Certification Body Requirements

(GTC-CBR)

Requirements for Certification Bodies and Auditors delivering Green Tourism Certified certification

October 2026

Version 2.0

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The official language of this document is British English. The definitive version is maintained on the Green Tourism website, and discrepancies between copies, versions or translations shall be resolved by reference to the definitive English version.

Green Tourism Certified Ltd expressly prohibits any modification of part or all of the contents.

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1 General Introduction

The Green Tourism Certified Certification Body Requirements (GTC-CBR) set out the criteria for Certification Bodies (CBs) to be appointed by Green Tourism Certified Ltd (GTC), the scheme owner, and the mandatory duties they must uphold when delivering certification services under the Green Tourism Certified scheme.

GTC reserves the right to appoint only one CB to deliver the certification services under the scheme.

CBs and auditors are expected to pursue continuous improvement and apply industry best practice, including relevant ISO standards. The framework ensures neutrality, independence, and consistent, transparent and credible operations.

Requirements for auditor qualification and competence are set out in Section 6 below.

Accurate application and verification of GTC requirements are essential to maintaining the integrity of the certification system. These requirements are foundational to the scheme's success.

A list of GTC-appointed CBs, including contact details and accreditation information, is available on the Green Tourism website. CBs must notify GTC of any updates to this information.

The requirements that apply to certified businesses and applicants are set out in the Green Tourism Certification Terms, including Annex A, the Certification Logo and Claims Rules. Where this document sets a timescale that affects a business, it matches the Certification Terms.

2 About this Document

Green Tourism Certified Ltd is responsible for the maintenance of these requirements.

Readers should ensure they are using the latest version of this and other documents. Updated documents, together with the master list of all available GTC documents, can be found on the Green Tourism website.

Version Control

Version Number	Date of Publication	Summary of Changes
1.0	01/09/2026	First publication
2.0	October 2026	Aligned with the Green Tourism Certification Terms (timescales, suspension and withdrawal, appeals, logo and claims rules). Terminology updated.

Effective date

The effective date for version 2.0 of the GTC Certification Body Requirements is October 2026. All certification bodies shall apply this version from this date.

Review Period

GTC welcomes comments on the GTC Certification Body Requirements. Comments will be considered as part of the review process. Reviews take place at least once every 5 years. Please submit comments to: enquiries@green-tourism.com

3 Scope and Normative References

The requirements in this document apply to all CBs and auditors conducting audits or performing certification services under the Green Tourism Certified scheme. The requirements apply globally.

The following documents contain provisions which, through reference in this text, become part of the GTC-CBR.

For documents that specify a date or version number, later amendments or revisions of that document do not apply as a normative requirement but can be used as further guidance.

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

a) Green Tourism Certified Standard v8.0
b) GTC Certification Process Requirements (GTC-CPR) v2.0
c) GTC Certification Body Requirements (GTC-CBR) v2.0
d) Green Tourism Certification Terms, including Annex A, Certification Logo and Claims Rules
e) ISO/IEC 17065:2012 Conformity assessment – Requirements for bodies certifying products, processes and services
f) ISO 19011:2018 – Guidelines for auditing management systems
g) ISO/IEC 17060 – Conformity assessment – Code of good practice
h) Accreditation Auditing Practices Group (AAPG) – Guidance documents
    i) ISO/IAF AAPG Auditing and CAB Impartiality
    ii) ISO/IAF AAPG Key criteria for assessing the competence of CBs and their ability to deliver credible results

4 Terms and Definitions

Term	Definition
Accreditation	A formal process by which an authoritative body assesses and recognises that an organisation is competent and authorised to perform certification activities.
Accreditation Body	An independent public or national organisation that formally recognises the competence of organisations, such as certification bodies, laboratories or inspection agencies, to perform specific tasks according to international standards. Its staff who carry out this work are referred to as assessors.
Certification Body or CB	An independent organisation that audits and verifies whether products, services, systems or organisations meet specific standards or requirements. For this scheme, the appointed CB is Green Business UK Ltd.
Scheme Owner	The organisation responsible for developing, maintaining and overseeing a certification scheme: a structured set of rules, procedures and criteria used to audit and certify conformity with a specific standard. For this scheme, the scheme owner is Green Tourism Certified Ltd.
Certification Terms	The Green Tourism Certification Terms, the agreement between a business and Green Business UK Ltd covering membership, support and certification, including Annex A, Certification Logo and Claims Rules.
Working days	Monday to Friday, excluding public holidays in the country concerned.
Days	Where a period is given in days without "working", it means calendar days.

