

## **GLOSSARY OF ACCREDITATION TERMS**

The following definitions explain the meaning of terms in relation to accreditation. The terms are used in the [GSTC Accreditation Manual v2.5](#). Account has been taken of generic definitions used elsewhere.

***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.

***Accreditation*** The formal declaration by a neutral third party that the certification program is administered in a way that meets the relevant norms or standards of certification program. The process of approval by GSTC of a certification body's competence to certify organisations to a GSTC-Recognized 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-Recognized standard. Abbreviated "AB".

***Accreditation Cycle*** Begins at or after the initial Accreditation Decision date or decision after a Reaccreditation Assessment and shall not be longer than five years. Before the end of a cycle, a reaccreditation 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]

**Audit** A systematic and comprehensive process of investigation through checking documents, conducting interviews, observation and other means.

**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.

**Audit findings** Results of the evaluation of the collected audit evidence against audit criteria.

Note 1: Audit findings indicate conformity or nonconformity.

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

Note 3: 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 time 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]

**Capacity** The potential or suitability for holding, storing, or accommodating (GSTC-D C6/D2) and/or the ability or facility to act (GSTC-D A5).

**CB** See Certification Body

**Central office** The office that is responsible for and centrally controls the management system.

[SOURCE: IAF MD 1:2018, modified]

**Certificate holder** A tourism enterprise, activity or service that has been certified by a GSTC-Accredited CB or a GSTC-Accredited CB

**Certification** Voluntary, third-party assessment, through an audit, of a tourism enterprise for conformity to a standard.

**Certification Body** A body that verifies that specified requirements relating to a product, process, system, person or body are fulfilled. Abbreviated “CB”. In current usage, these are often referred to as “conformity assessment bodies” or CABs, which have a slightly broader mandate.

**Certification program** GSTC prefers to use the term “Certification Body” in place of “Certification program”

**Certification scheme** A specific, named programme of certification resulting in the granting of a certificate of conformity to a tourism enterprise by a CB along with the right to display a mark associated with the scheme. It is defined by ISO as “[the rules, procedures, and management for carrying out certification] related to specified [services], to which the same specified requirements, specific rules and procedures apply.” After draft ISO/IEC 17067:2013

Certification system related to specified products, to which the same specified requirements, specific rules and procedures apply.

Note 1 to entry: 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 scheme owner** A person or other legal entity who owns the intellectual property associated with a sustainable tourism certification scheme.

**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** Conformity in fulfilling official requirements.

**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** Fulfilment 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 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.

**STC Accreditation Panel** An independent body of the GSTC that is technically competent and impartial, that will make decisions on recognizing sustainable tourism standards and approving certification programmes, and may endorse accreditation body recommendations to accredit CBs.

**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, approving certification programmes, 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 operator sectors, they have applicability to the entire tourism industry.

<b><i>TC Criteria Components</i></b>	The elements of each individual GSTC Criterion which are used to assess equivalence of a tourism standard with the principles of sustainable tourism as identified by the GSTC.
<b><i>GSTC endorsed Accreditation Body</i></b>	A qualified body authorized by the GSTC to manage the accreditation process and oversee the functions of the GSTC certification programs.
<b><i>GSTC requirements for CBs</i></b>	The requirements that a CB shall meet in terms of its structure, management and operational procedures.
<b><i>GSTC Standard</i></b>	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.
<b><i>GSTC-Accredited</i></b>	A certification program that has been assessed by the GSTC and found to be in conformity with all requirements of the GSTC-Accredited Manual
<b><i>GSTC-Accredited Application</i></b>	A correctly completed application made by a CB, requesting GSTC-Accredited status using the GSTC-Accredited Application Form.
<b><i>GSTC-Accredited Requirements</i></b>	The set of requirements for a CB to obtain GSTC-Accredited status.
<b><i>GSTC-Recognized Standard</i></b>	A sustainable tourism standard that has been evaluated by the GSTC as being equivalent to the GSTC Criteria.
<b><i>Hotel</i></b>	Term treated in a generic way to refer to accommodation.
<b><i>Impartiality</i></b>	The ability to make judgements and take decisions that are objective, based strictly on facts and free from other influences.
<b><i>Initial certification audit</i></b>	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 function (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. The absence of, or failure to meet, an element of a standard or performance criteria.

[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's Criteria or a GSCT's 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 1: 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.

**Standard owner** A person or other legal entity who owns the intellectual property associated with a sustainable tourism 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.

***Sustainable tourism  
standard***

A set of rules and guidelines that define the requirements of tourism enterprises in delivering sustainable tourism. For GSTC-Recognized status, the standard shall be equivalent to the GSTC Criteria.

***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.

***Unilaterally aligned  
standard***

A standard that is equivalent or comparable to the relevant GSTC Criteria but contains further requirements not contained in the GSTC Criteria.

***Witnessed audit***

An on-site assessment by a GSTC-appointed reviewer of the conduct of a sample certification audit as part of the evaluation of a CB's application for GSTC-Accredited.