



ROYALCERT CERTIFICATION AND INSPECTION SERVICES INC.

GSTC CERTIFICATION GUIDELINE

(This document is prepared as binding instruction and it is an integral part of 'FR.06 GSTC Certification Proposal and Contract')

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1. PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) is an organization that promotes sustainability and social responsibility in the tourism sector globally. The GSTC has developed minimum requirements that tourism businesses (hotels/accommodations and tour operators) shall meet to demonstrate a commitment to sustainable tourism from an environmental, social, cultural and economic perspective. GSTC certification is a third-party certification service subject to verification through audits by an accredited certification body. RoyalCert is a well-established certification body with expert staff in the certification sector, providing GSTC certification services.

GSTC Certification Program has been run by ROYALCERT Belgelendirme ve Gözetim Hizmetleri A.Ş Istanbul- Türkiye as headquarters, including affiliated offices located in Germany, Italy, Greece, Thailand, United Arab Emirates.

2. DEFINITIONS

GSTC Glossary of Accreditation All definitions in this manual can be found in **the GSTC Glossary of Accreditation** The term of organization in this document is referred to as "client"

3. ORGANIZATION

RoyalCert ensures the impartiality and independence of all employees involved in GSTC certification activities.

4. APPLICATION

4.1 Application

GSTC Certification applications are received in person with the Application Form or electronically via e-mail or www.royalcert.com.tr website.

All fields in the application form shall be filled in completely and approved by the signature of the applicant's authorized person

All incoming applications shall be subject to application review. This review is the control of the application form information and other requested documents (Trade Registry Gazette, Tax Certificate, Signature Circular, Chamber Registration Certificate, and other requested documents related to the application)

Audit duration for the suppliers of the tour operators shall be identified with the information provided by the auditor in accordance with numbers, geographical sites and risk levels during the initial assessment audit on-site

If the organization postpones the certification audit by not accepting it within 6 months from the date of application, its application shall be cancelled. However, this period shall not be applied in case of force majeure

The organization shall accept Ineligibility for certification It has had its certificate withdrawn within the last 2 years

It has had its certificate suspended within the last 6 months any association with entities that have been successfully prosecuted for forced labour and/or environmental violation

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

The organization shall accept to declare that; during the period of application and actively holding the certificate to inform RoyalCert in any association with entities that have been successfully prosecuted for forced labour and/or environmental violation.

4.2 Offer and Contract

As a result of the evaluation, RoyalCert shall prepare the offer and send it to the applicant. The proposal shall be signed by the applicant becomes a contract after it is signed and stamped by RoyalCert Certification Manager. One copy of the contract signed in two copies by the parties shall be sent to the applicant organization and one copy shall be kept in RoyalCert's client file with signature

4.3 Preparation of Audit Program

According to GSTC Certification Criteria, there are two main risk groups as high and low risk for the organizations within the scope of certification. According to the information specified in the application form, the risk level of the applicant's tourism business shall be determined. RoyalCert creates an Audit Program according to the information of the applicant based on the client risk level. In the created program, the type of audit shall be determined as initial certification, surveillance and recertification. Audit Program covers a 3-year certification cycle. Surveillance audits shall be carried out every 12 months during the 3-year period starting with the initial certification. The first three-year certification cycle starts with the certification decision. Subsequent cycles start with the recertification decision. In which processes of the client GSTC criteria will be audited, scope, duration, date, auditor information, etc. The audit program shall be prepared and sent to the client.

In case of any change in the scope, sites, applications, etc. of the client that may affect the audit program, the change information shall be notified to RoyalCert within 15 business days.

4.4 Calculation of Audit Duration and Period

Audit durations and periods shall be calculated in accordance with Royalcert GSTC Certification Program procedures based on GSTC criteria and relevant standards

4.5 Carrying out the Audit

Following GSTC criteria, initial certification and certificate renewal audits shall be carried out on-site.

The auditors and technical experts who will take part in the audit team shall be appointed by RoyalCert according to the scope of activity of the client. Audit scope, date, time, audit



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team information shall be shared with the client and approval shall be obtained from the client with a signature.

In case the client has an objection to the assignment of the auditor(s) who will take part in the audit, it shall be evaluated by RoyalCert and necessary changes shall be made if deemed appropriate.

The audit team will be ready for remote connection with the client on the specified date, on-site for field audits and remotely for remote audits.

The responsible personnel for the execution of the audit processes on behalf of the client, including the application process for the audit, shall be appointed by the client. The responsible person appointed by the client shall be notified to RoyalCert, and the responsible person shall be ensured to be present on-site during the audits.

