



The Gold Standard
Transition Guideline
for projects certified under VCS AFOLU



Applicable for A/R Requirements
Valid since June 2015
Author The Gold Standard Foundation

Background

Several project owners have been approaching the Gold Standard asking for guidance on how to transition from VCS AFOLU to Gold Standard A/R. This document describes the process for transitioning VCS AFOLU projects to The Gold Standard.

Terminology

VCS AFOLU terminology differs from the terms used in the Gold Standard 'A/R Requirements'. The following list gives an overview on the differences in terminology.

VCS AFOLU	Gold Standard A/R
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actual net GHG removals by sinks, Ex-post actual net GHG removals by sinks • A/R VCS project activity, A/R project activity, or Project activity • Baseline net GHG removals by sinks, Baseline • Ex-ante actual net GHG removals by sinks • Management stratum (strata) (MS) • Net anthropogenic GHG removal by sinks • Non-CO₂ GHG emissions • Project area, Project activity area • Project area • Project proponents • Validation • Verification 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CO₂-Fixation¹ Project activity Baseline Long-term CO₂-Fixation Modeling Unit(s) (MU) Net-CO₂-Fixation Project emissions Project area Eligible planting area Project owner Initial certification Performance certification

When communicating with the Gold Standard Secretariat or applying for Gold Standard certification, please use the Gold Standard terminology as defined by the 'A/R Requirements'.

Documentation

Gold Standard Templates

The project can apply for Gold Standard certification by filling-in the Gold Standard A/R *templates* (www.goldstandard.org/luf_ar-requirements) and referring in these *templates* to the existing VCS AFOLU documentation. Where the documentation under VCS AFOLU requirements does not fully cover a certain Gold Standard A/R requirement, additional evidence shall be provided.

¹ Unlike in VCS AFOLU, in Gold Standard the term 'CO₂-Fixation' does include the 'Project Emissions'

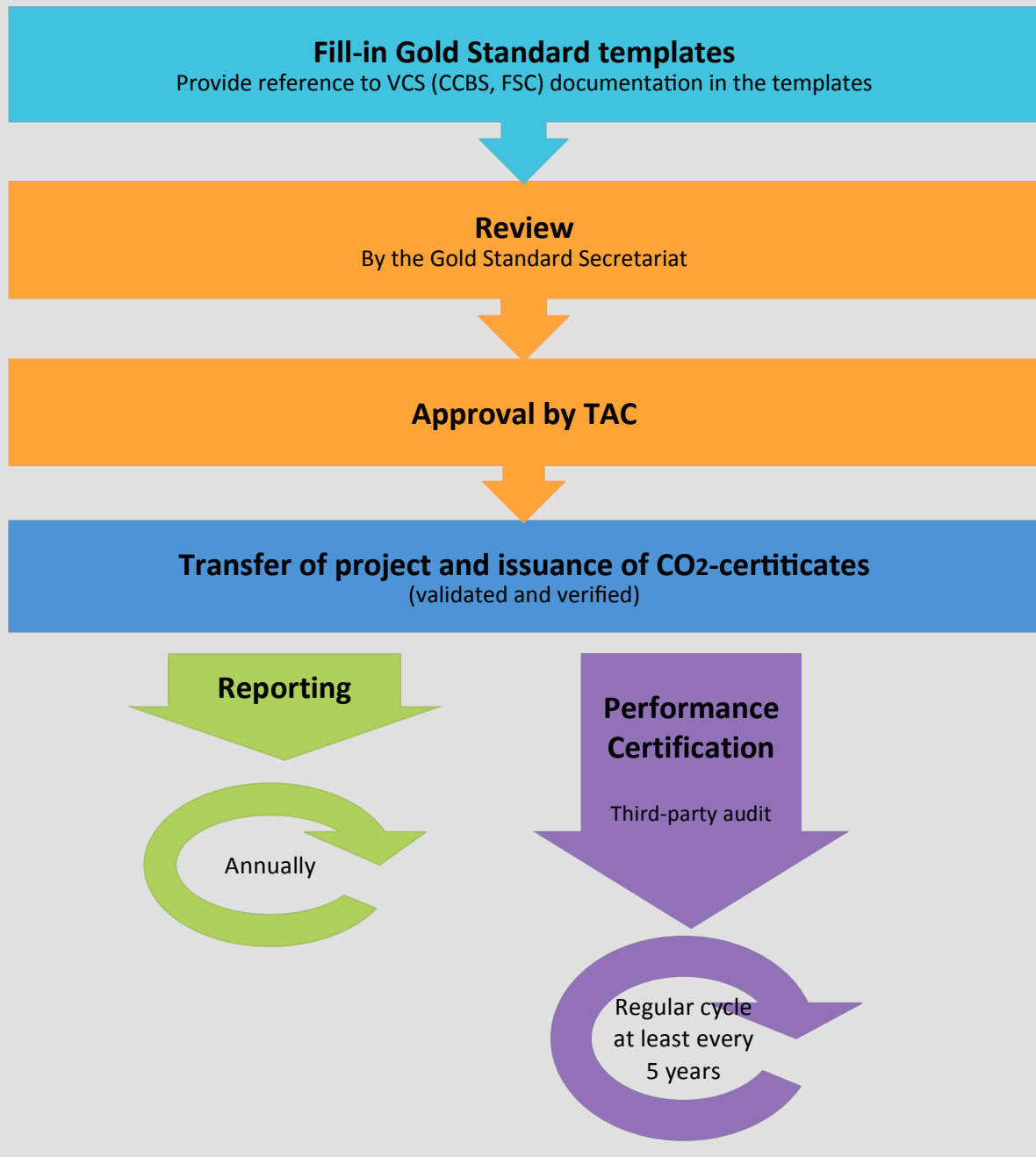
Transition Process

The Gold Standard Secretariat will review the completed Gold Standard A/R templates of the project, including the supporting documents, which are referenced in these templates.

