect this information at various times, including an application form. Such information gathering can be in conjunction with or separate from, the completion of the legally binding agreement (the certification agreement) specified in Clause 4.1.2 of ISO/IEC 17065:2012.

ISO 17065:2012 7.3 Application review:

8.5.12. The GSTC Requirements to ISO 17065:2012 Clause 7.3.1:

8.5.12.1. The CB shall define the scope of certification with the client by identifying the scope of the destination as per the following definition:

ISO 17065:2012 7.4 Evaluation

8.5.13. The GSTC Requirements to ISO 17065:2012 Clause 7.4.1:

8.5.13.1. The CB shall ensure that an audit plan is based on documented requirements of the CB as well as requirements described in this Manual.

8.5.13.2. An audit plan shall be developed to clearly identify the audit activity/activities required to demonstrate that the client's sustainability

management processes fulfil the requirements for certification to the Reference Standard.

8.5.13.3. The audit plan shall include the type of audit, such as initial audit, surveillance audits, and a recertification audit in the third year prior to the expiration of certification. The three-year certification cycle begins with the certification or recertification decision.

8.5.13.4. The certification cycle shall be 3 years, the audit program shall establish as a minimum, a surveillance audit every year and a recertification audit shall begin over the year prior to the expiration of certification.

8.5.13.5. The determination of the audit plan and any subsequent adjustments shall consider the size of the destination including volume of population, the scope and complexity of its tourism stakeholders, tourism businesses, economic contribution of tourism to the local economy, as well as the demonstrated level of destination management system's effectiveness and the results of any previous audits.

> *Note. The relevant stakeholders to the destination's tourism development and management include tourism businesses, communities, civil societies, academia, and other organizations and individuals. During an audit, CBs shall identify full range of stakeholders involved and ensure their inclusion in the process.*

8.5.13.6. The audit plan shall include the roles and responsibilities of the auditor and audit team when appropriate.

8.5.14. The GSTC Requirements to ISO 17065:2012 Clause 7.4.2:

8.5.14.1. The CB shall assign an auditor and or audit team, when appropriate, in conformity with the requirements set out in the GSTC Auditor Qualification, Knowledge and Skills in Section 10.

8.5.14.2. The CB and audit team assigned shall communicate and approve the audit plan with the client.

8.5.15. The GSTC Requirements to ISO 17065:2012 Clause 7.4.3:

8.5.15.1. At each full audit, the CB shall use an audit checklist/evaluation tool which includes all criteria and indicators of the Reference Standard and requires the completion, for each criterion, of the auditor's findings (conformity, non-conformity, or not assessed or not applicable), based on evidence obtained from the audit process.

NOTE: The audit checklist/evaluation tool created by the CB shall be used .

8.5.15.2. The evaluation tool shall include guidance for conducting the audit and conformity and indications for the required evidence types.

8.5.15.3. Where applicable, the evaluation tool shall include the additional certification and audit evaluation requirements for use of the GSTC name, and marks related to certification (Sections 14 to 16).

8.5.15.4. Each CB before performing audits shall define the level of risk of the client through carrying out a risk assessment. Risk assessments are applicable to all types of clients. The outcome of the risk assessment shall determine the duration and the focus of the audit and is additional to the elements described in Clause 8.5.15.6.

8.5.15.5. CBs shall develop documented procedures for determining the audit time in conformity with the three primary risk categories provided in 8.5.15.6.

8.5.15.6. CBs shall rely on the following three primary risk categories when conducting the risk assessment:

8.5.15.6.1. The likelihood and consequences of environmental, social, economic, and cultural impacts. CBs shall include the following

conditions for their analysis of impact likelihood and consequences.

    a. Climate Change Performance Index (CCPI) Rating

    b. Internal and national protected area: UNESCO World Heritage List, IUCN Protected Areas Category I to IV, List of Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar List)

8.5.15.6.2.   The Rule of Law and Control of Corruption scores of the country.

8.5.15.6.3.   The volume of visitors compared to the population.

8.5.15.7.   CBs may consider other secondary data and define risk level based on the following:

8.5.15.7.1.   Media monitoring checks of the destination (news classified as 'negative' will be prioritized when reviewing many overall results)

8.5.15.7.2.   Any other information gathered through online searches, social media, or networks

8.5.15.7.3.   Any other relevant information already within the knowledge of the CB personnel.

8.5.15.8.   CBs shall consider the client as high or low risk based on the following conditions:

8.5.15.8.1.   If any of the aspects listed in this clause apply, the client shall be considered as high risk:

    a. When negative environmental, social, economic, and cultural impacts have significant likelihood and consequences.

b. When the CCPI Rating is marked as 'Low' or 'Very low'.

c. When it has a protected area listed as a UNESCO World Heritage, IUCN Protected Areas Category I to IV, or Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar).

d. When the Rule of Law and Control of Corruption scores of the country in which the client is located are below 60 points according to BSCI Countries' Risk Classification, the client shall be considered as high risk.

e. When the number of visitors in the previous fiscal year is more than three times the local population

8.5.15.8.2. If the client falls under the above cases but is not classified as high risk, the CB shall provide a rationale.

8.5.15.8.3. If the three aspects listed in this clause apply, the client may be considered low risk:

a. When negative environmental, social, economic, and cultural impacts have minimal likelihood and consequences.

b. When the CCPI Rating is marked as 'Very High'.

c. When there is no national or international protected area.

d. When the Rule of Law and Control of Corruption scores of the country in which the client operates are above 60 points according to BSCI Countries' Risk Classification.

e. When the client population is less than or equal to 100,000 and the number of visitors for the previous fiscal year is the same or less than the population.

8.5.15.9.	CBs shall develop documented procedures for determining the audit time in conformity with the audit frequency and duration.

8.5.15.10.	Audit duration:

8.5.15.10.1.	Audit duration shall be determined based on the risk analysis.

8.5.15.10.2.	When the CB determines audit duration, that determination shall be justified as the duration covers audit activities for the consultation with both the public and private stakeholder groups representing the destination and site visits in addition to the audit of the destination management body.

8.5.15.10.3.	For high-risk destinations, more audit activities and time shall be allocated to address the risk factors.

8.5.16.	The GSTC Requirements to ISO 17065:2012 Clause 7.4.4:

8.5.16.1.	CB audit personnel shall follow the guidance on auditing provided in ISO 19011. In this case, the recommendations in that standard (ISO 19011) shall be understood as obligations.