The audit team audits the client's activities/services according to GSTC industry criteria as per RoyalCert's certification programme. The audit is based on the current documents published by GSTC (Hotels / Accommodation facilities question list and Tour operators question list) The activities/services of the client shall comply with all criteria within the scope of the document requested. The applications of all questions in the audit question list are stated in the Audit Report together with the evidence. Although the audit report does not carry a certification decision, it shall be shared with the audited organization and the client shall be informed in writing about the audit findings. Certification assessment shall be made by the Certification Committee following RoyalCert procedures.

4.6 Evaluation of Nonconformities

If deviations are detected from the requirements of the document(s) expressing the GSTC Criteria and the organization's system, the nonconformities shall be defined as minor or major in the **FR.37 Nonconformity Notify Form**.

The client shall identify and implement corrective/preventive actions to eliminate the nonconformity within 1 year for minor nonconformities and within 90 days for major nonconformities. The corrective/preventive actions (NC) identified by the client and their evidence shall be sent to the audit team leader by e-mail. All NCs shall be reviewed and verified by evidence submitted by the client as per relevant GSTC criteria. After verification of NCs, it shall be sent to the client as an attachment FR.10/FR.10-A audit report by the Team Leader. At the same time audit reports and verified nonconformities shall be submitted to the Certification Committee. Concrete evidence of the activity performed during verification shall be taken as the basis.

If the corrective preventive actions are not carried out effectively within the given period, the certification process shall be invalid and the client shall reapply for certification

4.7 Certification Decision

A decision shall be taken by the Certification Committee as a result of the review and assessment of the client's file. The Certification Committee makes its decision based on the evaluation of audit findings, results and other relevant information (prohibition of participation in tenders, client's comments on the audit report). As a result of the review and

evaluation made by the Certification Committee, in cases that remain pending and require detailed information, the Certification Committee requests information from the audit team leader who prepared the report

For the certification decision, the following shall be met:

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

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

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

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

- It has been reviewed and accepted that requirements for all GSTC Criteria are being met by the audited client

After the negative decision of the Certification Committee regarding the issuance of the certificate or the determination of a situation that prevents the use of the certificate, RoyalCert asks the client to apply in writing to eliminate the reasons in question and to request a follow-up audit

If the Certification Committee decides to issue a GSTC Certificate, the certificate shall be issued. The GSTC certificate contains the following information:

-Name and geographical location of the certified client

(For multi-site clients; the address of the head office and list of sites within the scope of certification)

For group clients; names and addresses of all group members within the scope of certification)

-Current publication of the standard taken as basis in the audit

-The date of issue of the certificate, extension or reduction of the scope of the certificate or renewal of the certificate, but not earlier than the relevant certification decision date,

- Document validity date

-Unique identification code (document number),

-GSTC logo

- The scope of the certification, taking into account the type of activities, products and services, so as not to lead to misunderstanding or ambiguity and to be applied at each facility,

- RoyalCert name, hologram, address and certification mark as well as, the client's logo, provided there is no misunderstanding or ambiguity.

4.8 Announcement of Certified Organizations

RoyalCert is obliged to create a database for the organizations certified according to GSTC criteria, revise it when necessary and send it to the relevant parties upon request. In addition, RoyalCert enables these organizations to be accessed and queried through its web page.

4.9 Transfer of Certification



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Based on the request of a tourism enterprise that has a GSTC certificate from a different certification body to continue its existing certificate with RoyalCert, the requestor sends the following information and requested documents to RoyalCert. RoyalCert notifies GSTC of each document transfer request received within 5 days.

Document transfer requests cannot be made in the following cases in accordance with GSTC criteria:

- If the requesting organization has major non-conformities / non-conformities that have not been closed by the company,
- If the certificate of the requesting organization is pending
- In the event of an unresolved complaint between the requesting organization and the certification body that has already certified it

4.10 Follow-up Audits

The closure period for major non-conformities requiring follow-up audits is a maximum of 1 (one) year, including on-site audits and decision-making processes by RoyalCert. On-site auditing of non-conformities and decision-making processes shall be completed in a maximum 3 months. The organization has the obligation to report the evidence of non-conformity closure within 1 (one) year, based on RoyalCert's audit and decision-making processes.

If written notification is not given that the nonconformities are closed within the specified period, the application of the organization shall be cancelled during the first certification process, and for certified organizations; the document suspension and cancellation process shall be carried out.

Follow-up audits can be planned remotely or on-site to allow observation of the situation affecting the decision. The client shall be informed of the follow-up audit decision. The process of follow-up audit shall be clarified and audit planning shall be made and implemented.

