



# GSTC Impartiality Policy

## version 1.0

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### Document History

Version	Date of Approval	Description of Amendment	Affected Section/Page
1.0	16 September 2024	New Document	N/A

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## Document Controls

This is version 1.0 of the GSTC Impartiality Policy, 2024.

Document Approval: GSTC Global Assurance Director

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The Global Sustainable Tourism Council

[www.gstcouncil.org](http://www.gstcouncil.org)

## **1. Purpose and Scope**

1.1. The Impartiality Policy aims to safeguard the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC)'s commitment to impartiality and ensure that any decision or activity made by GSTC does not compromise its commitment to fairness, transparency, and equitable decision-making. This policy prevents cases where the GSTC Board of Directors, the Secretariat, and the Assurance Panel's operations could unduly influence the organization's actions or result in potential excess benefit transactions, reinforcing the organization's commitment to maintaining impartiality in all activities.

## **2. Responsibility**

2.1. The responsibilities related to this policy are explained in clause 5.

## **3. Normative References (Associated Documents)**

3.1. ISO 17011:2017 (Conformity assessment — Requirements for accreditation bodies accrediting conformity assessment bodies)

3.2. GSTC Accreditation Manual for Certification Bodies-Industry: Hotel/Accommodation & Tour Operator in its latest version

3.3. GSTC Accreditation Manual for Destination in its latest version

3.4. GSTC Accreditation Procedure in its latest version

## **4. Terms of Definitions**

4.1. Please refer to the GSTC Accreditation Glossary.

## **5. Principles of Impartiality Policy**

5.1. GSTC's top management (The Board of Directors, the CEO, and other senior leaders) and the Assurance Panel) are committed to impartiality.

5.2. GSTC, in its role as an Accreditation Body, is responsible and committed to the impartiality of its assurance activities and will not allow commercial, financial, or other pressures to compromise its impartiality.

- 5.3. GSTC ensures the impartiality of its assurance processes by maintaining clear communication channels.
- 5.4. GSTC's objective is to promptly identify potential conflicts of interest (COI) and effectively address any actual conflicts as they arise.
- 5.5. GSTC is firmly committed to transparency and objectivity in its processes and publishes its policies and procedures that impact stakeholders such as applicants, accredited Certification Bodies (CBs), and GSTC-recognized standard owners on its official website.
- 5.6. GSTC diligently ensures the accurate dissemination of information concerning its activities to all interested parties. This includes posting pertinent information and publishing an annual report on its website.
- 5.7. GSTC maintains a non-discriminatory approach to accreditation and welcomes applications from any region of the world.
- 5.8. GSTC's accreditation processes are grounded in objective evidence and are subject to impartial assessments, free from influence by external interests or parties.
  - 5.8.1. GSTC develops and revises the Accreditation Manual through a rigorous process of stakeholder engagements, including public consultation and focus group interviews with relevant parties.
- 5.9. GSTC has established a transparent system for managing disputes, including complaints and appeals in the course of providing assurance services.
- 5.10. GSTC maintains ongoing vigilance in identifying, assessing, and monitoring risks to impartiality, including potential COI arising from its affiliations with other organizations or their personnel. The GSTC Secretariat regularly reviews the outcomes of these risk evaluations.
- 5.11. GSTC ensures thorough communication of the evaluation outcomes regarding potential COI and other risks to its impartiality in accreditation processes.
- 5.12. Accreditation processes include enforcing agreements with personnel to

manage COI concerns effectively and ensuring that all activities maintain independence and objectivity.

- 5.13. The Impartiality Policy for GSTC's assurance services adheres to the guidelines outlined in the GSTC Conflict of Interest Procedural Manual.
- 5.14. GSTC has a policy that "When an unacceptable risk to impartiality is identified and which cannot be mitigated to an acceptable level, then accreditation shall not be provided." [SOURCE: ISO 17011 Clause 4.4.7]
- 5.15. In terms of the impartiality committee detailed in the GSTC Impartiality Procedure, each member's term is two years.