8.5.16.2.	The auditor may undertake interviews with stakeholders within or external to the destination to clarify aspects of the client's activity and performance. The auditor shall undertake such interviews where there is significant doubt about the sufficiency, quality, or veracity of information supplied by a client.

8.5.16.3.	The client shall be informed in writing about any stakeholder interview undertaken but shall not be informed of any information that stakeholders request to remain confidential.

8.5.17.	The GSTC Requirements to ISO 17065:2012 Clause 7.4.6:

8.5.17.1.	The CB shall inform the client of all non-conformities in writing.

8.5.17.2. When major non-conformities have arisen, the CB shall provide a 90-day term to be corrected.

8.5.17.3. When minor non-conformities, the CB shall provide a 30-day term to be corrected.

8.5.17.4. If the CB provides different terms for correcting non-conformities, the provision shall be justified.

ISO 17065:2012 7.5. Review:

8.5.18. The GSTC Requirements to ISO 17065:2012 Clause 7.5:

8.5.18.1. The results of all evaluation activities shall be documented prior to the review.

ISO 17065:2012 7.6. Certification decision:

8.5.19. The GSTC Requirements to ISO 17065:2012 Clause 7.6:

8.5.19.1. The CB shall confirm, prior to making a certification decision, that:

8.5.19.1.1. The information provided by the audit team is sufficient with respect to the certification requirements and the scope for certification.

8.5.19.1.2. It has reviewed, accepted, and verified the effectiveness of correction and/or corrective actions for all non-conformities that represent:

a. Failure to fulfil one or more requirements of the Reference Standard; or

b. A situation that raises significant doubt about the ability of the client's sustainability management processes to achieve its intended outputs.

8.5.19.1.3.   It has reviewed and accepted the client's planned correction and/or corrective action for any other non-conformities.

8.5.20.   The GSTC Requirements to ISO 17065:2012 Clause 7.7.1:

8.5.20.1.   CBs shall provide the client with formal certification documentation that includes the following in addition to the items in the list of ISO 17065:2012 Clause 7.7.1:

8.5.20.1.1.   The Reference Standard, including an indication of issue status (e.g., revision date or number) used for the assessment of the certified client;

8.5.20.1.2.   The certification mark of the CB and the GSTC logo; other marks (e.g., accreditation symbol, client's logo) may be used provided they are not misleading or ambiguous; and

8.5.20.1.3.   Any other information required by the Reference Standard.

ISO 17065:2012 7.8. Directory of certified products:

8.5.21.   The GSTC Requirements to ISO 17065:2012 Clause 7.8:

8.5.21.1.   CBs shall maintain an up-to-date publicly available database of certification of clients including:

8.5.21.1.1.   Full name and address of the client;

8.5.21.1.2.   Scope of certification, including the Reference Standard if applicable; and

8.5.21.1.3.   Validity and duration of the certificate.

ISO 17065:2012 7.9. Surveillance:

8.5.22.   The GSTC Requirements to ISO 17065:2012 Clause 7.9:

8.5.22.1. Surveillance activities shall be established in the audit program and shall include periodic on-site audits to assure ongoing validity of the demonstration of fulfilment of the Reference Standard requirements.

8.5.22.2. Surveillance audits shall be conducted once every year.

8.5.22.3. Surveillance audits shall be conducted on-site at least once every two years:

8.5.22.3.1. For high-risk situations, on-site audits shall occur annually.

8.5.22.4. Surveillance audits can be performed on-site, remotely, or in combination. The CB shall provide a clear justification of the chosen methods for remote and on-site audit:

8.5.22.5. The date of the first surveillance audit following initial certification shall not be more than 24 months from the last day of the audit.

8.5.22.6. Surveillance audits are not necessarily full sustainability management processes audits. Surveillance audits may focus on key processes, a portion of the client's organization and/or sensitive issues. In the 3-year certification cycle, all requirements shall be covered.

8.5.22.7. Surveillance audits can use remote auditing techniques to some extent. In this case, IAF MD 4:2022 shall be used.

8.5.22.8. The CB may undertake random unannounced monitoring visits; and

8.5.22.9. The CB shall maintain certification based on the demonstration that the client continues to comply with the Reference Standard.

ISO 17065:2012 Clause 8.0 Management System Requirements.

8.5.23. The CB shall comply with the requirements of ISO 17065:2012 Clause 8.0.

9. Personnel Competence Criteria

9.1.   CBs shall comply with the requirements in ISO 17065:2012 6.1 Certification Body personnel.

9.2.   The GSTC Requirements to ISO 17065:2012 Clause 6.1:

   9.2.1.   All personnel involved in the audit or certification decision-making activities shall meet the criteria set out for the relevant role undertaken.

   9.2.2.   Personnel shall possess the knowledge and skills necessary to achieve the intended results of the roles they are expected to perform. Personnel shall possess generic knowledge and skills and shall also be expected to possess the discipline and sector-specific knowledge and skills described in this section.

   9.2.3.   Specific requirements for the GSTC auditors, reviewers, and decision-makers are set out in Sections 10 and 11, respectively.

10. Auditor Qualifications, Knowledge and Skills

10.1.   Individuals engaged to undertake audits (which may have one or more members) shall meet the following criteria.

Personal Attributes

10.2.   Auditors shall possess personal attributes to enable them to act following the principles of auditing stated in ISO 19011. Auditors shall exhibit professional behavior during audit activities, including being:

10.2.1.	Ethical	Fair, truthful, sincere, honest, and discreet;
10.2.2.	Open-Minded	Willing to consider alternative ideas or points of view
10.2.3.	Diplomatic	Tactful in dealing with people;
10.2.4.	Observant	Actively aware of physical surroundings and activitie

10.2.5.	Perceptive	Aware of and able to understand situations;
10.2.6.	Versatile	Adjusts readily to different situations;
10.2.7.	Tenacious	Persistent and focused on achieving objectives;
10.2.8.	Decisive	Reach timely conclusions based on logical reaso analysis;
10.2.9.	Self-reliant	Acts and functions independently while ir effectively with others;
10.2.10.	Firm	Able to act with fortitude; acts responsibly and ethic though these actions may not always be popular sometimes result in disagreement or confrontation;
10.2.11.	Open to Improveme	Willing to learn from situations;
10.2.12.	Culturally Sensitive	Observes and respectful to the culture of the audite
10.2.13.	Collaborative	Interacts effectively with others, including membe audit team and auditee's staff.

