

# GOLD STANDARD: STANDARDS SETTING PROCEDURES

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION AND PRINCIPLES

1.1 The Gold Standard Secretariat, governed by the Technical Governance Committee (TGC) is responsible for the development (including the initiation, design, authoring and development) of all Gold Standard's Standards. Standard is used as an overarching term throughout this document and may refer to:

- 000 Series – Technical Governance Principles & Requirements and any associated procedures, guidelines, templates
- 100 Series – Gold Standard Principles & Requirements and any associated requirements, procedures and guidelines
- 200 Series – Gold Standard Activity Requirements and any associated procedures and guidelines
- 300 Series – Gold Standard Contextual Requirements and any associated procedures and guidelines
- 400 Series – Gold Standard Impact Methodologies and any associated procedures and guidelines
- 500 Series – Gold Stand Product Requirements and any associated procedures and guidelines

1.2 This document sets out the Gold Standard's Standards Setting Procedure (SSP). It is designed to comply with the [ISEAL Alliance "Setting Social and Environmental Standards"](#) Code of Best Practice as is applicable to the Gold Standard Foundation.

1.3 Comments related to the SSP may be submitted at any time by any party to [help@goldstandard.org](mailto:help@goldstandard.org) via an email with the subject 'SSP Comments'. Gold Standard shall collate all such comments and review/update the SSP minimum every 3 years or more frequently where urgent matters are to be addressed.

1.4 The TGC has the authority over any changes to the SSP.

## 2.0 GOVERNANCE AND DECISION MAKING

2.1 Gold Standard develops and implements Standards and Modules that may take a number of different forms, as defined in 1.1, above. Their development may be newly initiated or constitute an update or revision to existing documents.

2.2 The creation or revision of these modules may be undertaken by Gold Standard either as:

(a) Self-initiated in line with pre-planned review or the strategic objectives and priorities of the organisation.

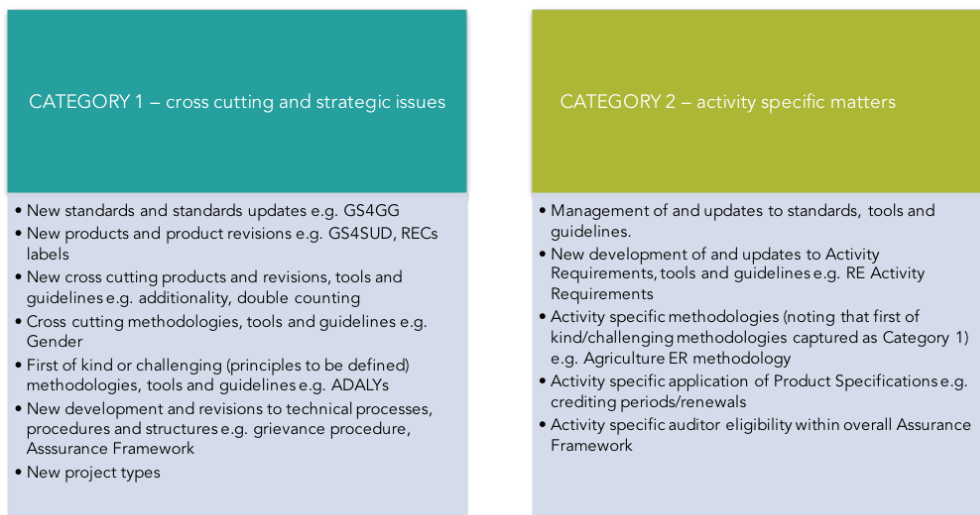
(b) By initiation via request by any Gold Standard stakeholder and subsequent acceptance by Gold Standard.

2.3 The Gold Standard TGC is responsible for mandating the development and approval process of all Standards and Modules. It does so by reference to the [Gold Standard Technical Governance Guiding Principles](#). New or updated Standards and Modules material shall not be published or available for use unless approved in accordance with the mandate given to the TGC as noted in the [Gold Standard TGC Terms of Reference](#).

Note that the TGC itself is not responsible for taking any such decisions. Instead it provides the necessary mandate to other Committees, Working Groups or the Secretariat as appropriate.

2.4 Standards approvals decisions typically fall into two categories, summarised in figure 1, below. Typically, Category 1 decisions are made by a group mandated by the TGC for that purpose. This could be an existing standing Committee, a sub-group or a newly formed Expert Working Group for the purpose. Project or function specific standing Committees are typically responsible for Category 2 decisions, though may be supplemented by further experts and/or stakeholders where required from time to time:

Figure 1- Categories of Standards Setting decisions



### 3.0 STANDARDS SETTING PROCEDURE

3.1 The Standards Setting Procedures (SSP) sets out the requirements, processes and procedures to be applied under the following development scenarios:

- (a) For developing new Gold Standard Standards documentation
- (b) For review and update to existing Gold Standard Standards documentation
- (c) For corrective action or suspension of existing approved Standards

3.2 The purpose of the document is to make clear the SSP for the above elements and provide details of compliance for all Gold Standard stakeholders and in line with the aforementioned ISEAL Codes. It also provides clear guidance as to the governance and approval requirements in line with the [Gold Standard Technical Governance Guiding Principles](#).

