



ASSURANCE

VALIDATION/VERIFICATION BODY REQUIREMENTS

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VERSION 2.0

The Validation and Verification Body Requirements follow the Assurance model of the Gold Standard for the Global Goals, which in turn is based on ISEAL’s Assurance Code.

SUMMARY

This document contains Gold Standard Validation/Verification Body Requirements for certification under the Gold Standard for the Global Goals and earlier versions of Gold Standard. The principles, rules and requirements set out in this document are applicable to all VVBs and certification bodies that seek to conduct Validations and Verifications for certifying Gold Standard Projects and Programmes.

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Examination	help@sustain-cert.com
Trainings	
Addition/deletion of auditor (s)	
Certification decisions	
Grievance	

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1 | PREFACE

- 1.1.1.1 | This document is to be read alongside the Gold Standard for the Global Goals [Principles & Requirements](#). The Gold Standard Validation & Verification Body Requirements (hereby referred to as the GS VVB Requirements) define the following key matters:
- a. The guiding principles that underpin the Gold Standard certification process
 - b. The Gold Standard certification decision making process
 - c. The criteria and procedure under which a VVB becomes approved (and maintains approval) as a GS VVB
 - d. The GS VVBs eligible for different certification pathways under Gold Standard for the Global Goals
- 1.1.1.2 | The Requirements laid out in this document shall apply to all GS VVBs carrying out audits of Gold Standard activities, regardless of which version of Gold Standard is being applied. Note that for brevity, the standard refers to Projects throughout the text; this may be read as Projects, Programmes or interventions, unless explicitly stated.
- 1.1.1.3 | Gold Standard's approach to certification decision making is overseen by the Gold Standard [Technical Advisory Committee](#) (TAC). Changes to the certification approach laid out in these Requirements shall be approved by TAC.
- 1.1.1.4 | It is envisaged that the Requirements shall be reviewed once every two years. Changes made to these Requirements shall be communicated to VVBs and project developers through Gold Standard communications, including the technical update newsletter. To receive these updates, [sign-up for news](#).

2 | SCOPE & APPLICABILITY

- 2.1.1.1 | This document sets out the Principles and Requirements for certification under the [Gold Standard for the Global Goals](#) and earlier versions of Gold Standard. These Requirements are part of a broader set of documents which work together to create a consistent and credible approach to standards and certification of Projects and SDG Impacts.
- 2.1.1.2 | The document is applicable to all VVBs seeking to conduct Validations and Verifications for [Gold Standard for the Global Goals](#) and for all earlier versions of Gold Standard.
- 2.1.1.3 | The Requirements set out in this document are applicable to all VVBs and certification bodies that seek to certify Gold Standard Projects and Programmes. Specifically, this document lists the following Requirements:
- a. Procedure for a VVB and individual auditors to become eligible for performing validation and verification activities;

- b. Procedure for maintaining eligibility to conduct validation and verification assessments in support of Gold Standard Certification.

2.1.1.4 | [SustainCERT](#) is Gold Standard's appointed certification/assurance body that is responsible for confirming certification decisions.

3 | EFFECTIVE DATE

3.1.1.1 | This document comes into force on 14/01/2021

3.1.1.2 | From 14 August 2017, only GS-VVBs, as defined in this document, are eligible to conduct validation and verification of Gold Standard projects & programmes registered under any version of Gold Standard.

4 | TERMS

4.1.1.1 | In addition to the definitions contained in the "[Glossary of Gold Standard terms](#)", the following terms apply in this Standard.

Competence - ability to apply knowledge and skills in order to perform validation and/or verification/certification activities in accordance with all Gold Standard rules and requirements;

Corrective action - action to eliminate the cause of a detected non-conformity in order to prevent its recurrence;

Individual expert – a person who may be self-employed, part of a one-person company or employed by any other company, as validators, verifiers, technical experts, team leaders and technical reviewers, used by a VVB to supplement its internal resources;

Knowledge - the theoretical and/or practical understanding of a subject;

Non-conformity - non-fulfillment of a Gold Standard VVB requirement;

Outsourced entities – other legal entities to which the VVB outsources some of the validation and verification/certification functions;

Skill - to carry out in practice; to do;

Technical area - a sub-sector of a sectoral scope defined based on the nature of technical processes, applicable methodologies, monitoring requirements and/or environmental impacts;

Technical expert - a qualified person who provides specific technical, methodological and sectoral knowledge and/or expertise in a validation or verification/certification team or a technical review team;

Technical review - an assessment of a validation or verification/certification opinion and report conducted independently from the validation or verification/certification team that prepared the opinion and report in order to ensure that the validation or verification/certification has been conducted in accordance with all applicable Gold Standard validation or verification/certification requirements;

Technical reviewer - a qualified person appointed to conduct the technical review in a technical review team;

Technical review team - one or more persons conducting a technical review;

Validation or verification/certification personnel - persons performing validation activities (validator, team leader, technical expert and technical reviewer) or verification/certification activities (verifier, team leader, technical expert and technical reviewer);

Validation or verification/certification team - one or more persons conducting a validation or verification/certification;

Validation or verification/certification team leader - a qualified person appointed to direct and supervise a validation or verification/certification team conducting a validation or verification/certification;

Validator or verifier - a qualified person appointed to conduct a validation or verification/certification in a validation or verification/certification team.

5 | CERTIFICATION GUIDING PRINCIPLES

5.1 | Guiding Principles

5.1.1.1 | The Gold Standard Guiding Principles for Certification are as follows:

- a. The climate security and sustainable development contributions and impacts delivered by a project, along with compliance with Eligibility Principles stated in the [Principles & Requirements](#) shall be thoroughly and accurately measured as well as reviewed by an approved independent third party (GS VVB) AND Gold Standard or its appointed certification/assurance body ([SustainCERT](#)).
- b. All Gold Standard NGO Supporters and other stakeholders can support the stakeholder consultation process and may be invited to provide input for every project at defined points in the certification process.
- c. The project shall transparently document and provide certification related information to enable reproducibility and traceability. Approved Project documents shall be made public on the [Impact Registry](#) unless pre-agreed as confidential (for example, in the case of commercially or privately sensitive information). The list of published documentation can be found in the [Principles & Requirements](#) (and in some cases also specific Activity Requirements and applicable Methodologies).
- d. The project's conformity and progress shall be monitored, reported and independently Verified throughout the entire certification period as per the project cycle described in [Principles & Requirements](#) or earlier versions of Gold Standard.

- e. The project shall have a Monitoring & Reporting Plan, based on the outcome of the [Safeguarding Principles Assessment](#), [SDG Impacts Assessment](#) and [Stakeholder Consultations](#). The monitoring parameters shall be regularly monitored, clearly reported on and independently validated/verified.
- f. Independent, accredited validation & verification bodies shall verify that the project meets all rules and that all claims and any calculations are accurate. VVBs must be able to demonstrate and maintain impartiality while conducting validation and verification activities.
- g. Gold Standard Secretariat or its appointed certification/assurance body shall review all documentation and may require corrections or enhancements where needed to ensure that a project meets Gold Standard requirements. These corrections or enhancements may take place after the third-party Validation or Verification if that is deemed to be incomplete or incorrect.

5.2 | ISEAL Alliance

- 5.2.1.1 | Gold Standard is in the process of becoming a full [ISEAL Alliance](#) Member and as such has evolved its certification approach to be in line with the [ISEAL Assurance Code](#)¹. Accordingly, the Requirements stated in this document will be reviewed and updated as part of the planned updates to the Standard and be brought further in line with the Code. A notification of changes shall be issued to all affected parties, particularly Accreditation Bodies (where appropriate) and applicant or approved GS VVBs and also published to the relevant section of the Gold Standard website.
- 5.2.1.2 | The following provides a brief overview/comparison of the ISEAL Assurance Code principles and how they are broadly adhered to by these Requirements:
 - a. **Consistency** – Gold Standard projects are first validated or verified by an accredited third party; GS VVB. SustainCERT, Gold Standard’s appointed certification/assurance body then administers a Roster of Experts to conduct peer reviews of the recommendations /completed validations and verifications to enhance consistency and rigour. In addition, SustainCERT provides regular training and support to GS VVBs, as well as tools, templates and guidelines to support a consistent and rigorous assessment process.