Knowledge and Skills

10.3. Generic knowledge for auditing:

10.3.1. Knowledge of audit principles, practices, and techniques. Auditors shall have knowledge of generic audit principles, practices, and techniques, as specified in this manual sufficient to conduct certification audits and to evaluate internal audit processes

10.3.2. Knowledge of the CB's process. Auditors shall have knowledge of a CB's process sufficient to perform audits in accordance with the CB's certification process.

10.3.3.   Communication skills appropriate to all levels within the client organization. Auditors shall be capable of communicating effectively with persons at any level of an organization using appropriate terminology and expressions.

10.3.4.   Note-taking and report-writing skills. Auditors shall be capable of reading and writing with sufficient speed, accuracy, and comprehension to record, take notes, and effectively communicate audit findings and conclusions.

10.3.5.   Presentation skills. Auditors shall be capable of clearly presenting audit findings and conclusions.

10.3.6.   Interviewing skills. Auditors shall be capable of interviewing to obtain relevant information by asking open-ended, well-formulated questions and listening to understand and evaluate the answers.

10.3.7.   Audit-management skills. Auditors shall be capable of conducting and managing an audit to achieve the audit objectives within the agreed timeframe.

10.4.   Specific knowledge of sustainability:

10.4.1.   Auditors shall have knowledge of the terminology, practices, and processes common to sustainability sufficient to understand the context of the client's operations, including:

10.4.1.1.   Sustainability terminology;

10.4.1.2.   Aspect and impacts of sustainability;

10.4.1.3.   Ability to interpret laws and regulations;

10.4.1.4.   Techniques for identification and evaluation of sustainability aspects and impacts and their sustainability significance;

10.4.1.5.   Needs, expectations, and concerns of the local community, workforce, and other relevant stakeholders, including heritage, cultural customs, and religious sensitivities; and

10.4.1.6.   Social, environmental, economic, and political context in destination development and management.

Education and Work Experience

10.5.   Auditor competence can be acquired using a combination of the following:

10.5.1.   Education or training that covers generic auditor knowledge and skills under the supervision of an experienced auditor; and

10.5.2.   Experience involving the exercise of judgment, decision-making, problem-solving, and communication with managers, professionals, peers, customers, and other interested parties.

10.6.   Education:

10.6.1.   Auditors shall have formal education sufficient to acquire the knowledge and skills described in Clause 10.3. A secondary education certificate is the minimum level required for auditors engaged to undertake audits for destinations.

10.7.   Work and Audit experience:

10.7.1.   Lead auditor qualification in ISO9001, ISO14001, SA8000, or other internationally recognized certification programs focusing on sustainability.

10.7.2.   At least 3 years experience in the hospitality, tourism industry, environmental management, or social sector.

10.7.3.   Audit experience: at least 20 audits in the hospitality, tourism industry, environmental management, or social sector. Audits should be completed within the previous 3 consecutive years.

10.7.4.   GSTC Audit experience: at least 10 audits against GSTC Industry Criteria or a GSTC-Recognized Standard within the previous 3 consecutive years.

10.7.5. An auditor shall undergo a supervised training period that involves at least 5 audits as a trainee auditor to gain practical experience in audit against GSTC Destination Criteria.

    10.7.5.1. If there is no traineeship opportunity, the auditor shall conduct 10 mock audits and the mock audit reports shall be evaluated by the CB.

    10.7.5.2. Evidence for no traineeship opportunity shall be documented.

10.8. Training on Auditing:

10.8.1. Training on auditing by training organizations relevant to non-tourism standards. The auditor shall have successfully completed training on audit techniques and practices. The GSTC accepts one of the formal training such as ISO 9001 quality management system standards, ISO 14001 environmental management systems, or other ISO standards or other relevant standards, provided by internationally and nationally recognized training organizations to fulfil this requirement; or

10.8.2. Training on auditing by organizations relevant to tourism standards. The auditor shall have successfully completed training with a minimum of the following areas via online or offline:

    10.8.2.1. Quality and Environmental Management System relevant to ISO 9001 and 14001;

    10.8.2.2. Audit techniques and practices based on ISO 19011;

    10.8.2.3. Stakeholder consultation: ability to consult with tourism businesses, regulatory agencies, industry groups, local community members, and any indigenous stakeholders; and

    10.8.2.4. Management of environmental, economic, and socio-cultural issues applied to the tourism sector.

10.9. The GSTC Training for Auditors. The auditor shall successfully complete the GSTC's Training for Auditors requirements.

NOTE: This shall be "GSTC Auditor Training" distinct from other GSTC sustainable tourism training programs for other tourism stakeholders:

10.9.1. Auditors shall attend Modules A, B, C, and D. Completion of these are sufficient for auditing the Destination.

10.9.2. Auditors satisfying the following requirements shall only attend Module A via online or offline as a mandatory training course:

10.9.2.1. Tourism work experience

10.9.2.1.1. Having at least 3 years of work experience in tourism certification; or

10.9.2.1.2. 10 years of work experience in tourism destination management as a staff member, consultant, or professional in tourism-related organizations such as public authorities, academic tourism departments, community groups, and so on.

10.9.2.2. Tourism audit experience

10.9.2.2.1. Completed at least 5 audits of Destination against GSTC Criteria or a GSTC-Recognized Standard completed within the previous 3 consecutive years; or

10.9.2.2.2. Completed at least 30 audits against GSTC Industry Criteria or a GSTC-Recognized Standard within the previous 3 consecutive years and completed 10 destination mock audits and evaluated by a GSTC Accredited CB.

NOTE: The outline of the content of GSTC's Training for Auditors course is presented in Annex B. The evaluation of the 10 destination mock audits will be reviewed by the GSTC during the accreditation assessment.

10.9.3.   Evaluation of the GSTC Training for Auditors. Auditors shall successfully pass the approved GSTC's Training for Auditors evaluation, which is divided into online and field evaluations:

10.9.3.1.   Online evaluation. The passing mark for the written exam on the contents and application of the GSTC Criteria shall be 85%+. The exam may be re-taken once, with the same requirement of 85%+ passing mark. If failed a 2nd time, the entire training course shall be repeated prior to additional testing.