3.3 Standards Setting and Revision Procedures

3.3.1 Figure 2 explains the types of documents and categories (as related to figure 1, above) of decision making within Gold Standard:

Figure 2- Categories of Documents and technical developments

Document Series	Category 1 – Matters reviewed and mandated by the TGC	Category 2 – Matters reviewed and approved by a permanent Committee

000 – Technical Governance	Guiding Principles Standards Setting Procedures Grievance Procedures TGC Terms of Reference Public consultation not required	Committee Terms of Reference Public consultation not required
100 – Gold Standard Principles & Requirements	New Principles, Requirements, Procedures and Guidelines Major review and update to the above Publication of terms reference/key principles and rationale and full 2 rounds (60 days and 30 days) of public consultation required	Activity-specific application of Principles & Requirements (typically through Activity Requirements, see below) Rule clarifications and updates Public consultation at discretion of Committee
200 – Activity Requirements	New Activity-types Requirements Publication of terms reference/key principles and rationale and 1 (30 days) round of public consultation required	New Activity Requirements or updates to same (within a given Committee scope) Public consultation at discretion of Committee
300 – Context Requirements	New Context Requirements, Tools and Guidelines. Publication of terms reference/key principles and rationale and 1 (30 days) round of public consultation required	–
400 – Impact Methodologies	New cross-cutting or first-of-kind or complex methodologies Publication of terms reference/key principles and rationale and 1 round (30 days) of public consultation required	New methodologies or updates to same (within a given Committee) scope) 1 round of public consultation (30 days) at discretion of Committee
500 – Product Requirements	New cross-cutting Product Requirements Publication of terms reference/key principles and rationale and 1 round (30 days) of public consultation required	Activity Specific Product Requirements Publication of terms reference/key principles and rationale and 1 round (30 days) of public consultation required

3.3.2 Note that the public consultation requirements noted in figure 2, above may be enhanced at the discretion of TGC or Committee where deemed necessary.

3.3.3 The procedure for development of Standards under Category 1 shall be as follows:

STEP 1 – The Secretariat shall notify TGC of the intended standards development. This is carried out using the Feasibility Assessment procedure noted in 3.2 below.

STEP 2 – Governance and workplan proposal are prepared. Secretariat makes a proposal to TGC for how the new standard should be developed and governed/approved. This proposal is justified using the [Gold Standard Technical Governance Guiding Principles](#) and is reviewed and approved by TGC. The proposal includes as minimum information:

- The purpose and rationale of the development
- The timeline for delivery including any funding deadlines
- An overview of key stakeholder groups affected (see 3.5 below)

- A proposal for the governance Working Group or Committee composition and terms of reference, with particular focus on the extend and boundary of any decisions they will take
- A proposal for public consultation approach as required

STEP 3 – Terms of Reference/Principles for the development are posted to the Gold Standard website, including for how stakeholders may engage in the process. This process is outlined in 3.4, below. Relevant standards bodies shall also be notified of the proposed development as per 3.5 below.

STEP 4 – The working structure as mandated in Step 2 is implemented and administered by the Gold Standard Secretariat. The outcomes of any public consultation steps are transparently published to the [Gold Standard website](#) within 6 weeks of closure of consultation periods.

STEP 5 – Once the approval of the relevant Working Group or Committee is granted, a final notification is posted to the [Gold Standard website](#), including any details of the coming into force and transition for the new standard.

This may also include targeted consultations with key stakeholders. Further consultations may be conducted as deemed necessary for the development of the Standard. For development of new modules (for example methodologies), consultation requirements shall be at the discretion of TGC.

3.3.4 The procedure for Category 2 decision shall depend upon the specific Terms of Reference of the relevant Committee. In effect, the Terms of Reference for such decisions supersede Steps 1-3 of the SSP (i.e., they have already been mandated by TGC to carry out the decision).

#### 3.4 Feasibility Assessment Process

3.4.1 It is the responsibility of the Secretariat to evaluate and report upon the likely need for a new Standard or Module to be developed.

3.4.2 Dependent on the nature of the Standard or Module, it is either the responsibility of the Gold Standard Board or Technical Governance Committee to give the Secretariat approval/mandate to proceed with development.

