Global Sustainable Tourism Council

ACCREDITATION MANUAL

For Certification of Hotels/Accommodations & Tour Operators

v2.5

27 April 2021

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The Global Sustainable Tourism Council

www.gstcouncil.org

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

Document Control

This is version 2.5 of the GSTC Accreditation Manual and replaces any and all previous versions.

Date of approval

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Version Notes

This version 2.5 of the GSTC Accreditation Manual utilizes the same section numbers as v2.4 through section 11. Numbering from section 12 onward is newly revised. This version 2.5 of the GSTC Accreditation Manual includes but not limited to the following revisions. Clarification has been made on the scope, expiration and renewal of accreditation. Additions and clarification of the requirements for implementing a certification process. Changes in auditor competences requirements and certification decision makers. Inclusion of news sections: Multi-site organization and Requirements for Tour Operators.

Updates to this and related Manuals will be provided by GSTC occasionally and will be distributed to currently Accredited Certification Bodies plus those with open applications for accreditation.

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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 for their sustainability management and performance. Relevant certification schemes and the bodies that run them vary from sizeable international operations or national schemes, some with support from government agencies to small schemes covering local areas or particular types of a tourism product.

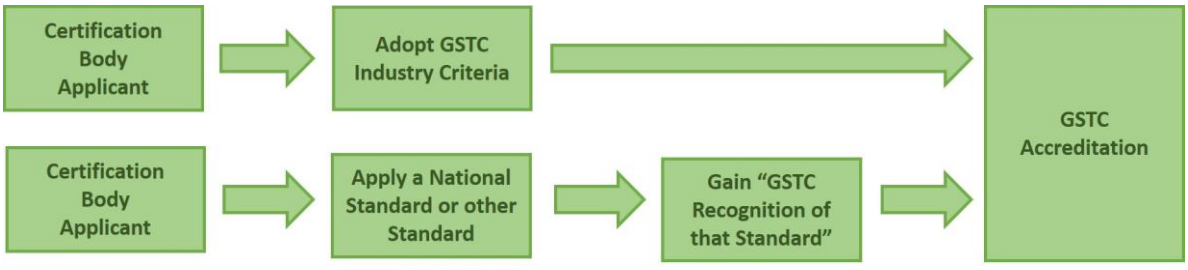
The GSTC intends to build a long-term relationship with all Certification Bodies and certification schemes. An aim of the GSTC is to continually increase the percentage of schemes that are accredited to certify to the GSTC Criteria.

Certification Bodies (CBs) may become accredited to certify either with the GSTC Criteria or utilize a standard they own IF that standard gains and maintains the "GSTC Recognized" status for its compliance to the GSTC Criteria.

- **GSTC Recognized:** GSTC recognizes the equivalence of a Certification Body's standard against the GSTC Criteria (Hotels/Accommodations, Tour Operators or Destinations). See the GSTC Recognized Manual.
- **GSTC Accredited:** Accreditation of a Certification Body that either uses a GSTC Recognized Standard OR certifies directly against GSTC Criteria. The third-party accreditation is managed by a GSTC Endorsed Accreditation Body.

Not all certification schemes cover all aspects of sustainability: economic, social, cultural and environmental. For example, a number are solely covering environmental matters and may grant the use of an eco-label. These schemes would only be eligible to become 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 a 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.



Additionally, "certification schemes" that commit to subcontracting the certification/audit process to GSTC Accredited Certification Bodies shall enter into licensing agreements with GSTC to formally engage in GSTC market access activities.

GSTC Marks – Summary and Benefits

Background

The Need for Sustainability of Tourism

Travel and tourism account for around 10% of the world's economic activity. It is a rapidly growing sector, with international tourist arrivals forecast to 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 be both positive and negative, providing both opportunities and responsibilities.

Negative impacts and concerns associated with travel and tourism include:

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

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

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

Sustainable tourism requires an approach to tourism development and management that 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 providers of tourism services are independent businesses and the majority are small and micro-enterprises. Tourism enterprises of all sizes are responding in different ways and to different degrees to the need for sustainable tourism.

The Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC)

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

The GSTC is a Membership Council governed by a Board of Directors, 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 fulfills 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.

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 certification schemes to move beyond a more mono-dimensional, often environmental focus.

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

- Sustainability objectives should be defined, and actions coordinated by an effective management system.

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

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

- Tourism should bring the greatest possible social and economic benefits to local communities and any negative impacts on them should be minimized.
- Local cultural heritage must be respected, and opportunities should be taken to strengthen its integrity and richness.
- Impacts on the global and local environment, through pollution and depletion of natural resources, should be minimised and support should be given to the conservation of local landscapes and biodiversity.

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

GSTC Criteria

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

- GSTC-Industry: The Global Sustainable Tourism Industry Criteria (version 3, December 2016). At this stage, GSTC-Industry is available in two versions, GSTC-Hotel and GSTC-Tour Operator, each with their own set of performance indicators;
- GSTC-Destinations: The Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria for Destinations (version 2, December 2019)

The development of GSTC-Industry Criteria allows the GSTC to develop sub-sector specific Indicators for this broader set of criteria, for example, MICE (meeting, incentive, convention and exhibition), cruise, attractions.

GSTC Assurance Panel

The GSTC Assurance Panel is established by the GSTC, bylaws:

The GSTC Assurance Panel ("The Panel") performs these functions:

1. Declare standards to be "GSTC Recognized", according to the terms of the GSTC Recognition of Standards Manual as approved by the CEO and the Board.
2. Validate and provide surveillance of GSTC's contracted partner Accreditation Body declarations of "GSTC Accredited Certification Bodies".
3. Function as an Accreditation Body for tourism subsectors where GSTC does not otherwise have an external partner Accreditation Body in place.

The Panel shall operate independently of the GSTC Board and executive staff regarding specific applications.

The Panel shall have no involvement with the day-to-day administrative operations of GSTC and none of the responsibilities, legal obligations or liabilities associated with being a Director.

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, CBs and Accreditation Bodies.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Certification Bodies that are accredited or are interested in accreditation, Accreditation Bodies, and other stakeholders interested in GSTC Accreditation, 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.

PART II: ADMINISTRATION OF ACCREDITATION

1. Manual Structure

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

This Manual is arranged in four parts:

- Part I introduces an overview of the GSTC Criteria and Accreditation.
- Part II sets out the manual structure, normative reference and requirements for GSTC Endorsed Accreditation Bodies in their accreditation of Certification Bodies.
- Part III set out the requirements for Certification Bodies to become accredited and the market access benefits.
- Part IV covers the glossary of terms 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 5: 2015 Determination of audit time of quality and environmental management systems
- IAF MD 4:2018 IAF Mandatory Document for the Use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) for Auditing/Assessment Purposes
- ISEAL Code of Good Practice Assuring Compliance with Social and Environmental Standards
- GSTC Checklist: Certification Scheme - Certification Body Framework

NOTE: See also Part IV for definitions.

3. GSTC Requirements for GSTC Endorsed Accreditation Bodies

3.1. The GSTC and the GSTC Endorsed Accreditation Body shall operate with a service agreement that includes any specific requirements from GSTC beyond the standard operating procedures of the Accreditation Body.

3.2. Before making an accreditation decision, the GSTC Endorsed Accreditation Body shall provide the GSTC Assurance Panel with the accreditation evaluation report containing the assessment team's recommendation as to whether or not accreditation should be granted. The GSTC Assurance Panel shall indicate to the GSTC Endorsed Accreditation Body whether or not it agrees with the recommendation made.

3.3. The GSTC Endorsed Accreditation Body shall administer the accreditation for Hotels/Accommodations and for Tour Operators.

3.4. The GSTC Endorsed Accreditation Body shall administer the complaints, appeals and disputes related to the accreditation or the certification process.

