GLOBAL SUSTAINABLE TOURISM COUNCIL

APPROVED

GSTC-APPROVED

MANUAL

and
Application Form

GLOBAL SUSTAINABLE TOURISM COUNCIL

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The Global Sustainable Tourism Council

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

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SECTION A: OVERVIEW AND INTRODUCTION

1   Introduction

GSTC Integrity Program

The GSTC Integrity Program 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 tourism product.

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

The GSTC considers it desirable for all sustainable certification standards to be GSTC-Recognized to ensure that an overall global baseline is set for sustainable tourism standards.

It is recognized that many standards do not currently cover all the elements of the GSTC Criteria or certifiers comply with all of the GSTC requirements for certification bodies. It may take some time for these bodies to complete the changes required to achieve compliance.

The GSTC acknowledges these challenges, and has a number of options for standard owners and CBs to gain GSTC endorsement.

- **GSTC-Recognized:** GSTC recognizes equivalence of a certification body's standard (criteria) against GSTC Criteria (Hotels, Tour Operators or Destinations). See the GSTC-Recognized Manual.

- **GSTC-Approved**: GSTC approves the policies and procedures of a certification body that uses a GSTC-Recognized standard. This document, the GSTC-Approved Manual, applies.

- **GSTC-Accredited**: Third party accreditation (by ASI) of certification body that either uses a GSTC-Recognized Standard OR certifies directly against GSTC Criteria and Indicators (GSTC-Industry, formerly Hotels, Tour Operators, and/or Destinations). See the GSTC-Accredited Manual.

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

The diagram below provides a simplified graphical depiction of the pathways of the GSTC Integrity Program and the table on the following pages summarizes the processes, key aspects and benefits.

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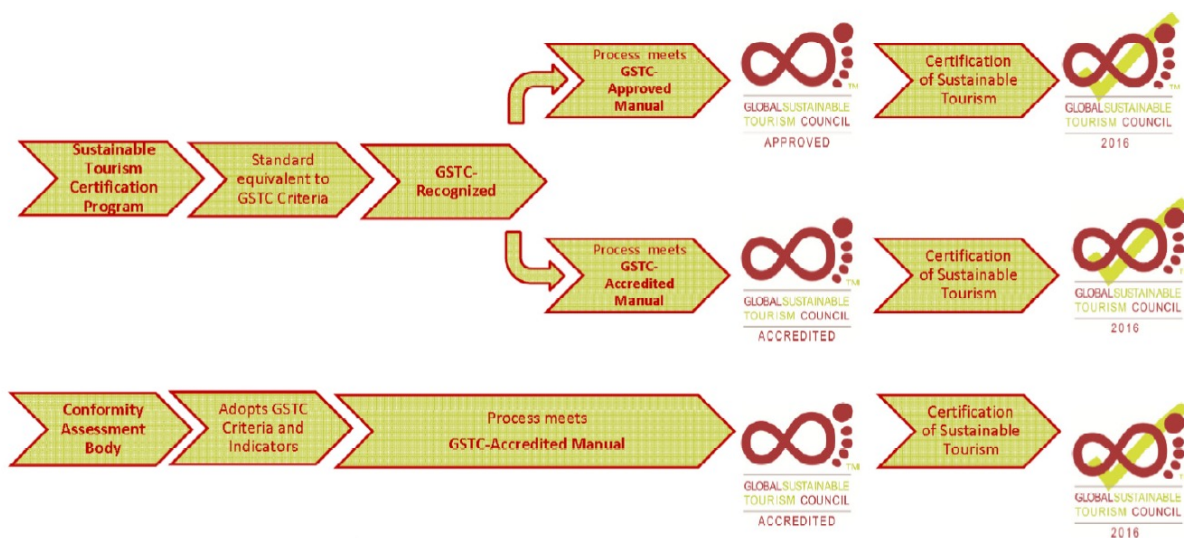
GSTC Integrity Program - Summary and Benefits

	GSTC-Recognized	GSTC-Approved	GSTC-Accredited
Summary			
GSTC recognizes equivalency of certification body's standard (criteria) against GSTC Criteria (Hotels, Tour Operators or Destinations).	✓	✓[1]	✓
GSTC approves the policies and procedures of certification body (that uses a GSTC-Recognized standard).		✓	
Third party accreditation (by ASI) of certification body that either uses a GSTC Recognized Standard OR certifies directly against GSTC Criteria and Indicators (Hotels, Tour Operators and/or Destinations).			✓
GSTC Logo Usage			
GSTC-Approved Certification Program or GSTC-Accredited Certification Body may use logo (subject to license agreement).	~[2]		
Certified Hotel/Tour Operator/Destination may use logo (subject to license agreement and annual fee – administered by certification body).	~[3]		
Promotion by GSTC			
Certification program or certification body promoted on GSTC website.	✓	✓	✓
Announcement of achievement in GSTC newsletter, GSTC website and GSTC social media outlets.	✓	✓	✓
Inclusion of Certification Body's logo on all GSTC official presentations, including Annual General Meeting, as well as all other speaking engagements and publications.	✓	✓	✓
Certified hotels, tour operators and destinations will be listed on the GSTC website directory.	✓	✓	✓
Certified hotels, tour operators and destinations will be prominently displayed (with a hyperlink to the individual hotel) on the GSTC website.		✓	✓
Certified hotels, tour operators and destinations have priority search on the GSTC website directory.		✓	✓
Development and publication on GSTC website of case studies (i.e. written blog post, video blog) of individual certified businesses.		✓	✓
Market Access			
Certified hotels (and soon tour operators) included in GSTC database available to online travel agencies (OTAs) including BookDifferent.com, HotelBeds.com, BookGreener.com, and Glooby.com (other OTAs are being added).	✓	✓	✓
Priority search results when OTA's use GSTC database.		✓	✓

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[1] To be GSTC Approved the certification body's standard must first be GSTC Recognised.
[2] A certification body that is a member may show the GSTC Member logo.
[3] A certified business that is a member may show the GSTC Member logo.

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The Need for Sustainability of Tourism

Travel and tourism account for around 10% of the world's economic activity. It is a rapidly growing sector, with international tourist arrivals forecast to grow from 1.1 billion in 2014 to around 1.8 billion in 2030[4].

The Sustainable Development Goals adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2015 are aimed at, inter alia, ending extreme poverty, fighting inequality and justice and tackling climate change. The significant relevance of tourism to 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 recognises and responds to these responsibilities and opportunities.