3.4.3 In such cases where formal approval is needed, the Secretariat shall provide an overview of (not-exhaustive):

- (a) How the proposal fits into the objectives and strategic direction of Gold Standard
- (b) Whether an existing Gold Standard document already provides this service
- (c) Whether another standards body provides a similar service and how these might compete
- (d) How the demand can be satisfied by the development of a Standard
- (e) Risks associated with the development of a Standard or Module
- (f) Funding and resource requirements, including external expertise
- (g) Key stakeholder feedback (including NGO supporters) where required
- (h) Any other pertinent information

3.4.4 Taking into account the above information Secretariat shall assess whether to proceed with the development (if it doesn't require formal mandate from Gold Standard Board/Technical Governance Committee) or else present to the relevant governance body for approval.

3.4.5 The formal decision and supporting information shall be maintained as per the Record Keeping procedure (Section 6.0, below).

#### 3.5 Notifications to other standards bodies

3.5.1 Gold Standard shall notify all stakeholders of any new Standard or Module (where appropriate) development by posting to the Gold Standard website. Such notices shall also be included in any outreach material such as Gold Standard newsletters.

3.5.2 Due to the breadth of the scope of Gold Standard, it is recognised that notifying every possible standard in the same space will not be feasible. Instead, where Gold Standard and another standards body appear to be developing similar or identical tools or products, the Secretariat shall investigate how best to notify and discuss with the other body of its intentions.

3.5.3 The above point shall not compel Gold Standard to notify or share information with a competing standard where this would be to the detriment of Gold Standard's work.

### 3.6 Terms of Reference & Public Summary Process

3.6.1 For all new Standards or major revisions to Standards, Gold Standard shall publish a clear Terms of Reference document to its website. This document shall include:

- (a) Background and rationale for the development of the Standard including links to the Gold Standard Vision, Mission and Theory of Change
- (b) The scope and the intended outcomes and impacts that the Standard aims to achieve
- (c) An overview of governance and decision making and how the Standard will be approved
- (d) A high level workplan including reference to consultation periods
- (e) Complaints and grievance contact details and protocol
- (f) Opportunities for engagement and consultation in Standards development
- (g) Any risks associated with the proposed Standard or its development

3.6.2 The Terms of Reference shall be dynamic; new elements, news, updates and changes shall be published to the Gold Standard website as the Standard develops.

3.6.3 The Terms of Reference shall be published as soon as possible after a mandate to proceed has been given (as per the Standards Setting Procedure) and a credible, robust workplan has been designed. The Terms of Reference shall be published no later than one month prior to first public consultation round, ideally earlier.

### 3.7 Stakeholder Mapping and Consultation Process

3.7.1 As a part of the Standard development or revision process, the Secretariat shall target key stakeholder groups which include both those who will be directly impacted by the implementation of the Standard and those who are indirectly affected, giving an opportunity to all groups to contribute to the development of the Standard.

3.7.2 All stakeholder consultations shall follow the [Gold Standard Stakeholder Consultation Policy](#). The Secretariat shall maintain a dedicated area on the organisation's website for all ongoing consultation.

## 4.0 STANDARDS COMPLAINTS PROCEDURES

4.1 All allegations, grievances and complaints regarding standards setting shall be directed through the Gold Standard [Allegations and Complaints Procedure](#).

## 5.0 REVIEW PROCESS AND ANNUAL PLAN

### 5.1 Review Process

All the Standards documentation shall be reviewed at a minimum of five years or periodically as requested by the external party or the TGC. The revisions can be specific to a document or the entire Standards documentation as deemed appropriate. The Secretariat shall inform its stakeholders of the planned date of revision of Standard or its Modules.

### 5.2 Annual Planning

5.2.1 The Secretariat shall on at least an annual basis produce a workplan of proposed Standards and Modules review.

5.2.2 The workplan shall include the organisational objectives for the year and their rationale, ongoing and future tasks that will be undertaken, expected timelines of completion, the team or the individual responsible for the tasks, contact information, etc.

5.2.3 The workplan as relates to Standards and Modules development shall be posted on the Gold Standard website where required.

## **6.0 RECORD KEEPING**

6.1 The Secretariat shall maintain a permanent record of previous Standard development, as well as the revisions of the Standard (including a record of Version Control). These include policies and procedures guiding the development of the Standard and shall be made available to stakeholders upon request.

6.2 During any public comment period and feedback/ suggestions/comments received from the stakeholders and/or the TGC on any of the Standard elements shall be compiled and recorded. The Secretariat's assessment of the feedback/ suggestions/comments shall also be maintained.

6.3 The Secretariat shall retain the draft and final versions of the Standard.