4.11 Planning Surveillance Audits

Surveillance audits shall be carried out following the GSTC criteria to verify that the client's activities/services continue to comply with the GSTC criteria. Surveillance audits shall be carried out in 12-month periods per the organization's audit program. The type of surveillance audits can be carried out as field audit, remote audit or a combination of these two based on the GSTC criteria.

4.12 Unannounced Audits

Unannounced audits are the audits carried out without notifying the client to see and evaluate all kinds of evidence situations that are likely to have a major impact on the compliance of a GSTC-certified client by RoyalCert with GSTC criteria. Reasons that may cause unannounced audits; complaints reflected in the public, complaints received by the accreditation body or GSTC, complaints received by the clients of hotel accommodation/tour operators, situations contrary to the GSTC criteria reflected in the media, social media, misleading/incorrect use of the GSTC certificate.

Any complaint or situation that may cause an unannounced

audit shall be examined and evaluated by the GSTC Technical Executive and then included in the audit planning with the approval of the Certification Manager. Unannounced audits shall be carried out in the field by focusing on the observation and evaluation of the situation subject to the complaint or audit.

4.13 Carrying out the Recertification Audit

A recertification audit shall be carried out before the expiry of the validity period of the certificate. Recertification audits shall be conducted as field audits.

The organization is responsible for monitoring the document validity period and shall notify RoyalCert at least 3 months before the expiry of the document validity period if it wishes to continue its certification. RoyalCert prepares a new certification program to cover a 3-year cycle. If the company does not request the continuation of the certificate, the certificate loses its validity at the end of the validity period.

If the recertification audit cannot be completed before the expiry of the validity period of the certificate or if it cannot be verified that corrective preventive actions have been taken for any major nonconformity identified in the recertification audit, recertification shall not be performed.

4.14 Multi-Site Organization Certification

Multi-site certification is issued to organizations which perform similar activities under the same management system, with a legal contract between a defined head office where activities are planned, controlled and managed and their sites. A multi-site organization is defined as an organization having:

- **An identified central office at which certain activities are planned, controlled, or managed, and**
- A network of local offices or branches (sites) at which such activities are fully or partially carried out

When carrying out the audit process, if any site has a major non-conformity, RoyalCert shall not

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

4.15 Group Certification

RoyalCert can provide a single certification to more than one small and/or medium-sized tourism enterprise (hotels/accommodations and tour operators) following GSTC criteria.

In order to provide group organization certification service, each group member shall be a legal entity and group members shall carry out their activities under the same management system. Group organization applications shall be evaluated by RoyalCert according to the GSTC Accreditation Manual and all activities of the certification process shall be planned and shared with the group organizations.

Evaluation of the group clients for fulfilling the GSTC criteria in terms of the requirements shall be performed on group certification audit at site.



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The findings for group clients shall be audited and the findings shall be recorded together with the evidence on the **FR.10 Audit Report**. For GSTC certification to be made within the scope of the group client, the criteria specified in this document shall be fully met by the client. The audit duration for the group clients shall be calculated by the staff in charge by taking into account the extra man/day required for reviewing eligibility criteria as referred to GSTC Accreditation Manual V.3.0 clause 15.

RoyalCert audits a sample of group members to evaluate the effectiveness of the sustainability management system. The sample size shall be based on the results of the risk assessment. The minimum number of group members to be audited annually by RoyalCert shall be the square root of the total number of members in the group. The members to be audited shall be selected in a way that includes all significant components of the TO's activities. The sampling plan shall be developed in advance of each audit, before the onsite assessment, and shall include the identification of the highest volume tours and higher risk categories of tours

RoyalCert carries out sanctions policy for non-conformities regarding the certification of groups. The sanctions shall be applied to the group as a whole according to RoyalCert procedures. Clients are required to obey the '**TL.06 Suspension, Withdrawal, Scope Reduction Instruction**' by reaching the updated document from the RoyalCert webpage (www.royalcert.com)

Failure of a group manager and internal auditors to detect non-conformities shall lead to sanctions. Failure of group management to act on non-conformities and apply appropriate sanctions to group members shall also lead to sanctions.

Major non-conformities, when the SMS is not functioning or when there is a direct risk that services are not meeting the standards or that non-certified services are sold as certified, shall lead to suspension of the entire group's certification

For the applications to be evaluated in the group organization category, the group members shall meet the group organization requirements in the GSTC criteria within the scope of their application

Requirements Applicable to Group Certification The following evaluations of all legal tourism enterprises included in this certification service, called group client certification service, shall be made by RoyalCert.