¹ ISEAL Assurance Code of Good Practice Version 2.0 < <https://www.isealalliance.org/get-involved/resources/iseal-assurance-code-good-practice-version-20>>

- b. **Rigour** – The level of rigour applied by Gold Standard is dependent on the Certification pathway proposed. For example, the application of a Gold Standard Approved Methodology defines the level of rigour and confidence required in its assessment. For the core Principles & Requirements, a combination of support and approval of GS VVBs and closed peer review ensures the level of rigour is maintained.
- c. **Competence** – VVBs must first demonstrate they have the required audit competence via a Gold Standard Recognised Accreditation. Further they must demonstrate this experience to Gold Standard to become approved as well to undertake regular training. This training and assessment approach is also applied to the SustainCERT’s Roster of Experts, who conduct peer reviews of the VVB recommendations.
- d. **Impartiality** – Gold Standard recognises third party Accreditations as part of the approvals process to become a GS-VVB. Gold Standard does not play any decision-making role in the assessment or accreditation decision making undertaken by the third party, thereby ensuring the impartiality of first assessment. Gold Standard shall, however, share any performance feedback with the third party where appropriate and requested. With regards to the certification, a project may only enter the certification review process with a positive validation or verification opinion from a VVB. It is not possible for Gold Standard to overturn a negative opinion, thereby ensuring impartiality of audit. Finally, the certification decision making process is supported by the Gold Standard independent [Technical Advisory Committee](#) and [NGO Supporter community](#), who are able to review and raise concerns on any certification review.
- e. **Transparency** – All Gold Standard certification information is publicly available via the [Gold Standard Impact Registry](#). In certain cases, materials may be retracted, for example, in the case of commercially sensitive financial information.
- f. **Accessibility** – The process described in these Requirements is broadly similar to other standards operating similarly to Gold Standard. It is reflective of market expectation though Gold Standard commits to reviewing accessibility at each planned review.

6 | GOLD STANDARD CERTIFICATION DECISION MAKING

- 6.1.1.1 | SustainCERT, Gold Standard’s appointed certification/assurance body is responsible for confirming certification decisions. There are a number of safeguards in place to ensure that this process maintains the principles set out in section 5| above, as described in this section.

6.1.1.2 | Gold Standard certification decision making is undertaken as a five-step process, with specific timings and details dependent on the certification pathway sought by the project. The steps are as summarised in Figure 1 and briefly described below:



Figure 1 . Certification decision making

STEP 1 – The project developer appoints a GS VVB, eligible for the specific certification pathway sought. The appointment and contracting are between the project developer and the VVB and shall include the scope of work that is comprehensive and suitable for the certification pathway sought.

STEP 2 – The VVB conducts Validation or Verification (as appropriate to project status) of the Project. This involves audit team appointment, audit planning, site visit, assessment of conformity to the [Principles & Requirements](#), or earlier versions of Gold Standard and associated standard documents and submission of a Validation or Verification Report with opinion (positive or negative) to SustainCERT.

STEP 3 – If the Validation or Verification Report provides a positive opinion, then a review is initiated by SustainCERT. This involves peer review by at least one expert (in some cases a second reviewer is also appointed at SustainCERT’s discretion, for example, high risk or first-of-kind projects). The documentation is also posted for review and comment by the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and NGO Supporters. During this step, Non-conformities (NCs), Corrective Action Requests (CARs), Observations (OBs)/Clarifications (CLs) and Forward Action Requests (FARs) may be raised, beyond those that may have already been raised by the VVB. Certification can only proceed if these are addressed.

STEP 4 – Certification is provided if:

- i. The VVB provides a Validation or Verification Report with positive opinion (and has not subsequently removed or changed this position during the review by SustainCERT).
- ii. The peer review carried out by SustainCERT is satisfied that all CARs and NCs are fully resolved (including any associated with TAC, NGO Supporters, or stakeholder inputs as below).
- iii. There are no outstanding TAC or NGO Supporter comments unresolved (see 6.1.1.3 | below).

STEP 5 – The certification decision along with any certificates are published on the [Gold Standard Impact Registry](#) as confirmation.

- 6.1.1.3 | NGO Supporters and other actors (as defined by Gold Standard in certain Activity Requirements) are stakeholders to the certification process, as opposed to decision makers. Their comments shall be discussed with the TAC if they cannot be resolved directly between SustainCERT and the NGO Supporter. The decision on if/how to address stakeholder comments therefore lies with the TAC.

7 | VVB ELIGIBILITY & APPROVAL REQUIREMENTS

This section describes the requirements for a VVB to become eligible and to maintain eligibility to conduct validation and verification assessments in support of Gold Standard Certification. An approved VVB is known as a GS VVB and they are eligible for a number of different certification pathways under GS4GG, dependent on their accreditation and competency backgrounds.

7.1 | General Requirements

- 7.1.1.1 | All approved VVBs shall comply with the Requirements in this document and any other Gold Standard rules, requirements and policies such as [Gender Policy](#) of the GS4GG.
- 7.1.1.2 | All decisions regarding the approval, suspension, or cancellation of VVBs approval status, based on the results of oversight activities, are made at the sole discretion of the Gold Standard, overseen by the TAC.

7.2 | Certification Pathways

- 7.2.1.1 | To conduct the validation and/or verification/certification of a Gold Standard project activity or Programme of Activities (PoA) and issue a validation and/or verification/certification opinion and report, a VVB shall be approved for project type/certification pathway applied by the project activity or PoA. The list of project type/certification pathway is contained in Annex A below.

7.3 | Legal status and matters

- 7.3.1.1 | A VVB shall be an entity registered under applicable national or international law so that it can function legally, enter into contracts, make decisions independently and may be sued in its own name.
- 7.3.1.2 | A VVB shall not have any pending judicial process for malpractice, fraud and/or other activity incompatible with functions as a VVB.
- 7.3.1.3 | A VVB shall maintain a record of all the judicial processes pending against it as well as information of any judicial cases held in the past.

7.3.1.4 | If the subject matter of a judicial process pending or instituted against the VVB is such that it is incompatible with its functions as a VVB, the VVB shall promptly report the matter to the Gold Standard Secretariat.

7.4 | Accreditation

7.4.1.1 | To be eligible to become a GS VVB, a VVB must hold a valid accreditation that is recognised by Gold Standard. The recognised accreditation programmes² are

- i. ISO 14065 for Greenhouse Gas activities accreditation offered under the ANSI-GS Accreditation Program
- ii. UNFCCC-CDM Accreditation (AIE or DOE status)
- iii. ASI – FSC Certification Body status

Other accreditations may be recognised over time.

Note that certain accreditations provide access to specific certification pathways, as defined in Annexure A.

7.4.1.2 | VVBs shall notify Gold Standard of any inconsistency between the requirements set down by any recognised accreditation and those of the Gold Standard as outlined in this document. Gold Standard shall advise the VVB on the course of action.

7.4.1.3 | An approved VVB shall maintain Gold Standard recognised accreditation, as listed above. Failure to maintain accreditation, or lapse of accreditation, may result in the immediate suspension and cancellation of approval.

7.4.1.4 | Within 120 days of being notified of any nonconformance by accreditation program, VVB shall provide written notice to the Gold Standard of the corrective action. That notification shall include reasons for the corrective action and the type of corrective action. The VVB must provide additional information to the Gold Standard upon request.

7.4.1.5 | In the event that a VVB loses, changes or does not renew its accreditation during the 36-month period from the date of approval, it shall immediately notify Gold Standard and provide details of all Projects for which it has contracts that require conclusion. Gold Standard shall direct the VVB on any additional course of action to conclude outstanding validations/verifications.