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

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[4] UN World Tourism Organisation, Tourism Highlights 2015 Edition

The Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC)

GSTC is a multi-stakeholder initiative formed in 2010 under the umbrella of the United Nations, including amongst its founding partners UNEP, UNWTO, UN Foundation, Sabre Holdings and Rainforest Alliance, amongst others. It was formed in response to the challenges and opportunities of sustainable tourism, by merging two previous initiatives.[5] In 2015, GSTC merged with the Tour Operators' Initiative, with TOI's operations now coming within the GSTC organization.

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

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

The mission of the GSTC is:

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

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

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

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[6] and showed how there are economic, social and environmental dimensions to each of them. The dimensions are seen as interrelated.

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

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

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

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

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[5] The Partnership for Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria and the Sustainable Tourism Stewardship Council
[6] UNEP, UNWTO *Making Tourism More Sustainable, A Guide for Policy Makers, 2005*

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- Tourism should bring the greatest possible social and economic benefits to local communities and any negative impacts on them should be minimised
- 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 set out in the GSTC Criteria.

GSTC Criteria

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

- GSTC-HTO: The Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria for Hotels and Tour Operators;
- GSTC- Destinations: The Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria for Destinations

As at mid 2016, the GSTC is planning to develop two new sets of criteria:

- GSTC-Industry: as a revision of GSTC-HTO and a scope expansion to address all tourism enterprise.
- GSTC-Country: a new set of criteria to address the framework for achieving sustainable tourism at the national level.

 The development of GSTC-Industry will allow the GSTC to develop sector specific Indicators for this broader set of criteria, for example the MICE sector.

GSTC Accreditation Panel

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

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

1. Establish the requirements for recognizing standards, approving certification programs, and validating the accreditation of conformity assessment bodies, through Manuals for Recognition, Approval, and Accreditation; guidance documents, and other documentation of procedures;

2. Determine whether a contractor is qualified to review a standard's conformity with the GSTC Criteria; review certification program procedures and processes; or award accreditation;

3. Declare standards to be "GSTC-Recognized";

4. Declare certification programs to be "GSTC-Approved";

5. Validate and provide surveillance of accreditation body declarations of "GSTC-Accredited certification bodies";

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

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

Principles for the implementation of the GSTC Integrity Program

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

1 Integrity

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

2 Credibility

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

3 Impartiality

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

4 Accessibility

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

5 Comprehensiveness

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

6 Rigorousness

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

7 Effectiveness

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

8 Transparency

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

9 Diversity

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

10 Achievability

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

Overview of GSTC-Approved process for Certification Programs

This document sets out requirements for the operation of the Global Sustainable Tourism Council's (GSTC's) program for conferring **GSTC-Approved status** on the activities of bodies certifying conformity to GSTC-Recognized sustainable tourism standards, which are hereafter referred to as "certification programs"[7].

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

In broad terms it means that the GSTC has recognized that the standard used for certification is equivalent to the **Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria** (GSTC-Recognized), that all equivalent criteria are mandatory and that the certification procedures largely meet international standards for transparency, impartiality, and competence. The processes involved with GSTC-Approved are faster, simpler, and less expensive than those involved with GSTC-Accredited, because not all requirements for full accreditation will be required. GSTC-Approved certification programs are encouraged to consider moving towards GSTC-Accredited. GSTC holds open the option to require such a transition at some point in the future. Businesses and activities certified by a GSTC-Approved certification program or GSTC-Accredited certification body ("clients" or "certificate holders") can also be licensed to use the **GSTC-Approved** language and logos.

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

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

The process of assessing a certification program for GSTC-Approved consists of a remote desk audit of documents provided by the program, to be supported by an audit of a certification audit, hereafter referred to as a witnessed audit, if required by the Accreditation Panel. In the case that a witnessed audit is required by the Panel, the applicant will be required to pay the travel costs and professional fees of the GSTC-designated auditor.

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

2   Normative References

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

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

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

a)   ISO/IEC 17065:2012 Conformity assessment — Requirements for bodies certifying products, processes and services

b)   ISO/IEC 17067:2013 Conformity assessment — Fundamentals of product certification and guidelines for product certification schemes

c)   ISO/IEC 17011: 2004 Conformity assessment — General requirements for accreditation bodies accrediting conformity assessment bodies

d)   ISO 19011:2011 Guidelines for auditing management systems

e)   ISO/IEC 17021-1:2015 Conformity assessment -- Requirements for bodies providing audit and certification of management systems

f)   ISO/IEC 17000:2004 Conformity assessment — Vocabulary and general principles

g)   ISO/IEC Guide 2: 2004 Standardization and related activities — General vocabulary

h)   Accreditation Audit Practice Group (AAPG) Guidance Documents:

   i.   ISO/IAF AAPG Auditing the CP Impartiality Committee

   ii.   ISO/IAF AAPG Key Criteria for assessing the competency of CPs and their ability to deliver credible results

i)   ISEAL Code of Good Practice for Setting Social and Environmental Standards.

   See also Section E Glossary for terms and definitions

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SECTION B: REQUIREMENTS FOR GSTC-APPROVED PROGRAMS

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

3   Structure and Responsibility

3.1   The CP shall be, or shall be part of, a legal entity.

3.2   The CP shall be able to show that it owns, or has the right to use, a GSTC-Recognized certification standard and any associated trademarks and labels.

3.3   The CP shall document its governance and operational structure. Documentation shall identify the board, committee or personnel responsible for:
a) Development of policies and procedures;

b) Supervision of implementation of procedures;

c) Supervision of finances;

d) Performance of evaluation activity;

e) Making decisions on certification;

f) Delegation of authority and contractual arrangements;

g) Handling of complaints and appeals.

3.4   The CP shall be responsible for decisions on the granting, maintaining, extending, suspending or withdrawing of certification.
3.4.1   Authority to take decisions on these matters may be delegated to individuals or a committee.

3.5   The CP shall have a legally enforceable certification agreement with its clients, which:
3.5.1   Sets out the responsibilities of the CP, including:
a) Carrying out an effective and impartial certification procedure

b) Communicating any changes in the standard and requirements to clients

c) Providing information to clients on its certification procedures.

3.5.2   Sets out the responsibilities of the client, including:
a) Conformity with the recognized standard and relevant certification requirements;

b) Correct communication of the meaning of the certification, avoiding misleading claims and withdrawing reference to certification following any termination;

c) Recording, handling, and informing the CP of complaints and corrective actions taken relating to compliance with the certification requirements;

d) Telling the CP of any changes that may affect compliance with certification requirements within ten days of them occurring;

e) Provision of all necessary information and arrangements for the certification audit process;

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  f)   Allowing the CP and the GSTC access to the client's premises, personnel and records for the purpose of audit.

