



GSTC Auditor Training Grievance Procedure

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Document Controls

This is version 1.0 of the GSTC Auditor Training Grievance Procedure, 2024.

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The Global Sustainable Tourism Council

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1. Introduction

1.1. The GSTC Auditor Training Grievance Procedure provides a framework for addressing grievances related to GSTC Auditor Training. This procedure ensures that complaints, concerns, feedback, and appeals are handled fairly, consistently, and in a timely manner, reflecting GSTC's commitment to maintaining high standards in its training programs.

2. Purpose and Scope

2.1. This procedure outlines the steps for individuals to submit grievances related to the GSTC Auditor Training program. It applies to complaints, concerns, feedback, and appeals raised by training participants, certification bodies, or any other stakeholders directly involved in GSTC Auditor Training. The scope of this procedure includes, but is not limited to, issues related to the training content, delivery, evaluations, or trainer conduct.

3. Principles

3.1. The grievance must be about compliance with the GSTC's standards, rules, policies, and procedures directly related to GSTC. The grievance is guided by the following principles:

- **Impartiality:** The process should not be open to any forms of influence which might raise doubts about the objectivity of the decisions taken.
- **Transparency:** The processes adopted should be transparent and available for scrutiny by stakeholders.
- **Confidentiality:** All information directly or indirectly disclosed during the process by all parties involved shall be treated as confidential. Information will not be shared with any third party without prior written consent from the GSTC in advance.

4. Normative References (Associated Documents)

- GSTC Grievance Mechanism in its latest version.

5. Terms and Definitions

- 5.1. **Appeal:** A request made by a participant or organization for GSTC to reconsider a decision related to their training results or other aspects of the GSTC Auditor Training Program.
- 5.2. **Appeal Committee:** A committee appointed by GSTC to conduct an investigation, review, and assessment of an appeal related to the Auditor Training Program.
- 5.3. **Appellant:** A participant or organization initiating an appeal against a decision made by GSTC regarding the Auditor Training Program.
- 5.4. **Complaint:** An expression of dissatisfaction by any person or organization regarding the GSTC Auditor Training Program, submitted to GSTC, where a response is expected.
- 5.5. **Complainant:** A person or organization submitting a formal complaint related to the GSTC Auditor Training Program.
- 5.6. **Concern:** An expression of dissatisfaction or interest by any person or organization regarding any aspect of the GSTC Auditor Training Program that is not sufficiently substantiated to be classified as a complaint, where a response is expected.
- 5.7. **Feedback:** Suggestions, comments, or input from any person or organization regarding the GSTC Auditor Training Criteria, Manuals, or training processes.
- 5.8. **Mediation:** A facilitated process where an impartial mediator assists the parties involved in a complaint to reach a mutually acceptable resolution before proceeding to a formal investigation.

6. Procedure for Concerns and Feedback

6.1. Individuals may submit concerns or general feedback about the GSTC Auditor Training program at any time. This includes suggestions for improvement or non-urgent matters that do not require formal investigation. Concerns should be submitted via email to the designated GSTC contact point, and GSTC will respond within 10 working days with an acknowledgment and, where relevant, information on any actions taken.

7. Procedure for Complaints

7.1. Submission of Complaints

7.1.1. Complaints must be submitted using the GSTC Grievance Form, detailing the nature of the complaint, relevant dates, individuals involved, and supporting documentation.

7.1.2. Complaints should be submitted via email to the designated GSTC contact point.

7.1.3. GSTC will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within 10 working days.

7.1.4. Complaints should be submitted within three months from the date of the event.

7.2. Initial Review

7.2.1. Upon receipt, GSTC will review whether the complaint is within the scope of Auditor Training and whether sufficient information has been provided.

7.2.2. If the complaint is admissible, GSTC will inform all relevant parties and initiate further action. If the complaint is not admissible, GSTC will provide the complainant with reasons for rejection.

7.2.3. GSTC may reject a Complaint in various circumstances, including but not limited to the following cases:

- 7.2.3.1. **Complaints related to written exam results or requests for individual feedback on exam questions:** GSTC does not provide detailed feedback on individual exam questions. Only pass/fail results and total scores are disclosed. Complaints or requests seeking specific feedback on exam performance will not be accepted.
- 7.2.3.2. **Complaints lacking sufficient information:** Complaints must include detailed information and supporting evidence. Complaints without adequate documentation, a clear description of the issue, or relevant facts will be dismissed.
- 7.2.3.3. **Complaints outside GSTC's scope:** Complaints that are unrelated to the GSTC Auditor Training Program or fall outside GSTC's purview will not be considered.
- 7.2.3.4. **Anonymous complaints:** Complaints submitted anonymously, or those requesting anonymity throughout the grievance process, will not be processed unless there are exceptional circumstances.
- 7.2.3.5. **Complaints older than six months:** Any complaint regarding an issue that occurred more than six months before submission may be deemed ineligible unless exceptional circumstances justify the delay.
- 7.2.3.6. **Frivolous or malicious complaints:** Complaints that are determined to be frivolous, malicious, or intended to disrupt GSTC operations or gain a competitive advantage will be rejected.

7.3. Mediation

- 7.3.1. If appropriate, GSTC may initiate a mediation process to resolve the complaint before proceeding to a formal investigation.