5 Requirements for Certification Bodies

5.1 General Requirements

5.1.1 The CB must ensure it can provide the appropriate expertise and experience, both in the relevant fields of activity and for the types of auditing tasks to be undertaken.

5.1.2 The CB should carry out audits in conformance with, or according to the principles of:

a) ISO/IEC 17065 – Requirements for product, process and service certification.
b) ISO 19011 – Guidelines for auditing management systems. The CB shall select and appoint the auditor or audit team in accordance with the standard, considering the competence needed to achieve the objectives of the audit.
c) Auditors of the CB must receive and pass the training provided by GTC to qualify as GTC auditors.
d) Auditors must be officially appointed by the CB, as employed or freelance.

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5.2 Recognition and Conformity of the CB

5.2.1 Certification Bodies operating under the Green Tourism Certified standard must be able to demonstrate conformity with ISO/IEC 17065 (Conformity assessment — Requirements for bodies certifying products, processes and services), either by:

a) holding current, verifiable evidence of conformity with ISO/IEC 17065 (which may include formal accreditation by a national accreditation body, but is not limited to this); or

b) demonstrating a documented, time-bound plan to achieve conformity with ISO/IEC 17065, including evidence of steps already taken and a target completion date.

5.2.2 A CB relying on 5.2.1(b) must submit its implementation plan to Green Tourism Certified Ltd at the point of recognition, and provide progress updates at intervals of no more than 12 months until conformity is achieved. Green Tourism Certified Ltd may suspend or withdraw a CB's recognition under the scheme if progress against the agreed plan is not maintained.

5.2.3 Green Tourism Certified Ltd is responsible for monitoring each recognised CB's ongoing conformity with 5.2.1. Any material change in a CB's status, including a revised implementation plan or an adverse finding from an internal or external review, must be notified to Green Tourism Certified Ltd without delay.

5.3 Independence, Impartiality and Confidentiality

5.3.1 The CB and its auditors must be:

a) impartial and free from conflicts of interest;

b) basing evaluations and decisions on objective evidence of conformity (or non-conformity); and

c) not influenced by other interests or by other parties.

5.3.2 All CB staff, especially auditors and technical experts, must operate with a high level of professional integrity and be free from commercial, financial, personal or other pressures that might affect their judgement.

5.3.3 Any person with a potential conflict of interest shall be excluded from decision-making.

5.3.4 A conflict of interest can include (but is not limited to):

a) A relationship to the company based on a personal or financial interest of the auditor or CB in the company audited.

b) Situations where the CB or auditor has acted as a consultant or advisor for the same scope or activity on which the company is being audited.

c) A role held in a capacity that may impair their judgement during the audit or influence the result of the audit, or a family member or close personal or professional affiliate of the auditor being involved in the activity of the company audited.

d) The auditor holding financial assets related to the activities of the business for which the audit is performed.

5.3.5 Auditors who worked for or with a company shall not perform audits for that company for at least 2 years after the working relationship has ended.

5.3.6 In all cases, the CB should assess case by case whether the previous relationship with the company may affect the judgement of the auditor. The person may not be assigned to the audit or decision-making process if the potential for any conflict of interest still exists.

5.3.7 The CB must establish documented procedures, in a dedicated conflict of interest policy, to determine and manage the independence of auditors and any conflicts of interest which may arise in the context of GTC certification activities. The policy or procedures must require auditors and technical experts to notify the CB of any potential conflict of interest before engagement. Auditors must be independent of the activity being audited.

5.3.8 The impartiality requirements above shall apply to everyone at the CB involved in decision-making during the certification process, including those giving final approval for issuing the certificate.

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5.3.9 Information relating to GTC databases or members, including related documentation, will be treated as confidential unless disclosure is required by GTC, by law or by regulations of national public authorities.

5.4 Application, Recognition and Publication by GTC

5.4.1 The CB submits a written application to enter into co-operation with GTC and to be appointed by GTC.

5.4.2 The CB must provide evidence of its recognition and compliance and of supporting qualifications.

5.4.3 If GTC has received sufficient evidence from the applying CB, GTC will provide a Licence Agreement to the CB. The Licence Agreement is a legally binding contract establishing the co-operation between Green Tourism Certified Ltd and the applying CB.

5.4.4 The Licence Agreement must be accepted and signed by both the CB and GTC.

5.4.5 Once both parties have signed the Licence Agreement, the CB is appointed by GTC.

5.4.6 Certification, audit or inspection activity of any kind can only be conducted after both the applying CB and GTC have signed the Licence Agreement.