 3.5.3   Is signed by both parties prior to initiating the certification process.

4   Scope and Accessibility

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

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

4.2   A CP may certify against the GSTC-Recognized Standard that it owns or has the right to use.

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

4.4   Where a client provides multiple tourism services, the certification document will identify the services that have been certified, and the CP will ensure that the client limits its claims of certification and use of logos and marks to the certified services.

4.5   The policies and procedures adopted by the CP shall be non-discriminatory.

4.6   The CP shall make its services available to all applicants whose activities fall within its declared field of operation.

 4.6.1   Access to certification shall not be conditional upon the size of the client or membership of any association or group

5   Impartiality and Conflict of Interest

5.1   The CP shall have a written policy which expresses its commitment to impartiality, confidentiality, and the objectivity of its activities.

5.2   All personnel and committees, either internal or external to the CP, who could influence certification activities, shall declare that they will act impartially and not allow any commercial, financial or other pressures to compromise their impartiality.

5.3   All personnel, internal or external, shall be required to reveal any situations that may present them or the CP with a conflict of interest

5.4   The CP shall document an assessment of risks to impartiality and potential conflicts of interest, together with measures taken to eliminate or minimise these risks and conflicts.

5.5   The organisational structure of the CP shall include a mechanism, to ensure implementation of the CPs impartiality policy.

5.6   Neither certification evaluations nor certification decisions shall be undertaken by anyone whose impartiality may be compromised by having provided consultancy to the client.

5.7　Prior to and during the certification process the CP shall not give prescriptive advice to a client in a form and to a level of detail that could compromise its ability to undertake an impartial certification.

5.8　The CP may provide general information to assist tourism service providers strengthen the sustainability of their operations and to understand and comply with the GSTC-Recognized Standard, through publications, seminars, training courses and other activity, provided this is not seen as part of the certification process and is open to all existing or potential clients.

6　Financial Stability and Liability

6.1　The CP shall be able to demonstrate that it has the cash flows required to remain in business for the life of certificates issued.
　　6.1.1　Cash may come from operations and subsidy from government or other sources.
　　6.1.2　Where financial stability depends on subsidy, this should be covered by documented agreement.

6.2　The CP shall evaluate its liability risks and demonstrate that it has adequate arrangements to cover liabilities arising from its operations.

7　Professional Capacity

7.1　The CP shall ensure that personnel, internal and external, used in the certification process are competent to perform their functions and shall document how this is achieved.

7.2　The CP shall use auditors who have professional qualifications and experience in certification, auditing and in sustainable tourism. Auditors shall:
　　7.2.1　Have an undergraduate degree in environmental, sustainability, management and/or tourism disciplines, or have a minimum of five years' experience in an environmental discipline and/or sustainable tourism;
　　7.2.2　Have qualifications in environmental auditing, or have at least 5 years' experience in developing and/or managing a sustainable tourism certification program; and
　　7.2.3　Have at least five years' experience in sustainable tourism or an awareness of sustainable tourism (e.g. from training provided by the GSTC, the CP or other suitable training program).

7.3　Auditors must have documented awareness of the GSTC-Recognized standard.
　　7.3.1　Such documentation may be provided by the CP as a result of training provided by the CP or through work as an assistant auditor for the CP.

7.4　A CP must provide suitable evidence of its auditors' qualifications and experience:
　　7.4.1　< 5 auditors: Where a CP has less than five auditors, a resume (curricula vitae) and certificates/qualifications of existing auditors shall be provided as evidence. The selection criteria/qualification requirements and any in-house training/awareness program shall be submitted for engagement of new auditors.

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7.4.2   5 or more auditors: Where a CP has 5 or more auditors, the selection criteria/qualification requirements and any in-house training/awareness program shall be submitted for engagement of new auditors. A table summarizing existing auditors' qualification against 7.2 is required and resumés (curricula vitae) and qualifications of three auditors is required.

7.4.3   CPs are encouraged to implement capacity building among auditors, including sharing of information and developing new auditors.

7.5   Auditing personnel may be employed directly by the CP or be independent personnel working under contract to the CP.

7.6   The CP shall only outsource certification activities to an external body that fulfils the same requirements specified in this section of GSTC-Approved Manual as the CP itself, or that complies with the GSTC-Accredited Manual requirements for a certification body. This includes outsourcing to an external body to provide auditing services. The CP shall:

7.6.1   Take responsibility for all outsourced activities

7.6.2   Have legally enforceable agreements with all bodies that provide outsourced services

7.6.3   Have procedures for checking that such bodies are adhering to this agreement and for taking any necessary corrective action.

7.7   Personnel involved in the certification process shall sign a document that commits them to abide by the rules of the CP, including matters relating to confidentiality and conflict of interest.

7.8   The CP shall identify the training needs of personnel and provide training to ensure that they are competent to fulfil their functions. Personnel shall understand the GSTC-Recognized standard used and other requirements for certification.

7.9   The CP shall establish procedures for monitoring personnel performance. This should involve review of audit reports, feedback from clients and observation of audits. The results of this monitoring shall be communicated to auditors together with any recommendations to improve performance.

7.10   The CP shall maintain a record of all personnel used, including their relevant qualifications, level of experience, training received and, for organizations with 20 or more employees, performance appraisals.

8   Information and Confidentiality

8.1   The CP shall make publicly available and easily accessible, without charge, information on the following:

8.1.1   The CP, its location(s) and contact details

8.1.2   The rules for granting certification and the evaluation procedures and certification process

8.1.3   A description of the charges made to clients

8.1.4   A description of the rights and duties of certified clients in how they should refer to the certification and identify themselves with it

8.1.5   Information about how to make complaints and appeals and how these will be handled.

8.2   The CP shall identify the GSTC-Recognized Standard(s) to which certification is offered.

8.2.1 The CP may restrict access to documentation which reveals the proprietary systems used in audits.

8.3 The CP shall provide certified clients with a formal, signed certification document which identifies:
8.3.1 The name and address of the CP and of the client
8.3.2 The services covered by the certification
8.3.3 The GSTC-Recognized Standard(s) to which the services comply
8.3.4 A unique record number or code
8.3.5 The dates of granting and of expiry of the certification.

8.4 The CP shall provide clients with rules on references to the certification that can be made by clients and the use of any certification mark or logo.

8.5 Any mark or logo shall be traceable to the CP.

8.6 The CP shall monitor and control the use of any mark or logo and any references made to the GSTC-Recognized Standard and shall take action to deal with any incorrect or misleading use.
8.6.1 Monitoring and control shall address any use of the certification logo or mark by un-certified parties, and discontinuation of use where certification has been terminated or withdrawn.

8.7 The CP shall keep up to date a directory with details of all services certified by them and shall make this publicly available and easily accessible.