² Other accreditation programmes may be added to this list in due course (for example further ISO 14064/65 providers). Project developers and/or VVBs may request Gold Standard to investigate and decide whether to approve further such accreditation routes for a fee (Please contact Gold Standard Secretariat for applicable fee schedule). The decision is taken by the GS-TAC with a review period of 8 weeks.

The VVB must not sign new contracts for validation/verification services until a decision is made by Gold Standard.

7.5 | Human resources

7.5.1 | General

- 7.5.1.1 | GS VVB shall establish, document, implement and maintain a procedure for determining human resources having the competence prescribed in sections 7.6 | below in order to perform its validation and/or verification/certification functions.
- 7.5.1.2 | GS VVB shall employ or have access to, sufficient personnel/resources with the necessary competence to cover its operations related to the applicable certification pathways for which the VVB has applied for GS approval or has been approved.
- 7.5.1.3 | GS VVB shall establish, document, implement and maintain a procedure for the recruitment of personnel so as to ensure they meet competence requirements in this Standard.
- 7.5.1.4 | GS VVB shall evaluate, at least annually, the sufficiency of resources required to perform its validation and/or verification/certification functions taking into account the necessary competence related to the technical area(s), geographical locations of Gold Standard project activities and PoAs, past performance of its validation and/or verification/ certification functions and expected volume of its validation and/or verification/certification activities for the future. The GS VVB shall document the evaluation conducted and its results.
- 7.5.1.5 | The validation and verification/certification personnel, irrespective of whether they are internal or external resources, shall be under the responsibility³ of a member of the VVB management.
- 7.5.1.6 | In each certification pathway/project type for which a VVB has applied for Gold Standard approval or has been approved, the VVB shall have:
 - a. At least one person qualified in the technical area who will participate in the validation or verification/certification team (validator, verifier, team leader or technical expert);
 - b. At least one person qualified in the technical area who will participate in the technical review team (technical reviewer or technical expert).

³ Responsibility in this context does not refer to control of human resources in term of employment, but to the control of validation and verification activities.

7.5.1.7 | GS VVB may fulfil the requirement for sufficient resources by:

- a. Using internal resources;
- b. Using external individuals; and/or
- c. Outsourcing/subcontracting.

7.5.2 | **Use of external individuals**

7.5.2.1 | GS VVB may appoint external individuals, who may be self-employed, part of a one-person company or employed by any other company, as validators, verifiers, technical experts, team leaders and technical reviewers to supplement their internal resources as provided for in paragraph 7.5.1.7 | above. In such cases, the VVB shall establish, document, implement and maintain a procedure for engaging external individuals.

7.5.2.2 | The procedure referred to engage external individual above shall require that:

- a. The VVB has:
 - i. A contract with the external individual if the person is self-employed or part of a one-person company, or
 - ii. A contract with the external individual or a three-party contract with the external individual and the company that employs her/him if the person is employed by a company.
- b. The VVB takes full responsibility for any work carried out by an external individual, and obtains from the external individual a written agreement that he/she shall comply with all GS-VVB's applicable policies and procedures, including confidentiality and impartiality/independence.
- c. The agreement shall explicitly require the external individual to notify the VVB of any existing or prior association with any project participants of the Gold Standard project activity or PoA that he/she may be assigned to validate or verify/certify. This includes actual or potential involvement in identification, development or financing of Gold Standard project activities or PoAs.
- d. The external individual is familiar with the VVB's procedures for validation or verification/certification functions and has access to an up-to-date set of documented procedures giving relevant instructions and information on the Gold Standard activities.

7.5.2.3 | Requirements with respect to competence, evaluation and qualification, monitoring of performance, maintenance of competence, training as well as personnel records, as defined in sections below shall also apply to external individuals.

7.5.2.4 | In cases where external individuals are contracted by VVBs for activities other than GHG or activities including certification of new products or Certified SDG Impact statements in addition to GHG, the CV(s) shall be shared by the VVB with the Gold Standard. The VVB shall also obtain and

verify a declaration from the individual that there is no Conflict of Interest arising from the individual's appointment and make available to Gold Standard on request.

7.5.3 | **Outsourcing/subcontracting**

7.5.3.1 | GS VVB may subcontract other legal entities (subcontractors) to provide one or more function/services to supplement its internal resources. In such cases, the GS VVB shall establish, document, implement and maintain a procedure for subcontracting.

7.5.3.2 | The procedure referred to outsourcing/subcontracting above shall require that:

- a. The VVB shall have a contract with the outsourced entity, ensuring that the outsourced entity and its personnel:
 - i. Performs validation and/or verification/certification activities, as applicable, in accordance with all applicable GS4GG rules and requirements;
 - ii. Complies with all applicable requirements in this Standard and those of the VVB's own policies and procedures, including, but not limited to, the provisions related to impartiality and confidentiality.
- b. The VVB shall take responsibility for all activities outsourced to subcontracted entities;
- c. If a contract is made between the VVB and a company/legal entity, even if a one-person company, the technical expertise to be provided to the VVB shall be treated as use of external individual, and the requirements applicable to use of external individual shall apply.

7.5.3.3 | The VVB shall also obtain and verify a declaration from the sub-contractor that there is no Conflict of Interest arising from the appointment and make available to Gold Standard on request.

7.5.3.4 | In cases where other entities are contracted for activities other than GHG or activities including certification of new products or Certified SDG Impact statements in addition to GHG, details on subcontracting shall be shared with Gold Standard.

7.5.3.5 | If a VVB outsources one or more functions, the VVB shall ensure that the subcontracted entity does not further outsource this function.

7.5.4 | **Individual experts**

7.5.4.1 | For certain certification pathways, individual expert(s) may be subcontracted by a project developer. Such instances are defined in Annex A.

7.5.4.2 | In such cases, the individual shall submit the application to Gold Standard for approval (including approval by TAC) prior to entering into any contract to conduct validation or verification.

7.5.4.3 | The application should include the following:

- a. CV demonstrating the competency requirements as stated under Section 7.6 | belowbelow AND
- b. Letter of motivation and that the individual has no financial interest or any other conflict of interest concerning the Project.

7.6 | Structure and competence

The following structure and competency requirements are provided to GS VVBs. Failure by a GS VVB to adhere to these requirements shall be taken into account during any re-approvals process.

7.6.1 | **General competence**

7.6.1.1 | A validation or verification/certification team shall collectively have all knowledge and skills required, and the ability to apply such knowledge and skills to conduct a validation or verification/certification.

7.6.2 | **Audit teams**

7.6.2.1 | An audit team shall, at a minimum, include a Team Leader and a Validator/Verifier.

7.6.2.2 | An audit team employed by a GS VVB shall collectively have the necessary competence, including; knowledge and experience of all applicable GS4GG or earlier versions of Gold Standard rules and requirements and other related documents including the following, as related to the pathways for which they are eligible to conduct validation and verification.

7.6.2.3 | An audit team shall collectively have the skills to communicate effectively with the VVB's client, either through personal knowledge of the client's language or through an interpreter/translator. (Note that English is the language required to be used in reporting to and communicating with Gold Standard).

7.6.2.4 | An audit team shall collectively have the following knowledge relevant to the Gold Standard project activity or PoA to be validated or verified/certified:

- a. Technical and methodological aspects, including:
 - i. The technical processes and technologies, and project design, including the technical area(s) relevant to the Gold Standard project activity or PoA;
 - ii. The Gold Standard approved baseline and monitoring methodology(ies) applied, including the baseline scenario, project boundary, project scenario, calculation of GHG emission reductions or removals, environmental impact and monitoring requirements, measurement techniques, calibration and uncertainty in the measurement of the applicable parameters, and impact of failure of monitoring equipment on the measurement of emission reductions.

