



**GOVERNANCE**

# STANDARDS SETTING PROCEDURES

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## SUMMARY

This document sets out [Gold Standard’s Standards Setting Procedure](#). This includes the development and revision of standards, tools, guidelines, methodologies and procedures.

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## 1| INTRODUCTIONS AND PRINCIPLES

- 1.1.1 | 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 Standards under Gold Standard for the Global Goals (GS4GG). 'Standard' is used as an overarching term throughout this document and may refer to the following list and any associated procedures, guidelines, templates:
- 000 Series – Technical Governance Principles & Requirements
  - 100 Series – Principles & Requirements
  - 200 Series – Activity Requirements
  - 300 Series – Contextual Requirements
  - 400 Series – Impact Quantification Methodologies
  - 500 Series – Product Requirements
- 1.1.2 | This document sets out the [Gold Standard's Standards Setting Procedure](#) hereafter "SSP". It is designed to comply with the ISEAL Alliance "[Setting Social and Environmental Standards](#)" Code of Best Practice as is applicable to Gold Standard for the Global Goals.
- 1.1.3 | Comments related to the SSP may be submitted at any time, by any party to [Standards@goldstandard.org](mailto:Standards@goldstandard.org) with the subject 'SSP Comments'. Gold Standard shall review/collate all such comments and update the SSP at a minimum every 3 years or more frequently where urgent matters are to be addressed.
- 1.1.4 | The TGC has the authority over any changes to the SSP.
- 1.1.5 | In the case of non-substantive changes to the standard (for example corrections of error, language clarification), Gold Standard does not conduct a formal revision process but instead includes notification of any changes in the subsequent review and revision process.
- 1.1.6 | Between regular or planned updates to the Standard there may be urgent clarifications or corrections required, for example, if Gold Standard receives substantial feedback from stakeholders that warrants an immediate review of a specific requirement in the Standard. Where such circumstances occur, Gold Standard will update the requirements in discussion with [Technical Governance Committee \(TGC\)](#) or appointed Technical Advisory Committee (TAC). The updates will be published, and stakeholders notified. Where required, further stakeholder engagement sessions may follow, dependent on the nature of the changes. The precise process for decision, publication and further engagement on unplanned updates shall be discussed with the TGC or appointed TAC on a case-by-case basis

## 2| GOVERNANCE AND DECISION MAKING

- 2.1.1 | Gold Standard develops and implements Standards and Modules that may take a number of different forms, as defined in 1.1.1 | above. The

development of these Standards and Modules may be newly initiated or constitute an update or revision to existing documents.

- 2.1.2 | The creation or revision of these modules may be undertaken by Gold Standard either as:
  - a. Self-initiated in line with pre-planned reviews or the strategic objectives and priorities of the organisation.
  - b. By initiation via request by any stakeholder and subsequent acceptance by Gold Standard.
  
- 2.1.3 | The TGC is responsible for mandating the development and approval process of all Standards and Modules. It does so by reference to the [Technical Governance Guiding Principles](#). New or updated Standards and Modules shall not be published or available for use unless approved in accordance with the mandate given to the TGC or appointed Committee as noted in the [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 [Advisory Committees, Working Groups or the Secretariat as appropriate](#).
  
- 2.1.4 | Standard approval decisions typically fall into two categories, summarised in TABLE 1, below. Typically, Category 1 decisions are made by TGC or a Technical Advisory Committee 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 these may be supplemented by further experts and/or stakeholders where required.

**Table 1 – Categories of Standards Setting decisions**

CATEGORY 1	CATEGORY 2
Cross cutting and strategic issues	Activity specific matters
- New standards and standard updates e.g. GS4GG	- Management of and updates to standards, tools and guidelines.
- New products and product revisions e.g. GS4SUD, REC labels	- New development of and updates to Activity Requirements, tools and guidelines e.g. RE Activity Requirements
- New cross cutting products and revisions, tools and guidelines e.g. additionality, double counting	- Activity specific methodologies (noting that first of its kind methodologies captured as Category 1) e.g. Agriculture emission reduction quantification methodology
- Cross cutting methodologies, tools and guidelines e.g. Gender	- Activity specific application of Product Specifications e.g. crediting periods/renewals
- First of its kind methodologies, tools and guidelines e.g. ADALYs	- Activity specific auditor eligibility within overall VVB Requirements

- New development and revisions to technical processes, procedures and structures e.g. Grievance Procedure, Validation & Verification Requirements (VVB)
- New project types

### 3| STANDARDS SETTING PROCEDURE

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

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

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 in line with the aforementioned ISEAL Codes. It also provides clear guidance as to the governance and approval requirements in line with the Technical Governance Guiding Principles.