8.8 The CP shall develop and implement a written policy which expresses its commitment to confidentiality. This shall include:
8.8.1 Informing its clients of the information it intends to make public
8.8.2 Requiring all personnel to abide by the confidentiality policy
8.8.3 Informing the clients of any information that it may be required to make available by law
8.8.4 Agreeing with the client on the release of any information required for other purposes, such as handling complaints.

9 Certification Process

9.1 The CP shall have a consistent, systematic and documented process for conducting evaluation of clients and determining whether or not to grant certification.

9.2 Upon receipt of an application for certification, the CP shall:
9.2.1 Ensure that the client is fully aware of the process and costs
9.2.2 Clarify the certification required and the scope of activities to be covered
9.2.3 Obtain initial information about these activities, relevant to planning the evaluation
9.2.4 Reach agreement to proceed
9.2.5 Plan the evaluation process.

9.3 The CP, or sub-contracted body, shall select personnel to carry out the evaluation.
9.3.1 Personnel shall not be selected by the client, but clients shall be given the opportunity to raise any objections about personnel selected, for example on grounds of conflict of interest.

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9.4   Audit personnel shall obtain documentary evidence from the client on its policies, activities and performance concerning the different components of the standard.

    9.4.1   Audit personnel should draw any significant concerns about the conformity of documentation to the client, and may request further information.

    9.4.2   A period may be allowed for non-conformities to be addressed and reported to the CP.

9.5   Audit personnel shall conduct a visit to the premises of the client.

    9.5.1   The visit shall involve:

        a)   Interviews with key personnel

        b)   Obtaining objective evidence that demonstrates conformity or non-conformity with the GSTC-Recognized Standard and other certification requirements

        c)   Observation of the premises where the tourism service is delivered.

9.6   Audit personnel may undertake consultation with stakeholders within or external to the client to clarify aspects of the client's activity and performance.

    9.6.1   Audit personnel should undertake consultation where there is significant doubt about the sufficiency, quality, or veracity of information supplied by a client.

    9.6.2   The client shall be informed in writing about any stakeholder consultation undertaken.

9.7   At the end of the visit, Audit personnel shall have a closing meeting with the client to present the findings of the audit process. Audit personnel should:

    9.7.1   Explain any observed non-conformity with the GSTC-Recognized Standard and other requirements or areas where improvement could be made

    9.7.2   Seek clarification and comment from the client, and a commitment as to when any non-conformities identified are to be addressed

    9.7.3   Explain to the client that this exchange of information does not predetermine the outcome of the certification decision.

9.8   Audit personnel shall prepare a written report of audit which:

    9.8.1   Sets out the process of the audit, including dates, documents scrutinised and interviews held

    9.8.2   Identifies areas of non-conformity with the standard

    9.8.3   May include comments and recommendations relevant to the decision on whether to grant certification

    9.8.4   Provides sufficient detail to enable a certification decision to be taken

    9.8.5   Is made available to the client, in full or in summary form.

9.9   The CP shall invite the client to correct any non-conformity identified within a specified time period and inform the CP when this rectification has been completed.

    9.9.1   The CP shall then implement a suitable re-evaluation process to verify conformity in these areas.

9.10   The CP shall assign one or more individuals to review all information and results from the evaluation and make a decision on whether or not to grant the certification.

    9.10.1   This decision shall be documented.

    9.10.2   Individuals involved in making this decision shall not include those involved in undertaking the audit.

9.11   The CP shall communicate to the client the results of the decision.

10 Renewal, Monitoring and Termination of Certification

10.1   The certification's validity shall be not greater than three years from the date on which it was granted as shown on the certification document.

   10.1.1   Should the certification validity be greater than two years, the CP shall undertake at least one on-site visit to monitor the performance of the client during this period.

10.2   The CP should notify the client of the need for renewal of certification in sufficient time for a re-certification process to be carried out prior to the end of the current validity period.

10.3   Certification renewal shall follow the requirements for certification set out in this manual.

10.4   If certification has not been renewed by the expiry date, the CP shall terminate the certification.

   10.4.1   The CP shall inform the client that it is no longer certified and require that it removes all references to its previous certification.

   10.4.2   The CP shall monitor the client's conformity with instructions in 10.4.1 for a period of twelve months or longer.

   10.4.3   The CP shall adjust its records and make publicly available information to reflect this termination.

10.5   The CP shall carry out monitoring of a certified client's activities to check that conformity with the standard is being maintained.

   10.5.1   Monitoring shall include a requirement that the client undertakes an annual self-assessment and prepares a report and statement of compliance.

10.6   Should the CP have any concerns about the client's conformity with the standard, as may arise from monitoring, notified changes, complaints (see section 11) or other information received, it should investigate the situation and if necessary instigate a re-certification process.

10.7   The CP shall have the right to suspend or terminate the certification upon finding any non-conformity. The CP shall inform the client of the reasons for suspension or termination and take action as specified in 10.4.

11 Appeals and Complaints

11.1   The CP shall record all appeals and actions taken to resolve them.

11.2   The CP shall have a documented appeals procedure for receiving, evaluating and making decisions about appeals made by clients against the certification decision. This procedure shall include:

   11.2.1   Acknowledging receipt of the complaint

   11.2.2   Investigating the appeal in a timely manner

   11.2.3   Gathering any necessary information

   11.2.4   Making a decision on the appeal, which should be approved by an individual(s) not involved with the original certification decision

   11.2.5   Informing the appellant of the outcome of the appeal

   11.2.6   Taking all necessary actions to resolve any issues arising.

11.3   The CP shall record all complaints and actions taken to address them.

11.4   The CP shall have a documented complaints procedure for receiving, evaluating and making decisions about complaints against the CP or against a client. This procedure shall include:

   11.4.1   Acknowledging receipt of the appeal
   11.4.2   Confirming whether the complaint relates to the certification scheme
   11.4.3   Investigating the complaint in a timely manner
   11.4.4   Drawing the complaint to the attention of any client involved
   11.4.5   Gathering any necessary information
   11.4.6   Making a decision on the complaint, which should be approved by an individual(s) not involved with certification activities related to the complaint
   11.4.7   Informing the complainant and client of the outcome of the complaint
   11.4.8   Taking all necessary action to resolve issues arising.

12 Management System

12.1   The CP shall have a management system that is described in a manual or a set of linked documentation, which:

   12.1.1   Is appropriate to the size and complexity of the organization.[8]
   For small organizations, a complex system is not required, but the seven basic areas of ISO/IEC 17065[9] should each have policies and procedures.
   12.1.2   May be in any form of media.
   12.1.3   Should include the CPs objectives and the policies and procedures for managing and operating it.
   The policies and procedures should not impose an excessive burden on the certification program, but must ensure that records of all actions taken with respect to clients are documented and that these documents are handled according to established policies and procedures, as well as the records of training, decisions, appeals, etc.