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

PART III: ACCREDITATION - REQUIREMENTS FOR CERTIFICATION BODIES

The section sets out requirements for CBs certifying that clients conform to a GSTC Recognized Standard and/or GSTC Criteria. In addition to GSTC specific requirements for certification of sustainable tourism, this section uses ISO 17065:2012 as a basis with additional or specific 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 a GSTC Endorsed Accreditation Body which conforms to Part II.

4.1.2. Enter into a licence 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 minimum requirements that are set out in Part III of the GSTC Accreditation Manual.

4.2.1. All CBs will be subject to an assessment of their conformity to these requirements by a GSTC Endorsed Accreditation Body.

5. Scope of Accreditation

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

5.1.1. The **Tourism activity** to which certification is granted:

5.1.1.1. Hotels/Accommodations

5.1.1.2. Tour Operators

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. GSTC Recognized Standard (alternative B). In this case, all the requirements in the standard that allow for its recognition by 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 Endorsed Accreditation Body, according to its rules.

5.1.2.3.3. 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 a 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 a GSTC Recognized Standard shall be aligned with the geographic coverage of the GSTC Recognized Standard.

5.2. In its communication to the public and to tourism organizations, the CB shall make clear what is its accreditation scope.

5.3. Reliance on Legislation

5.3.1. Reliance on Legislation is applicable to a CB that certify against the GSTC Criteria and/or 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) must be identified;

5.3.2.3. the laws are enforced; and

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;

5.3.3.2. Text from the CB's 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 CB's area of operation.

6. Languages

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

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

6.2. In the event, an enterprise being certified has a business language for which there is a Reference Standard, but a sizable proportion of the staff of the tourism organization being audited speak 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 enterprise being audited). The sizable proportion of the staff shall be defined by the CB.

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

6.4. When the audit team does not speak the language of the client, 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 enterprise being audited).

6.5. Where a CB is working in a language other than English, it will provide translated documents in English as required for initial accreditation and ongoing requirements by the GSTC Endorsed Accreditation Body.

6.6. Any required reporting and correspondence with 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 or the GSTC Endorsed Accreditation Body 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 initial GSTC Accredited status.

Amendment of Accreditation Requirements

7.2. GSTC shall give due notice, at least 90 days, of any changes to its requirements for accreditation. 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 Endorsed Accreditation Body shall verify that each GSTC Accredited CB conforms to the changed requirements within the transition time determined by GSTC.

Amendment of a GSTC Criteria

7.4. GSTC shall inform all applicants and GSTC Accredited CBs of any changes in the requirements of the GSTC Industry Criteria for Hotels/Accommodations and Tour Operators.

7.4.1. 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 Endorsed Accreditation Body, 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 Endorsed Accreditation Body, the GSTC Accredited CBs and other relevant interested parties.

Amendment of a GSTC Recognized Standard

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. 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 GSTC Endorsed Accreditation Body, the standard owner, the GSTC Accredited CBs and other relevant interested parties.

7.6. Should a standard no longer be GSTC Recognized the certification program has a twelve-month

period in which to re-apply or renew the GSTC Recognized status of a standard following the GSTC Recognized Manual.

Ongoing Suitability of a Certification Program

7.7. If at any time, should the GSTC Endorsed Accreditation Body have reason to be concerned about the ongoing conformity of an already GSTC Accredited CB against the GSTC accredited 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, cancelation, extension, withdrawal or scope reduction of accreditation shall be administered by the GSTC Endorsed Accreditation Body, according to its rules.

7.9. In the event of non-compliance with the obligations assumed by the applicant or 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 established by the GSTC Endorsed Accreditation Body.

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 and the GSTC Endorsed Accreditation Body. 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. A GSTC Accredited CB shall apply for an extension of its scope to provide auditing and certification services to a 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 body granting the accreditation may further limit the accreditation scope having regard to the geographical areas of operation, or types of tourism activity to be certified.

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 Accreditation Manual.

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

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. 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;

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. 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. 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. 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 CB's 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. 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 CB's behalf, shall keep confidential all information obtained or created during the performance of the CB's activities except as required by law.

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

8.5.6. GSTC 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;

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

ISO 17065:2012 6.0 Resource requirements

ISO 17065:2012 7.0 Process Requirements

ISO 17065:2012 7.1 General

8.5.7. GSTC Requirements to ISO 17065:2012 Clause 7.1.2

8.5.7.1. The CB shall define the scope of the certification, specifying the services and locations that have been assessed against the Reference Standard.

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

8.5.7.3. When a certification scheme is owned by a third party, the CB shall have legal authorization to use the Reference Standard, marks and logos and any other intellectual property rights as well as other rules of the scheme.

8.5.7.4. 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, conformity with at least one of the criteria matching each of the GSTC Criteria shall be mandatory in order to demonstrate that all certified businesses and activities comply with all the GSTC Criteria.

ISO 17065:2012 7.2 Application

8.5.8. GSTC Requirements to ISO 17065:2012 Clause 7.2

8.5.8.1. 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:

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

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

8.5.8.1.3. The general information of the client, including its name and the address(es) of its physical location(s), description of its process and operations and other information, and any relevant legal obligations;

8.5.8.1.4. 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 in a larger corporation, if any;

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

8.5.8.1.6. All other information needed in accordance with the relevant certification scheme, such as information for initial evaluation and surveillance activities, e.g. the locations where the tourism services are provided and contact personnel at these locations.

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.

ISO 17065:2012 7.3 Application review

8.5.9. GSTC Requirements to ISO 17065:2012 Clause 7.3.1

8.5.9.1. CB shall use the following tourism activities to describe the scope of the audit of the client:

8.5.9.1.1. Hotels/Accommodations

8.5.9.1.2. Tour Operators

ISO 17065:2012 7.4 Evaluation

8.5.10. GSTC Requirements to ISO 17065:2012 Clause 7.4.1

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

8.5.10.2. 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.

8.5.10.3. 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.

8.5.10.4. 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.

8.5.10.5. The determination of the audit plan and any subsequent adjustments shall consider the size of the client organization, the scope and complexity of its sustainability management processes and products as well as demonstrated level of effectiveness and the results of any previous audits.

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

8.5.11. GSTC Requirements to ISO 17065:2012 Clause 7.4.2

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

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

8.5.12. GSTC Requirements to ISO 17065:2012 Clause 7.4.3

8.5.12.1. At each 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 conclusion (conform, not conform or not assessed), based on evidence obtained from the audit process.

NOTE: The CB shall use the audit checklist/evaluation tool template provided by GSTC once this template is published.

8.5.12.2. The evaluation tool shall include guidance for conducting the audit and compliance and indications for the types of evidence required.

8.5.12.3. Each CB before performing audits must define the level of risk of the client through carrying out a risk assessment. Risk assessments are applicable to all types of clients (e.g., single certificate, multi-site, group certification and Tour Operators) and the two scopes of certifications (Hotels/Accommodations and Tour Operators). 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 8.5.12.5.

8.5.12.4. CBs shall develop documented procedures for determining the audit time in conformity with the two primary risk categories provided in 8.5.12.5.

8.5.12.5. CBs shall rely on the following two primary risk categories when conducting the risk assessment.

8.5.12.5.1. If any of the two 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 a client's country of operation score on Transparency International's latest corruption perception index is below 50 points.

8.5.12.5.2. If the two 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 a client's country of operation score on Transparency International's latest corruption perception index is above 50 points.

8.5.12.6. CBs shall develop documented procedures for determining the audit time in conformity with the audit frequency and duration upon the scope of certification described in 8.5.12.7 to 8.5.12.9.

8.5.12.7. When the scope of certification is Hotels/Accommodations

8.5.12.7.1. Surveillance audit shall occur annually.

8.5.12.7.2. On-site audits shall occur minimally at the time of initial certification and recertification and at least once each two years. High risk situations shall be audited on-site more frequently.

8.5.12.7.3. Audits shall normally be 1-day duration for low-risk properties and more than 1 day for higher risk situations.