- 7.3.2. The GSTC Auditor Training Administrator will be appointed as the mediator to facilitate discussions between the complainant and the relevant parties to explore resolution options.
- 7.3.3. The mediator will organize a meeting with all parties involved to discuss the grievance openly, aiming to reach a mutually acceptable resolution.
- 7.3.4. All discussions during the mediation will be confidential, and any agreements reached will be documented for reference.
- 7.3.5. If the mediation results in a satisfactory resolution for both parties, the complaint will be considered resolved, and the case will be closed. If mediation is unsuccessful or deemed inappropriate, GSTC will proceed with a formal investigation.

7.4. Investigation

- 7.4.1. GSTC will conduct a formal investigation into accepted complaints within 30 working days, involving a review of all submitted materials and interviews if necessary.
- 7.4.2. GSTC holds the authority to select the appropriate investigator(s) to handle the complaint. The investigator or investigation team will be appointed based on their technical expertise and relevance to the subject matter of the complaint.
- 7.4.3. GSTC will prepare a summary of the investigation and issue a decision on the merits of the complaint within 30 working days. If there are delays in the process, GSTC will inform all parties involved and provide an updated timeline for completion.
- 7.4.4. Final recommendations or decisions will be communicated to the complainant and relevant parties, along with any actions GSTC will take to resolve the issue.

7.5. Outcomes

- 7.5.1. Possible outcomes may include clarifications, adjustments to training content or procedures, or other resolutions depending on the nature of the complaint.
- 7.5.2. If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of the investigation, they have the right to formally request an appeal. The appeal must be submitted in writing and will be reviewed by a designated appeals committee within GSTC. The appeals process will involve a thorough examination of the initial complaint and the investigation's findings to ensure that all concerns are adequately addressed.

8. Procedure for Appeal

8.1. Appeal Submission

- 8.1.1. Participants who wish to appeal a decision (e.g., training results, certification, etc.) must submit an appeal in writing, outlining the reasons for the appeal and providing any supporting documentation.
- 8.1.2. Appeals must be lodged within 30 days of receiving the original decision.

8.2. Appeal Acceptance Criteria

- 8.2.1. Given the limited resources and personnel, GSTC has established clear criteria to determine when an appeal will be accepted. Appeals will only be considered if they meet the following conditions.
- 8.2.2. **Clear and Specific Grounds for Appeal:** The appellant must provide a clear and specific explanation of the reasons for the appeal. Appeals with vague or insufficient reasoning may not be accepted.
- 8.2.3. **Provision of Clear Evidence:** The appellant must submit clear evidence to support their claims. This includes, for example, new evidence or documentation that was not available during the original decision-making process.

- 8.2.4. **Objective Errors:** The appellant must prove that the decision or assessment was objectively flawed or unfair. This could include discrepancies in how the appellant was assessed compared to others or unreasonable handling of the process.
- 8.2.5. **Excessive Disciplinary Action:** The appellant may argue that the disciplinary action imposed was disproportionate to the nature of the issue or infraction. In such cases, the appellant must provide evidence to support the claim of excessive or unjust action.
- 8.2.6. **Bias or Conflict of Interest:** The appellant must raise concerns of potential bias or a conflict of interest that may have influenced the original decision. The appellant should provide evidence or examples to support their concerns.

8.3. Appeal Review

- 8.3.1. Upon receipt of the appeal, GSTC will evaluate whether valid grounds for reconsideration exist based on the established acceptance criteria outlined in Clause 8.2.
- 8.3.2. If the appeal is accepted, GSTC will appoint an Appeal Committee comprising at least two qualified professionals. This committee will be responsible for reviewing and making a decision on the appeal while adhering to the principle of impartiality.
- 8.3.3. To ensure transparency, the selection process for committee members will be communicated to the appellant.
- 8.3.4. GSTC will notify the Committee and forward the appeal along with all supporting documentation within ten (10) days of acknowledging receipt of the appeal. The Committee will then assess the submitted information within 30 days of receiving it, determine whether to accept or reject the appeal, and inform GSTC of their decision.

8.4. Final Decision

8.4.1. The outcome of the appeal is final. If the appellant remains dissatisfied, they may escalate the issue to relevant external governing bodies as appropriate.

9. Legal Liability

9.1. GSTC will not be held legally liable for any damages or losses arising from complaints or their outcomes, as long as GSTC acts in good faith and follows established procedures for complaint and appeal resolution. This limitation of liability applies to all parties involved in the complaint and appeal process and is intended to protect GSTC while promoting an open environment for addressing concerns.

10. Monitoring and Evaluation

10.1. GSTC is committed to ensuring the grievance procedure remains effective, fair, and aligned with best practices. Regular reviews and updates will be conducted to enhance the process, ensuring it reflects evolving standards and stakeholder needs.

11. Record Keeping

11.1. All records generated from appeals, complaints, concerns, and feedback will be kept by GSTC for a maximum of 5 years, including:

- a. Appeals, complaints, concerns, and feedback
- b. Acknowledgements and notifications to the complainant
- c. Confidentiality agreements signed by the complainant
- d. Any reports prepared during the investigation.
- e. Final decisions and outcomes of investigations
- f. Annual summaries from the GSTC regarding complaints.

12. Expenses

- 12.1. GSTC maintains the right to bill costs and expenses to the parties submitting grievances and appeals for investigation at the GSTC Daily Rate.

Annex A. Grievance Flowchart