5.4.7 An exception to this rule can only be made if certain activities are explicitly required during the process of accreditation or recognition of the CB, and only with explicit approval in advance from GTC.

5.4.8 As soon as the Licence Agreement between GTC and the CB is finalised, GTC will publish the name, address and logo of the GTC-appointed CB on the Green Tourism website.

5.4.9 GTC will publish the name of the CB's responsible GTC scheme manager and the contact details of the CB. The information on the Green Tourism website about GTC-appointed CBs will be publicly available and kept up to date.

5.5 Duties and Responsibilities of Certification Bodies

5.5.1 Appointment of GTC Scheme Manager

a) The CB must appoint at least one GTC scheme manager within the CB to act as the main contact person for GTC.

b) The appointed GTC scheme manager will be named as contact person for the certificates issued by the CB and published as such on the Green Tourism website.

c) The GTC scheme manager must take part in GTC Fundamental Training at least once every 3 years.

d) The GTC scheme manager should take part in the regular meetings organised by GTC for appointed CBs to exchange practical experience, feedback and examples of best practice.

e) The GTC scheme manager is also responsible for adding, removing or updating the CB's staff information on GTC databases and website. Auditors or CB employees are not allowed to be the contact person for a registered GreenCheck Superuser.

f) The GTC scheme manager is also responsible for communicating with all auditors and other relevant staff within the CB about updates and amendments to any aspect of the certification process notified by GTC (for example, through GTC system updates or notifications to CBs).

5.6 Competence of Auditors

5.6.1 The CB is responsible for ensuring that auditors working for the CB are qualified for the activities they perform, and that they comply with the requirements in this document (see Section 6) before any GTC audits are conducted.

5.6.2 Before an auditor can start to conduct GTC audits, the CB must ensure that the auditor has taken part in and passed the mandatory GTC Fundamental Training. Further training requirements may become necessary in the future. An up-to-date overview of current training is available on the Green Tourism website.

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5.6.3 The CB must have a procedure in place to ensure that every auditor conducts at least 10 audits each year (subject to availability) against the current Green Tourism Certified standard to maintain knowledge.

5.6.4 Witness audits are acceptable for maintaining competence. Exceptions to this rule must be discussed with and approved by GTC in a timely manner (for example, where the CB does not have enough audits for each auditor to conduct the required number).

5.6.5 The CB is responsible for ensuring that auditors take part in GTC Fundamental Training every 3 years to maintain competence, especially when the Green Tourism Certified standard is revised.

5.6.6 GTC monitors the training status of auditors conducting audits under the scheme.

5.6.7 The CB must ensure that auditors performing GTC audits receive and understand the GTC systems, adjustments or changes to GTC requirements, and other communications from GTC relevant to auditors.

5.6.8 When engaging any new auditor for GTC audits, the CB must also check the list of auditors suspended from GTC audits, available directly from GTC.

5.6.9 GTC may set up further training on various topics, which may also become mandatory for auditors. A complete overview of available GTC training is on the Green Tourism website.

5.6.10 Within 48 hours of taking part in any GTC training, the auditor must pass an examination. Only after the examination has been passed will GTC issue official confirmation that the training has been completed, which is one of the requirements to audit against the Green Tourism Certified standard. This also applies to the GTC scheme manager appointed by the CB.

5.6.11 The CB shall have a process in place for selecting and appointing the auditor or audit team according to ISO 19011.

5.6.12 The CB must ensure that the auditor and audit team have the specific skills required to conduct the audit, with regard to the relevant certification requirements and the scope audited.

5.6.13 If the audit team consists of only one auditor, the auditor shall have the competence to perform the duties of an audit team leader. The audit team may be supplemented by technical experts, who must operate under the direction of the lead auditor.

5.6.14 The CB shall have procedures in place to ensure that the same auditor can only conduct audits (certification and re-certification audits) of the same business for up to 3 consecutive audit cycles.

5.6.15 The CB must keep appropriate records of the education, training, skills and experience of each GTC auditor working for the CB. If it is not possible to maintain competence from one year to the next, the auditor must be trained by the CB and/or take part in GTC Fundamental Training.

5.6.16 The CB shall have documented procedures for reviewing and deciding a timely and appropriate response to any declaration of a potential conflict of interest (CoI), as described in 5.3.4.

5.6.17 The review of CoI procedures shall ensure that the declared actual or potential conflict of interest neither influences, nor is perceived to influence, the evaluations, actions and decisions of the CB.

5.6.18 The CB shall keep records of the reasoning behind any decisions, including actions taken to resolve a possible or actual conflict of interest.