8.5.12.7.4. When the CB determines based on the risk analysis that less or more than 1 full day is required for the on-site audit, that determination must be justified.

8.5.12.8. Exceptions are allowed for extremely low risk cases.

8.5.12.8.1. Extremely low risk Hotels/Accommodations shall comply with the following:

a. Accommodations with fewer than 20 guest rooms and less than 15 staff
b. With no meeting/wedding/function space and activities,
c. Local ownership - not belonging to a Multi-site organization,
d. Not located in sensitive areas,

e. with access to the internet and/or broadband to use information and communication technology for participating in remote audits when appropriate.

8.5.12.8.2. For extremely low-risk Hotels/Accommodations the following exceptions shall apply:

a. On-site audits shall occur minimally at the time of initial certification and recertification and at least once each three years.
b. Audit duration shall be at minimum ½-day (4 hours)
c. Remote audits shall occur in the case of surveillance audits.

8.5.12.9. When the scope of certification is Tour Operators

8.5.12.9.1. Surveillance audit shall occur annually.

8.5.12.9.2. On-site audits shall occur minimally at the time of initial certification and recertification and at least once each two years. High risk situations shall be audited on-site more frequently.

8.5.12.9.3. Audits shall normally be 2-day duration and at minimum ½-day (4 hours), but more than 2 days for higher risk situations.

8.5.12.9.4. When the CB determines based on the risk analysis that less or more than 2 full days is required for the on-site audit, that determination must be justified.

8.5.12.10. The CB shall ensure the client's location and/or operation in a Sensitive Area is considered in defining the level of risk.

8.5.12.10.1. Sensitive areas include but are not limited to world heritage listed areas, areas set aside for environmental and/or cultural protection, marine parks, beaches, rivers, lagoons, wetlands/swamps, alpine/arctic areas, tropical islands/coral reef, national/state parks, areas set aside for indigenous people or specific national and state or regional environmental, social and cultural legislation requirements, or any other factor that is considered high risk by the CB as per the location and the activity of the client.

8.5.12.10.2. If a client is located in a sensitive area, this client will be categorized as "high" risk.

8.5.12.10.3. If a client is not located in a sensitive area, this client will be categorized as "low" risk.

8.5.12.11. The CB should use the following lists and categories to determine a sensitive area:

8.5.12.11.1. UNESCO World Heritage List

8.5.12.11.2. IUCN Protected Areas Categories System

8.5.12.11.3. List of Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar List)

8.5.12.12. When the lists in 8.5.12.11 are not available, the CB should rely on national legislation where the client operates to determine the sensitive area.

8.5.12.13. All levels of risk are subject to ratification by the CB. The two primary risk categories described in clause 8.5.12.5 may be used to define the level of risk of the client.

8.5.12.14. Travel time to and from audited sites shall not be included in determining the audit time.

8.5.12.15. Remote audits shall only be applied for surveillance audits. If the CB uses to some extent remote auditing techniques, IAF MD 4:2018 shall be used.

8.5.12.16. If the CB operates within specific jurisdictions, countries or areas, specific guidance on local application of the criteria may be included within the evaluation tool.

8.5.13. GSTC Requirements to ISO 17065:2012 Clause 7.4.4

8.5.13.1. 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.

8.5.13.2. The auditor may undertake interviews with stakeholders within or external to the client in order 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.

8.5.13.3. 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.

8.5.14. GSTC Requirements to ISO 17065:2012 Clause 7.4.6

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

8.5.14.2. When major non-conformities have arisen, the CB shall provide a 1-year term to be corrected.

8.5.14.3. When minor non-conformities, the CB shall provide 90 days term to be corrected.

ISO 17065:2012 7.5. Review

8.5.15. GSTC Requirements to ISO 17065:2012 Clause 7.5

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

ISO 17065:2012 7.6. Certification decision

8.5.16. GSTC Requirements to ISO 17065:2012 Clause 7.6

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

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

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

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

ISO 17065:2012 7.7. Certification documentation

8.5.17. GSTC Requirements to ISO 17065:2012 Clause 7.7.1

8.5.17.1. Additionally, to items in the list of 7.7.1, the following:

8.5.17.1.1. The name and geographical location of each certified client (or the geographical location of the headquarters and any sites within the scope of a multi-site organization. See section 15);

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

8.5.17.1.3. The scope of certification with respect to the type of activities, products and services as applicable at each site without being misleading or ambiguous;

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

8.5.17.1.5. Any other information required by the Reference Standard.

8.5.17.2. The CB shall have rules for certified clients that jointly advertise other tourism services that have not been certified by the Reference Standard. The advertisement of those other tourism services shall not imply that the product, process or service is certified by the Reference Standard.

ISO 17065:2012 7.8. Directory of certified products

8.5.18. GSTC Requirements to ISO 17065:2012 Clause 7.8

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

8.5.18.1.1. Full name and address of the client;

8.5.18.1.2. Scope of certification; including the Reference Standard if applicable.

8.5.18.1.3. Validity and duration of the certificate.

ISO 17065:2012 7.9. Surveillance

8.5.19. GSTC Requirements to ISO 17065:2012 Clause 7.9

8.5.19.1. 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.

8.5.19.2. Surveillance audits shall follow the requirements set out in clause 8.5.12

8.5.19.3. Surveillance audits shall be conducted once every year.

8.5.19.4. Surveillance audits shall be conducted on-site at least once each two years.

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

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

8.5.19.5.1. For remote audits, the CB shall only cover section A, D1 and D3 in the GSTC Industry Criteria.

8.5.19.5.2. For on-site audits, the CB shall ensure that social, cultural and environmental sensitive Criteria in section B, C and D3 of the GSTC Industry Criteria are covered.

8.5.19.6. For extremely low-risk Hotels/Accommodations, surveillance audits can be performed remotely. The CB shall cover all the GSTC Criteria and provide clear justification of the chosen methods for remote audit.

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

8.5.19.8. 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.

8.5.19.9. Surveillance audits can use, to some extent, remote auditing techniques. In this case, IAF MD 4:2018 shall be used.

8.5.19.10. The CB may undertake random unannounced monitoring visits.

8.5.19.11. 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

9. Personnel Competence Criteria

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

9.2. GSTC Requirements to ISO 17065:2012 Clause 6.1

9.2.1. All personnel involved in 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 discipline and sector-specific knowledge and skills described in this section.

9.2.3. Specific requirements for GSTC auditors, reviewers and decision makers are set out in section 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 principles of auditing stated in ISO 19011. Auditors shall exhibit professional behavior during the performance of audit activities, including being:

10.2.1. ethical, i.e. fair, truthful, sincere, honest, and discreet;
10.2.2. open-minded, i.e. willing to consider alternative ideas or points of view;
10.2.3. diplomatic, i.e. tactful in dealing with people;
10.2.4. observant, i.e. actively aware of physical surroundings and activities;
10.2.5. perceptive, i.e. aware of and able to understand situations;
10.2.6. versatile, i.e. adjusts readily to different situations;
10.2.7. tenacious, i.e. persistent and focused on achieving objectives;
10.2.8. decisive, i.e. reach timely conclusions based on logical reasoning and analysis;
10.2.9. self-reliant, i.e. acts and functions independently while interacting effectively with others.
10.2.10. firm, i.e. able to act with fortitude; acts responsibly and ethically, even though these actions may not always be popular and may sometimes result in disagreement or confrontation;
10.2.11. open to improvement, i.e. willing to learn from situations;
10.2.12. culturally sensitive, i.e. observes and respectful to the culture of the auditee;
10.2.13. collaborative, i.e. interacts effectively with others, including members of the 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 Certification Body's process. Auditors shall have knowledge of a Certification Body's process sufficient to perform in accordance with the Certification Body'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; and
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 which the client operates.

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;

10.5.2. Experience involving the exercise of judgement, 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 Hotels and Tour Operators.