10.9.3.2.   Field evaluation. Passing marks for the field performance test on the ability to apply the GSTC Criteria and Indicators to the field and the audit skills is above 75% achievement. In the case of failure to pass the field performance test, the auditor shall satisfy the GSTC requirements for the completion of training.

NOTE: The GSTC will share the requirements for the auditors who failed the field evaluation in a separate document.

10.9.3.3.   The auditors satisfying 10.9.2 shall take the online exam but shall be exempted from the field evaluation. The passing mark for the online evaluation shall be 85%+.

10.9.3.3.1.   Auditors are allowed to retake the exam one time, with the same requirement of 85%+ passing mark. If failed a 2nd time, the training course shall be repeated prior to additional testing.

10.9.4.   GSTC Training Sanctions:

10.9.4.1. The GSTC may sanction those who cheat during the test. For auditors, GSTC may issue a 2-year sanction prohibiting them from participating in GSTC Auditor Training.

10.9.4.2. If the auditor is again caught cheating on the second chance, he or she shall be prohibited from attending GSTC Auditor Training.

10.10. The CB shall determine whether or not personnel are competent to undertake audits, review audit reports, and make certification decisions in each country covered by its accreditation scope, considering that there may be significantly different regulatory, cultural, and language issues.

10.11. Auditors whose accreditation scope includes the certification with a GSTC-Recognized Standard shall be trained on that full standard. This is not included in the GSTC Auditor Training and shall be provided by the Standard Owner or the CB.

Maintenance and Improvement of Competence

10.12. The GSTC-qualified auditors shall continually improve their competence. Auditors shall maintain their auditing competence through regular participation in sustainability audits and continual professional development. Continual professional development involves the maintenance and improvement of competence. This may be achieved through means such as additional work experience, training, private study, coaching, attendance at meetings, seminars and conferences, or other relevant activities.

10.13. Auditors shall demonstrate their continuing professional development.

10.14. Auditors shall attend follow-up training organized by the GSTC whenever changes are made to the GSTC Criteria.

10.15. Up-to-date records of auditor competency shall be maintained. The record of auditors newly qualified for the GSTC destination auditing shall be submitted to the GSTC for reviewing and managing the GSTC's list of qualified auditors.

10.16. Verification mechanisms:

10.16.1.   Periodical Evaluation. The CB shall evaluate auditors' competence at least every three years through a combination of an observed on-site audit, shadow audits, and feedback from different sources, such as a review of audit reports or client feedback. The evaluation of auditors shall be recorded.

10.16.2.   Revised GSTC Criteria Examination. Approved Auditors shall pass an examination within six months of the issue of revised GSTC Criteria or certification requirements to sustain competence. The GSTC shall manage and communicate the type of examination (e.g., online, field performance, or both).

11. Reviewers and Certification Decision Makers: Qualification, Knowledge, and Skills

11.1.   The personnel appointed by the CB as reviewers and certification decision-makers shall collectively possess the following knowledge and skills:

11.1.1.   Auditing principles, practices, and techniques: knowledge of generic management systems audit principles, practices, and techniques, sufficient to understand a certification audit report;

11.1.2.   The GSTC Criteria and Indicators and the GSTC-Recognized Standard used as Reference Standards: knowledge of the Reference Standards being specified for certification sufficient to make a decision based on a certification audit report, including the understanding of local, social, cultural, and business context;

11.1.3.   CB processes: knowledge of the CBs processes sufficient to determine if expectations of the CB have been fulfilled based on the information submitted for review;

11.1.4.   Tourism sector: knowledge of the terminology, practices, and processes common to a client's work sufficient to understand an audit report in the context of the Reference Standard;

11.1.5. Terms, definitions, and processes in sustainable tourism: knowledge of the terms, definitions, and processes related to sustainable tourism sufficient to understand a certification audit report;

11.1.6. Language understanding to allow them to use the relevant language version of the GSTC Criteria and, if applicable, the GSTC-Recognized Standard:

11.1.6.1. Should comfortably read and speak the language used by most personnel in the tourism destination and in which the reports are written; and

11.1.6.2. This section only applies to audits and certifications not undertaken in English. For information on languages for accreditation and certification, see Section 6 of this Manual.

12. Eligibility for Destination Certification and Steps

12.1. GSTC Destination Certification shall be made through the following steps.

12.1.1. The options for the destinations take a step-by-step approach.

12.1.1.1. Option 1 with three steps.

12.1.1.1.1. Step 1. Approved Destination Certification Candidacy status by the CB.

12.1.1.1.2. Step 2. Verified as a destination with a Sustainable Management System (SMS) by the CB (hereafter, GSTC SMS Verified Destination).

12.1.1.1.3. Step 3. Certified as a sustainable destination (hereafter, GSTC Certified Destination).

12.1.1.2. Option 2 with two steps.

12.1.1.2.1. Step 1. Approved Destination Certification Candidacy status by the CB.

12.1.1.2.2. Step 2. Certified as a sustainable destination.

12.1.2. Option 3 for destinations ready for certification.

12.1.2.1. CBs may proceed with certification if destinations are ready for audit without any intermediate steps described in Clause 12.1.1.

12.1.3. A Destination shall not hold a GSTC Destination Certification Candidacy status for more than two years. The destination shall obtain either a GSTC SMS Verified Destination or a GSTC Certified Destination status.

12.1.4. If a destination selects Option 1, the CB shall initiate Step 3 within three years of issuing the GSTC SMS Verified Destination Certificate.

12.2. Eligibility. For Options 1 and 2, the CB shall accept a destination's application for the GSTC Certification when the following conditions are met. For Option 3, the CB shall proceed with the GSTC Certification process when the destination meets the requirements in Clause 12.2.2.

12.2.1. Completion of a Destination Certification Candidacy Workshop.

12.2.1.1. To be eligible as a Candidate for Destination Certification, a representative from the applicant organization shall complete the online Candidacy Workshop, which the GSTC provides. This is an online asynchronous workshop, which the proposed Candidate can take at any time prior to applying for Candidacy.