5.7 Quality Management

5.7.1 The CB must include relevant aspects of GTC's systems in the CB's quality management system (QMS) as appropriate.

5.7.2 The quality management of the CB should aim for continuous improvement of the CB's management of the scheme, internally and externally.

5.7.3 The QMS shall also include a document management system.

5.7.4 The integration of GTC into the QMS of the CB should cover:

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a) Internal processes of the CB. This includes sufficient process descriptions and clear responsibilities for activities performed in relation to GTC (for example, who is responsible for issuing and signing GTC certificates).

b) Document management system. This shall include general elements (for example, manuals, policies and definitions of responsibilities) and the internal monitoring of documents and records, management review of the management system, internal audits, and procedures for identifying and managing non-conformities and for taking preventive action to eliminate the causes of potential non-conformities.

c) Services provided to external parties, including Green Tourism members. This includes communication with customers, the preparation and performance of audits, and the handling of complaints from stakeholders.

5.7.5 The CB must have an internal procedure ensuring that the CB's auditors and decision-makers do not offer or provide consultancy or advice to businesses they audit or certify, in line with the separation of advice and audit described in the Certification Terms. Relevant records shall be kept for a minimum of 5 years (subject to data protection law), or longer if required by national authorities.

5.7.6 Appointed CBs must submit an annual evaluation report to GTC. This report shall include:

a) The number of audits conducted by the CB during the calendar year;

b) A list of the certificates issued and withdrawn during the calendar year;

c) A summary of significant non-conformities, corrective actions and risks detected during audits;

d) The status of the CB's appointment or accreditation.

5.7.7 Failure or refusal by the CB to comply with 5.7.6 shall lead first to the CB's suspension, and then to exclusion from conducting audits under the scheme if the CB does not co-operate.

5.8 Establishing the Framework to Conduct Audits

5.8.1 CBs are responsible for establishing the process for audits performed by the auditors working for the CB.

5.8.2 CBs shall have a mechanism for monitoring the competence, qualification and performance of their auditors for the duration of their engagement.

5.8.3 The CB shall have a written, legally enforceable agreement for the provision of audit activities with the auditee (ISO/IEC 17065 4.1.2). For this scheme, the agreement is the Green Tourism Certification Terms, published on the Green Tourism website and agreed by the business on the application form.

5.8.4 If the auditee is a different legal entity from the intended certificate holder, the CB shall have a written agreement with all entities. The agreement shall specify that:

a) The auditee is required to conform to the Green Tourism Certified standard;

b) The CB shall suspend or withdraw the certificate if it finds reasons for suspension or withdrawal as set out in Section 5.11;

c) The certified business shall accept expedited audits, including unannounced audits, from the CB.

5.8.5 Before the CB accepts an application and before any certification or audit activities begin, the applicant must be a current member of Green Tourism (membership is provided by Green Business UK Ltd under the Certification Terms) and registered on the GreenCheck platform.

5.8.6 The CB must identify the scope of activities undertaken by the applicant that are relevant to the scheme, and which represent the requirements to be verified during the audit.

5.8.7 If the agreement between the CB and the auditee ends, the CB must declare invalid and withdraw certificates issued under that agreement, and ensure this takes effect by the end date of the agreement.

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5.8.8 When the agreement with an auditee is concluded, the CB shall inform the auditee that current Green Tourism membership is a prerequisite of certification and of the continued validity of any certificate (Certification Terms, Annex A3).

5.8.9 At each audit, the CB shall verify that the information provided by the business when applying for the audit is correct.

5.8.10 The CB must ensure that auditors use the current version of the GTC Certification Process Requirements (GTC-CPR) for each GTC audit, and that the GreenCheck portal is completed fully and correctly.

5.8.11 The auditor must verify during each audit that the auditee has access to the current versions of the GTC normative documents, including the Certification Terms.

5.8.12 If questions or ambiguity arise during the certification process, the CB must contact GTC immediately to request clarification and guidance before proceeding with the certification.

5.8.13 Audits to verify conformity with GTC requirements must be conducted at the frequency set out in the table in GTC-CPR 6.4.3, unless specific exemptions apply. The CB should encourage timely recertification of the auditee, especially to avoid a gap between two certificate cycles.

5.9 Control of the Green Tourism Certified Logo, Trademarks and Claims

5.9.1 The Green Tourism Certified name, standard and logo are trademarks owned by Green Tourism Certified Ltd.

5.9.2 A certificate holder may use the Green Tourism Certified name and logo on materials seen by consumers (or by business customers for promotional purposes) only under the permission given in Annex A of the Certification Terms, the Certification Logo and Claims Rules. The CB (Green Business UK Ltd) gives this permission when it issues the certificate, checks the logo is used correctly and acts on misuse.