- b. Host country (or regional) experience, including:
 - i. Regional aspects and applicable rules and requirements of the host country(ies) of the project activity or PoA;
 - ii. Knowledge about the economy, geography, climate, culture, social conditions, and local language of a given country or region.
- c. Environmental matters and Socio-economic matters relevant to the Gold Standard project activity or PoA to be validated or verified/certified

7.6.3 | **Validation team knowledge and skills**

7.6.3.1 | A validation team shall collectively have the knowledge prescribed in the following knowledge areas:

- a. Additionality assessment and baseline establishment (see Annex B);
- b. GHG accounting and monitoring (see Annex B);
- c. Sustainable development impact assessment.

7.6.3.2 | For the validation of a Gold Standard project activity or PoA applying a Gold Standard approved baseline and monitoring methodology allowing or requiring the use of surveys and sampling, the validation team shall collectively have the knowledge of surveys and sampling, as defined in Annex B below.

7.6.3.3 | A validation team shall collectively have the skills to assess the compliance of proposed Gold Standard project activities and PoAs against all applicable requirements.

7.6.4 | **Verification/certification team knowledge and skills**

7.6.4.1 | A verification/certification team shall collectively have the knowledge of:

- a. Quality or environmental management systems (e.g., ISO 9001 and 14001);
- b. GHG accounting and monitoring, as defined in Annex B below;
- c. Sustainable development impact assessment and monitoring.

7.6.4.2 | For the verification/certification of a GS4GG project activity or PoA applying a Gold Standard approved baseline and monitoring methodology allowing or requiring the use of surveys and sampling, the verification/certification team shall collectively have the knowledge of surveys and sampling, as defined in Annex B below.

7.6.4.3 | For the verification/certification of a GS4GG project activity or PoA undergoing post registration changes, the verification/certification team shall collectively have the knowledge of additionality assessment and baseline establishment, as defined in Annex B below.

7.6.4.4 | A verification/certification team shall collectively have the skills to assess the compliance of implemented GS4GG project activities and PoAs and consequent monitored emission reductions or removals against all applicable requirements.

7.6.5 | **Validator or verifier auditing knowledge and skills**

7.6.5.1 | A validator or verifier shall have auditing knowledge and skills and the ability to apply them to perform validation or verification/certification activities including:

- a. Data, information and system auditing techniques and methodologies;
- b. Risk assessment techniques and methodologies;
- c. Data and information sampling techniques and methodologies;
- d. Application of the concepts of materiality and level of assurance;
- e. Collection of information through effective interviewing, listening, observing and reviewing documents, records and data;
- f. Verification of the accuracy of collected information, evaluation of the sufficiency and appropriateness of gathered evidence to support validation or verification/certification findings and conclusions;
- g. Preparation of validation or verification/certification opinions and reports.

7.6.6 | **Team leader knowledge and skills**

7.6.6.1 | Meet the requirements in paragraph 7.6.5 | above.

7.6.6.2 | A validation or verification team leader shall have auditing knowledge and skills and the ability to apply them to perform validation or verification/certification activities, including:

- a. Knowledge and understanding of applicable Requirements, processes and procedures as required for the Project type and Certification Pathway(s) under Validation or Verification;
- b. Planning and making effective use of human resources and managing validation or verification teams;
- c. Planning and organising work effectively and performing it within the agreed time schedule, to priorities and focus on matters of significance;
- d. Representing the validation or verification/certification team in communications with the VVB's clients;
- e. Understanding the validation or verification/certification process, leading the team to reach conclusions on all aspects of the validation or verification/certification and complete the validation or verification/certification opinion and report;
- f. Preventing and resolving conflicts.

7.6.7 | **Competence for technical experts**

7.6.7.1 | A technical expert shall have specific knowledge and/or expertise in technical, methodological and sectoral aspects and demonstrable ability to apply such knowledge and skills.

7.6.7.2 | A technical expert shall be familiar with a VVB's procedures for audit functions and shall have access to an up-to-date set of documented procedures giving relevant instructions and information on the Gold Standard activities.

7.6.8 | **Competence for technical review teams**

7.6.8.1 | A technical review team, whether it is composed of one or more persons, shall collectively have all knowledge and skills required in paragraphs above and the ability to apply such knowledge and skills, to conduct a technical review.

7.6.8.2 | A technical reviewer shall meet the requirements prescribed in paragraph 7.6.7.1 | and 7.6.7.2 | above.

7.7 | **Management of human resources and competence**

7.7.1 | **Demonstration of competence and qualification of personnel**

7.7.1.1 | A VVB shall establish, document, implement and maintain a procedure for evaluating its validation and/or verification/certification personnel, for demonstrating that they have appropriate competence and meet applicable requirements as well as for qualifying and authorising them before they perform validation and/or verification/certification activities.

7.7.1.2 | The procedure referred to in paragraph 7.7.1.1 | above shall:

- a. Include the consideration of the competence criteria, as determined above, and the competence requirements in this Standard;
- b. Address the qualification of personnel:
 - i. For all functions in validation and/or verification/certification activities, i.e. validator, verifier, team leader, technical expert, and technical reviewer;
 - ii. In all technical areas in which the VVB intends to operate or operates, within all sectoral scopes for which the VVB has applied for approval or has been approved;
- c. Ensure that records of the evaluation-demonstration-qualification-authorisation process are retained

7.7.1.3 | The VVB shall evaluate and demonstrate competence of its personnel through the following methods, generating objective records how competence was evaluated under each method:

- a. Review of personnel records, mentoring or training; and
- b. An examination.

7.7.1.4 | The review of personnel records shall include, but is not limited to, the review of curriculum vitae detailing work experience and education.

7.7.1.5 | Mentoring activities shall be specific to the relevant function and/or technical area and shall cover the entire spectrum of responsibilities of the relevant function and/or technical area.

7.7.1.6 | Training programmes shall be designed so as to cover the required knowledge and skills and shall comply with the requirements contained in paragraphs below.

7.7.2 | **Personnel records**

7.7.3 | A VVB shall maintain up-to-date personnel records of management and administrative personnel and the validation and/or verification/certification personnel including those external to the VVB. These records shall include relevant documentation related to recruitment, evaluations, qualifications, performance monitoring, training, experience, affiliations, professional status, and any consultancy services that the personnel have provided.

7.7.4 | **Examination**

7.7.4.1 | GS VVBs/individual experts shall participate in all examination programmes provided by SustainCERT. Successful application includes for named Team Leaders and Validators/Verifiers to attend examinations during the 36-month period. Team Leaders and Validators/Verifiers shall also be required to take the examination provided by Gold Standard as part of the VVB approval and reapproval process.

7.7.5 | **Trainings**

7.7.5.1 | GS VVBs/individual experts shall participate in all mandatory trainings provided by SustainCERT. Successful application includes for named Team Leaders and Validators/Verifiers to attend training during the 36-month period. In the case of individual experts, only those applicants that have received approval can undertake training.

7.7.5.2 | The auditors/individual experts shall take at least two trainings per year and also take additional training sessions when new versions of the Standard are released or when relevant updates are made to the Gold Standard rules. In this case, the auditors/individual experts will be notified whenever such trainings are available. The training is offered online, every three months. Access to the training material will also be provided as a part of this online training program via electronic link. The electronic link is for individual use only and is non-transferable.

7.7.5.3 | In order to maintain the GS approval status, the individual expert/VVB shall ensure that at least one team leader and one validator/verifier shall have completed at least two mandatory training/exams each year during the approved period of 36 months.

7.7.5.4 | In order to obtain the Training Certificate, the Team Leader and Validator/Verifier shall:

- a. Attend at least two training programs offered in a year.

- b. Where an evaluation (test) is required upon completion of any training program, the individual shall achieve at least a score of 75% or higher in each of the two evaluations (tests).

7.7.5.5 | Team Leaders, validator/verifiers and individual experts who score less than 75% shall take the training again and the subsequent test. If after two tries the threshold competency is not met (75% or higher) then an improvement plan shall be agreed with SustainCERT, including a plan to re-take the examination. Failure to complete the agreed plan/examination shall result in Gold Standard status for the Team Leader or validator/verifier being removed.