During the review, the Gold Standard Secretariat may raise Corrective Action Requests (CAR) to the project owner. When all CARs are closed, the Gold Standard Secretariat will provide the project information (filled-in templates and supporting documents) to the Gold Standard Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) for consideration.

Upon approval by the TAC, the project will be registered as a Gold Standard A/R project. The standard process for issuance of Gold Standard CO₂-certificates can then proceed. At this point the project has successfully transitioned from VCS AFOLU to Gold Standard.

For the remaining time of the crediting period, the regular Gold Standard certification cycle applies.



Certification under CCBS or FSC

Where the transitioning VCS AFOLU project is certified under the Climate, Community & Biodiversity Standard (CCBS), the same documentation process as outlined in the paragraph 'Gold Standard Templates' applies.

CCBS project documentation (PDD and reference information) and CCBS validation/verification reports shall be provided as *supporting documents*.

Where the transitioning VCS AFOLU project is certified under the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), reference to the 'FSC Certification Report' shall be provided in response to the Gold Standard 'A/R Requirements' in section '3. Sustainability' (except for chapter '3.6 Legal Rights'). It is not necessary to reference individual FSC criteria in the Gold Standard *templates*.

The latest 'FSC Certification Report' shall be provided as a *supporting document*.

Registry

All project information (filled-in *templates* and *supporting documents*) shall be uploaded through the Gold Standard Registry which is hosted by Markit (www.goldstandard.org/our-activities/project-registry).

All project information, except confidential information, shall be made publically available through the Gold Standard Registry.

Reporting

For all projects that transition, the annual reporting as outlined in the Gold Standard 'A/R Requirements' chapter '6.3 Reporting' will commence in the same year as the project is transitioned to Gold Standard.

Other technical specification

Double counting

To avoid double counting of CO₂-certificates, the project owner shall provide clear evidence needs to be provided that CO₂-certificates that want to transition to Gold Standard have been cancelled/expired under the respective mechanism.

Crediting period

In contrast to VCS AFOLU, Gold Standard A/R projects cannot renew their crediting period. Gold Standard projects have a fixed crediting period which must be selected when the project is registered, and can be between 30 and 50 years.

Transitioning VCS AFOLU projects will need to redefine their crediting period. The start of the crediting period under Gold Standard must be the same as the start date for the project under VCS AFOLU.

Permanence risks

In order to assure the permanence of CO₂-certificates under the Gold Standard, projects must contribute 20% of the CO₂-certificates issued to the project (or an equivalent number of other Gold Standard CO₂-certificates from the *Energy* or *Land Use & Forests*) to the Gold Standard Compliance Buffer at the time of issuance.

VCS projects with a buffer greater than 20%

Where a transitioning project has a VCS buffer greater than 20%, the VCS buffer percentage will be applied upon registration of the project under the Gold Standard. This higher buffer will be retained until a performance certification under the Gold Standard demonstrates the project's compliance with the Gold Standard 'A/R Requirements', in particular the chapter 'Risk Register'.

Once a transitioning project has completed its first performance certification under the Gold Standard, the buffer will be adjusted to 20% of issued CO₂-certificates as per the Gold Standard Compliance Buffer.

VCS projects with a buffer less than 20%

Where a transitioning project has a VCS buffer less than 20%, the Gold Standard's buffer percentage will be applied upon registration of the project under the Gold Standard. These projects will keep its buffer or, in case the buffer is less than 20%, the buffer shall raise to 20% from the date the project is transitioned.

Certification

Once the project is transitioned, the project will be registered under the Gold Standard and shall undergo a third-party performance certification within the next 3 years from the transition or within 5 years since its last verification under VCS AFOLU.

The performance certification shall be executed by an auditor recognized through the Gold Standard www.goldstandard.org/luf_auditors

Fee

For the review of the transitioning project information, the Gold Standard charges a fee of 2'000 USD. This fee must be paid prior to the commencement of the review which will follow the process for Gold Standard Pre-Feasibility Assessments.

Where a review of the transitioning project information identifies topics which involve additional costs in order to provide full evidence to the Gold Standard, the project owner will be informed before any costs are incurred. In this case the transition process will only continue when an agreement with the project owner was found on how to proceed.

History of this document

Version	Date	Nature of revision
1.0	June 2014	Initial publication
1.1	Jun 2015	The guideline improved the description on measures to put in place to avoid double counting (e.g. through voluntary cancellation). The ERAA option was taken out, as it focused only on pre-CDM activities.