



GSTC Opening and Closing Meetings Procedure

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Document History

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Table of Contents

1. Purpose and Scope	3
2. Normative Reference and Associated Documents	3
3. Terms and Definitions	3
4. General	4
5. Opening Meeting	4
6. Closing Meeting	5

Document Controls

This is version 1.0 of the GSTC Opening and Closing Meetings Procedure, 2024.

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1. Purpose and Scope

- 1.1. This procedure outlines the agenda and structure of Opening and Closing meetings held by the GSTC Accreditation Team during any type of assessment for Applicants and Accredited Certification Bodies (ACBs).
- 1.2. The assessments that GSTC conducts for the accreditation include:
 - a. Desk Assessment
 - b. Office Assessment (Head Office Assessment and Affiliate Office Assessment)
 - c. Witnessing
 - d. Surveillance Assessment

2. Normative Reference and Associated Documents

- ISO 19011:2018 Guidelines for quality and/or environmental management systems auditing.
- The latest version of the GSTC Accreditation Manual for Certification Bodies-Industry: Hotel/Accommodation & Tour Operator.
- The latest version of the GSTC Accreditation Manual for Certification Bodies-Destination.
- The latest version of the GSTC Accreditation Procedure.

3. Terms and Definitions

- 3.1. Unless specified otherwise, all GSTC terms and definitions are provided in the [GSTC Glossary of Sustainable Tourism Terms](#).
- 3.2. For terms related to Recognition and Accreditation, please refer to the GSTC Accreditation Glossary.

4. General

- 4.1. Opening and closing meetings shall be chaired by the lead assessor.

- 4.2. Opening and closing meetings are conducted by a GSTC Assessment Team, comprising one or more GSTC Assessors.
- 4.3. Opening and closing meetings shall be formal.
- 4.4. Meeting minutes, including attendance records, should be kept.
- 4.5. Opening and closing meetings may be held remotely if appropriate, with the agreement of both parties.

5. Opening Meeting

- 5.1. The opening meeting shall be conducted with the CB personnel relevant to the assessment, including the management team. Opening meetings shall be organized before the assessment starts. The purposes of an opening meeting are:
 - 5.1.1. to formally start the assessment process;
 - 5.1.2. confirm and/or adjust the assessment plan;
 - 5.1.3. confirm the assessment objectives, scope, and criteria;
 - 5.1.4. provide a summary of how the assessment activities will be undertaken;
 - 5.1.5. explain the methods and procedures to be used, including grading of nonconformities and reporting if needed;
 - 5.1.6. confirm communication channels and;
 - 5.1.7. provide an opportunity for the CB to ask questions.
- 5.2. Opening meeting may also include the following elements:
 - 5.2.1. introduction of the participants, including an outline of their roles;
 - 5.2.2. confirmation of the assessment timetable and other relevant arrangements with the CB, such as the date and time for the closing

meeting, any interim meetings between the assessment team and the CB's relevant team, and any late changes and adjustments required;

- 5.2.3. advising the CB that the assessment evidence will only be based on a sample of the information available and that, therefore, there is an expected element of uncertainty in the process;
- 5.2.4. confirmation of the language to be used during the assessment;
- 5.2.5. confirmation that, during the assessment, the CB will be kept informed about the progress;
- 5.2.6. confirmation that the resources and facilities needed by the assessment team are available;
- 5.2.7. confirmation of matters relating to confidentiality;
- 5.2.8. confirmation of relevant work safety, emergency, and security procedures for the assessment team;
- 5.2.9. confirmation of the availability, roles, and identities of the CB's personnel involved in any part of the assessment process;
- 5.2.10. information about conditions under which the assessment may be terminated; and
- 5.2.11. Information on the mechanism available to appeal during the assessment process, conclusions, or accreditation decision.

6. Closing Meeting

6.1. Closing meetings shall be conducted with the CB personnel relevant to the assessment, including the management team. Closing meetings shall be organized after the assessment is completed. The purposes of the closing meeting are:

- 6.1.1. to formally conclude the assessment process;

- 6.1.2. recap the assessment objectives, scope, and criteria;
 - 6.1.3. present, discuss, and acknowledge assessment findings, such as major and minor nonconformities, and Opportunities for Improvement (OFI);
 - 6.1.4. present and agree on the timeline and requirements for submitting corrective actions.
 - 6.1.5. inform about the next steps in the assessment process.
 - 6.1.6. to provide an opportunity for the CB to ask questions and seek clarification.
- 6.2. Closing meeting additional considerations:
- 6.2.1. any diverging opinions regarding the assessment findings and/or conclusions between the assessment team and the CB shall be discussed and, if possible, resolved. If not resolved, all opinions should be recorded.
 - 6.2.2. OFI will be presented if specified by the assessment objectives. It should be emphasized that recommendations are not binding.