10.7. Work and Audit experience

10.7.1. Experience requirements to audit Hotels/Accommodations/Tour Operators

10.7.1.1. Audit experience: at least 5 audits in any sector. Audits should be completed within the previous 3 consecutive years.

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 a 4-5 days training on audit techniques and practices. GSTC accepts one of the formal training such as ISO 9001 quality management system standards, or ISO 14001 environmental management systems or other ISO standards or other relevant standards, provided by internationally and nationally recognized training organizations to fulfill this requirement; or

10.8.2. Training on auditing by organizations relevant to tourism standards. The auditor shall have successfully completed a 3-days training with 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 business, regulatory agencies, industry groups, local community members and any indigenous stakeholder;

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

10.9. GSTC Training for Auditors. The auditor shall successfully complete GSTC's Training for Auditors requirements. *This must be "GSTC Auditor Training" distinct from other GSTC sustainable tourism training programs for other tourism stakeholders.*

10.9.1. All auditors shall attend Module A, Module B, and Module E. Completion of these are sufficient for auditing Hotels.

10.9.2. Auditors of Tour Operators shall satisfy 10.8.3.1 plus Module C.

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

10.9.3.1. Having over 3 years of work experience in tourism certification; and

10.9.3.2. Having at least 10 audits of Hotels/Accommodations/Tour Operators against a GSTC Recognized Standard or the GSTC Criteria completed within the previous 3 consecutive years.

NOTE: The outline of the content of GSTC's Training for Auditors course is presented in Annex B. Questions on GSTC's Training for Auditors should be directed to the GSTC.

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

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

10.9.4.2. Field evaluation. Passing mark for 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 must observe at least 5 field audits as a trainee and be evaluated internally by qualified staff within the CB.

10.9.4.3. The auditors satisfying 10.9.3 shall take the online exam but shall be exempted from the field evaluation. The passing mark for the online evaluation shall be 85%+.

10.9.4.3.1. 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 must be repeated prior to additional testing.

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

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

Maintenance and improvement of competence

10.12. GSTC qualified auditors and audit team leaders 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. Following up GSTC Training for Auditors. Auditors shall take follow-up GSTC Training for Auditors organized by the GSTC when there is any change of the GSTC Criteria.

10.15. Records of auditors' competence. Records shall be maintained up to date at all times to demonstrate auditors' competence. The record of auditors newly qualified for sustainable tourism auditing shall be submitted to the GSTC Endorsed Accreditation Body for reviewing and managing the GSTC's list of qualified auditors.

10.16. Verification mechanisms

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

10.16.2. Revised GSTC Criteria Examination. Auditors shall pass an appropriate examination within six months of issue of revised GSTC Criteria or certification requirements. The type of examination (e.g., online, field performance, or both) shall be managed and communicated by GSTC.

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. GSTC Criteria and Indicators and GSTC Recognized Standard used as Reference Standard: 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 CB's processes sufficient to determine if expectations of the CB have been fulfilled based on the information submitted for review.

11.1.4. Tourism organization business sector: knowledge of the terminology, practices and processes common to a client's business sector 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 GSTC Criteria and if applicable the GSTC Recognized Standard.

11.1.6.1. Should comfortably read and speak the language used by the majority of personnel in the tourism business and in which the reports are written.

11.1.6.2. This section only applies to audits and certification not undertaken in English. See section 6 of the GSTC Accreditation Manual regarding languages for audits and auditors.

11.1.7. Knowledge of group and multi-site certification (if applicable): understanding and applying requirements and guidance for group and multi-site certification.

12. Ineligibility for certification

12.1. An organization is ineligible for certification if:

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

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

12.2. The CB shall require the client (both during the periods of application and actively certified) to declare any association with entities that have been successfully prosecuted for forced labour and/or environmental violation.

12.3. If an entity belonging to, or currently contracted by, a client has been successfully prosecuted for violations of laws on forced labour and/or environment in the last 2 years, this organization applying for certification shall not be allowed to continue with the GSTC certification process.

12.4. A CB may transfer a GSTC Certification to another GSTC Accredited CB upon request from a client. Where a transfer has been requested, the CB accepting the transfer shall:

12.4.1. Record the reason(s) for the transfer and its legitimacy;

12.4.2. Verify and close any open minor NCs;

12.4.3. Determine whether an on-site or off-site audit is required to complete the transfer;

12.4.4. Inform the GSTC within five days from the client's request to transfer.

12.5. The certification shall not be transferred when the client has any outstanding major non-conformities or is suspended, or the client is subject to an ongoing complaint that is under process by the current CB.

13. Certification program with multilevel award system

13.1. Certification schemes that allow more than one level of compliance shall ensure that the minimum level meets the GSTC Criteria. The certification process for any level shall comply with the requirements of this Manual.

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

14. Multi-site Organisation's Certification

Introduction

14.1. CBs should note that section 14 uses IAF MD 1:2018 as a basis with additional or specific GSTC requirements.

14.2. As in the general market, there are large enterprises in the tourism sector s that operate and deliver tourism services at several different sites. When this happens in such a way that the tourism activities and their management are carried out in a similar manner at different sites, all under a single management system, the multi-site certification can apply.

14.3. A multi-site organization is an organization with a central office in which certain activities are performed or managed within a network of sites, and at which such activities are fully or partially carried out. All sites have a direct legal or contractual link with the central office of the organization and are subject to a common sustainability management system. A multi-site organization is defined as an organization having:

14.3.1. An identified central office at which certain activities are planned, controlled, or managed, and

14.3.2. A network of local offices or branches (sites) at which such activities are fully or partially carried out.

14.4. Such an organization need not be a unique legal entity, but all sites must have a legal or contractual link with the central office of the organization and be subject to a common quality system which is laid down, established and subject to continuous surveillance by the central office. This means that the central office has the rights to implement corrections or corrective actions when needed at any site. This shall be laid down in the contract between the central office and the sites.

Examples of possible multi-site organizations are:

- Organizations operating with franchises with common SMS, (for example, hotel management groups);

- Tourism service companies with multiple sites offering a similar service;
- Tourism companies with multiple branches.

Eligibility of a multi-site organization for certification

14.5. The requirements of clause 5 of IAF MD 1:2018 shall apply.

14.6. All the relevant sites (including the central office) shall be under the multi-site organization's internal audit program and all shall have been assessed in line with that program before the organization applies to the certification.

14.7. The tourism services provided by the multi-site organization shall be managed by the same organization.

14.8. The multi-site organization shall demonstrate that its central office has established a sustainability management system in line with the Reference Standard under assessment and that the whole organization meets the requirements of the standard. This shall include consideration of relevant regulations.

14.9. Factors affecting the eligibility of a "multi-site organization" to be eligible for sampling:

14.9.1. The multi-site certification process shall not be applied where site sampling is not appropriate to gain sufficient confidence in the effectiveness of the management system under assessment. Such considerations shall include:

14.9.1.1. The scope of the sustainability management system and if applicable sub-scopes for each site.

14.9.1.2. size of sites eligible for multi-site assessment: the larger the size of individual sites, the greater the inherent tendency for system implementation to vary from site to site; consequently, the greater the need to have a higher sampling frequency. Similarly, extreme differences in the size or complexity of individual sites within the population increase the tendency for variations in the way in which the system is implemented. If significant variation exists in operational equipment or site size, such that it would be reasonable to expect some variations in consistency of operations, visits undertaken must ensure sufficient sampling of each sub-category of site type.

Specific requirements applicable to multi-site organization's certification

14.10. Information required:

14.10.1. To properly evaluate if the organization complies with the requirements of a multi-site organization, besides the information usually required for the application, it shall also include the evaluation of:

14.10.1.1. Results of internal site audits and management reviews or previous certification audits;
14.10.1.2. Records of complaints and other relevant aspects of corrective and preventive action;
14.10.1.3. Significant variations in the size of the sites/services;
14.10.1.4. Variations in shift patterns and work procedures;
14.10.1.5. Complexity of the management system and processes conducted at the sites;
14.10.1.6. Modifications since the last certification audit;
14.10.1.7. Maturity of the management system and knowledge of the organization;
14.10.1.8. Environmental and social issues and extent of aspects and associated impacts for sustainability management systems;
14.10.1.9. Differences in culture, language and regulatory requirements; geographical dispersion; and
14.10.1.10. Whether the sites are permanent, temporary or virtual.

