



OPTIONAL REQUIREMENT

DEVIATION APPROVAL REQUIREMENTS AND PROCEDURES

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1| SCOPE AND APPLICABILITY

1.1.1 | This document outlines key principles, requirements and approval procedures for projects seeking:

- a. Deviation from Gold Standard for the Global Goals (GS4GG) requirements and SDG Impact Quantification Methodologies and/or applicable methodologies prior to submission for certification with GS4GG.
- b. Temporary changes to a certified project - which include changes from the registered monitoring plan, the applied methodologies or other standard documents - that are expected not to occur beyond a given monitoring period.

1.1.2 | For a deviation approval, project developers shall submit the required documents and/or send notification to SustainCERT. Project developers seeking permanent¹ changes to a registered project activity, shall follow the [Design Change Approval Procedure](#).

1.1.3 | Any clarifications on Gold Standard for the Global Goals (GS4GG) Requirements and SDG Impact Quantification methodologies/or applicable methodology can be sought at any time and do not require a deviation to be submitted. Clarifications can be submitted to SustainCERT at help@sustain-cert.com.

2| PRINCIPLES AND DEFINITIONS

2.1 | Principles

2.1.1 | Projects seeking a deviation must ensure that the following principles are adhered to -

- **Environmental integrity:** Gold Standard certified products e.g. GS VERs and/or statements shall not be overestimated as a result of the deviation, and conservativeness must be ensured
- **Contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):** SDG contributions that the project is designed to achieve must be in line with GS4GG requirements and are not compromised

¹ Changes that alter the project design and are permanent in nature are considered as a permanent change. The permanent change may have an impact on certified project design with regards to one or more of following project aspects, although not limited to; applicability of the methodology, compliance with registered monitoring plan, scale of the project, safeguarding assessment, stakeholder consultation, sustainable development impact, applicable legal requirements.

- **Safeguarding principles and requirements:** Projects must be in line with Safeguarding principles and requirements of GS4GG
- **Compliance with host country regulations:** Projects must not conflict with host country regulations

2.2 | Definitions

- 2.2.1 | The following actions constitute a project deviation, when a project deviates from
- a. Applicable requirements listed in the following GS4GG documents:
 - i. Principles and Requirements
 - ii. Activity Requirements
 - iii. Product Requirements
 - iv. Context Requirements
 - b. Requirements listed in an applicable SDG Impact Quantification methodology
 - c. Its approved monitoring plan

3 | REQUIREMENTS

- 3.1.1 | The project developer or coordinating/managing entity (CME) shall identify and document any actual or proposed temporary changes² to the implementation, operation or monitoring of the certified project activity, Programme of Activities (PoA) or included VPAs. Hereafter, 'project activity' refers to project activity, PoAs or included VPAs, unless stated otherwise.
- 3.1.2 | If there is any actual or proposed temporary change to the implementation, operation or monitoring of a certified project activity, the project developer/CME **IS RECOMMENDED TO** submit the following information/documents, **REFLECTING THE TEMPORARY DEVIATION**, as part of the request for approval of temporary changes:
- a. PDD, PoA DD or VPA DD (in both track-change and clean versions) that reflects the actual or proposed changes
 - b. Monitoring report, where applicable

² A Certified Design project requesting to include new technology/measures shall submit the request for approval of design change to Gold Standard within one year of the start date of the proposed technology/measures (design change component). If the developer fails to submit the request for approval within one year, the design change component shall not be eligible for Gold Standard Certification. Paragraph 4.1.49, [Principles and requirements](#)

- c. Deviation request form, summarising the temporary changes and the impact(s) of these changes on the relevant aspects of the project, including the reasons for the changes and any additional information relating to the changes.
- d. Any other supporting documentation (for example, Environmental Impact Assessment conducted in relation to the changes in the project, licenses etc.) shall be provided along with the documents listed above.

3.1.3 | Project Developers shall explain the nature, scope of the temporary change(s), extent and duration of the non-confirming monitoring period in the Monitoring Report and shall provide all supporting documentation.