7.7.5.6 | Training and examination completion are monitored on an annual basis.

7.8 | Monitoring of performance and ensuring competence

7.8.1.1 | Gold Standard follows a Performance Management approach, designed to accelerate the development of VVB capabilities and to improve the quality and efficiency of certification services under the Gold Standard for Global Goals. This is made up of the following elements:

- a. Review of all VVB/individual expert reports submitted to the SustainCERT during certification.
- b. Detailed monitoring of the first 3 to 5 engagements for newly approved VVBs/individual experts, including review of work plans, verification teams, risk assessments, reports and findings.
- c. Provision of immediate feedback on performance as audit engagements are planned, conducted and concluded.
- d. Annual review of VVB/individual expert competence and performance based on information gathered across the year, with training and assessment to remedy any performance problems.

7.8.1.2 | Persistent and/or serious problems with the performance of a GS VVB/individual expert may result in the Gold Standard revoking the VVB's/individual expert's approval or refusing their re-approval.

7.8.1.3 | A VVB shall establish, document, implement and maintain a procedure for monitoring the performance of its validation and/or verification/certification personnel to ensure appropriate performance and that their competence is maintained.

7.8.1.4 | A VVB shall ensure the maintenance and update of competence of its validation and verification/certification personnel to keep up with newly introduced or revised Gold Standard rules and requirements and shall take into account technological changes related to project activities and PoAs.

7.8.1.5 | Where there is evidence that a VVB intentionally provided false information, intentionally omitted to provide information that should have been provided, or deliberately violated any approval requirement, or performs poorly on regular basis, SustainCERT shall promptly submit a draft

assessment report. The Gold Standard Secretariat will assess and decide whether to recommend that the TAC suspend or withdraw the approval of the VVB. At this stage, the Secretariat may request the VVB to provide information relating to the alleged conduct.

7.9 | Quality management system

7.9.1 | General

7.9.1.1 | A VVB shall establish, document, implement and maintain a quality management system for ensuring and demonstrating consistent implementation and compliance with the requirements outlined in this document.

7.9.1.2 | A VVB shall periodically update its quality management system, including all documents that form part of it, to reflect any changes in the GS4GG rules and requirements and address the outcomes of internal audits and management reviews.

7.10 | Gold Standard Registry

7.10.1.1 | All GS-VVBs must sign the Gold Standard Terms & Conditions for VVBs at the time of application submission and renewal.

8 | VALIDATION AND VERIFICATION PROCESS AND REQUIREMENTS

8.1 | Contract review

8.1.1.1 | A GS VVB shall establish, document, implement and maintain a procedure for reviewing contracts with clients for the provision of validation and verification/certification services.

8.1.1.2 | Before submitting a proposal/quotation to a potential client and entering into a contract for the validation or verification/certification of a project activity or PoA, a GS VVB shall conduct a contract review and ensure that:

- a. It is approved for project type/certification pathway for which the project activity or PoA is seeking be validated or verified/certified;
- b. It has sufficient human resources, internal or external, with the required competence to undertake the validation or verification/certification;
- c. It has no impartiality issues with the conduct of the validation or verification/certification;
- d. Considerations such as location(s) of the client's operations, time required to complete the validation or verification/certification and any other issues influencing the validation or verification/certification, such as language, safety conditions, etc., have been taken into account.

- 8.1.1.3 | VVBs shall have legally enforceable contracts with the project developer to whom they provide validation and verifications/certification services.
- 8.1.1.4 | The VVB shall ensure that they provide an estimate of the time that will be taken to perform an audit function in the contract signed with the project developer.
- 8.1.1.5 | For each validation or verification/certification conducted, a VVB shall document and maintain records of the complete details of the contract review process (conduct and approval of contract reviews), including the justification for the decision to undertake the validation or verification/certification and the contract.

8.2 | Selection of the validation or verification/certification personnel

- 8.2.1.1 | A VVB shall establish, document, implement and maintain a procedure for the selection of members of validation and verification/certification teams and members of technical review teams.
- 8.2.1.2 | For each validation or verification/certification to be conducted, the VVB shall ensure, in addition to compliance with team competence requirements, that:
 - a. At least one member of the validation or verification/certification team is qualified in the technical area(s) of the project activity or PoA to be validated or verified/certified;
 - b. At least one member of the technical review team is qualified in the technical area(s) of project activity or PoA to be validated or verified/certified.
- 8.2.1.3 | For each validation or verification/certification to be conducted, the VVB shall ensure that:
 - a. Each member of the validation or verification/certification team and each member of the technical review team informs the VVB, prior to accepting the assignment, about any known existing, former or envisaged link to the project activity or PoA to be validated or verified;
 - b. All members of the validation or verification/certification team and all members of the technical review team have no conflict of interest with respect to the project activity or PoA to be validated or verified and satisfies all impartiality requirements.
- 8.2.1.4 | A VVB shall have formal rules and/or contractual conditions to ensure that each member of the validation or verification/certification team and each member of the technical review team acts in an impartial and independent manner.
- 8.2.1.5 | In selecting members of a validation or verification/certification team, the VVB shall consider and document the following aspects:
 - a. Complexity of the project activity or PoA;

- b. Risks associated with the project activity or PoA;
- c. Technological and regulatory aspects;
- d. Size and location of the facility;
- e. Type and amount of field work necessary for the validation or verification/certification process.

8.2.1.6 | In advance of the validation/verification, the VVB shall provide the project developer the names and tasks of the validation/verification team members and sufficient background information to allow the project developer to object to the appointment of any particular member(s), with sufficient justification, and for the VVB to reconstitute the team in response to any valid objection.

8.2.1.7 | Gold Standard does not approve the teams appointed to individual validations or verifications but reserves the right to comment on the appropriateness and experience of the audit team.

8.3 | Validation and verification/certification

8.3.1.1 | A VVB shall establish, document, implement and maintain a procedure for performing its validation and/or verification/certification functions in accordance with the requirements specified in this document and other relevant requirements specified in GS4GG standards.

8.3.1.2 | For the validation or verification/certification visit to the project activity or PoA site, the following personnel, at a minimum, shall participate in the visit:

- a. The team leader (recommended but not mandatory);
- b. The team member(s) qualified in the technical area(s) of the project activity or PoA being validated or verified/certified.

8.4 | Technical reviews

8.4.1.1 | A VVB shall establish, document, implement and maintain a procedure for conducting technical reviews of final draft validation or verification/certification opinions and reports prepared by validation or verification/certification teams.

8.4.1.2 | Prior to the issuance of a final validation or verification/certification opinion and report, the appointed technical review team shall conduct a technical review of the final draft validation or verification/certification opinion and report.

8.5 | Issuance of final validation or verification/certification opinions and reports

- 8.5.1.1 | A VVB shall establish, document, implement and maintain a procedure for approving and issuing final validation or verification/certification opinions and reports.
- 8.5.1.2 | A validation or verification/certification opinion and report shall be approved and issued only if the technical review has established that all applicable VVB validation or verification requirements have been met.
- 8.5.1.3 | A final validation and verification/certification opinion and report shall be approved and issued by a member of the VVB's management.

8.5.2 | Control of records

- 8.5.2.1 | A VVB shall establish, document, implement and maintain a procedure for controlling the identification, collection, indexing, access, filing, storage, protection, retrieval, time retention and disposition of all its records.
- 8.5.2.2 | Records of original observations, derived data and sufficient information used to follow an audit trail shall be maintained to demonstrate compliance with the requirements.
- 8.5.2.3 | Records shall be retained for a period of time consistent with its contractual and legal obligations and the Gold Standard approval requirements. All records shall be held securely and safely so as to preserve all confidential information.
- 8.5.2.4 | The record control procedure should protect and back up records to prevent unauthorised access to, or amendment of, these records.