5.9.3 The CB shall have a documented procedure for the issue and use of any logo or trademark of the CB (ISO/IEC 17065 4.1.3, 7.9.3 and 7.9.4) for the certification programme, including procedures for pre-publication review and authorisation by the CB of:

a) All use of the CB's logo by certificate holders; and

b) All public claims made by the certificate holder about their certification.

5.10 Changes Affecting Certification

5.10.1 GTC may issue amendments to the GTC programme documents. Amendments will be issued to the CB with a publication date and an effective date.

5.10.2 The timescales for auditees and certificate holders to conform to, and be audited against, the amended GTC documents shall be specified.

5.10.3 Amended programme documents take precedence over any previous version unless otherwise stated.

5.10.4 GTC will not be liable for any costs or loss of accreditation or certification arising from changes to the programme documents.

5.10.5 The CB shall give all certificate holders and auditees at least 6 months' notice of changes to the Green Tourism Certified standard, and time to adapt (Certification Terms, section 10). Amendments to other GTC programme documents shall be communicated to them within 30 days of the amended version being published.

5.10.6 The CB should include a summary of changes provided by GTC in this communication.

5.11 Suspension or Withdrawal of Certification

5.11.1 The CB may suspend or withdraw a certificate for a contractual or administrative reason, as set out in the Certification Terms, section 15.

5.11.2 The CB shall suspend a certificate if the certificate holder:

a) No longer holds a current Green Tourism membership;

b) No longer conforms to the Green Tourism Certified standard;

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c) Has not made adequate progress towards closing non-conformities;

d) Does not provide information to allow verification that non-conformities are being addressed;

e) Does not agree to allow the CB to carry out an unannounced or expedited audit as required;

f) Does not provide information requested by the CB within 10 working days of the request;

g) Has given misleading information, or misused the logo;

h) Has not paid fees due (Certification Terms, section 18); or

i) Requests a period of self-suspension.

5.11.3 If a certificate is suspended, the CB shall:

a) Inform the certificate holder in writing of the reason for the suspension, the date it takes effect, what the certificate holder must do to resolve it and by when (usually no more than 90 days), and inform GTC.

b) Instruct the certificate holder to stop using the logo online straight away and to remove or cover it in print and on site within 14 days, and not to claim Green Tourism Certified status while suspended (Certification Terms, Annex A8).

c) Instruct the certificate holder to provide a documented corrective action plan, acceptable to the CB as able to address the cause(s) of the suspension, within the timeframe stated in the notice of suspension.

d) Require the corrective action plan to include a timeframe that falls within the suspension period.

e) If the certificate holder submits an acceptable corrective action plan within the stated timeframe, instruct the certificate holder to implement it and to upload to the GreenCheck platform:

i) A statement confirming their acceptance of the corrective action plan; and

ii) The corrective action plan.

f) If the certificate holder does not submit an acceptable corrective action plan within the stated timeframe, withdraw the certificate.

5.11.4 On the date the suspension takes effect, the CB shall:

a) Record the decision on the GreenCheck platform, so that the public register shows the certification as suspended;

b) Suspend the certificate until the cause of the suspension has been fully addressed;

c) Verify the effectiveness of the corrective action once the certificate holder reports that it is complete.

5.11.5 When the CB has verified that the certificate holder has addressed the reason for suspension, the CB shall:

a) Reinstate the certificate (lift the suspension);

b) Produce a rationale documenting:

i) Evidence describing how the cause of suspension has been satisfactorily addressed; and

ii) A statement confirming the reinstatement of the certificate.

5.11.6 The CB shall withdraw the certificate if the effectiveness of the corrective actions cannot be verified within the timeframe stated in the notice of suspension.

5.11.7 If a certificate is withdrawn, the CB shall:

a) Upload a notification of withdrawal on the GreenCheck portal;

b) Inform the business in writing of the withdrawal within 5 working days of the decision;

c) Instruct the business in writing to stop claiming Green Tourism Certified status from the date of withdrawal, and to remove the logo from everything within 30 days, online first (Certification Terms, Annex A8);

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d) Inform the business that it may reapply after 12 months (Certification Terms, section 15), and of its right to appeal (Section 5.18).

5.12 Issuance of Certificates

5.12.1 The CB shall issue a digital certificate in English which, in addition to the requirements of ISO/IEC 17065 7.7, contains:

a) The latest published version of the Green Tourism Certified logo;

b) A unique certificate number.