12.2   Shall be accessible to relevant personnel and be understood by them.

12.3   The CP shall have procedures for the control of documents. These shall cover the adequacy, updating, changing, identity, legibility, use, distribution, removal and disposal of documents.
   It is essential, even for the smallest organization, that all documents are properly managed.

12.4   The CP shall have procedures for the control of records. These should cover the identification, storage, protection, retrieval, retention and disposal of records.
   Records can be digital or on paper.

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[8] Guidance on management system requirements for very small organizations is shown in italics. For further guidance, see ISO/IEC 17065.
[9] According to ISO/IEC 17065, section 8, a certification body must: EITHER have a management system that addresses: a) general management system documentation (e.g., manual, policies, definition of responsibilities (8.2); b) control of documents (8.3); c) control of records (8.4); d) management review (8.5); e) internal audit (8.6); f) corrective actions (8.7); and g) preventive actions (8.8) OR have established and maintain a management system, in accordance with the requirements of ISO 9001.

12.5   The CP shall conduct a regular internal audit of its procedures to verify that the management system is effectively implemented.

    12.5.1   Internal auditors shall not audit their own work.

    12.5.2   Results of internal audits shall be made known to personnel with the responsibility for the areas that have been audited.

For very small organizations, this can be conducted as a group effort of all personnel. ISO 19011 provides guidelines for conducting internal audits.

12.6   The CP shall review the continuing suitability of its management system at least once every 12 months. The review shall be based on information from a variety of sources, including internal audit, inputs from personnel, feedback from clients, complaints and appeals.
For very small organizations, this can be conducted as a group effort of all personnel.

12.7   The CP shall take action to address actual and potential weaknesses in its operations, including non-conformities with the requirements of this section. The actions taken and the results achieved shall be recorded.

12.8   The CP should gather and record evidence on the impact that the presence of the certification scheme has had on its clients and their sustainability policies and actions.

13 Languages

13.1   A CP may only certify using languages for which there is a GSTC-Recognized standard.

    13.1.1   The auditor must be proficient in that language.

13.2   In the event an enterprise or destination being certified has a business language for which there is a GSTC-Recognized standard, however a sizable proportion of the staff of the enterprise/destination being audited speak mainly another (local) language, the auditor may undertake the Audit accompanied by a capable translator.

    13.2.1   In this event it is expected that the vast majority of documents are in the language of the GSTC-Recognized standard, and only spoken word translation is required. The enterprise/destination may use local language documents for training/awareness/management purposes with its staff and stakeholders, these may be translated to the language of the GSTC-Recognized standard by the enterprise/destination for the auditor's review.

13.3   In the event an auditor does not speak the language of the enterprise/destination an audit may be completed only with certified translation of documents and using a qualified translator during the audit.

SECTION C: PROCESS FOR ASSESSING APPLICATIONS FOR GSTC-APPROVED

14 GSTC-Approved Application

Application Form

14.1   An application for GSTC-Approved must be made by a CP on the current version of the GSTC-Approved Application, based on this GSTC-Approved Manual v.2.2.

Documentation Requirements

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

14.3   An overall description of the CP.

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

14.5   Documentation describing how the CP demonstrates its compliance with the GSTC-Approved Requirements of this Manual referring to:
14.5.1   Structure and responsibility (clause 3 of this Manual)
14.5.2   Scope and accessibility (clause 4 of this Manual)
14.5.3   Policies and practices about impartiality and conflict of interest (clause 5 of this Manual)
14.5.4   Financial stability and liability (clause 6 of this Manual)
14.5.5   Professional capacity (clause 7 of this Manual)
14.5.6   Policies and practices for information and confidentiality (clause 8 of this Manual)
14.5.7   Description of the certification process (clause 9 of this Manual)
14.5.8   Procedures for renewal, monitoring and termination (clause 10 of this Manual)
14.5.9   Procedures to deal with appeals and complaints (clause 11 of this Manual)
14.5.10 Description of the management system it has implemented (clause 12 of this Manual)
14.5.11 Procedures for handling certification in a non-standard language (clause 13 of this Manual)
14.5.12 Description of policies and procedures to use and protect its certification marks, including licensing

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

14.7   Documentation describing how the CP ensures and demonstrates compliance with the professional capacity required for a CP as set in clause 7 of this Manual shall include:
14.7.1   Competence criteria for personnel involved in the certification process
14.7.2   A description of the procedures to manage and perform audits
14.7.3   How competence of the personnel is managed and monitored

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

Properly Made GSTC-Approved Application

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

15 GSTC-Approved Process

Process for Evaluation

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

Fundamental Eligibility

15.2 To be GSTC-Approved, a Certification Program must own or have the right to use, a GSTC-Recognized standard[10], must apply all the GSTC-equivalent criteria as mandatory in its certification and must meet the GSTC-Approved Requirements (Section B of this Manual).

Omission of Requirements

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

Reliance on Legislation

15.4 In some situations, where a CP is used in only one country or a smaller region (i.e. one legal jurisdiction), the applicant may choose to demonstrate that a GSTC-Approved Requirement is fully covered by legislation. In such a case:
  a) the specific law(s) must be identified;
  b) evidence must be provided that the relevant law(s) are enforced; and
  c) the CP's manual must require tourism enterprises to demonstrate compliance with applicable laws.

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[10] Equivalent standards might have differences in presentation and even in substance, e.g. in explanatory notes, guidance on how to fulfil the requirements of the standard, preferences for alternatives and varieties. Equivalency for purposes of GSTC-Recognized status includes harmonized, unified, identical, unilaterally-aligned, and comparable standards. (ISO/IEC Guide 2:2004 6.1, 6.2, 6.3, 6.8, and 6.9)

15.5 Acceptable evidence may include:

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

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

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

GSTC-Approved Application

15.7 CPs wishing to have their certification program GSTC-Approved shall download, or otherwise obtain copies of, the GSTC-Approved Manual v2.2 and associated GSTC-Approved Application documents which provide details of the process.

15.8 The CP shall complete all sections of the form "GSTC-Approved Application".

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

15.10 The CP:

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

    15.10.2 Shall justify any variations between their program and the relevant GSTC-Approved Requirement.

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

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

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

15.12 In the form "GSTC-Approved Application", the certification program shall undertake to:

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

    15.12.2 Give the GSTC all updated versions of their GSTC-Recognized standard within 10 days of it being updated or in any way changed.

    15.12.3 Give the GSTC all updated versions of any documentation relied on for the GSTC-Approved status within 10 days of it being updated or in any way changed.