3.1.4 | Project Developer shall also:

- a. Propose alternative monitoring arrangements for the non-confirming monitoring period. In this case, the project developer shall apply conservative assumptions or discount factors to the calculations to the extent required to ensure that GHG emission reductions or net anthropogenic GHG removals will not be overestimated as a result of the deviation; or
- b. Apply the following most conservative values approach when alternative monitoring arrangements are not proposed. This does not require approval by the Gold Standard Secretariat:
 - i. Apply zero for baseline GHG emissions for the entire non-confirming monitoring period; and/or
 - ii. Apply the values assuming that the source of GHG emissions is operated at the maximum capacity for the entire non-confirming monitoring period. For project GHG emissions related to the consumption of electricity, add 10 per cent to account for transmission and distribution losses.

3.1.5 | Project developers shall confirm in the monitoring report that the changes have occurred due to reasons beyond their control but is temporary in nature and the project will revert back to its original design after a given monitoring period.

4| REQUIREMENTS FOR VVBs

4.1.1 | The VVB shall determine (where required):

- a. Whether there is a temporary change from the registered monitoring plan, and, if there is, determine whether the change complies with the relevant requirements stated in paragraphs 3.1.3 & 3.1.4 above, as applicable
- b. Whether the project developers have proposed alternative monitoring arrangements or applied the most conservative values approach for the non-confirming monitoring period

- c. Where alternative monitoring arrangements have been proposed, whether the arrangements apply conservative assumptions or discount factors to the calculations to the extent required to ensure that GHG emission reductions or net anthropogenic GHG removals will not be overestimated as a result of the deviation

- 4.1.2 | For cases where a temporary change from the registered monitoring plan may be applicable to the monitoring period under verification and part of the subsequent monitoring period, the VVB shall determine the exact period to which the temporary change applies.
- 4.1.3 | The VVB shall state its opinion on whether the deviation complies with the relevant requirements stated in paragraphs 3.1.3 & 3.1.4 above, as applicable.

5| DEVIATION APPROVAL PROCEDURE

5.1 | Submission of request for deviations

- 5.1.1 | Deviation requests shall be submitted to SustainCERT with a complete [Deviation Request form](#).

5.2 | Processing the request for deviations

- 5.2.1 | The deviation requests are processed as outlined below.

a. Outside Certification Review

- 5.2.2 | When a new project deviation without any precedent of TAC approval is submitted, the Gold Standard Secretariat will present the request to the TAC for decision, at the earliest possible opportunity. The decision confirms approval or rejection of the request. It will also outline any requirements and/or expectations from the project, as applicable, in light of the deviation from GS4GG requirements. The decision will be communicated to the project developer and/or VVB as part of the deviation form.
- 5.2.3 | Deviations that are approved by TAC will either set a precedent for other projects to apply or will be limited to a specific project, e.g. if a project faces unique circumstances arising from force majeure conditions. For project specific deviations that do not apply to other projects, the approval decision should clearly define the expectations to fall back in-line with Gold Standard requirements as project circumstances return to normal.
- 5.2.4 | When a project deviation with precedent (i.e., TAC has previously approved a similar deviation) is submitted, the Gold Standard Secretariat will decide on the deviation request in line with previous decisions approved by TAC or may delegate to SustainCERT if precedent exists and the decision is clear.

b. Part of Certification Review

5.2.5 | When a deviation is identified by SustainCERT or submitted by PD/VVB as part of the certification process, i.e. design or performance certification etc, SustainCERT shall assess the deviation and decide on the deviation request leading to the conservative outcome as part of the certification decision. SustainCERT shall take into account any precedents available, based on earlier TAC decisions. It should also be ensured that such deviations are restricted to a specific period and do not become a norm.

c. Creation of Precedent

5.2.6 | When a decision by the Gold Standard TAC on a deviation request constitutes a precedent, i.e. the approved deviation can also be applied by other projects, this shall be mentioned and outlined in the deviation form. Conditions under which the approved deviation can be applied by other projects shall be clearly defined.

5.2.7 | Gold Standard will ensure that the deviation precedents are incorporated in the relevant requirements or methodologies at the time of the next revision/update. In the interim, deviation precedents may also be published as a rule update/clarification on the Gold Standard website.

6| ACCESS TO APPROVED DEVIATIONS

6.1.1 | All deviations and associated documents submitted for approval will be made publicly available. The project developer may request to retract any confidential information informing SustainCERT at the time of submission of a request.

6.1.2 | The deviation decisions will be made public using one of the following platforms, as applicable:

- a. Project level deviations – These deviation forms will be uploaded on a project page in the SustainCERT application;
- b. Project level deviations that result in a precedent – the deviation form will be made publicly available on the Gold Standard website.