5.12.2 The CB shall issue a certificate with a maximum validity of 3 years from the date of issue.

5.12.3 A certificate shall contain:

a) A statement confirming that the certified business conforms to the Green Tourism Certified standard.

5.12.4 The certificate shall include:

a) The name of the certified business;

b) The address of the certified site;

c) The business scope certified;

d) The date certification was granted;

e) The date the certificate expires.

5.12.5 The CB shall inform the certificate holder that it may claim its status as Green Tourism Certified only in accordance with the Certification Logo and Claims Rules (Certification Terms, Annex A).

5.12.6 Claims involving use of the logo or signage shall follow the Certification Logo and Claims Rules (Certification Terms, Annex A).

5.12.7 GTC provides the formal certificate templates, which must always be used. If a CB intends to adjust the layout of the template (for example, to include watermarks for security or to place the CB logo), the adjustment must be approved by GTC.

5.12.8 Each certificate covers one site and one business scope (Certification Terms, section 3). A business with several sites holds a separate certificate for each certified site.

5.13 Certificate Decision-Making Entity

5.13.1 The CB must define the entity (for example, a person or committee) responsible for making the certification decision at the CB.

5.13.2 This entity must be qualified to make the certification decision (for example, a technical reviewer) and must not have been involved in conducting the audit of, or giving advice to, the business to be certified.

5.13.3 If the entity responsible for the certification decision and the auditor do not agree on the outcome (that is, whether to issue the certificate), a third responsible entity within the CB shall be appointed to take the certification decision.

5.13.4 After a positive certification decision, the CB will issue a certificate using the latest version of the GTC certificate template (see 5.12.7). A certificate can only be issued if all applicable audit process and GTC requirements are fulfilled.

5.13.5 The CB must make the certification decision within 10 working days of the evidence being complete, and make the digital certificate and logo available to the business to download within 5 working days of a positive decision (Certification Terms, section 10).

5.13.6 The CB may issue a certificate up to 5 working days before the start of the validity period, for example before a public holiday or non-working day.

5.13.7 Certificates issued by the CB shall be entered into the GreenCheck portal on the day of issue.

5.13.8 The validity period of a certificate must not start before the date the certificate is issued. The CB is responsible for the correctness of the certificate it issues until the certificate expires, is ended by the business, or is withdrawn by the CB.

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5.13.9 If a business does not intend to continue with certification, it may end its certification before the end of the validity period by giving notice to the CB that issued the certificate and to GTC.

5.13.10 The CB is responsible for informing GTC of the end date of the validity period. If a certificate ends before the end of its validity period, GTC will update the public register on the Green Tourism website as soon as it receives notice.

5.13.11 If certification ends early, the CB must withdraw the certificate in GreenCheck with immediate effect, inform GTC, and instruct the business to remove the logo from everything within 30 days (Certification Terms, Annex A8).

5.13.12 In case of serious violations (such as deliberately false evidence, or conduct that seriously harms the environment, people or the reputation of the scheme), critical non-conformities, or major non-conformities not closed within the required timeframe (GTC-CPR 6.17), the CB shall suspend and immediately proceed to withdrawal of the certificate. If the Certification Terms between the CB and the business end, the CB shall withdraw, from the end date, any valid certificate that runs beyond it.

5.13.13 Suspended or withdrawn businesses must settle all outstanding fees. Failure to do so may result in the suspension and ending of Green Tourism membership (Certification Terms, sections 18 and 19).

5.13.14 The certificate always remains the property of the issuing CB.

5.13.15 If a CB will not renew a GTC certificate (that is, it will not conduct a recertification audit), or a certificate has expired, been ended or withdrawn, the CB shall record its reasons and inform GTC.

5.14 Documentation

5.14.1 CBs must properly document all GTC audits and certifications carried out in the GreenCheck portal.

5.14.2 The CB must ensure that at least the names, addresses, membership numbers, the version of the GTC-CPR applied during the audit, and any previous audit reports are recorded.

5.14.3 The GreenCheck portal must be kept up to date. Audit results, copies of all certificates issued and other related documents must be kept for 5 years from the date of issue (subject to data protection law), or longer if required by the relevant national authority.

5.14.4 The CB must ensure that the version of the GTC-CPR valid at the time of the audit is used and recorded for each audit.

5.14.5 An audit report must be prepared for every audit performed.

5.14.6 All documents and evidence shall be saved in GreenCheck in the relevant section of the system.

5.15 Data Transmission

5.15.1 The CB must update GreenCheck for each audit in a timely manner.

5.15.2 This includes evidence to validate conformity with GTC requirements. The CB must ensure that the evidence demonstrating conformity is uploaded and available to GTC.