14.10.2. The CB shall have procedures to conduct the certification of a multi-site organization. These procedures shall be made available to the clients.

14.11. Sampling

14.11.1. The CB shall have a written procedure to establish and manage the site sampling process for the audit of a client's sustainability management system covering the same activity in various locations. The rationale for the sampling plan shall be documented for each client.
14.11.2. The sampling frequency shall be at least once every year.
14.11.3. The CB shall follow mandatory requirements set out in IAF MD1:2018 for determining the sampling.

14.12. Management of non-conformities

14.12.1. The requirements in clause 7.7 of IAF MD 1:2018 shall be met.

14.12.2. The CB shall monitor the multi-site organization’s review and corrective action process and may need to increase the sampling frequency until it is clear that control is re-established.

14.12.3. When carrying out the audit process, if any site has a major non-conformity, the CB shall not:

14.12.3.1. Issue a certificate to any of the network until satisfactory corrective action is completed (for initial and re-certification only);
14.12.3.2. Exclude a particular site because of a Major non-conformity at that site (in the case of surveillance).

14.13. Certificates

14.13.1. The CB shall issue a single certificate identifying the name and address of the central office of the multi-site organization and with a list of the sites to which the certificate relates. If the certification scope of any site(s) is only part of the general scope, this will be clearly shown in the schedule.

14.13.2. The list of sites shall be kept updated. The CB shall require the multi-site organization to inform any changes in the sites, including the closure of any of the sites.

14.13.3. Additional sites can be added to an existing certificate as part of surveillance or recertification audits. When adding a new group of sites to join an already certified multi-site organization, the new sites shall be considered as an independent set for the determination of the sample size. After adding the new group to the certificate, the CB shall add the new sites to the previous total to work out the sample size for future surveillance or certificate renewal audits.

14.13.4. The certificate shall be suspended in its entirety if the central office or any of the site(s) does not / do not fulfill the necessary criteria for maintaining the certificate.

15. Group Certification

Introduction

15.1. Several individual tourism enterprises may form a group to implement a Reference Standard and seek certification together. The purpose is to share the cost of implementation and certification. Group certification is a well-established good practice within sustainability standards and is particularly practiced by small and medium businesses.

15.2. Group certification is a practice of organizing individual enterprises into structured groups to implement a Reference Standard in a common manner and under a common leadership and commitment and achieve effective sustainable performance according to the Reference Standard. Group certification must not be confused with multi-site certification which can be applied to a single enterprise.

Requirements applicable to Group Certification

15.3. When a certification scheme accepts the practice of group certification, the following shall be required:

15.3.1. Group members shall be individual organizations that offer similar tourism services;
15.3.2. Group members shall operate in the same country and with the same language;

15.3.3. The group shall have a mechanism to manage the implementation and maintenance of the same Reference Standard;
15.3.4. The group shall establish and maintain a sustainability management system;
15.3.5. The sustainability management system shall have a mechanism to ensure and assess systematically the conformity and performance of each individual enterprise of the group, including internal audits;
15.3.6. A group manager shall be appointed who shall be responsible for the operation of the sustainability management system. The group manager may be a cooperative of group members, an association, a consultant or an external auditing body;
15.3.7. All the members of the group are formally committed to comply with the rules and management of the group and the requirements of the Reference Standard and the certification obligations;
15.3.8. Group members are legally established entities, with their own name or brand.

15.4. The CB shall ensure that the GSTC's requirements for groups are followed.
15.5. Annex C presents the requirements applicable to the operation of a group certification.

Communication between the CB and the group

15.6. The CB shall clearly communicate the certification requirements for group certification, including these requirements and any additional scheme specific requirements (regardless if these are set by the CB or the standard owner) to the group manager.
15.7. There shall be a contract between the group and the CB, including a commitment by the group manager to meet the Reference Standard and certification requirements for group certification.
15.8. The group manager shall report annually to the CB, including on relevant changes in the group's production and management practices, and provide comments and actions regarding any shortcomings in the system.

NOTE: The annual report can be a narrative or in the form of a template provided by the scheme or CB.

Evaluation of the sustainability management system (SMS)

15.9. The CB shall audit the group's SMS in order to evaluate its functioning and effectiveness and to ascertain whether the SMS results in conformity with the Reference Standard and certification requirements for group certification.

15.10. The CB shall audit the SMS to the same Reference Standard at least once every year.

15.11. The CB's audit of the SMS shall include an assessment of the conformity with the requirements outlined in this document and, in particular, that:

15.11.1. All internal procedures are in place;
15.11.2. The group members know and access the Reference Standard and certification requirements for group certification;

15.11.3. A risk assessment, appropriate to the nature, scale and complexity of the tourism activity, is carried out by the group;
15.11.4. Each member of the group shall be internally inspected annually;
15.11.5. New group members are only accepted as certified after the record-keeping requirements are fulfilled, the internal inspection is completed and there are no major non-conformities outstanding;
15.11.6. Instances of non-conformity are dealt with by the group manager; and
15.11.7. Adequate records of internal inspections are maintained.

15.12. The CB shall carry out a risk assessment of all aspects of the group and its members, as well as of the SMS, to identify risks to the integrity of the certification. The risk assessment shall function as a basis for the audit and certification activities.
15.13. The auditor shall assess the competence of the group's internal auditors, according to ISO 19011:2018.
15.14. The CB shall audit a sample of group members to evaluate the effectiveness of the sustainability management system. The sample size shall be based on the results of the risk assessment. The minimum number of group members to be audited annually by the CB shall be the square root of the total number of members in the group. The members to be audited shall be selected in a way that represents the whole group, based on a combination of a risk-based and random selection of the sample.
15.15. The outcome of the external audit of group members shall be compared with the outcome of the group's internal audit.

Sanctions

15.16. Non-conformities regarding group compliance shall be based solely on the Reference Standard and certification requirements for group certification.
15.17. The CB shall have a documented sanctions policy for non-conformities regarding the certification of groups. The sanctions shall be applied to the group as a whole.
15.18. Failure of a group manager and internal auditors to detect non-conformities shall lead to sanctions. Failure of group management to act on non-conformities and apply appropriate sanctions to group members shall also lead to sanctions.
15.19. Major non-conformities, when the SMS is not functioning or when there is a direct risk that services are not meeting the standards or that non-certified services are sold as certified, shall lead to suspension of the entire group's certification.
15.20. The CB shall follow up sanctions in a timely manner to determine if conditions have been fulfilled and shall render further sanctions where necessary.

Certificates

15.21. The CB shall issue a single certificate identifying the name and address of all the members of the group to which the certificate relates.
15.22. The list of group members shall be kept updated. The CB shall require the group manager to inform of any changes in the membership, including the closure of any of the group members.

15.23. The certificate shall be withdrawn in its entirety if the group manager or any of the group members does not / do not fulfill the necessary criteria for maintaining the certificate.

16. Requirements for Tour Operators

Introduction

16.1. The term "Tour Operators" is used herein to refer to many types of packagers, transport operators, and sellers of travel. Each of those types are complex and varied in their approaches. Collectively, they offer a broad range of services in the tourism industry, marked by a high degree of packaging product and service components operated by third-party services providers. The services provided by Tour Operators occur in many locations whether spread across all continents or more locally. Users of this manual must consider the category of Tour Operator in question when applying this manual in practice.