12.2.2. Submission of the documents demonstrating a sustainable tourism management system is in place by a Destination Management Organization(DMO). The documents include the following:

12.2.2.1. Introduction of Destination Management Organization

a. The name of the organization applying for candidacy

b. Demonstrate the organization has been in place for a minimum of 5 consecutive years.

c. Link to the organization's website.

d. Name and geographic description of the destination.

e. Inventory of destination tourism businesses, including hotels/accommodations, tour operators, and tourism attractions.

f. The organization's chart or structure, which identifies all paid and contracted employees with the lead person responsible for certification, is clearly identified.

g. The organization's most recent strategic plan, including mission statement, goals, objectives, etc.

h. The organization's financial plan shows current and future funding sources for operating the destination organization.

12.2.2.2. Governance and regulatory responsibilities. Information on governing bodies or organizations who are responsible for the following areas:

a. Policy Making Body, with respect to the destinations ordinances, permitting systems, and development

b. Workforce Development and Management

c. Safety and Security Management

d. Risk and Crisis Management

e. Destination Planning

f. Land Development and Property Management

g. Cultural Resources Management

h. Climate Change Management

i. Energy and Power Production

j. Natural Resources Management

k. Water Quality and Stewardship Management

l. Waste management

m. Pollution Control

n. Transportation Management

12.2.2.3. Stakeholder Engagement. List the organization's annual activities that demonstrate engagement with the following destination stakeholders:

a. Private tourism sector

b. Public sector

c. Civil society

d. Residents

12.2.3. CBs shall verify the submitted information through a desk review to accept the destinations as GSTC Destination Certification Candidates.

12.2.3.1. CBs shall submit the list of destinations with the GSTC Destination Certification Candidacy status to the GSTC Secretariat within 10 days of officially granting the destination the candidacy status.

12.2.3.2. The GSTC Accreditation Secretariat shall review the CB's verification report during surveillance assessments.

13. Ineligibility for Destination Certification

13.1.   A destination is ineligible for the GSTC Certification if:

   13.1.1.   It does not comply with the requirements described in Section 12.

   13.1.2.   It has had its certificate withdrawn within the last 2 years.

   13.1.3.   It has had its certificate suspended within the last 6 months.

13.2.   The CB shall require the destination to declare any cases convicted of forced labor or environmental violations in the destination during the application and certification periods.

13.3.   If there is a case for violating laws on forced labor and/or environment in the last 2 years, this organization shall not be allowed to continue with the GSTC certification process.

14. Requirements for Sustainable Destination Management Verification

14.1.   Destinations can apply for the GSTC SMS Verified Destination status before seeking GSTC Destination Certification.

14.2.   CBs shall initiate the verification process within two years of destination certification candidacy approval by the GSTC.

14.3.   CBs shall verify if the destination meets Pillar A requirements of the GSTC Destination Criteria through desk review and onsite verification.

14.4.   CBs shall initiate the GSTC Destination Certification process within three years of issuing the GSTC SMS Verified Destination Certificate.

15. Requirements for Destination Certification

Time limits for Destination Candidacy and GSTC SMS Verified Status

15.1. Destinations shall apply for the GSTC Destination Certification after obtaining the GSTC SMS Verified Destination status or the GSTC Destination Certification Candidacy status.

    15.1.1. The GSTC Destination Certification application shall be submitted within 2 years of obtaining candidacy status or 3 years of being a GSTC SMS Verified Destination.

Requirements for Certified tourism businesses, Renewable energy, and Green transport

15.2. The CBs shall verify the following requirements before proceeding with the certification process.

    15.2.1. The destination shall have a clear plan for sustainable tourism businesses with specific targets for certification, renewable energy, and green transport.

15.3. **Certified Tourism Businesses**. At least 15% of the following tourism businesses have been certified to international or national sustainability standards, which include the GSTC Criteria.

    15.3.1. The international or national sustainability standards shall cover social, cultural, or environmental aspects of sustainability.

    15.3.2. The certification in clause 15.3 shall be one of the accredited schemes by the IAF members.

    15.3.3. The tourism businesses counted in this Manual are limited to the following:

        15.3.3.1. Hotels/Accommodations

        15.3.3.2. Tour operators

        15.3.3.3. MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conventions/Conferences, and Events/Exhibitions)

        15.3.3.4. Attractions

15.3.4.   The percentage of the certified tourism businesses includes:

15.3.4.1.   The percentage of GSTC-Certified hotels/accommodations;

15.3.4.2.   The percentage of GSTC-Certified tour operators;

15.3.4.3.   The percentage of GSTC-Certified MICE businesses;

15.3.4.4.   The percentage of GSTC-Certified attractions;

15.3.4.5.   The percentage of tourism businesses to the GSTC-Recognized standards that are used by GSTC-Accredited CBs; and

15.3.4.6.   The percentage of tourism businesses certified to other international or national standards that are described in clauses 15.3.1 and 15.3.2.

15.3.5.   CBs shall justify if they certify destinations having less than 15% tourism businesses.

Note. The percentage of GSTC-Certified MICE businesses and attractions will be evaluated, respectively, following the launch of the GSTC MICE and the GSTC Attraction Certification. But other certifications meeting clauses 15.3.1 and 15.3.2 can be counted.

15.4.   **Renewable energy.** Destinations set targets for renewable energy production and supply with a defined timeframe that aligned with the national climate change strategy and renewable energy production.

15.4.1.   Renewable energy supply accounts for at least 10% of the total.

15.4.2.   The achievement of each target year shall be verified.

15.5.   **Green transport.** Destinations set targets for green transport and cleaner mobility aligned with national climate change strategy and target and provide evidence that confirms the implementation of the target.

15.5.1.   At least 10% of rental cars and tour buses use green transport.

Note: See the definition of Green transport in the Glossary.

Sampling Requirements

15.6.   The CBs shall have documented procedures for determining the sampling process and audit duration based on the risk assessment considering the following factors:

    15.6.1.   The size of the DMO;

    15.6.2.   Tourism contribution to the destination economy;

    15.6.3.   The ratio of the volume of visitors compared to the number of residents;

    15.6.4.   The percentage of residents involved in tourism-related businesses;

    15.6.5.   The complexity of tourism businesses in terms of numbers, types, and size;

    15.6.6.   Culturally significant and/or sensitive tangible intangible heritage, such as UNESCO World Heritage sites, archaeological sites, national or local heritage, and/or Indigenous communities; and

    15.6.7.   Environmentally important and/or vulnerable sites include locally, nationally, or internationally protected areas, sites vulnerable to climate change, high biodiversity ecosystems, etc.