5.15.3 After issuing a certificate by uploading it to GreenCheck, the CB must inform GTC of the certificate issued within 24 hours. The documents provided include, but are not limited to:

a) The digital certificate;

b) The final audit report in digital form.

5.15.4 GTC may specify document requirements or request additional information or documents, especially if this is necessary to reduce the risk of fraud or to improve the quality or integrity of the certification scheme.

5.15.5 Appropriate transition periods for providing additional information or documents will be agreed directly with the CB's GTC scheme manager.

5.15.6 The CB must also provide relevant audit evidence to GTC about any follow-up audit, without being asked and in a timely manner after the audit, in GreenCheck.

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5.15.7 The CB must update changes to existing certificates, or to their status, without delay in the business's certificate section of the GreenCheck portal.

5.15.8 The CB shall inform GTC without delay of any unsuccessful audit.

5.16 GTC Integrity Programme

GTC operates an Integrity Programme to maintain quality and risk management and to monitor the performance and compliance of CBs and auditors.

5.16.1 The Integrity Programme protects the integrity of the Green Tourism Certified scheme and supports continuous improvement and the use of best practice.

5.16.2 Within the Integrity Programme, GTC is entitled to carry out Integrity Audits of the CB.

5.16.3 Integrity Audits are conducted either by GTC or by independent auditors commissioned by GTC.

5.16.4 Integrity Audits are conducted on site and/or remotely at the CB's head office (office audits). GTC does not audit or visit certified businesses.

5.16.5 Integrity Audits aim to evaluate the performance of the CB and of individual auditors working for the CB.

5.16.6 The result of an Integrity Audit is an Integrity Report, which evaluates the performance of the auditor and the CB and identifies points for improvement and/or non-conformities based on the findings.

5.16.7 The CB must allow, and take part in, office audits scheduled by GTC.

5.16.8 GTC is entitled to forward the Integrity Report to the public authority or accreditation body responsible for the recognition or accreditation of the CB, especially in the case of serious non-conformities by the CB or its auditors.

5.17 Sanctions

5.17.1 In case of non-compliant behaviour by the CB or its auditors, GTC may impose sanctions on the CB.

5.17.2 Based on a case-by-case review, GTC evaluates the type and level of non-compliance and sets the type and level of sanctions.

5.17.3 Any individual auditor suspended from conducting GTC audits will be included in the list of suspended auditors.

5.18 Complaints and Appeals

5.18.1 The CB shall have a procedure in place for handling complaints and appeals related to GTC audits or certification activities conducted by the CB and its auditors.

5.18.2 The procedure shall enable the CB to process complaints and appeals in an effective, timely and professional manner.

5.18.3 The CB shall:

a) Within 2 working days of receiving a complaint or appeal, acknowledge it and give the complainant or appellant an outline of the CB's proposed course of action;

b) Keep the complainant or appellant informed of progress until the complaint or appeal is closed;

c) Inform the complainant or appellant if resolving the complaint or appeal requires the involvement of the scheme owner.

5.18.4 The CB shall investigate and give the complainant or appellant a full response, including any actions to be taken, within 30 days of receiving the complaint or appeal (Certification Terms, section 10).

5.18.5 A business may appeal any certification decision, suspension or withdrawal by writing to the CB within 30 days of the decision. The appeal shall be reviewed by someone who had no part in the original decision. A suspension stays in place while an appeal is considered.

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5.18.6 If the appellant is still dissatisfied, they may ask Green Tourism Certified Ltd, as scheme owner, to review how the process was followed (Certification Terms, section 16). The CB shall co-operate fully with any such review.

5.19 Compliance with Legal Requirements

5.19.1 The CB shall comply with legal requirements in the countries in which it operates, including consumer protection and green claims law that applies to the certification and the use of the logo.

5.19.2 Key personnel shall show understanding of applicable legislation and regulations.

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6 Requirements for Auditors

Whatever their specific operational area, all auditors must meet general requirements and qualifications to conduct GTC audits.

6.1 General Requirements

6.1.1 Technical knowledge and a good understanding of the audited activities relevant to GTC certification, sufficient to identify, evaluate and manage the risks during each audit the auditor performs.

6.1.2 Good proficiency in English and working language skills in the relevant native or working language.

6.1.3 Personal and professional behaviour in line with ISO 19011 (for example, ethical, open-minded, diplomatic, observant and culturally sensitive). Auditors should follow the principles of auditing in ISO 19011 when conducting GTC audits: integrity, fair presentation, due professional care, confidentiality, independence and an evidence-based approach.