16.2. The main Tour Operators sustainability impacts occur outside their premises and arise by their third-party services providers such as accommodations, transportation, guiding, food services, attractions of many types, catering, entertainment and other services. Effective Tour Operator management systems are essential for these varied and complex businesses and must include sustainability and monitoring of performance on sensitive sustainability issues within the supply chain.

The Scope/eligibility of Tour Operators for certification

16.3. The CB shall define the scope of certification with the client by identifying the type of Tour Operators as per the following categories and corresponding definitions:

16.3.1. Outbound Tour Operator: Businesses that package and/or market travel products to consumers to travel from their residence to other places. Their clients travel "outbound". Although primarily retail businesses, they may also act as wholesalers.

16.3.2. Inbound Tour Operators: Businesses also known as Destination Management Companies (DMC's), Ground Handlers and similar. Inbound Tour Operators can operate as follow:

16.3.2.1. As a wholesale operator that receives the clients of other businesses in specific destinations of expertise and operational bases;

16.3.2.2. As a seller of their services on a retail basis;

16.3.2.3. As an owner of their own transport vehicles, or lease from others, or a combination of the tow.

16.3.3. Land Transport Providers: Businesses that primarily lease their transport vehicles to providers of travel packages; including many vehicle types such as busses/motorcoaches, vans/ mini-vans, cars, motorcycles/motorbikes, boats/ships, bicycles. Although primarily vehicle operators and providers, they may also operate and market packages.

16.4. The CB shall be aware that Tour Operators may operate diverse sets of products/services offerings across the 3 categories of Tour Operators defined in 16.3.

16.5. In cases where a tour operator manages more than one of the categories described in 16.3, the CB shall determine whether the scope of certification should include all the categories or should each Tour Operators category apply for separate certifications.

16.5.1. If all the tour operator's categories are subject to a common sustainability management system, then all the categories shall be considered in the scope of certification.

16.6. The Tour Operator shall ensure that all services providers fulfill the Reference Standard through the TO's SMS.

Requirements for preparing an audit plan for Tour Operators

16.7. The CB shall be aware of the scope, the characteristics, ownership structure, degree of ownership of services providers and the type of tour operator product to ensure that the audit plan is adapted to each client's context.

16.8. The CB shall understand that the Tour Operator may operate with a diverse set of product/service offerings, but the focus of the audit process should be based on considering which of those categories serve as the primary business unit by volume.

16.9. The CB shall specify the type of Tour Operator Product to be included in the audit:

16.9.1. Multi-day packages that include accommodations

16.9.2. Excursions; single-day tour packages without any overnight accommodations. These include city tours, local tours, regional tours, shore excursions from cruises while in port.

16.10. The CB shall specify the Tour Operator ownership structure to be audited:

16.10.1. Tour Operators, regardless of the level of control of the management of a service, shall ensure that all services providers that are participating in a TO GSTC Certificate fulfill the Reference Standard.

16.10.2. In cases where the Tour Operator owns majority equity in a service provider business, and that services are used frequently by the Tour Operator, the Tour Operator shall be required to arrange for that business to be fully certified under a separate and distinct certification. A reasonable timeline for completion of certification shall be set by the CB.

16.11. The CB shall have documented procedures for determining the audit time based on the risk assessment considering the following factors:

16.11.1. Number of sites where the Tour Operator operates;

16.11.2. Size of business based on number of passengers;

16.11.3. Size of business based on number of services providers.

16.12. The CB shall have a written procedure to establish and manage the sampling process for one or more than one business unit included in the scope of certification. The procedure shall meet IAF MD1:2018 Requirements.

Communication between the CB and the client

16.13. The CB shall clearly communicate the certification requirements for Tour Operators, including these requirements and any additional scheme specific requirements (regardless if these are set by the CB or the standard owner) to the client.

Evaluating the Tour Operator Management System

16.14. The CB shall audit the Tour Operator Management System in order to evaluate its functioning and effectiveness and to ascertain whether the SMS results in conformity with the Reference Standard and certification requirements.

16.15. The CB's audit of the SMS shall include an assessment of the conformity with the requirements outlined in this document and, in particular:

16.15.1. Sustainability measurement and monitoring mechanism of services providers performance;
16.15.2. Degree of control of services providers involved in the supply chain;
16.15.3. Mechanism of control, internal procedures and reports of the supply chain;
16.15.4. When applicable, contracting policies for non-owned and less-controlled services providers;
16.15.5. Policy for contracting and contract implementation relating to sustainability;
16.15.6. Risk assessment, appropriate to the nature, scale and complexity of the type of service provider.

16.16. The CB shall ensure that Tour Operators encourage services providers to gain individual sustainable certification, and evidence of an increase in the number of certified services providers shall be provided in the management system records. For all categories of Tour Operators, the CB shall verify the following:

16.16.1. Tour Operators implement a policy of preferential contracting with certified sustainable services providers.
16.16.2. Special attention shall be given to contracting certified sustainable hotels due to the importance of hotels to most Tour Operator product offerings and due to the general availability of certified hotel properties. Among certified hotels, additional preference shall be given to those certified by a GSTC Accredited CB.
16.16.2.1. Evidence of an increase in the number of certified hotels by a GSTC Accredited CB shall be provided in the management system records of the Tour Operator.
16.16.3. In cases where the Tour Operator subcontracts for land transport, special attention shall be given to contracting certified sustainable land transport providers.

NOTE: According to 16.3, land transport providers are a category of tour operator that can be audited by a CB.

16.16.4. The Tour Operator contracting policy minimally indicates that in the contract bidding process, when two or more bids are similar in price and quality, a certified service provider shall be chosen in preference to a non-certified service provider.

16.16.5. All service provider contracts include clauses requiring some degree of sustainable practices to be implemented and reported to the Tour Operator.

Sensitive issues for focus on management and auditing processes

16.17. The CB shall ensure that the following high risk service provider components are monitored in the Tour Operator's management system:

16.17.1. Quality of the reporting capacity and data compilation capacity of the Tour Operator's sustainability management system per Criterion A1 shall include supply chain performance information.

16.17.2. Assessment of the overall quality of sustainable supply of key product and service categories, such as:

16.17.2.1. Hotels/Accommodations
16.17.2.2. Transport providers
16.17.2.3. Attractions

16.18. Aviation components of Tour Operator contracting, and operations are outside the scope of GSTC Accreditation for Tour Operator certification. Except when the CB should consider assessing the Tour Operator's compliance with Greenhouse Gas Emissions (GHG) criteria.

16.18.1. When conducting the assessment, the CB shall consider whether specific aviation components are necessary in place of lower-GHG-emitting transport options such as trains or other land-transport vehicles.

Sampling of Contracted Services Providers

16.19. The CB shall include in the audit process the review of the tour operator's management system from the home office and relevant field offices, of performance records relating to the requirements of the management system and services providers contracts.

16.20. The CB shall include in the audit plan an evaluation of a sample of Tour Operator's services providers that represents the whole group.

16.20.1. The CB shall recognize that hotels that have been certified by another GSTC Accredited CB conform to the GSTC Criteria. These GSTC certified hotels shall therefore not be included in the sampling.

16.21. Services Providers that are being sampled for the purpose of auditing may be audited remotely if these are considered low risk by the CB.

16.22. The CB shall have a written procedure to establish and manage the sampling process. That procedure shall meet IAF MD 1: 2018 Requirements.

16.23. The CB shall select the services providers based on the factors below, in decreasing order of importance:

16.23.1. Service provider determined for on-site sampling by the GSTC Endorsed Accreditation Body or GSTC.
16.23.2. Service provider is most frequently used by the Tour Operator.
16.23.3. Service provider is part of any kind of internal or external investigation, including complaint investigations.
16.23.4. Service provider is considered high risk as per the risk table 16.24.1.
16.23.5. Logistical consideration in the case of on-site audits: combination of trips, availability of auditors, and geographic proximity.
16.23.6. Where the sampling table dictates that 4 or more services providers shall be audited, a minimum of 25% of the sample rounded up to the nearest whole number shall be selected at random.