15.7.   The CBs shall ensure the samples represent a diverse range of stakeholders, including businesses, communities, civil societies, academia, and public bodies, as well as places most visited and conflicts raised due to tourism. The procedure shall meet IAF MD1:2018 Requirements.

16.   Certification Program with Multilevel Award System

16.1.   The GSTC-Accredited CS that allows multiple levels of compliance shall ensure that the minimum level meets the GSTC Destination Criteria, and the certification process for any level shall comply with the requirements stated in this Manual, as long as the level is referred to as certification.

Example: a certification scheme awards destinations in 3 levels: Bronze, Silver, and Gold. The Bronze level of this certification scheme shall comply with all the criteria of the GSTC Destination Criteria and hold a valid and currently Recognized status in the GSTC.

17. Branding & Market Access

17.1.   Licensing Agreement:

17.1.1.   A GSTC-Accredited CB shall operate in accordance with a Certification Body Licensing Agreement (CBLA) with the GSTC;

17.1.2.   The CBLA establishes the terms of licensing for the GSTC-Accredited CB to use the GSTC trademarks specific to the agreement (including the GSTC-Certified Logo for businesses and the GSTC-Accredited Logo). The agreement delineates terms and conditions of use, ownership, and application of the trademarks, duties, and usage guidelines. It outlines the duration, termination conditions, and licensing logo fees.

17.1.3.   A certification scheme subcontracting auditing and certification services with one or more GSTC-Accredited CB shall operate in accordance with a Certification Scheme Licensing Agreement (CSLA) with the GSTC.

17.1.3.1.   The CSLA establishes the terms of licensing for the Certification Scheme (CS) owner to use the GSTC trademarks specific to the agreement (including the GSTC-Certified Logo for businesses). The agreement delineates terms and conditions of use, ownership, and application of the trademarks, duties, and usage guidelines. It outlines the duration, termination conditions, and licensing logo fees. The use of the GSTC-Accredited Logo by the CS owner is not permitted.

17.1.3.2.   CS shall not state or imply in its marketing or operational material or instructions that it is a GSTC-Accredited CB. Further guidance in this regard is provided within the CSLA.

17.2.   Market Access for Certified Organizations:

17.2.1.   The GSTC shall make publicly available a list of the GSTC-Accredited CBs together with a summary of each CB authorized for publication by the CB.

17.2.2.   The GSTC may arrange publicity and promotion of the GSTC-Accredited CB and tourism businesses certified by the GSTC-Accredited CB.

17.2.3.   The GSTC-Accredited CBs shall provide a list of certified tourism businesses to the GSTC upon request.

17.2.4.   The certificate holders of GSTC-Accredited CBs and CSs (those with a GSTC CSLA in effect) may receive various market access opportunities and promotions directly by the GSTC (subject to available resources). Engagement in those programs and activities shall adhere to the terms of the CBLA and CSLA with the GSTC or any separate Trademark Licensing Agreement and Non-disclosure Agreements as required by the GSTC.

17.2.5.   The GSTC Logo Usage relating to the GSTC Tour Product Certification shall comply with the terms of the CBLA with the GSTC. The GSTC logo shall not be presented with or alongside any tour product unless those tour products are currently GSTC-Certified according to the requirements in Section 17.

PART IV: GLOSSARY OF ACCREDITATION TERMS

18.   Definitions

18.1.   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.

Accreditation	The process of approval by the GSTC of a Certification Body's competence to certify organizations to the GSTC Reference Standard.
Accreditation Body	An independent entity that operates in conformity with the standard ISO/IEC 17011 and is technically competent to accredit CBs to perform conformity assessment using the GSTC Reference Standard.
Accreditation Cycle	Begins at or after the initial Accreditation Decision date or decision after a Re-accreditation Assessment and shall not be longer than five years. Before the end of a cycle, a re-accreditation Assessment shall be conducted prior to cycle expiration. *NOTE: usually, the accreditation cycle has a duration of 5 years.* [SOURCE: adapted from ISO/IEC 17011:2017(E)]
Accommodation	Accommodation: service facilities that regularly provide overnight lodging for travelers in the form of a room or other type of unit and may provide limited or full services such as food and beverage, housekeeping, and recreational and/or fitness activities, amongst others. The accommodation categories involve a large diversity of types and forms that are recurrently evolving and vary according to the cultural and socio-economic context.

	For the purpose of certification, accommodation comprises a wide range of categories, including, but not limited to, hotels, hostels, motels, roadside inns, beach hotels, apartment hotels, tourist residences, bed and breakfast establishments, tourist residences, farmhouses, holiday dwellings, glamping sites, and similar accommodation appropriately equipped to offer at least overnight stays and/or additional services.
Attraction	A Tourist Attraction is a place of interest that is owned and/or managed by an identifiable entity for the purposes of attracting visitors, operating and delivering services and/or experiences including but not limited to recreation, leisure, natural, historical, cultural, educational or religious experiences.
Audit Conclusion	The outcome of an audit, after consideration of the audit objectives and all audit findings. [SOURCE: ISO 19011:2018]
Audit Criteria	Set of requirements used as a reference against which objective evidence is compared. - Note 1: If the audit criteria are legal (including statutory or regulatory) requirements, the words "compliance" or "non-compliance" are often used in an audit finding; and - Note 2: Requirements may include policies, procedures, work instructions, legal requirements, contractual obligations, etc. [SOURCE: ISO 19011:2018]
Audit Evidence	Records, statements of fact or other information, which are relevant to the audit criteria and verifiable. [SOURCE: ISO 19011:2018]

Audit Findings	Results of the evaluation of the collected audit evidence against audit criteria.
	- *Note 1 to entry: Audit findings indicate conformity and nonconformity;*
	- *Note 2 to entry: Audit findings can lead to the identification of risks, opportunities for improvement or recording good practices; and*
	- *Note 3 to entry: In English, if the audit criteria are selected from statutory requirements or regulatory requirements, the audit finding is termed compliance or non-compliance.*
	[SOURCE: ISO 19011:2018]
Audit Plan	Description of the activities and arrangements for an audit. [SOURCE: ISO 19011:2018]
Audit Program	Description of the arrangements for a set of one or more audits planned for a specific time frame and directed towards a specific purpose. [SOURCE: ISO 19011:2018]
Audit Scope	Extent and boundaries of an audit.
	- *Note 1: The audit scope generally includes a description of the physical and virtual locations, functions, organizational units, activities, and processes, as well as the period covered; and*
	- *Note 2: A virtual location is where an organization performs work or provides a service using an online environment allowing individuals irrespective of physical locations to execute processes.*
	[SOURCE: ISO 19011:2018]