- Group members shall be individual organizations that offer similar tourism services
- Group members shall operate in the same country and with the same language
- The group shall have a mechanism to manage the implementation and maintenance of the same Reference Standard, The group shall establish and maintain a sustainability management system
- The sustainability management system shall have a mechanism to ensure and assess systematically the

conformity and performance of each enterprise of the group, including internal audits

- A group manager shall be appointed who shall be responsible for the operation of the sustainability management system. The group manager may be a cooperative of group members, an association, a consultant or an external auditing body
- All the members of the group shall be formally committed to complying with the rules and management of the group and the requirements of the Reference Standard and the certification obligations
- Group members are legally established entities, with their own name or brand
- Each member of the group shall be internally inspected annually

The outcome of the external audit of group members shall be compared with the outcome of the group's internal audit.

RoyalCert ensures that the GSTC's requirements for groups are followed for GSTC Group Certification apply.

- Formal agreement of group members with the group manager. RoyalCert reviews and evaluates the relevant contract to ensure that at least the following issues are defined.
 - a. A commitment that the group member will fulfil the requirements of the sustainable management system and GSTC criteria
 - b. A commitment by the group member to provide the group manager with the required information
 - c. A commitment by the group member to comply with group manager instructions
 - d. Acceptance by the group member of internal and third-party audit
 - e. An obligation for the group member to report non-conformities
 - f. The right of members to terminate membership
 - g. A description of the processes to be followed if membership of the group shall be suspended or terminated. All group members shall have access to the requirements of the Reference Standard and specific certification requirements applicable to group certification.
- The GSTC Industry Criteria requirements may be in any form or media.
- Documents can be an internal standard based upon an external standard developed by the group or an external standard

Documents such as contracts and internal standards which the group members need to understand shall be written in a way that is appropriate to their local language, culture and knowledge. Group members shall have adequate knowledge about standards, requirements and production methods, based on appropriate education, training, skills and experience.

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



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- *When setting up the SMS, the group manager shall carry out a risk assessment concerning compliance with the Reference Standard and specific certification requirements applicable to group certification. The risk assessment shall include at least the identification of risks at the level of group member operations and the performance of the SMS*
Risk assessment appropriate to the nature, scale and complexity of all group members. The risk assessment shall be conducted in a way to protect the integrity and compliance of all group members with the sustainable management system and GSTC criteria. In the risk analysis assessment document; communication with the group manager, change in the management and activity structure of any group member, management of all other changes that may affect the sustainable management system and GSTC criteria shall be clearly identified and activities shall be defined. Relevant assessments shall be made by the GSTC audit team and the findings will be included in the audit report
 - *Group members shall only provide services within the scope of the certification in conformity with the requirements of the Reference Standard and specific certification requirements applicable to group certification.*
 - *Safeguards shall be in place to ensure that services outside the scope of the certification are not provided by group members in a way that may imply that they are certified.*
 - *Internal audit shall take place to allow group managers to determine whether or not an individual group member is meeting the requirements of the Reference Standard and specific certification requirements applicable to group certification.*
 - *Each member of the group shall be audited annually except in circumstances that are defined by an individual certification scheme. GSTC auditors evaluate the internal audits of the group members according to their ability to meet the ISO 19011:2018 standard criteria. At the same time, the GSTC auditor assesses the competence of the group members' internal auditors according to the ISO 19011:2018 standard.*
 - *Justifications for less frequent audits can be based on different factors including the results of risk assessments. Audits shall take place at different times of the year and not be so regular as to become predictable.*
 - *Few group members shall always be audited and found to be in conformity before their services can be certified.*
 - *Internal auditors can provide advice to group members but shall not audit those members to whom they have provided advice, they shall be independent of management and shall not audit/inspect their work.*
 - *A decision by the group manager on the status in the group of individual members shall be taken annually.*

This decision shall be based on internal inspections and other relevant information.

- *Safeguards shall be in place to ensure that internal inspectors are not unduly influenced in their findings by group managers or group members.*
- *Group members shall have the right to dispute any finding that leads to their suspension or removal from the group.*
- *The SMS shall include the application and enforcement of sanctions to individual group members who do not comply with the standards or other requirements.*

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

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

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

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

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

4.16 Certification of Tour Operators

The application of tour operators shall be evaluated in accordance with RoyalCert procedures established according to GSTC criteria. If the applied scope is found appropriate, an audit program shall be carried out. The scopes are defined following:

Businesses that operate outbound tourism comprising activities of a visitor that resides outside the country of reference, either as part of an outbound tourism trip or as part of a domestic tourism trip.

Businesses that operate inbound tourism comprising activities of a non-resident visitor within the country of reference on an inbound tourism trip.