16.24. The CB shall determine the risk based on evidence supplied by the applicant or certified tour operator in advance of each audit.

16.24.1. The CB shall determine the level of risk of each service provider by using table 16.24.1.
16.24.1.1. The CB shall determine the risk factors that are relevant to the service provider based on its category and activities.
16.24.1.2. If any of the relevant identified risk factors apply, then the service provider is considered high risk and shall be considered in the sampling selection.
16.24.1.3. When the factor in table 16.24.1 comprises 2 subitems, if one item is applicable then the factor shall be considered high risk.

Table 16.24.1 Risk Table

	RISK FACTOR	APPLICABILITY
1	**A6: Accurate promotion** The service provider has made incorrect sustainability claims	N/A =N Applicable = Y
2	**A7.1 Compliance** The service provider does not keep its required licenses and permits up to date	N/A =N Applicable = Y
3	**A7.4 Access for all** The service provider does not provide access to visitors with special needs, where appropriate.	N/A =N Applicable = Y
4	**B5 Exploitation and harassment** Activities inappropriately involve children or other minorities and vulnerable groups.	N/A =N Applicable = Y
5	**B7 Decent work** a. The service provider does not pay a living wage. b. Service provider working conditions are not safe.	N/A =N Applicable = Y
6	**C1 Cultural interactions** The service provider does not comply with the guidance for management and promotion of visits to indigenous communities or historically sensitive sites.	N/A =N Applicable = Y
7	**C2 Protecting cultural heritage** a. The service provider activities do not contribute to the protection, preservation and enhancement of cultural heritage. b. The service provider activities do not allow local access to sites and traditions of historical, archaeological, cultural and spiritual significance.	N/A =N Applicable = Y
8	**C3 Presenting culture and heritage** a. The service provider does not include elements of local culture. b. The service provider does not respect intellectual property rights of local community.	N/A =N Applicable = Y
9	**D1.2 Efficient purchasing** The service provider does not make use of reusable and recyclable items, including plastic goods, to reduce waste.	N/A =N Applicable = Y
10	**D1.3 Energy conservation** a. The service provider does not use renewable energy. b. The service provider does not measure its energy consumption.	N/A =N Applicable = Y
11	**D1.4 Water conservation** The service provider is located or operates in an arid or semi-arid area.	N/A =N Applicable = Y
12	**D2.4 Solid waste** The service provider does not reduce, reuse or recycle waste (including food waste).	N/A =N Applicable = Y
13	**D3.1 Biodiversity conservation** The service provider operates in natural protected areas and areas of high biodiversity value	N/A =N Applicable = Y

14	**D3.4 Wildlife interactions** The service provider engages in wildlife interaction activities. NOTE: Wildlife tours that observe animals without actively attracting (through for instance wild bait) or allowing contact with wildlife directly are not considered high risk.	N/A =N Applicable = Y
15	**D3.5 Animal welfare** The service provider engages in activities where species of wild animals are acquired, bred or held captive	N/A =N Applicable = Y
16	**D3.6 Wildlife harvesting and trade** The service provider engages in activities where wildlife species are harvested, consumed, displayed, sold or traded	N/A =N Applicable = Y

16.25. The sampling of contracted services does not constitute certification of the services providers nor of products. The Tour Operator's external communications shall not state or imply that services providers or products are certified.

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. 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.

17.1.2.1. Certification schemes shall not state or imply in its marketing or operational material or instructions that 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. 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. GSTC may arrange publicity and promotion of a GSTC Accredited CB and tourism organizations certified by a GSTC Accredited CB.

17.2.3. GSTC Accredited CBs, certification schemes and their certificate holders may receive various market access opportunities and promotions directly by the GSTC (subject to available resources). Engagement in those programs and activities must adhere to the terms of the Certification Body Licensing Agreement (CBLA) and Certification Scheme Licensing Agreement (CSLA) with the GSTC, or any separate Trademark Licensing Agreement as required by GSTC.

PART IV: GLOSSARY OF TERMS AND ANNEXES

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 GSTC of a Certification Body's competence to certify organisations to a GSTC Reference Standard.

Accreditation Body

An independent entity that operates in conformity with the standard ISO/IEC 17011 and that is technically competent to accredit CBs to perform conformity assessment using a GSTC 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.

[adapted from ASI-PRO-101: 2019]

Accommodation

Accommodation: service facilities that regularly provide overnight lodging for travellers in a form of a room or other type of unit and may provide limited or full services such as food and beverage, housekeeping, recreational and/or fitness activities, amongst others. The categories of accommodation 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 residence, bed and breakfast establishments, tourist residences, farmhouses, holiday dwellings, glamping sites, and similar accommodations appropriately equipped to offer at least an overnight stays and/or additional services.

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.

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 or nonconformity.

Note 2 to entry: Audit findings can lead to the identification of risks, opportunities for improvement or recording good practices.

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.

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.

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.

[SOURCE: ISO/IEC 17065:2012, 3.9, modified]

Note 2: GSTC System is a Certification system

Certification system

Rules, procedures and management for carrying out certification.

[SOURCE: ISO/IEC 17000:2004, 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.

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]

GSTC

Global Sustainable Tourism Council

GSTC Accreditation

Accreditation provided by an Accreditation Body that is endorsed 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 Accreditation Body 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 Endorsed Accreditation Body

A qualified body authorized by the GSTC to manage the accreditation process and oversee the functions of the GSTC certification programs.

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 take 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.

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.

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 a 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]

Services providers

Subcontracted companies or internal organizations and agents that provide a wide variety of services to a tour operator to form a complete tour package that is marketed to travellers. Services providers involve a large diversity including but not limited to accommodations, transportation, guiding, food services, attractions of many types, entertainment, amongst others.

Sustainable tourism standard

A set of rules and guidelines that define the requirements of tourism enterprises in delivering sustainable tourism. For GSTC Recognition, 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.

Sustainability management process

Process that delivers a sustainability result.

Third-party

Carried out by an individual or body that is independent of the entity being certified or accredited.

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 Operators comprise outbound tour operator, inbound tour operator and land transport providers and any combination amongst the 3 categories.

Tourism enterprise

An entity providing one or more services to tourists.

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/approach for accreditation described in clause 5.1.2.3.3. The Certification Body and the Certification Scheme shall comply with this GSTC Checklist when the Certification Body applies for the scope extension of accreditation to provide auditing and certification services against a GSTC Recognized Standard owned by a Certification Scheme.

A.1. Checklist and steps

A.1.1. The Certification Scheme (CS) signs a service agreement with an Accredited Certification Body (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 arrangement, these auditors will have to qualify as a 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 Certification Scheme Licensing Agreement (CSLA) with GSTC which provides rules of engagements for GSTC logo and trademark usage.
- Enter into a Certification Body Licensing Agreement (CBLA) with GSTC which provides rules of engagement for GSTC logo and trademark usage for its own clients and for clients of any and all certification schemes that contract with the CB to conduct certification/auditing functions on their behalf.

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

- 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 GSTC Recognized. 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.