Audit Team	One or more persons conducting an audit, supported if needed by technical experts: - *Note 1: One auditor of the audit team is appointed as the audit team leader; and* - *Note 2: The audit team can include auditors in training.* [SOURCE: ISO 19011:2018]
CB	See Certification Body.
Central Office	The office that is responsible for and centrally controls the management system. [SOURCE: IAF MD 1:2018, modified]
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.
Certification Scheme	Certification system related to specified products, to which the same specified requirements, specific rules and procedures apply. - *Note 1: The rules, procedures and management for implementing product, process and service certification are stipulated by the certification scheme; and* [SOURCE: ISO/IEC 17065:2012, 3.9, modified] - *NOTE 2: the GSTC System is a Certification system.*
Certification System	Rules, procedures and management for carrying out certification. [SOURCE: ISO/IEC 17000:2020, 2.7, modified]
Client	A tourism enterprise that purchases a certification service from a CB.

Compliance Audit	An audit conducted on a certificate holder to evaluate the compliance of a Certification Body's certification processes and certificate holder's sustainability management system against certification requirements. [SOURCE: ASI-INF-20-100-ASI Glossary-V4.0, modified]
Conflict of Interest	A situation where the capacity for objectivity of a person or body is at risk.
Conformity	Fulfillment of a requirement. [SOURCE: ISO 19011:2018]
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.
Destination	A physical space with or without administrative and/or analytical boundaries in which a visitor can spend an overnight. It is the cluster (co-location) of products and services, and of activities and experiences along the tourism value chain and a basic unit of analysis of tourism. A destination incorporates various stakeholders and can network to form larger destinations. [SOURCE: World Tourism Organization (2019), *UNWTO Tourism Definitions*, UNWTO, Madrid, DOI: https://doi.org/10.18111/9789284420858) and (https://www.gstcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/GSTC-Destination-Criteria-v2.0.pdf)

	A destination is a geographical area consisting of all the services and infrastructure necessary for the stay of a specific tourist or tourism segment. Destinations are the competitive units of incoming tourism. [SOURCE: https://www.gstcouncil.org/gstc-criteria/glossary/].
Equivalent Standard	A standard whose requirements have a direct correspondence with the requirements with the GSTC standard. The standard may have a differing presentation, or even in substance, e.g. in providing guidance on how to meet requirements. Equivalency for purposes of GSTC Recognition includes harmonized, unified, identical, unilaterally aligned, and comparable standards. [SOURCE: ISO/IEC Guide 2:2004 6.1, 6.2, 6.3, 6.8, and 6.9]
Green transport	Green transport, also known as sustainable transport, is a type of transportation with minimal negative environmental impact. Unlike traditional modes of transport that rely on fossil fuels, green transport modes use renewable energy sources such as wind, solar, hydroelectric, and biomass energy, among others.
GSTC	Global Sustainable Tourism Council.
GSTC Accreditation	Accreditation provided by the GSTC.
GSTC Assurance Panel	An independent body of the GSTC that is technically competent and impartial, that will make decisions on recognizing sustainable tourism standards and certification scheme owners and may endorse the GSTC Accreditation Secretariat recommendations to accredit CBs.
GSTC Criteria	GSTC Criteria are a common understanding of sustainable tourism and are the minimum that any tourism business should aspire to

	reach. They are organized around four main themes: effective sustainability planning; maximizing social and economic benefits for the local community; enhancing cultural heritage and reducing negative impacts to the environment. Although the criteria are initially intended for use by the accommodation and tour operation sectors, they have applicability to the entire tourism industry.
GSTC Requirements for CBs	The requirements that a CB shall meet in terms of its structure, management and operational procedures.
GSTC Recognized Standard	A sustainable tourism standard that has been evaluated by the GSTC as being equivalent to the GSTC Standard.
GSTC Standard	The minimum requirement of a tourism enterprise that can be recognized as fully complying with principles of sustainable tourism as identified by the GSTC and the GSTC Criteria.
Hotel	Term treated in a generic way to refer to accommodation.
Impartiality	The ability to make judgements and make decisions that are objective, based strictly on facts and free from other influences.
Initial Certification Audit	Audit carried out by an auditing organization independent of the client and the parties that rely on certification, for the purpose of certifying the client's sustainability management processes and sustainability performance. - *Note 1: Certification audits include initial, surveillance, re-certification audits, and can also include special audits.* - *Note 2: Certification audits are typically conducted by audit teams of those bodies providing certification of conformity to the requirements of the Reference Standard.*

Major Non-conformity	Non-conformity that affects the capability of the management system to achieve the intended results. Non-conformities could be classified as major in the following circumstances: - if there is a significant doubt that effective process control is in place, or that products or services will meet specified requirements; - a number of minor non-conformities associated with the same requirement or issue could demonstrate a systemic failure and thus constitute a major non-conformity.
Minor Non-conformity	Non-conformity that does not affect the capability of the management system to achieve the intended results.
Multi-site Organization	An organization covered by a single management system comprising an identified central office (not necessarily the headquarters of the organization) at which certain processes/activities are planned and controlled, and a number of sites (permanent, temporary or virtual) at which such processes/activities are fully or partially carried out. [SOURCE: IAF MD 1:2018]
Non-Conformity	Non-fulfillment of a requirement. [SOURCE: ISO 19011:2018]
Objective Evidence	Data supporting the existence or verity of something. - *Note 1: Objective evidence can be obtained through observation, measurement, test or by other means; and* - *Note 2: Objective evidence for the purpose of the audit generally consists of records, statements of fact, or other information which are relevant to the audit*

	criteria and verifiable. [SOURCE: ISO 19011:2018]
Performance	Measurable result. - *Note 1: Performance can relate either to quantitative or qualitative findings; and* - *Note 2: Performance can relate to the management of activities, processes, products, services, systems or organizations.* [SOURCE: ISO 19011:2018]
Process	Set of interrelated or interacting activities that use inputs to deliver an intended result [SOURCE: ISO 19011:2018]
Reference Standard	A standard used as the reference against which the audit is performed, according to the accreditation granted. *NOTE: The Reference Standard could be the GSTC Criteria or the GSTC-Recognized Standard*
Requirement	Need or expectation that is stated in the Reference Standard.
Scheme Owner	Person or organization responsible for developing and maintaining a specific certification scheme. *Note: The scheme owner can be the Certification Body itself, a governmental authority, a trade association, a group of Certification Bodies or others.* [SOURCE: ISO/IEC 17065:2012, 3.11]
Sustainable Tourism Standard	A set of rules and guidelines that define the requirements of tourism enterprises in delivering sustainable tourism. For the GSTC-Recognition status, the standard shall be equivalent to the