Businesses that operate domestic tourism comprising the activities of a resident visitor within the country of reference, either as part of a domestic tourism trip or as part of an outbound tourism trip.

estination Management Companies (DMCs): They may also be called Ground Handlers and other similar descriptions. Businesses arrange and operate tours for incoming tourists on behalf of overseas Tour Operators.



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Business Scope of the Tour Operator:

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

As a seller of their services on a retail basis, is the owner of their transport vehicles, or lease from others, or a combination of the two.

Tour Operators may operate diverse sets of products/services offerings across the 3 categories of Tour Operators defined above

If all active categories of tour operations are in a common management system, all categories shall be in the scope of certification.

Auditing against GSTC Industry Criteria of tour operators shall be carried out in two stages. In the first stage, the own activities of the TO shall be audited. In the second stage, TO's supplier's activities shall be audited.

During the first stage audit of the TO at site, data of the suppliers shall be collected by the auditor. Upon processing the data by Royalcert further proposal shall be prepared for the second stage audit depending on the number, size, geographical location and risk level of the suppliers in accordance with the requirements of GSTC Criteria for the TO. By approving this proposal for certification according to GSTC Criteria, TO also accepts in advance the second stage audit proposal to be submitted for its suppliers as required by the standard.

GSTC certification shall be made by auditing the compliance of the client and suppliers with the sustainable management system and GSTC criteria following the scope of the tour operator. GSTC audits include an assessment of the conformity with the requirements outlined in this document and, in particular;

- *Sustainability measurement and monitoring mechanism of services provider's performance,*
- *Degree of control of service providers involved in the supply chain,*
- *mechanism of control, internal procedures and reports of the supply chain*
- *Policy for contracting and contract implementation relating to sustainability*

Tour Operators shall encourage service providers to gain individual sustainable certification if there are relevant certification programs and evidence of an increase in the number of certified service providers is provided in the management system records. For all categories of Tour Operators, RoyalCert verifies the following on audits:

- *Tour Operators implement a policy of preferential contracting with certified sustainable suppliers if there are relevant certification programs.*

- *Special attention shall be given to contracting certified sustainable hotels due to the importance of hotels to most Tour Operator product offerings and due to the general availability of certified hotel properties. Among certified hotels, additional preference is given to those certified by a GSTC Accredited CB.*
 - *Evidence of an increase in the number of certified hotels by a GSTC Accredited CB is provided in the management system records of the Tour Operators.*
- *In cases where the Tour Operator subcontracts for land transport, special attention is given to contracting certified sustainable land transport suppliers using clean energy vehicles.*

Note: *According to GSTC Accreditation Manual V:3.0, land transport providers are a category of tour operator that can be audited by RoyalCert or another CB.*
- *The Tour Operator contracting policy minimally indicates that in the contract bidding process, when two or more bids are similar in price and quality, a certified supplier shall be chosen in preference to a non-certified supplier.*
- *All supplier contracts include clauses requiring some degree of sustainable practices to be implemented and reported to the Tour Operator.*

Main service provider components shall be monitored in the Tour Operator's management system as follows;

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

Assessment of the overall quality of sustainable supply of key product and service categories, such as: Hotels/Accommodations, transport providers, attractions, aviation components of Tour Operator contracting, and operations are outside the scope of GSTC Accreditation for Tour Operator certification. However, the RoyalCert shall assess the Tour Operator's conformity with GSTC Criterion D2.1 Greenhouse Gas Emissions (GHG) from the following perspectives:

- *Whether specific aviation components are necessary in place of lower-GHG-emitting transport options such as trains or other land-transport vehicles; and*
- *Whether the aviation booking is directly managed by the TO.*

Sampling of Contracted Services Providers

A sampling of Contracted Services Providers shall be selected to be audited and shall be made according to RoyalCert procedures and instructions prepared following IAF MD 1: 2023 conditions and GSTC Accreditation Manual V.3.0 and ISO 17065 standard. While determining the audit periods and suppliers to be audited based on the risk analysis, the number of sites where the tour operator operates, the number of passengers, and the size of the business according to the



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number of suppliers shall be taken into consideration.

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

In the case that the tour operator has a GSTC-certified supplier by RoyalCert or another accredited organization, GSTC-certified suppliers shall be exempted from sample audits. In the audits to be carried out on tour operators, the number of suppliers should be determined and accordingly, the audit should be carried out by selecting the sampling method according to ISO 19011:2018 Annex A6. The contracts made by suppliers with the Tour operator must undertake to audit within the scope of the Sustainable Management system, and the Tour operator must audit its supplier within this scope and provide evidence. In the audit carried out by TO's supplier, the method and application of the sustainable management system shall be audited.