8.5.3 | Records pertaining to validation and/or verification/ certification functions

- 8.5.3.1 | A VVB shall establish, document, implement and maintain a procedure for maintaining and managing specific records pertaining to its validation and/or verification/certification activities.
- 8.5.3.2 | A VVB shall securely transport or transmit specific records pertaining to its validation and/or verification/certification activities and securely maintain them in accordance with its own specified retention period.
- 8.5.3.3 | While performing audits of Gold Standard PoAs, the VVB shall ensure that they carry out an audit of the Coordinating and Managing Entity (CME)'s internal management system. In particular, the VVB shall assess whether the internal management system includes the following aspects:
 - a. A clear definition of the roles and responsibilities of personnel involved in different tasks of the PoA;
 - b. Records of arrangement for training and capacity development of the personnel;
 - c. Records and documentation control process of the PoA;

- d. Measures for continuous improvements of the internal management system.

8.5.4 | **Complaints and appeals**

8.5.4.1 | VVBs shall establish, document, implement and maintain a publicly available appeals procedure for receiving, managing, evaluating, and investigating complaints, making decisions on them, and making appropriate corrections and corrective actions. Through this procedure, clients can appeal assessment decisions as well as a complaints procedure through which stakeholders can raise complaints against project, project developer, auditor etc.

8.5.4.2 | The procedure referred shall include the following:

- a. The designation of personnel responsible for handling of complaints;
- b. The contact details of personnel responsible for the handling of complaints;
- c. The process for receiving the complaint, gathering and verifying all necessary information for evaluating the validity of the complaint, investigating the complaint and for deciding what actions are to be taken in response to it;
- d. Safeguarding the confidentiality of the complainant and subject of the complaint;
- e. Ensuring that the persons engaged in the complaint handling process are different from those who carried out the audit on the activity.

8.5.4.3 | Keeping the complainant informed of the progress and informing the complainant of the outcome of the investigation and the final notice of the end of the complaints handling process.

8.5.4.4 | The VVB shall investigate the allegations and specify all proposed actions in response to the complainant within 3 months of receiving the complaint. In cases where the complainant is not satisfied with the decision, the VVB shall inform the complainant that it has the option of making a complaint to Gold Standard.

8.5.4.5 | It shall be ensured by the VVB that appropriate corrections and corrective actions are taken following investigation of the complaint.

8.5.5 | **Internal audits**

8.5.5.1 | A VVB shall establish, document, implement and maintain a procedure for conducting internal audits of its GS4GG validation and verification/certification functions and those of its outsourced entities in order to verify whether its quality management system is effective and ensure that its operations continue to comply with the GS4GG requirements and its own documented policies and procedures.

- 8.5.5.2 | A VVB shall conduct an internal audit on its GS4GG validation and verification/certification functions and those of its outsourced entities at least once a year and in accordance with a predetermined schedule and procedure.
- 8.5.5.3 | VVBs shall share the results of the internal audit with SustainCERT at least once a year and in accordance with a predetermined schedule and procedure.
- 8.5.5.4 | An internal audit shall:
- a. Address all GS4GG approval requirements as stated in this document;
 - b. Be conducted by personnel independent of the function audited, either the VVB's own qualified personnel or an external qualified expert;
 - c. Ensure adequate recording of the function audited, the audit findings and non-conformities raised;
 - d. Include the verification and recording of the implementation and effectiveness of the corrections and corrective actions taken in response to the non-conformities raised in the internal audit.
- 8.5.5.5 | VVBs shall not provide the following services/information to project developers during the project audit –
- a. Identification, development and/or financing of Gold Standard project activities and PoAs;
 - b. Consultancy related to Gold Standard project activities and PoAs;
 - c. Training on Gold Standard project activities and PoAs and other related topics;
 - d. Marketing/promotion and an affiliation with carbon markets consultancy/financing organisations;
 - e. Offering/payment of commissions or other inducements for promotion or establishing new business;
 - f. Laboratory testing and calibration for Gold Standard project activities and PoAs;
 - g. Use of personnel for the validation and/or verification certification of a Gold Standard project activity or PoA who were previously associated with the Gold Standard project participants in their personal capacity or otherwise for any activity such as development, consultancy, training, etc.;
 - h. Other organisational considerations such as performance targets in financial terms or in terms of a specific number of Gold Standard project activities and PoAs to be validated and/or verified/certified during a period of time;

- i. VVBs shall carry out an internal assessment of their impartiality policies and record any non-conformities. Gold Standard retains the right to seek this information from VVBs.

8.6 | Corrective Action Requests, Clarifications and Forward Action Requests

8.6.1 | Validation

8.6.1.1 | If the VVB identifies issues that require further elaboration, research or expansion in order to determine whether the project activity meets the Gold Standard requirements and can achieve credible GHG emission reductions or net anthropogenic GHG removals, the VVB shall ensure that these issues are accurately identified, formulated, discussed and concluded in the validation report.

8.6.1.2 | The VVB shall raise a Corrective Action Request (CAR) if one of the following situations occurs:

- a. The project participants have made mistakes that will influence the ability of the proposed Gold Standard project activity to achieve real, measurable, verifiable and additional GHG emission reductions or net anthropogenic GHG removals;
- b. The applicable Gold Standard requirements have not been met;
- c. There is a risk that GHG emission reductions or net anthropogenic GHG removals cannot be monitored or calculated.

8.6.1.3 | VVB shall raise a Clarification Request (CL) if information is insufficient or not clear enough to determine whether the applicable Gold Standard rules and requirements have been met.

8.6.1.4 | VVB shall raise a Forward Action Request (FAR) during validation to identify issues related to project implementation that require review during the first verification of the proposed Gold Standard project activity. If FAR is not resolved during first verification, the VVB should determine if it should be converted to CAR. The VVB shall not raise a FAR that relates to the Gold Standard rules and requirements for registration of the project activity.

8.6.1.5 | The VVB shall resolve or “close out” CARs and CLs only if the project developer modify the project design, rectify the PDD, or provide additional explanations or evidence that satisfy the VVB’s concerns. If this is not done, the VVB shall not submit a request for registration of the proposed Gold Standard project activity.

8.6.2 | Verification

8.6.2.1 | If the VVB identifies issues related to the monitoring, implementation and operations of the registered Gold Standard project activity that could impair the capacity of the project activity to achieve GHG emission reductions or net anthropogenic GHG removals or influence the monitoring and reporting of emission reductions or removals, the VVB shall ensure that these issues

are accurately identified, formulated, discussed and concluded in the verification and certification report.

- 8.6.2.2 | The VVB shall raise a CAR if one of the following situations occur if:
- a. Non-compliance with the registered monitoring plan, the applied methodologies, the applied standardised baselines or other applied methodological regulatory documents, is found in monitoring and reporting and has not been sufficiently documented by the project participants, or if the evidence provided to prove conformity is insufficient;
 - b. Modifications to the implementation, operation and monitoring of the registered Gold Standard project activity has not been sufficiently documented by the project participants;
 - c. Mistakes have been made in applying assumptions, data or calculations of GHG emission reductions or net anthropogenic GHG removals that will impact the quantity of emission reductions or removals;
 - d. Issues identified in a FAR during the validation to be verified during the verification or the previous verification(s) have not been resolved by the project participants.
- 8.6.2.3 | VVB shall raise a clarification request (CL) if information is insufficient or not clear enough to determine whether the applicable Gold Standard rules and requirements have been met.
- 8.6.2.4 | The VVB shall raise a FAR during verification for actions if the monitoring and reporting require attention and/or adjustment for the next verification period. If FAR is not resolved during next verification, the VVB should determine if it should be converted to CAR.
- 8.6.2.5 | The VVB shall resolve or “close out” CARs and CLs only if the Project Developer has rectified the monitoring report or has provided additional explanations or evidence that satisfy the VVB’s concerns. If this is not done, the VVB shall not submit a request for issuance of Emission Reductions.