	GSTC Standard.
Surveillance Audit	Audit performed as a basis for maintaining the validity of the certification. Surveillance audits can be performed remotely, on-site or a combination of both: remote and on-site.
Tour Operator	Businesses/organizations that plan, operate and deliver a complete package tour to a traveller. The term Tour Operator involves a large diversity of types of packagers, transport operators and sellers of travel that can be combined amongst them and vary according to the set of products/services offering, ownership structure and/or geographical location of their operations. For the purpose of certification, Tour Operator comprise outbound Tour Operator, inbound Tour Operator and land transport suppliers and any combination amongst the 3 categories.
Tour Product	Products of traveling around from place to place that are organized and offered by Tour Operator with a broad range of services in the tourism industry, marked by a high degree of packaging product and service components of transport, places, activities, or accommodation.

19. Level of Requirement

Term	Definition
"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.

Annex A - GSTC Checklist: Certification Scheme – Certification Body Framework (Normative)

This document outlines the steps for implementing the Certification Scheme - Certification Body Framework (CS-CB Framework) for accreditation described in Clause 5.1.2.3.3. The CB and the CS shall comply with this GSTC Checklist when applying for the scope extension of accreditation to provide auditing and certification services against the GSTC-Recognized Standard owned by a CS.

A.1. Checklist and steps

A.1.1. The CS signs a service agreement with an Accredited CB:

- CS agrees to no longer manage/provide auditing and certification services.

- The agreement sets out the rules for carrying out auditing and certification services on behalf of the CS.

- The CS and CB agree on the role of CS auditors in the accredited process. If CS auditors continue to audit under the CB-CS Framework arrangement, these auditors will have to qualify as the GSTC auditor following the respective GSTC-Accreditation Manual requirements,

- The CS can sign a service agreement with one or more GSTC-Accredited CBs to perform all the auditing functions and certification decisions for the certification of clients.

A.1.2. Licensing Agreement GSTC-CS / GSTC-CB:

- Enter into a CSLA with the GSTC, which provides rules of engagement for the GSTC logo and trademark usage.

- Enter into a CBLA with the GSTC, which provides rules of engagement for the GSTC logo and trademark usage for its own clients and for clients of any and all CSs that contract with the CB to conduct certification/auditing functions on their behalf.

A.1.3. The GSTC-Accredited CB submits an application for extension of technical sub-scope to GSTC:

- The CB shall indicate and provide the evidence regarding the GSTC-Recognized Standard owned by the respective CS.

- The Standard of the CS shall be the GSTC-Recognized Standard. If the GSTC-Recognized status is expired, the CS shall re-apply or renew the GSTC-Recognized status of the standard in accordance with the GSTC-Recognized Manual v5.0.

- Tour Product is a part of the technical scope of the TO and does not require additional technical scope and separate application process.

A.1.4. GSTC reviews the application:

- To determine the duration and type of assessment needed.

- For technical scope extensions, a desk review and witness assessment shall always be required.

A.1.5. GSTC carries out a desk review:

- Major nonconformities resulting from the desk review shall be satisfactorily closed before the witness assessment can be scheduled.

A.1.6. GSTC carries out the witness assessment (of a CB audit of the GSTC-Recognized Standard:

- Major nonconformities resulting from the witness assessment shall be satisfactorily closed.

A.1.7. Upon a positive GSTC decision to extend the scope of accreditation, the CB will now be entitled to carry out audit and certification services on behalf of the CS.

A.1.8. CB carries out the certification audit and makes the certification decision against the GSTC-Recognized Standard owned by the CS.

A.2. Associated documentation

A.2.1. The GSTC Accreditation Manual for Certification of Hotel/Accommodation & Tour Operator v4.0

Annex B - Outline of the content of GSTC's Training for Auditors (Normative)

Table B.1. The GSTC Training for Auditors modules and evaluation

Course of the Training for Auditors		Destination
Module A	Understanding of sustainable tourism	Online or in-person training
	Overview of the the GSTC	Online or in-person training
Module B	Industry Criteria and indicators for Hotel	In-person training
Module C	Industry Criteria and indicators for Tour Operator	In-person training
Module D	Destinations Criteria and Indicators	In-person training
Module E	Field exercise	In-person training
Evaluation	Written exam on the contents of Criteria and Indicators	85%+ achievement
	Field performance test on the ability to apply Criteria and Indicators to the field and the audit skills	75%+ achievement

Note: All training sessions are arranged and managed by the GSTC.

Table B.2. Example of training time required for each Module

Course of the Training for Auditors		Destination
Module A (online or offline)	Understanding of sustainable tourism[1]	2 hours
	Overview of the GSTC (mission & programs)	1 hour
Module B (offline)	Industry Criteria and Indicators for Hotel[2]	1 hour
Module C (offline)	Industry Criteria and Indicators for Tour Operator[3]	1 hour
Module D (offline)	Destinations Criteria and Indicators[4]	6 hours
Module E (offline)	Field exercise and Performance test[5]	
Evaluation[6] (offline)		
Total training time required		11 hours

[1] The length of the lecture may be subject to change according to the understanding/experience level of the trainee. Questions on the GSTC Auditor Training should be directed directly to the GSTC.

[2, 3, 4] are based on the condition of no group discussion(s) and guest speech(es).

[5] The length of the field exercise is determined by each auditor trainee. The performance test evaluates the submitted mock audit report.

[6] Online exam time is not mentioned here as it is taken by an individual trainee.

Note 1: The total training time required is subject to change by the GSTC.

Note 2: The GSTC may provide online training on Module A-D in exceptional circumstances such as Covid-19 or other high-risk situations.