6.1.4 The auditor should plan and conduct the audit, with respect to the nature, timing and extent of evidence-gathering, so that a meaningful level of assurance is available for a decision on conformity with GTC requirements.

6.1.5 Ask the auditee to provide missing audit evidence, explain deviations, or revise claims or figures before reaching a conclusion.

6.1.6 Auditors are not permitted to make the final certification decision on audits they have performed themselves.

6.1.7 Auditors are not permitted to carry out any activity which may affect their independence or impartiality, including giving advice to businesses they audit.

6.1.8 Besides the mandatory GTC Fundamental Training, GTC offers training modules for auditors on specific topics.

6.1.9 All auditors involved in a GTC audit shall take part in the mandatory GTC Fundamental Training.

6.1.10 Auditors may attend additional relevant GTC training as specified in this document and on the Green Tourism website.

6.2 General Qualifications

6.2.1 Evidence of experience in tourism or related industries in a management or supervisory capacity and/or dealing with environmental issues:

a) A CV in English (demonstrating at least three years' experience);

b) Experience gained through working in some aspect of the tourism industry, as well as experience at senior management level;

c) An applicant will normally only be qualified at first to conduct GTC certification services in areas to which their expertise relates. Additional witnessed audits may be required if the applicant wishes to conduct GTC certification services outside their area of expertise.

6.2.2 Relevant experience and demonstrated competence in environmental auditing, and one of the following qualifications:

a) A pass on an IRCA- or RABQSA-recognised EMS/QMS (ISO 14001, ISO 19011) lead auditor course; or

b) Registration as an EMS/QMS auditor with IRCA or RABQSA; or

c) An equivalent environmental, social or quality auditor qualification. An auditor is expected to have been an experienced lead auditor. This experience may include internal audits.

6.2.3 Has attended GTC Fundamental Training and achieved the pass mark of at least 75% in the examination.

6.2.4 Knowledge in handling data sources and evaluating their plausibility.

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6.2.5 Regular participation in any further GTC training that may be required to conduct audits covering specific scopes or topics.

6.3 Auditor Performance Monitoring

6.3.1 Witness audit: everyone undergoing GTC auditor training must complete a witnessed audit. Five supervised audit days are required, accompanying an approved GTC auditor on a certification audit.

6.3.2 Annual commitment to comply with the GTC auditing services agreement. Before being issued with, or renewing, an auditor certificate, the applicant must sign a document confirming they have read the Services Agreement and Conflict of Interest policy and will comply with their requirements.

6.3.3 Participation in GTC Fundamental Training must be repeated at least every 3 years.

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7 Changes to Certification Bodies

7.1.1 Certified businesses may freely choose a GTC-appointed CB to perform a certification audit.

7.1.2 Certified businesses may also change from one CB to another for recertification. However, requirements 7.1.3 to 7.1.10 on the integrity of the system must be met.

7.1.3 The newly commissioned CB must check the business's certification history appropriately, to reduce the risk that CBs are changed with the intent to cover up breaches of GTC requirements.

7.1.4 If a certified business changes CB twice within five years, the CB contracted for the second change must apply a higher risk level for the next scheduled audit than the risk level applied for the previous audit.

7.1.5 The newly contracted CB shall take 7.1.3 and 7.1.4 into account when carrying out the risk assessment, as well as the certification history of the business and the audit documents from previous audits.

7.1.6 Where a business already certified intends to be recertified by a different GTC-appointed CB, the newly contracted CB must receive the relevant audit documents and procedures from the previous GTC audit.

7.1.7 The audit procedures and documents from the previous audit must be considered during the recertification performed by the newly contracted CB.

7.1.8 GTC must provide the newly contracted CB with access to the relevant audit documents from the previous audit. Both CBs (new and previous) must co-operate if questions arise during the recertification about the audit history of the business.

7.1.9 GTC is entitled to set specific conditions for recertification that are suitable for preventing future non-conformities or ensuring future conformity with GTC requirements.

7.1.10 GTC must therefore be able to inform the new CB of any specific conditions that apply to the recertification of a business. GTC may not accept a certificate issued by the CB if GTC was not informed of the change of CB before the audit, or if the specific conditions set by GTC were not considered during the audit.

7.1.11 A CB remains responsible for the certificates it has issued until they expire, are ended by the business, or are withdrawn by the issuing CB.

7.1.12 Based on its agreement with the business, a CB may shorten the validity period of an issued certificate if the business ends the agreement with the CB. A CB cannot take over certificates issued by another CB. A business may not request a change of CB while a contract dispute is ongoing.

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