9 | VVB APPROVAL PROCEDURE

9.1 | Scope and objective of approval assessments

- 9.1.1.1 | The Gold Standard VVB approval is based on valid accreditation (paragraph 7.4 |) for the validation and verification/certification functions for project type/certification pathway contained in Annexure A. A VVB may apply for approval for one or more project type/certification pathway.
- 9.1.1.2 | Approval is granted to an entity registered under applicable national laws, irrespective of whether the entire organisation or a part of it performs validation and/or verification/certification functions.

- 9.1.1.3 | Approval is granted for both validation and verification/certification functions together, for one or project type/certification pathway. Likewise, if approval is suspended or withdrawn, it is done so for both validation and verification/certification functions together, for one or project type/certification pathway.
- 9.1.1.4 | The objective of an approval assessment of a VVB is to assess and determine whether the VVB complies with Gold Standard VVB requirements.
- 9.1.1.5 | If the validation and/or verification/certification functions are performed by a part of VVB, and other parts of the VVB are involved in other activities, these activities may be assessed as they may affect validation and/or verification/certification activities, in particular with regard to independence and impartiality.

9.2 | Validity of Gold Standard approval

- 9.2.1.1 | The approval of VVBs/individual experts by the Gold Standard is provided on an ongoing basis. The approval may be reassessed and/or revoked at any time at the sole discretion of the Gold Standard, overseen by the Gold Standard TAC.
- 9.2.1.2 | GS-VVB status is granted for a period of 36 months from the date of approval, whereupon the applicant may re-apply for approval. Prior to expiration, the GS-VVB shall re-submit the full set of information, as per 9.4.8 | below of this document, updated as required for re-approval. An application for re-approval shall be submitted no later than 8 weeks prior to the end of the 36-month period.

9.3 | General modalities of approval assessments

- 9.3.1.1 | The assessment of a VVB for approval and for renewal of approval involves a desk-based review by the Gold Standard Secretariat. The application documentation submitted by the VVB to assess VVB eligibility, competence and operational capability to perform validation and/or verification/certification functions in line with the GS VVB requirements will be reviewed.
- 9.3.1.2 | If, after the completion of an assessment, the VVB has demonstrated compliance with all requirements, approval or renewal of approval shall be granted to the VVB for the functions and project types/certification pathways for which the VVB has demonstrated its competence.
- 9.3.1.3 | The language to be used in any approval assessment shall be English.

9.4 | Approval procedure

9.4.1 | General

- 9.4.1.1 | The process for initial approval comprises the following steps:

- a. Submission of an application for approval by an entity;
- b. Completeness check of the application documentation by the Gold Standard Secretariat;
- c. Submission of documentation by the Gold Standard Secretariat for TAC feedback;
- d. Desk review by the Gold Standard Secretariat of the documentation provided by the VVB;
- e. Final decision by the Gold Standard Secretariat on approval or rejection of application.

9.4.2 | **Application for VVB approval**

9.4.2.1 | An entity that wishes to be approved as a VVB shall submit to the Gold Standard Secretariat a duly completed application form, a declaration from the entity and outsourced entities where the entity's validation and verification/certification functions are to be performed, and all other documents specified in 9.4.2.2 | & 9.4.2.3 | below.

9.4.2.2 | The VVB shall provide declaration that:

- a. Confirms commitment to the Gold Standard Principles (as per this document and the Gold Standard for the Global Goals [Principles & Requirements](#)), AND
- b. Confirms that the applicant has no financial interest in and no conflict of interest with Gold Standard or any Gold Standard Project (save for the provision of Validation/Verification services), AND
- c. Declaration that the VVB has no pending judicial processes for malpractice, fraud and/or other activity incompatible with its functions as a VVB.

9.4.2.3 | The applicant VVB shall provide following documents with completely filled application form:

- a. A copy of the valid accreditation certification by a Gold Standard recognised Accreditation Programme, listed in 7.4 | above;
- b. Evidence confirming the legal status of the VVB entity;
- c. Evidence to demonstrate that policies and mechanisms are in place to prevent conflicts of interest and to identify and resolve potential conflict of interest situations if they arise.
- d. Organisational chart showing lines of authority, responsibility and allocation of functions;
- e. Demonstration that the team structure put forward has the necessary capacity and resilience to maintain its ability to audit Gold Standard projects. For example, proof that the team is resilient to changes in staffing and has the necessary resource and backing to see through proposed workload. Refer to paragraph 7.5 | for details.

- f. Demonstration of team structure and key individuals' competence (via CVs) relevant to the scope of the certification pathway(s) for which approval is sought. Refer to paragraph 7.6 | for details.
- g. A list of auditors that will apply for approval; at least one Team Leader and one Validator/Verifier shall be named in the application; further can be included or named at a later date, subject to the payment of additional fee for further individuals
- h. All named auditors must take the online exam set by Gold Standard and receive a passing score of greater than 75% within four weeks of submission of application. If the auditor does not pass the exam, he/she may retake the exam. Only two retakes of the examination are allowed. If the applicant wishes to take second retake of examination, the applicant must take a paid online training.
- i. A list of subcontracted individuals and document outlining the procedure for engaging external individuals. All subcontracted individuals must also take online exam and receive a passing score of greater than 75%.

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9.4.2.4 | Gold Standard may request additional information or documentation from an applicant after receipt of the application for approval as a GS-VVB.

9.4.2.5 | To apply for GS-VVB status, a VVB shall send filled out application with evidence that the following requirements have been met to the Gold Standard via email to vvb@goldstandard.org.

9.4.2.6 | The application of a VVB for approval shall be considered duly submitted when the Gold Standard Secretariat has received both the application documentation and the application fee.

9.4.3 | **Completeness check**

9.4.3.1 | The Gold Standard Secretariat shall undertake a completeness check of the application documentation. If the documentation is found incomplete, the Secretariat shall inform the VVB of the missing elements within 15 days⁴ of the application being considered duly submitted. Subsequent steps of the process shall only continue once all requested documentation has been received by the Gold Standard Secretariat.

9.4.4 | **TAC review**

⁴ In this Procedure, the number of days is to be considered as calendar days, unless specified otherwise

9.4.4.1 | If the Gold Standard Secretariat considers the information contained in the application documentation adequate for the assessment, the Secretariat shall notify and make available VVB application and documentation to TAC for their review.

9.4.4.2 | The TAC review shall last for 3 weeks.

9.4.5 | **Desk review**

9.4.5.1 | In parallel to TAC review, the Gold Standard Secretariat shall undertake the desk review of the application documentation.

9.4.5.2 | If the Gold Standard Secretariat considers the information contained in the application documentation adequate for the assessment, it shall prepare and finalise the desk review within 4 weeks of the submission of the application and payment of the fee, whichever is later. The Secretariat shall consider the TAC feedback, together with the desk review, to make the decision.

9.4.5.3 | The VVB shall provide the requested additional and/or amended documentation within 3 weeks of receipt of the review form. If the Gold Standard Secretariat considers that additional and/or amended documentation are adequate for the assessment, it shall prepare and finalise the desk review in 2 weeks. If the Secretariat considers that additional and/or amended documentation are not adequate for the assessment, it shall ask for further information.

9.4.6 | **Approval decision**

9.4.6.1 | The Gold Standard Secretariat shall consider TAC feedback, together with desk review findings, and decide on one of the following options:

- a. Approve the VVB for some or all project types/certification pathways applied for; or
- b. Reject the application for approval.

9.4.6.2 | The Gold Standard Secretariat shall maintain a public list of approved VVBs on the GS4GG website, containing information on:

- a. Approved project type/certification pathways;
- b. Contact details and addresses VVB;
- c. List of approved auditors;
- d. Approval date and status; approved, suspended or cancelled.

9.4.6.3 | Where an application is rejected, the Gold Standard Secretariat shall provide feedback indicating the rationale for rejection. Reapplication by the VVB may be submitted no sooner than 6 months after the date of communication of rejection by the Secretariat and shall include details of how the areas of feedback provided have been addressed, improved upon and resolved.