    15.12.4 Abide by GSTC's requirements for GSTC-Approved status.

    15.12.5 Follow the GSTC-Approved Manual processes in the event of a complaint or an appeal.

    15.12.6 Inform the GSTC of any substantial changes to the ownership and/or management of the CP.

15.13 The GSTC will not reveal the names of certification programs that have applied for GSTC-Approved, but have not completed the process, have been GSTC-Approved (Conditional) or which have not achieved GSTC-Approved status. The results of the evaluation of the CP are confidential, with the results available only to the GSTC Secretariat and Accreditation Panel. Only those CP's that are GSTC-Approved will be publicly identified.

GSTC Assessment of Applications

15.14 The CP must pay the relevant application fee before a GSTC-Approved Application will be assessed.

15.15 The completed GSTC-Approved Application form together with all the documentation requested shall be reviewed for completeness by GSTC technical staff, who may request further information and documentation.

15.16 Once satisfied that the application is complete, GSTC will appoint a reviewer to undertake the assessment. The reviewer may be a GSTC staff member permanently appointed to review all CP's, except in cases of conflicts of interest or the appearance thereof.

15.17 The appointed reviewer(s) shall undertake an assessment of the equivalency of the CP against the GSTC-Approved Requirements. The reviewer(s) shall:
> 15.17.1 Draw the attention of the CP to any GSTC-Approved Requirement where the program appears not to address the requirement, and ask for further clarification or evidence if required.
> 15.17.2 Write an evaluation report based on the assessment of the compliance of the program to the GSTC-Approved Requirements.
> 15.17.3 Submit the report to the CP owner for comment, with a request to either correct any areas where compliance has not been established (prior to further consideration); or seek agreement to addressing potential conditions to correct any areas where compliance has not been established.
> 15.17.4 Update the report on receipt of the requested information from the CP.

15.18 The reviewer(s) shall make a recommendation on whether or not GSTC-Approved status should be granted in a final evaluation report.
> 15.18.1 A positive recommendation shall be made if the reviewer(s) involved believes that the CP addresses all GSTC-Approved Requirements.
> 15.18.2 A negative recommendation shall be accompanied by a summary of which areas are felt not to be compliant with the GSTC-Approved Requirements, and of the views of the certification program on compliance of those areas.
> 15.18.3 A recommendation of the requirement for a witnessed audit shall be made if the reviewer(s) believes that further evidence is required prior to reaching a decision.

15.19 The reviewer shall forward to the Chair of the GSTC Accreditation Panel a copy of the final evaluation report, including the recommendation.

15.20 When requested by the Accreditation Panel, GSTC shall arrange and undertake an audit of a certification audit chosen randomly from those scheduled in the relevant time period. The auditor may or may not be the same person as the desktop reviewer of the application.

15.21 The CP will be required to meet to costs of the witnessed audit.

15.22   The appointed auditor shall prepare a report of the witnessed audit, covering the following areas: audit preparation; communication with client; gathering and use of evidence, including observation and document review; identification of non-conformities; knowledge and skills of auditor(s) and ability to apply in audit situation; overall assessment of application of CP procedures. A GSTC form will standardise and document the audit process. The appointed auditor will submit the report to the Chair of the Accreditation Panel.

GSTC Accreditation Panel Decision

15.23   The Chair of the GSTC Accreditation Panel shall appoint a sub-group of three Panel members.

15.24   The GSTC Accreditation Panel shall review the evaluation report, together with a report of a witnessed audit if requested, and make a decision on whether or not to grant GSTC-Approved status for the CP.

15.25   The Panel may decide to grant GSTC-Approved (Conditional) status if there are a limited number of GSTC-Approved Requirements which the Certification Panel considers can be rectified by the CP.

15.26   The Chair of the GSTC Accreditation Panel shall inform the certification program of the Panel's decision on granting GSTC-Approved status:
   15.26.1 If the decision is not to grant GSTC-Approved status, the GSTC Accreditation Panel shall specify what if any steps the certification program must take before GSTC-Approved can be granted.
   15.26.2 Should the certification program subsequently submit further information or a revised GSTC-Approved Application, the process shall recommence.

15.27   If the decision is to grant GSTC-Approved with conditions to be met by a specified date, the certification program shall:
   15.27.1 Commit to meet the conditions by the specified date.
   15.27.2 Acknowledge that no publicity or claims may be made about the GSTC-Approved (Conditional) status.
   15.27.3 Acknowledge that GSTC-Approved (Conditional) status will be withdrawn if the conditions have not been met by the specified date.
   15.27.4 Agree to submit evidence to the GSTC that the conditions have been met prior to the specified date.

15.28   A fee may be applicable for re-lodgement and re-assessment of a CP which has received GSTC-Approved (Conditional) status.

15.29   If the decision is to grant GSTC-Approved status with or without conditions, the GTSC shall provide the certification program with a letter (or similar document) regarding claims that can be made, and the terms upon which they may be made.

16 Expiry and Renewal Process

Expiry of GSTC-Approved Status

16.1   GSTC-Approved status will apply to a certification program until the earlier of:
   16.1.1   The certification program amends their policies, procedures or practices

16.1.2   The majority ownership of the certification program changes

16.1.3   The standard used by the GSTC-Approved program is no longer GSTC-Recognized

16.1.4   Two years from granting of initial GSTC-Approved status.

Renewal of GSTC-Approved Status

16.2   If the GSTC-Approved status of a CP has expired, the CP may apply for a renewal (preferably three months prior to the expiry).

16.2.1   If there have been changes to the ownership, management or any policies and procedures a new GSTC-Approved Application may be required to be completed; or

16.2.2   If there have not been changes to the ownership, management or any policies and procedures a GSTC-Approved (Renewal) Application may be completed.

Amendment of GSTC-Approved Requirements

16.3   If the GSTC-Approved Requirements have been amended by the GSTC, the GSTC Accreditation Panel will give due notice to GSTC-Approved CPs of any changes made to the GSTC-Approved Requirements and subsequent actions that they may be required to take upon expiry of their current GSTC-Approved status:

16.3.1   A new GSTC-Approved Application may be required to be completed; or

16.3.2   A GSTC-Approved (Renewal) Application may set out the revised or additional requirements in a short form matrix (including the full individual criteria and components).

16.3.3   If the GSTC-Approved Manual is changed during the period of a CP's GSTC-Approved status (i.e. up to two years), no action is required of the CP until renewal upon the expiry of the GSTC-Approved status.

Amendment of a GSTC-Recognized Standard

16.4   The GSTC-Approved status of a CP only applies whilst the standard is GSTC-Recognized.

16.5   Should a standard be no longer GSTC-Recognized the certification program has a twelve-month period in which to re-apply or renew the GSTC-Recognized status of the standard in accordance with the GSTC-Recognized Manual.