Evaluation of Non-Conformities

The basis for GSTC certification is the full compliance of all suppliers with the GSTC criteria. The evaluation of the non-conformities detected shall be carried out for the tour operator and each supplier as specified in clause 4.6 of this guideline.

Certification Decision

The certification decision process shall be carried out in line with the document and field audits carried out to the tour operator and suppliers as specified in 4.7 of this guideline.

In case the tour operator has a supplier that does not perform its activities following the GSTC criteria, certification decisions shall not be made following the GSTC criteria.

The audits conducted on the suppliers of the tour operator and the appropriate results of the audits do not give the right to issue a GSTC certificate for the suppliers, the right to the certificate belongs to the tour operator.

4.16.1 Certification of Tour Products

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

When certifying a Tour Product, the CB shall specifically evaluate the following GSTC Industry Criteria at each audit, and shall obtain evidence of conformity with each criterion that is directly attributable to the Tour Product to be certified ("Product-Specific Evidence"). The CB shall evaluate and record Product-Specific Evidence for each of the following GSTC Industry Criteria:

A5	Customer experience
A6	Accurate promotion
A9	Information and interpretation
B2	Local employment
B3	Local Purchasing
B4	Local entrepreneurs
B5	Exploitation and harassment

B7	Decent work
B8	Community services
B9	Local livelihoods
C1	Cultural interactions
C3	Presenting culture and heritage
C4	Artefacts
D1.1	Environmentally preferable purchasing
D2.2	Transport
D2.4	Solid waste
D3.3	Visits to Natural Sites
D3.4	Wildlife interactions
D3.5	Animal welfare
D3.6	Wildlife harvesting and trade

For GSTC Criteria where Product-Specific Evidence is not required, the Royalcert shall evaluate the criteria but may choose to do so either at an aggregated level or at a product-specific level.

Certificates shall be cancelled immediately in the case where the Tour Operator certification expires or is revoked.

The Tour Operator is not eligible to conduct a certification process while its certificate is suspended.

Eligibility for Product Certification:

GSTC Tour Product Certification is only applied to excursions

Eligibility for Certification of Excursions:

- An excursion shall be certified only if it is operated by a Tour Operator that is certified regarding GSTC Industry Criteria by ROYALCERT;
- The Tour Operator is currently certified by Royalcert per the terms of GSTC Industry Criteria;
- Excursions shall be operated by a certified Tour Operator that is categorized per the terms of Type of Tour Operator;
- Excursions shall be certified only if in the case that the product operates in largely the same manner for a full calendar year, with minimal changes to land transport suppliers and vehicles, attractions, and the itinerary. When alternate key suppliers are provided to replace the regularly used suppliers, the Tour Operator selects them as a matter of standard operating procedure from their approved list within their management system; and
- Customized Excursion packages shall not be certified.

Requirements for Certification of Excursions:

- Specific Excursions shall be clearly defined and documented for auditing by Royalcert, indicating its marketed name plus key features including places visited and types of land transport vehicles used;
- Changes to the standard itinerary of the Excursion shall conform to the requirements of the management system and



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all other elements of Section for Tour operators and tour products

- The Excursion suppliers shall be controlled by the Tour Operator management system, including but not limited to:

- 1. Attractions are selected and monitored with a focus on avoidance of visits that are harmful to the environment as follows:*
 - High-risk attractions located in areas having high natural and/or cultural conservation value or high-risk activities with wildlife or sensitive cultural sites visits like marine mammal parks/shows and indigenous communities shall have documentation to explicitly demonstrate compliance with each aspect of criterion and each aspect of the indicators applicable to that criterion and;*
 - The documentation shall be updated annually with historical evidence to demonstrate continued conformity over the previous year.*
 - 2. Clean energy vehicles shall be required in the contracting process over higher-GHG emitting vehicles except where reasonable procurement of such vehicles is not possible; and*
 - 3. Sustainably procured food service shall be provided as much as reasonably possible.*
- Certifications of Excursions shall be cancelled immediately in the case the Tour Operator certification expires or is revoked.*

4.17 Scope Expansion

In the event that GSTC Certified clients notify us of their requests to add new sites and/or services to the scope of the certificate, it shall be assessed whether the relevant sites/activities affect the risk level of the client. As a result of the assessment, the relevant sites and/or activities shall be added to the most recent surveillance or recertification audits of the audit program. If the audit results are appropriate, the scope of the certificate shall be expanded.

Following the GSTC criteria, the scope of the GSTC Certificate cannot be expanded before the audit of the sites to be added to the scope of the document is carried out.