A.1.4. ASI 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. ASI carries out a desk review

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

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

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

A.1.7. Upon a positive ASI 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. GSTC Accreditation Manual v2.5

A.2.2. ASI-PRO-20-101 Accreditation Procedure V5.1 - 08 December 2020

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

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

Course of the Training for Auditors		Hotel	Tour Operator	Hotel + Tour Operator
Module A	Understanding of sustainable tourism	Online or in person training attendance	Online or in person training attendance	Online or in person training attendance
	Overview of the GSTC	Online or in person training attendance	Online or in person training attendance	Online or in person training attendance
Module B	Industry criteria and indicators for Hotels	In person training attendance	In person training attendance	In person training attendance
Module C	Industry criteria and indicators for Tour Operators	-	In person training attendance	In person training attendance
Module D	Destinations criteria and indicators	-	-	-
Module E	Field exercise	Mock-Audit training exercise with hotel(s)	Mock-Audit training exercise with tour operator(s)	Mock-Audit training exercise with hotel(s) and tour operator(s)
Evaluation	Written exam on the contents of criteria and indicators	Above 85% achievement	Above 85% achievement	Above 85% achievement
	Field performance test on the ability to apply criteria and indicators to the field and the audit skills	Above 75% achievement	Above 75% achievement	Above 75% achievement

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

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

Course of the Training for Auditors		Hotel	Tour Operator	Hotel + Tour Operator
Module A (offline)	Understanding of sustainable tourism[1]	2 hours	2 hours	2 hours
	Overview of the GSTC (mission & programs)	1 hour	1 hour	1 hour
Module B (offline)	Industry criteria and indicators for Hotels[2]	6 hours	1 hour	3 hours
Module C (offline)	Industry criteria and indicators for Tour Operators[3]	-	5 hours	3 hours
Module D (offline)	Destinations criteria and indicators[4]	-	-	-
Module E (offline)	Field exercise and Performance test[5]	8 hours or 1 day	8 hours or 1 day	16 hours or 2 days
Evaluation[6] (offline)				
Total training time required		9 hours lecture and 1-day field practice & test	9 hours lecture and 1-day field practice & test	9 hours lecture and 2 days field practice & 'test

[1] The length of the lecture may be subject to change according to the understanding/experience level of the trainee. Questions on 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) time

[5] The length of field exercise and performance test does not include the travel time to/from the field exercise site and the length of field performance test subject to change according to the number of trainees.

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

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

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

Annex C – Requirements applicable to a Group of Tourism enterprises that cooperatively implement a Reference Standard and seek certification

The CB shall provide information about the specific requirements applicable to Group Certification. At least, these requirements shall include:

C.1.Sustainability management system

C.1.1 The group shall establish, implement, maintain and continuously improve a sustainability management system that complies with the Reference Standard requirements

C.1.2 The SMS shall be documented.

C.1.3 The SMS shall include written rules on:

- Responsibilities and authorities for relevant roles for the successful implementation and maintenance for the sustainability management system and its performance, including the group manager, staff, contractors, elected persons and committees;
- Approval and rejection of new members;
- Record-keeping requirements for both group members and the group's manager;
- Internal audits;
- Qualification criteria for internal inspectors;
- Processes for applying sanctions and appeals;
- Operation and control of the sustainability management processes;
- Creating, updating and control of documented information.

C.2 Resources

C.2.1 The Group SMS shall determine and provide the resources needed, including staffing, competency, training, infrastructure, technology and finance for the establishment, implementation, maintenance and continual improvement of the sustainability management system and ensure conformity of individual members with the Reference Standard and specific certification requirements applicable to group certification in an objective and transparent manner.

C.3 Group Manager

C.3.1 The group manager shall be responsible for the implementation of the SMS, including verifying group member conformity with the requirements of the Reference Standard and specific certification requirements applicable to group certification.

C.3.2 The group manager shall appoint one person or group (e.g. committee) in charge of the SMS.

C.3.3 The group manager shall manage potential and actual conflicts of interest in a manner appropriate to its scale and conditions. Individuals shall disclose potential conflicts of interest and shall not take part in work or decisions related to their potential conflict.

C.3.4 All persons in the group including management, committees, internal auditors and others shall be competent for their tasks. The group manager shall determine the necessary competencies for various positions and provide training or take other actions to satisfy these needs. This shall include appropriate training for new staff and elected people were needed for them to fulfill their tasks.

C.3.5 Records of education and training shall be maintained.

C.4 Group Members

C.4.1 Group members shall each sign (or commit by a practical alternative) to a contract/agreement with the group manager. The group manager shall make sure that group members understand the implications of the contract. The contract shall contain at least:

- A commitment by the group member to fulfill the requirement of the Reference Standard and specific certification requirements applicable to group certification;
- A commitment by the group member to provide the group manager with required information;
- A commitment by the group member to comply with group manager instructions;
- Acceptance by the group member of internal and third-party inspection;
- An obligation for the group member to report non-conformities;
- The right of members to terminate membership;
- A description of the processes to be followed if membership of the group is to be suspended or terminated.

C.4.2 All group members shall have access to the requirements of the Reference Standard and specific certification requirements applicable to group certification.

- The Reference Standard requirements may be in any form or media.
- Documents can be an internal standard based upon an external standard developed by the group or an external standard.

C.4.3 Documents such as contracts and internal standards which the group members need to understand shall be written in a way that is appropriate to their local language, culture and knowledge.

C.4.4 Group members shall have adequate knowledge about standards, requirements and production methods, based on appropriate education, training, skills and experience.

C.4.5 The group shall determine the necessary competence for group members and provide training or take other actions to satisfy these needs. Records of member training shall be maintained by the group.

C.5 Continuous Improvement

C.5.1 The group manager shall determine and implement plans for improving the SMS and group members' performance against the Reference Standard and specific certification requirements applicable to group certification. Among the information that can inform these plans are:

- Internal audits findings;
- External audit findings;
- Complaints and appeals;

C.5.2 When setting up the SMS, the group manager shall carry out a risk assessment in relation to compliance with the Reference Standard and specific certification requirements applicable to group certification. The risk assessment shall include at least identification of risks at the level of group member operations and performance of the SMS.

C.5.3 Group manager shall take relevant measures to prevent or minimize to an acceptable level the identified risks and address non-conformities. The group manager shall focus its resources on these areas.

C.6 Service Integrity

C.6.1 Group members shall only provide services within the scope of the certification in conformity with the requirements of the Reference Standard and specific certification requirements applicable to group certification.

C.6.2 Safeguards shall be in place to ensure that services outside the scope of the certification are not provided by group members in a way that may imply that they are certified.

C.7 Internal audits

C.7.1 Internal audit shall take place to allow group managers to determine whether or not an individual group member is meeting the requirements of the Reference Standard and specific certification requirements applicable to group certification.

C.7.2 Each member of the group shall be audited annually except in circumstances that are defined by an individual certification scheme.

Justifications for less frequent inspection can be based on different factors including the results of risk assessments.

Inspections should take place at different times of the year and not be so regular as to become predictable.

C.7.3 New group members shall always be inspected and found to be in conformity before their services can be certified.

C.7.4 Internal inspectors can provide advice to group members but shall not inspect those members to whom they have provided advice, they should be independent of management and shall not audit/inspect their own work.

C.7.5 A decision by the group manager on the status in the group of individual members shall be taken annually.

- This decision shall be based on internal inspections and other relevant information.
- Safeguards shall be in place to ensure that internal inspectors are not unduly influenced in their findings by group managers or group members.

C.7.6 Group members should have the right to dispute any finding that leads to their suspension or removal from the group.

C.7.7 The SMS shall include the application and enforcement of sanctions to individual group members who do not comply with the standards or other requirements.

C.7.8 The consequences of non-conformity and sanctions shall be made clear to group members.

C.7.9 Sanctions shall include but are not limited to, exclusion from sales of certified services.

C.7.10 Records of sanctions shall allow for the easy identification of sanctioned group members.

C.8 Records

C.8.1 Records covering the relationship between the group manager and group members shall be maintained and kept up to date, including at least the following:

- Contracts between the group and individual group members;
- Group member list;
- Records for selling certified services;
- Internal audit reports;
- non-conformities, sanctions and follow-up action arising from both internal audits and external audits; and
- Complaints and appeals.

C.8.2 When a group member is not able to create and maintain records, the group manager shall assume responsibility for maintaining these records.

C.8.3 All group members shall be recorded in a list. This list shall be updated as necessary and shall include at least the following information for each member:

- Name of the member or code assigned to the member;
- Address(es) and activities that are provided at each address;
- Certification status;
- Dates of internal audits; and
- Any scheme-specific data needed.