9.4.7 | **Addition/deletion of Auditors name**

- 9.4.7.1 | The auditor shall contact SustainCERT to seek addition to the list of approved auditors.
- 9.4.7.2 | The auditor shall also take the examination and score at least 75% in order to be eligible for addition.
- 9.4.7.3 | For removal of auditors, the VVB shall contact SustainCERT with the name of the auditor being removed.
- 9.4.8 | **Renewal of approval of VVB**
- 9.4.8.1 | To submit the application of renewal of VVB, the VVB shall submit a new application.
- 9.4.8.2 | Within two weeks of receiving an application for re-approval and payment of applicable fee, the Gold Standard Secretariat shall conduct the completeness check and inform the VVB that either the application is complete, or that additional specific information is required to make the application complete.
- 9.4.8.3 | Upon confirmation by Gold Standard that the application and all applicable training requirements are complete, the Gold Standard performs a 3-week review, overseen by the Gold Standard TAC.
- 9.4.8.4 | Gold Standard shall inform the VVB after 3-week review period, either that the re-approval is granted, or that additional specific information is required to make a decision.
- 9.4.8.5 | Where an application is rejected, the procedure outlined in paragraph 9.4.6.3 | above is followed.
- 9.4.8.6 | GS-VVB status is granted for a period of 36 months from the date of re-approval, whereupon the applicant may re-apply for approval.
- 9.4.9 | **Modification, suspension, or revocation of VVB - Status**
- 9.4.9.1 | The Gold Standard may review and, for good cause, including any violation or any similar action in an analogous GHG system, modify, suspend, or revoke approved GS status granted to the VVB. The Gold Standard shall not revoke the approval status without offering GS-VVB an opportunity for presenting clarification.
- 9.4.9.2 | During suspension or revocation proceedings, the GS-VVB may not continue to provide validation/verification services.
- 9.4.9.3 | Within 30 days of suspension or revocation of Gold Standard approval, a GS-VVB must notify all stakeholders; including project developers for whom it is provided validation/verification services or has provided validation/verification services within the past 6 months of its suspension or revocation of Gold Standard approval. The notification shall also include information on the course of action to conclude outstanding validations/verifications as agreed with Gold Standard.

9.4.9.4 | An approved GS-VVB or individual expert may request to voluntarily withdraw its approval status by providing a written notice to the Gold Standard requesting such withdrawal.

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ANNEX A – GS CERTIFICATION PATHWAYS

The following table provides an overview of which GS-VVB pathways are eligible for each Gold Standard Certification. Note that one application may cover several pathways under the same fee, except in the case of LU&F – see the [Gold Standard Fee Schedule](#).

Gold Standard Project Type/Certification Pathway	UNFCCC DOE/AIE	ANSI 14065 VVB	ASI FSC Certification Body	Gold Standard Objective Observer
CER Labelling (all project types)	Yes	No	No	No
Renewable Energy Labelling (scope requirements below apply)	Yes	Yes	No	No
Micro-scale (all Project types)*	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Micro-scale & Small Holder (LUF)*	No	No	No	Yes
Gold Standard for Sustainable Urban Development	Yes	Yes	No	No
Community Services Activity Requirements:				
Technology distribution	Yes – Scope*	Yes –	No	–
Cookstove, CFL etc.	3	Scope** 3		
Biodigesters	Yes – Scope 13/15/1	Yes – Scope 6	No	–
Renewable Energy	Yes – Scope 1	Yes – Scope 1	No	–

WASH	Yes – Scope 3	Yes – Scope 3	No	–
Other Project Types:				
Renewable Energy (RE Activity Requirements)	Yes – Scope 1	Yes – Scope 1	No	–
Waste to Energy	Yes – Scope 13/1 (municipal) or 15/1 (animal manure management)	Yes – Scope 1/6 (municipal) Scope 5 (animal manure management)	No	–
Shipping	Yes – Scope 7	Yes – Scope 1	No	–
Others – as stated in GS - approved methodologies	As per methodology	On application	No	–
Land-use & Forest Activity Requirements				
A/R	Yes – Scope 14	Yes – Scope 3	Yes	–
Agriculture	Yes – Scope 15	Yes – Scope 5 (livestock projects only)	On application	–

* <https://cdm.unfccc.int/DOE/scopelst.pdf>

** <https://www.ansi.org/Accreditation/environmental/greenhouse-gas-validation-verification/DocumentDetail?DRId=666>

In addition to the above the following methodologies/products require specific training to be undertaken prior to conducting validation/verification:

- All ADALYs (SDG3) methodologies
- Projects involving the issuance of Gender Impact (SDG 5) Statements

ANNEX B - VALIDATION AND VERIFICATION TECHNICAL KNOWLEDGE

The following table below contains specific validation and/or verification technical knowledge requirements for auditors (either individual or VVB auditors) corresponding to four key knowledge areas.

Knowledge area	Validation and/or verification technical knowledge
Additionality assessment and baseline establishment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Additionality assessment and baseline establishment in CDM/GS approved methodologies; - Project evaluation and investment decision theory; - NPV and IRR rules of investment appraisal; - Investment under uncertainty and sensitivity analysis; - Establishment of baseline scenarios based on various approaches, such as historical emissions, monitored data, benchmarking, top performers in similar activities, best available technologies, most attractive alternative technology and standard values.
GHG accounting and monitoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Greenhouse gases eligible under the Kyoto Protocol; - Definition of project boundaries, gases and emission sources in CDM projects; - Use of Global Warming Potential and conversion of non-CO2 GHG to equivalent CO2 emissions; - Direct measurement of GHG emissions using flow meters and gas analysis; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Indirect evaluation of GHG emissions: - Use of GHG standard emission factors based on energy content and service level; o Combustion of solid, liquid and gaseous fuels and approaches to evaluating GHG emissions from fuel combustion; o Evaluation of GHG emissions from heat and power generation by means of GHG emission factors and quantification of energy use; o Evaluation of power grid GHG emission factors based on power plant dispatch analysis; o Use of mass and energy balances in the evaluation of GHG emissions; - Metrology and the measurement of physical properties;

- Quality control of measurements, including the concepts of measurement range, measurement uncertainty (accuracy, precision and bias) and meter calibration;
 - Statistical treatment of data, surveys and sampling
-

Sustainable Development Assessment

- Sustainable Development Goals and Targets
 - Sustainable Development Impact indicators
-

Safeguarding Principles

- Environmental, social and economic risks

ANNEX C - DOCUMENTATION MATRIX FOR VVB ASSESSMENTS

The documentation matrix provided below contains the list of all supporting documents required for each VVB assessment process i.e., Initial approval, Scope extension, Re-approval and Annual reporting.

S.No.	Document	Initial approval	Scope extension	Re-approval	Annual reporting
1.	VVB application form	x		x	
2.	A copy of the valid accreditation certification	x	x	x	
3.	Evidence confirming the legal status of the VVB entity	x		x	
4.	Confidentiality agreement(s) signed between the applicant VVB and staff	x	x	x	
5.	Evidence to demonstrate that policies and mechanisms are in place to prevent conflicts of interest and to identify and resolve potential conflict of interest situations if they arise.	x		x	
6.	Evidence of the established quality management system	x		x	
7.	Evidence of the established complaints and appeals procedure	x		x	
8.	Organisational chart showing lines of authority, responsibility and allocation of functions	x	x	x	
9.	Demonstration that the team structure put forward has the	x	x	x	

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	necessary capacity and resilience to maintain its ability to audit Gold Standard projects.			
10.	CVs of key personnel	x	x	x
11.	A list of auditors that will apply for approval	x	x	x
12.	Evidence of all named auditors attaining passing score in the online VVB exam	x	x	x
13.	Document outlining the procedure for engaging external individuals.	x	x	x
14.	A list of subcontracted individuals	x	x	x
15.	Declaration of other offices performing validation and verification/certification functions	x	x	x
16.	Gold Standard Terms and Conditions for VVBs	x		x
17.	Annual Activity report			x