Based on the request of multi-site clients to add a new group of sites (more than one site) to their GSTC Documents, a separate sample selection shall be made for the sites to be added. The sample selection shall reflect the size, organizational structure, sustainable management system and complexity of all new sites to be added. After the new sites are added to the document, a sample site selection shall be made by adding to the general site total for subsequent audits (surveillance and recertification).

4.18 Complaints, Appeals

Complaints, appeals and disputes from applicants, clients, clients' customers and third parties regarding GSTC certification processes shall be evaluated impartially by RoyalCert following the requirements of the GSTC accreditation body and other relevant institutions and standards. The

acceptance, investigation and decision of complaints and appeals shall be carried out in a manner that does not lead to a discriminatory practice against the appellant/complainant. RoyalCert keeps the management process for appeals and complaints publicly available on its website. All complaints, appeals and disputes evaluated and closed by RoyalCert shall be notified by e-mail to td@gstccouncil.org address of GSTC within 5 days

4.19 Use of Documents and Logos

The organization may use the certificate in its works, offers, advertisement purposes, to show that its product / service is produced/offered within the scope of the management system based on the application. The GSTC Certificate issued to organizations can only be used for the scope and settlement/location specified on it.

The organization shall not jointly advertise other tourism services that have not been certified by the Reference GSTC Standard. The advertisement of those other tourism services shall not imply that the product, process or service is certified by the Reference GSTC Standard.

The certificate cannot be transferred to another organization or legal entity in any way. GSTC document validity period is 3 years. Companies whose certificate expires are obliged to stop using the document and logo. The organization is obliged to stop using and referring to its GSTC certificate after the suspension of the GSTC certificate or termination of the document contract. It shall stop the use of all kinds of documents, promotional materials, advertising activities and those bearing the relevant GSTC certification logo. In the use of documents and logos, the organization shall comply fulfil the following obligations

- a) Comply with RoyalCert's GSTC Certification program requirements when referring to its certification status in communication media such as the Internet, documents, brochures or advertising*
- b) not make or permit any misleading statements regarding its certification*
- c) Shall not use or allow the use of the certification document and any part thereof in a misleading manner*
- d) Upon withdrawal or cancellation of its certification by RoyalCert, it shall cease all advertising that includes a reference to certification*
- e) When the scope of certification is reduced, all advertising materials shall be revised accordingly*
- f) It shall not use the certification document or any part of it in such a way as to give the impression that it certifies a product (including a service) or process of the organization*
- g) It shall not give the impression that the certification is applied to activities outside the scope of the certification*
- h) It shall not use the document it has received in a manner that will cast a shadow on RoyalCert or the reputation of the accreditation body and GSTC and lose public confidence*
- l) If the client provides copies of the certification documents to others, the documents shall be reproduced in their entirety or as specified in the GSTC certification program*
- k) The scope of certification concerning the type of activities,*



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products and services as applicable at each site without being misleading or ambiguous

l) The name, address and certification mark of RoyalCert and the GSTC logo may be used provided they are not misleading or ambiguous and that the organization is entitled to receive a certificate. The instructions for proper logo use can be found at:

<https://royalcert.com/manual-procedures/'TL.03 Logo Usage Instructions'> are available on the website www.royalcert.com. For organizations that do not fulfil these obligations, RoyalCert may take actions such as correction and corrective action, suspension of certification, withdrawal of the document, publication of the violation and legal action where necessary. Where applicable, the evaluation tool shall include the additional certification and audit evaluation requirements for the use of GSTC name and marks as they relate to certification

4.20 Changes in the Reference Standard or Certification Requirements Based on the Contract

Changes in the requirements of the ISO 17065 standard, GSTC Accreditation Manual and GSTC criteria on which the certification is based shall be notified to the certified organizations, RoyalCert shall be authorized to grant an appropriate transition period for the organizations to apply the new conditions, provided that it does not contradict the provisions of the legislation and does not create an unfair competitive environment, and the validity of the certificate continues until the end of the transition period

RoyalCert announces each change in the certification conditions to the certified clients by revising this Manual. Since this guide is an integral and binding part of the contract by signing this contract, the organization shall in advance accept and undertake to observe the required amendments

The compliance of each client with the new conditions is verified by signing this contract. This verification shall be completed before the first audit after the date of the change of conditions.