Ongoing Suitability of a Certification Program

16.6   Should the GSTC Accreditation Panel have reason to be concerned about the ongoing conformity of an already GSTC-Approved program with the GSTC-Approved Requirements, it may require the certification program to provide further information, and may, as an ultimate sanction, withdraw the GSTC-Approved status.

17 Appeals Procedure

Complaints

17.1   Any complaints made about matters relating to GSTC-Approved processes shall be submitted to the GSTC.

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17.2   The GSTC shall forward complaints to the GSTC Accreditation Panel, who will discuss the complaint with the complainant and / or certification program and agree appropriate action.

17.3   The GSTC shall record all actions taken and communicate the outcome of the complaint to the complainant.

Appeal by a Certification Program

17.4   An appeal by a certification program against an GSTC-Approved decision may only be due to:
    17.4.1   Refusal by the GSTC to accept its application for GSTC-Approved status
    17.4.2   Refusal to proceed with a GSTC-Approved evaluation
    17.4.3   A decision to refuse, suspend or withdraw GSTC-Approved status and any other action that impedes the attainment of GSTC-Approved status.

17.5   The grounds for an appeal are limited to:
    a)   An appeal based on the grounds that the GSTC has not followed its own procedures or met the GSTC-Approved Manual; or
    b)   An appeal based on the grounds that the GSTC has incorrectly interpreted the GSTC-Approved Requirements.

17.6   Notifications of appeal shall be received within 30 days of the GSTC Accreditation Panel decision being communicated to the CP, and shall be directed to the GSTC Executive Director (GSTC CEO). The appeal notice does not have a set format but shall:
    17.6.1   Be in writing and signed by the appealing certification program or its legal representative
    17.6.2   Specify the grounds on which the appeal is made
    17.6.3   Be accompanied by relevant documented objective evidence
    17.6.4   Indicate what steps were taken to resolve the issue prior to lodging the appeal
    17.6.5   Contain an agreement to pay the costs of the appeal process, if and as allocated by the Appeals Panel
    17.6.6   Contain an agreement to adhere to all terms and provisions of this procedure.

17.7   The GSTC CEO shall verify that the conditions for appeal set out above have been met, and if not, shall so advise the appellant.

17.8   If and once conditions have been met, the GSTC CEO shall formally acknowledge receipt of the appeal.

17.9   An Appeals Panel shall be established by the GSTC Board and its membership notified to the appellant.

17.10   Appeals Panel Terms of Reference and operating procedures are described below, but may be amended in the sole discretion of the Appeals Panel to suit the nature of the appeal.

17.11   Copies of the Appeals Panel decision shall be forwarded to the appellant and GSTC personnel as appropriate by the Appeals Panel secretary within seven days of the decision being made.

17.12   The GSTC shall be responsible to ensure that the appellant undertakes any required actions, and for taking any actions it is responsible for.

17.13   The GSTC shall verify that effective actions have been taken.

17.14   The decision of the Appeals Panel shall be binding on all parties and no further appeal on the same matter shall be accepted.

17.15 The Appeals Panel secretary shall be responsible for keeping records of the appeal. On the instruction of the Appeals Panel chair, these may be sealed to protect confidentiality.

Review of Appeals

17.16 Records of appeals shall be reviewed at GSTC Accreditation Panel meetings.

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

Appeals Panel Terms of Reference

17.18 Up to three members will be appointed to each Appeals Panel, invited by the GTSC Executive Director on behalf of the GSTC Board.

17.19 Persons not from the Accreditation Panel shall be enrolled as Appeals Panel members to ensure that the Appeals Panel has the expertise, balance of interests and impartiality required to make a decision.

17.20 Appeals Panel members shall be independent and impartial (no conflict of interest) to the appeal in question.

17.21 Appeals Panel members will be requested to sign a confidentiality agreement if they have not already done so.

17.22 The appellant will have opportunity to object to Appeals Panel membership on grounds of them having a conflict of interest. The Appeals Panel shall consider such a challenge, but will not be bound to change its membership.

17.23 One Appeals Panel member shall act as chair, appointed by the Appeals Panel members.

17.24 Members will have knowledge of accreditation and standards and may seek additional advice as they see fit.

Functions of the Appeals Panel

17.25 To decide on the validity of the appeal made by the owner of a certification program (the "Appellant") against a GSTC decision on granting of GSTC-Approved status.

17.26 To make a binding decision on the appeal.

17.27 To advise the parties of their final decision(s).

Procedure

17.28 The GSTC Executive Director shall appoint a staff member not directly involved with the appeal to act as secretary to the Appeals Panel.

17.29 The GSTC Executive Director shall forward all information related to the appeal to the Appeals Panel members.

17.30 All parties may be requested by the Appeals Panel to provide additional information, attend in person meetings (at each party's cost) or participate in conference calls as required.

17.31 Reasonable efforts shall be made to ensure that all parties have an opportunity to put their case to the Appeals Panel – generally written form is preferred.

17.32 The Appeals Panel shall make its own operating rules and procedures as necessary,

17.33   The Appeals Panel shall bear in mind the grounds for appeal:

     17.33.1 Should the grounds for appeal be that the GSTC has not followed procedures, the Appeals Panel shall limit its investigation to whether or not the procedure has been followed.

     17.33.2 Where the procedure is unclear or is silent on a matter, the GSTC's interpretation of a GSTC-Approved Requirement shall prevail unless it is felt by the Appeals Panel to be against standards and/or certification industry best practice, or against the principles of natural justice;

     17.33.3 Should the grounds for appeal be that GSTC's has incorrectly interpreted a requirement of its own procedure, GSTC's Accreditation Panel shall be asked to provide an interpretation which shall be binding.

17.34   The Appeals Panel chair shall determine the most appropriate method to review the appeal. It may be conducted by conference call, email or by meeting.

17.35   Parties may be asked by the Appeals Panel chair to present oral arguments at an in-person review meeting. Use of lawyers for this purpose is not allowed; the parties involved shall represent themselves.

17.36   No timescales are defined but it is recommended that the appeal review is held within 60 days of the formation of the Appeals Panel, and the appeal decision be made within 30 days of the Appeals Panel's review.

17.37   While a consensus approach to decision making is desirable, if this is not possible the appeal decision shall be made by simple majority vote. In the event of a tied vote, the Chair of the Appeals Panel shall have a casting vote.

17.38   The Appeals Panel will communicate their decision to all parties, which will be binding and no further appeal shall be permitted.

17.39   Where required the GSTC CEO will take follow-up action.

17.40   On completion of the appeal all records will be forwarded to the Appeals Panel secretary for retention.

Costs

17.41   The cost of hearing an appeal shall be determined by the GSTC.

17.42   The Appeals Panel shall determine the apportionment of the costs of the Appeal.

17.43   In apportioning costs, the Appeals Panel shall commence with the assumption that cost should be borne equally between the appellant and the GSTC.