#### 3.1 | Standards Setting and Revision Procedures

3.1.1 | Table 2 explains the types of documents and categories (as related to Table 1, above) of decision making within Gold Standard:

**Table 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Guiding Principles</li> <li>- Standards Setting -Procedures</li> <li>- Grievance Procedures</li> <li>- TGC Terms of Reference</li> <li>- Public consultation not required</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Committee Terms of Reference</li> <li>- Public consultation not required</li> </ul>
100 – Principles & Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- New Principles, Requirements, Procedures and Guidelines</li> <li>- Major review and update to the above</li> <li>- Publication of terms of reference / key principles and rationale</li> <li>- 2 rounds (60 days and 30 days) of public consultation required</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Activity-specific application of Principles &amp; Requirements (typically through Activity Requirements, see below)</li> <li>- Rule clarifications and updates</li> <li>- Public consultation at discretion of Committee</li> </ul>
200 – Activity Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- New Activity-types Requirements (when outside given Committee scope)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- New Activity Requirements or updates to same (within a given Committee scope)</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Publication of terms of reference/key principles and rationale</li> <li>- 1 round (30 days) of public consultation required</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Public consultation at discretion of Committee</li> </ul>
300 – Context Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- New Context Requirements, Tools and Guidelines.</li> <li>- Publication of terms of reference/key principles and rationale</li> <li>- 1 round (30 days) of public consultation required</li> </ul>	
400 – Impact Methodologies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- New cross-cutting or first of its kind (outside given Committee scope)</li> <li>- Publication of terms of reference/key principles and rationale</li> <li>- 1 round (30 days) of public consultation required</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- New methodologies or updates to same (within a given Committee) scope</li> <li>- 1 round (30 days) of public consultation at discretion of Committee</li> </ul>
500 – Product Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- New cross-cutting Product Requirements (outside given Committee Scope)</li> <li>- Publication of terms of reference/key principles and rationale</li> <li>- 1 round (30 days) of public consultation required</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Product Requirements (within given Committee scope)</li> <li>- Publication of terms of reference/key principles and rationale</li> <li>- 1 round (30 days) of public consultation required</li> </ul>

3.1.2 | Note that the public consultation requirements noted in Table 2, may be enhanced at the discretion of TGC or appointed Committee where deemed necessary.

3.1.3 | 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 [Technical Governance Guiding Principles](#) and is reviewed and approved by TGC. The proposal includes (as a minimum):

- 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 extent 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 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 update 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.

[An approved GS4GG sStandard document or rule update ~~shall~~ will be made public on the Gold Standard website within 30 days from obtaining approval from TGC or TGC appointed committee, for example Technical Advisory Committee.](#)

- 3.1.4 | 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).
- 3.1.5 | As a default all standard updates within category 1 and 2 have 90 days grace period before updates come into force unless it is differently specified in the update document.

### **3.2 | Feasibility Assessment Process**

- 3.2.1 | It is the responsibility of the Secretariat to evaluate and report upon the likely need for a new Standard or Module to be developed.
- 3.2.2 | 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.
- 3.2.3 | 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
- d. Risks associated with the development of a Standard or Module
- e. Funding and resource requirements, including external expertise
- f. Key stakeholder feedback (including NGO supporters) where required
- g. Any other pertinent information

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

3.2.5 | The formal decision and supporting information shall be maintained as per the Record Keeping procedure (Section 6| below).

### **3.3 | Notifications to Other Standard Bodies**

3.3.1 | 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](#).

3.3.2 | 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.

3.3.3 | 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.

### **3.4 | Terms of Reference & Public Summary Process**

3.4.1 | 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

f.g. Any risks associated with the proposed Standard or its development

3.4.2 | 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.

3.4.3 | 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.

### **3.5 | Stakeholder Mapping and Consultation Process**

3.5.1 | 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.

3.5.2 | 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| STANDARDS COMPLAINTS PROCEDURES**

4.1.1 | All allegations, grievances and complaints regarding standards setting shall be directed through the [Gold Standard Grievance Procedure](#).

## **5| REVIEW PROCESS AND ANNUAL PLAN**

### **5.1 | Review Process**

5.1.1 | 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| RECORD KEEPING

6.1.1 | The Secretariat shall maintain a permanent record of previous Standard development (i.e. all versions of all elements of the standard are permanently stored), 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.

6.1.2 | 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.

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

## DOCUMENT REVISION HISTORY

Version number	Release date	<u>Summary of changes</u>
Version 2.1 (Current version)	Feb 2021	a. <u>Addition of process requirement for the publishing of standard document /rule update <del>shall</del> on the Gold Standard website within 30 days of TAC approval</u>
Version 2.0	July 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. <u>Revision of the document template</u></li> <li>b. <u>Addition of process requirement for non-substantive changes to the standard</u></li> <li>c. <u>Addition of process requirement for ad-hoc changes to the standard (due to urgent clarifications or corrections)</u></li> <li>d. <u>Specific changes made to Table 2 (Categories of Documents and technical developments) to increase the breadth of its scope</u></li> <li>e. <u>Addition of 90 days grace period requirement before updates come into force (unless stated otherwise in the update document).</u></li> <li>f. <u>Making editorial improvements</u></li> </ul>
Version 1.0 (Initial version)	July 2017	<u>Initial adoption</u>