4.21 Royalcert Certification and Inspection Inc.'s Obligations

It is obliged to keep all information and documents related to the organization confidential under its procedures and to have the contract containing confidentiality provisions signed by certification personnel, auditors and experts. However, this information can be shared with the accreditation body when requested by the accrediting body. When it has to provide information to third parties for legal reasons, it shall inform the relevant company

The service provided by RoyalCert is valid for GSTC audits and certification. It cannot provide consultancy for the establishment of systems for compliance with GSTC criteria. RoyalCert has undertaken to maintain impartiality in its services

RoyalCert notifies the relevant organization in writing of client complaints arising from non-conformities in the management system and is communicated to RoyalCert. Based on the importance of the complaint, an audit can be arranged in the organization

It is obliged to announce the important changes that may occur in the certification system (standard procedures or rules) as

soon as possible to the certified companies to make the necessary arrangements within the transition period to be determined. For this purpose, web pages, e-mail etc. can be used

RoyalCert has the right to make changes to the application documents related to GSTC Certification provided to the Client. However, the vested rights before the change are valid and the date of the change shall be taken as the basis for the implementation of the changes. The change made shall be announced to all organizations that have been certified and are in the application stage through the website

RoyalCert is responsible for keeping a list of certified, suspended and cancelled companies and publishing it on its website and updating it once a month. This list includes the name, address (for each of the multi-site and group organizations), scope, document number, document issue date, document validity period and accreditation, etc. of the certified client

RoyalCert is obliged to keep all records of clients related to GSTC certification activities during the validity period of the document

RoyalCert has "Professional Liability Insurance" against risks that may cause or result in damage within the scope of audit and certification activities, and the scope and limits of its liability shall be stated here. RoyalCert has no responsibility if the documents issued are not recognized by third parties. RoyalCert has the right to audit its certified client if deemed necessary

RoyalCert assumes responsibility for all Work assigned to subcontracted auditors and/or technical experts. The service provided by RoyalCert will be provided following ISO 19011, ISO/IEC 17065, GSTC Accreditation Manual and other accreditation rules

If RoyalCert voluntarily renounces its accreditation or its accreditation is cancelled by the accreditation body; Companies certified by RoyalCert will be placed under the supervision of a certification body affiliated with the accreditation body

RoyalCert may, where necessary, have observers (such as accreditation auditors or candidate auditors) present at organization audits

4.22 Obligation of the Certified Client

Certified client shall fulfil their obligations within the framework of this Guide

It is obliged to follow and comply with the changes in the documents related to the certification practices updated by RoyalCert from www.royalcert.com. The organization is obliged to apply the GSTC Criteria requirements based on certification.

Certified clients are liable to comply following:

a. Always fulfils the certification requirements, including implementing appropriate changes when they are communicated by RoyalCert.

b) If the certification applies to ongoing production, the certified product continues to fulfil the product requirements

c) The client makes all necessary arrangements for

1) conduct the evaluation and surveillance (if required), including provision for examining documentation and records,



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and access to the relevant equipment, location(s), area(s), personnel, and client's subcontractors;

- 2) investigation of complaints,*
- 3) taking appropriate action with respect to subjected complaints and any deficiencies found in products that affect compliance with the requirements for certification,*
- 4) documenting the actions taken*
- 5) the participation of observers, if applicable*
- 6) Client is obliged to grant access to all its' premises, records and documents to RoyalCert, Accreditation Body and Program Owner (GSTC).*
- 7) The client is obliged to take all safety measures and inform RoyalCert, the Accreditation Body (GSTC) and the Program Owner (GSTC) of all applicable safety requirements for the audit to be conducted in advance.*
- 8) The client is obliged to provide access to its premises to the Accreditation Body (GSTC) for any kind of audit including unannounced audits, to monitor the conformity of the GSTC certification program of RoyalCert. The client is obliged to give any kind of document or record related to the audit performed to RoyalCert, the Accreditation Body (GSTC) and the Program Owner (GSTC) if required.*
- d) The certification contract requires that the client makes claims regarding certification consistent with the scope of certification*
- e) Client does not use its product certification in such a manner as to bring RoyalCert into disrepute and does not make any statement regarding its product certification that RoyalCert may consider misleading or unauthorized,*
- f) Upon suspension, withdrawal, or termination of certification, the client discontinues its use of all advertising matter that contains any reference thereto and takes action as required by the certification scheme (e.g. the return of certification documents) and takes any other required measure,*
- g) Client provides copies of the certification documents to others, the documents shall be reproduced in their entirety or as specified in the certification scheme*
- h) With a certification contract referring to its product certification in communication media such as documents, brochures or advertising, the client complies with the requirements of the RoyalCert and as specified by the GSTC*
- i) Client complies with any requirements that may be prescribed in the GSTC relating to the use of marks of conformity, and on information related to the product.*
- j) Client keeps a record of all complaints made known to it relating to compliance with certification requirements and makes these records available to RoyalCert when requested, and*
- k) Client informs RoyalCert, without delay of changes that may affect its ability to conform with the certification requirements*