17.44   Should the Appeals Panel consider that the appeal is frivolous and without merit, it may require the appellant to pay a proportion of up to 100% of the costs.

17.45   Should the Appeals Panel consider that the GSTC has acted in a way that does not display all due diligence, it may require the GSTC to pay a proportion up to 100% of the costs.

17.46   In the event that the appellant has been ordered to pay the costs, or part of them, the appellant will be under obligation to pay the amount due to the GSTC within ten days of the date of the decision.

18 Fees

GSTC-Approved Application

18.1   A CP will be required to pay a fee for the process of approving its certification program.

18.2   Fees must be paid upon application and before the GSTC-Approved Application is considered.

18.3   The fee is set out in the GSTC-Approved Application.

18.4   The Panel will determine whether or not a witnessed audit is required. For that reason, the costs of conducting a witnessed audit are NOT included in the published price of the GSTC-Approved application, and the applicant will be liable to cover the additional expenses of the GSTC auditor's travel expenses plus professional fees if the Panel requires the audit.

Pre-Lodgement Advice

18.5   A CP (for an agreed fee) may request pre-lodgement support/advice by GSTC technical staff. Technical staff may provide comments on a standard, or comment on a draft GSTC-Approved Application.

18.6   Such advice is offered to support CPs achieving GSTC-Approved status, however the advice is offered as officer level advice and is not to be considered as GSTC Accreditation Panel policy nor a commitment or liability for positive consideration.

18.7   Provision of such advice by a GSTC staff/reviewer is not a conflict of interest for undertaking the subsequent assessment of a lodged GSTC-Approved Application.

SECTION D: LOGOS AND PROMOTION

19 Publicity and Promotion

GSTC Promotion of GSTC-Approved Certification Programs

19.1 The GSTC will make publicly available a list of the GSTC-Approved certification programs together with a brief summary of each CP, approved for publication by the CP.

19.2 The GSTC will make publicly available and implement a clear policy on claims of GSTC-Approved status of certification programs. This will include surveillance of the use of those claims and taking action against incorrect use.

19.3 GSTC may arrange publicity and promotion of GSTC-Approved programs and tourism businesses/products certified by a GSTC-Approved certification program.

Promotion by GSTC-Approved Certification Program

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

GSTC Promotion and Market Access Benefits

19.5 The GSTC publishes a summary of the promotion and market access benefits on www.gstcouncil.org. This is updated as required.

19.6 In terms of GSTC logo usage:
   19.6.1 A GSTC-Approved CP may use the GSTC-Approved Logo
   19.6.2 A Hotel/Tour Operator/Destination certified by a GSTC-Approved CP may use the GSTC Tick Logo (subject to a license agreement being in place between the GSTC and the CP and an annual fee paid by the CP).

19.7 GSTC-Approved CPs may receive the following promotion by the GSTC (subject to available resources):
   19.7.1 Certification program promoted on GSTC website.
   19.7.2 Announcement of achievement in GSTC newsletter, GSTC website and GSTC social media outlets.
   19.7.3 Inclusion of Certification Program's logo on all GSTC official presentations, including Annual General Meeting, as well as all other speaking engagements and publications.
   19.7.4 Certified hotels, tour operators and destinations will be listed on the GSTC website directory.
   19.7.5 Certified hotels, tour operators and destinations will be prominently displayed (with a hyperlink to the individual hotel) on the GSTC website.
   19.7.6 Certified hotels, tour operators and destinations have priority search on the GSTC website directory.
   19.7.7 Development and publication on GSTC website of case studies (i.e. written blog post, video blog) of individual certified businesses.

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19.8   The GSTC will endeavor to work with partners to promote GSTC-Approved CP's and their certified businesses and destination.

The following market access initiatives are being developed as at mid-2016:

- Certified hotels (and soon tour operators) included in GSTC database available to online travel agencies (OTAs) including BookDifferent.com, HotelBeds.com, BookGreener.com, and Glooby.com (other OTAs are being added).
- Priority search results when OTA's use GSTC database.

20 Use of GSTC Marks

Introduction

20.1   The GSTC logos, marks and trade names are protected by the GSTC.
        20.1.1   Trade names and marks include the names 'GSTCouncil', 'Global Sustainable Tourism Council', 'Travel Forever', 'GSTC-Approved' and 'GSTC-Accredited'.

License Agreement

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

Logo Terms of Use

20.3   There are three "Terms Of Use Documents" which are Appendices to the license agreement:
        20.3.1   GSTC Integrity Program - Terms of Use - GSTC Approved Logo v1.1: Which sets out the rules of a CP's use of GSTC-Approved Logo.
        20.3.2   GSTC Integrity Program - Terms of Issuance - Tick Logo v1.1: Which sets out the rules for a CP giving the GSTC Tick Logo to their certificate holders.
        20.3.3   GSTC Integrity Program - Terms of Use - Tick Logo v1.1: Which sets out rules for use of the Tick Logo by certificate holders.

20.4   Having signed a license agreement, a GSTC-Approved CP may:
        20.4.1   Use the GSTC-Approved Logo in its promotion and marketing of its program.
        20.4.2   Use the Tick Logo only to promote an example of what certified businesses may display.
        20.4.3   Distribute the Tick Logo to its certified businesses only when it is also accompanied by the Terms of Use.

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

SECTION E: GLOSSARY

21 Terms and Definitions

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

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

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

Term	Definition
AB	See "Accreditation Body"
Accreditation	The process of approval by a GSTC appointed Accreditation Body 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".
Audit	A systematic and comprehensive process of investigation through checking documents, conducting interviews, observation and other means
CB	See "Certification Body"
Certificate holder	A tourism enterprise, activity or service that has been certified by a GSTC-Approved CP or a GSTC-Accredited CB
Certification	Voluntary, third-party assessment, through an audit, of a tourism enterprise for conformity to a standard
Certification body	A body that verifies that specified requirements relating to a product, process, system, person or body are fulfilled. Abbreviated "CB". In current usage, these are often referred to as "conformity assessment bodies" or CABs, which have a slightly broader mandate. Abbreviated "CB".
Certification program	A certification scheme that requires conformity with a GSTC-Recognized Standard to award certification. Abbreviated "CP".
Certification scheme	A specific, named program of certification resulting in the granting of a certificate of conformity to a tourism enterprise by a CB along with the right to display a mark associated with the scheme. It is defined by ISO as "[the rules, procedures, and management for carrying out certification] related to specified [services], to which the same specified requirements, specific rules

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

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