

RULE UPDATE

REVISION TO PRELIMINARY REVIEW REQUIREMENTS AND PROCEDURE

Publication Date 11/10/2023 (V1.1) 16/08/2021(V1.0)

Related Documents

- [GS4GG Principles and Requirements](#)
- Rule Update – [The SDG Impact Tool](#)
- [Preliminary Review Form](#)

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BACKGROUND

Gold Standard continuously strives to make the certification process simpler for project developers while maintaining robustness and procedural efficiency. To support these efforts Gold Standard introduced a standardised checklist to fast-track preliminary review for a limited number of project types. With this rule update, the scope of the fast-track preliminary review is extended to include most project types, the document requirements have been reduced and the timelines for review expedited. The revised requirements and procedures are summarised in this rule update document.

RULE UPDATE

PROJECT CATEGORY: All project categories except LUF/AGR

1 | SCOPE AND APPLICABILITY

- 1.1.1 | Pathway 1 refers to the completeness check pathway that has been established to fast-track eligible projects through the preliminary review process. The revised requirements for pathway 1 shall apply to all the project¹/VPAs² both regular and retroactive), except LUF/AGR projects, submitted for preliminary review after 08/12/2022 (inclusive). Please note the revised requirements may be adopted voluntarily by project developers from the date of publication and submissions for preliminary review under the revised process are possible after 05/09/2022.
- 1.1.2 | Pathway 2 is a detailed preliminary review. Early users of a new Project Type, Methodology or Product or a project applying the Land Use and Forests Activity Requirements are required to follow Pathway 2. Such projects shall undergo detailed preliminary review as required by [GS4GG Principles and Requirements](#). The revised requirements summarised in tables 1 and 2 below apply to such projects, however, the duration of preliminary review remains at 4-weeks.

2 | REVISED REQUIREMENTS AND PROCEDURE

2.1 | Preliminary review requirements

- 2.1.1 | The following tables highlight where revisions have been introduced in the requirements.

Table 1 – Revisions to [Principles and Requirements](#)

Current requirements	Revised requirements
<p>Para 5.1.1. (a)</p> <p>All Projects must LIST with the Gold Standard by undertaking a Preliminary Review and uploading Key Project Information, draft Project Design Document and completed Stakeholder Consultation Report.</p>	<p>Para 5.1.1. (a)</p> <p>All Projects must LIST with the Gold Standard by undertaking a Preliminary Review and uploading Key Project Information draft Project Design Document and completed Stakeholder Consultation Report.</p> <p>Refer to para 5.1.4 below</p>
<p>Para 5.1.3</p> <p>The Preliminary Review (time of first submission) is conducted once at the outset (i.e., at an early stage of project design and before Listing on the Gold Standard Impact</p>	<p>Para 5.1.3</p> <p>The Preliminary Review (time of first submission) is conducted once at the outset (i.e., at an early stage of project design and before Listing on the Gold Standard Impact</p>

¹ In case of regular VPAs, exemptions may apply, refer to the [Programme of Activity Requirements](#) for further details.

² Preliminary review submission is considered 'submitted' when the Project Developer has: (a) signed and submitted the Terms and Conditions AND (b) submitted the Project Documentation AND (c) paid the fee for the Preliminary Review, where required (para 5.1.7, [Principles and Requirements](#))

Registry, see below) of a Project. During the Preliminary Review, Gold Standard conducts a desk review of the Key Project Information and Draft Project Design Document. This review considers whether the Project has the potential to conform to the Gold Standard Requirements and may therefore progress to Listed status.

Para 5.1.4

The Preliminary Review includes a desk review of the Project Eligibility Principles as well as the applicability of the methodology amongst other matters, based on the Key Project Information, draft PDD and [Stakeholder Consultation Report](#). It involves one of the pathways below, dependent on the type of activity. Gold Standard shall decide which pathway a Project is required to undertake, though guidelines are provided as follows:

(a) Pathway 1 – Completeness Check Pathway
- This pathway is for regular and retroactive cycle, eligible project types unless otherwise stated in the Activity Requirements. Note that certain project types require certain details to be checked and resolved more thoroughly during the Completeness Check. These are stated in the Activity Requirements. The Completeness Check Pathway consists of a Preliminary Review period of 4 weeks, conducted by Gold Standard.

(b) Pathway 2 – Detailed Preliminary Review
- In this pathway, Gold Standard conducts a more thorough check of the project documentation. The application of a Detailed Preliminary Assessment is at the discretion of Gold Standard, though typically is required for early users of a new Project Type, Methodology or Product. The Detailed Preliminary Review Pathway consists of a Preliminary Review period of 4 weeks, conducted by Gold Standard.

Registry, see below) of a Project. During the Preliminary Review, Gold Standard conducts a desk review of the Key Project Information ~~and Draft Project Design Document~~. This review considers whether the Project has the potential to conform to the Gold Standard Requirements and may therefore progress to Listed status.

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(a) Pathway 1 – Completeness Check Pathway
- This pathway is for regular and retroactive cycle, ~~eligible project types unless otherwise stated in the Activity Requirements. Note that certain project types require certain details to be checked and resolved more thoroughly during the Completeness Check. These are stated in the Activity Requirements. The Completeness Check Pathway consists of a Preliminary Review period of 4 weeks, conducted by Gold Standard.~~ (Refer to the revised procedure and timeline below under section 2.2 of this rule update).

(b) Pathway 2 – Detailed Preliminary Review
- In this pathway, Gold Standard conducts a more thorough check of the project documentation. The application of a Detailed Preliminary Assessment is at the discretion of Gold Standard, though typically is required for early users of a new Project Type, Methodology or Product and a ~~project~~ applying the [Land Use and Forests Activity Requirements](#). The Detailed Preliminary Review Pathway consists of a Preliminary Review period of 4 weeks, conducted by Gold Standard.

- New methodology refers to the first version of a methodology. If a revised/new version of an approved methodology is published it is not considered a new methodology.

Para 5.1.8

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The minimum requirements for submission of Project Documentation include

The minimum requirements for submission of Project Documentation include Key Project Information and

(a) A completed [Stakeholder Consultation Report](#)

(b) A substantially completed Project Design Documentation submission that captures:

i. Fully completed details required under Section – General Eligibility Criteria.

ii. A substantially completed [Safeguarding Principles Assessment](#) (meaning the majority completed, including any key matters that relate to the project type or context) including any Expert Stakeholder opinions and recommendations.

iii. Defined SDG Impacts including any Expert Stakeholder opinions and recommendations sought.

iv. Confirmation of certification pathway and any Gold Standard Approved Methodologies and Product Requirements followed including a demonstration of Financial Additionality where required.

v. A draft Monitoring Plan.

(a) Key Project Information

(b) A completed [Stakeholder Consultation Report](#)

(c) Only applicable to projects A substantially completed draft Project Design Documentation submission only for projects with a new Project Type, Methodology or Product or a project applying [Land Use and Forests Activity Requirements](#), a draft Project Design Document is required that captures:

i. Fully Completed details required under Section – General Eligibility Criteria section for project description and methodology application. The additionality demonstration and monitoring plan can be summarised briefly.

ii. A summary of substantially completed [Safeguarding Principles Assessment](#) (meaning the majority completed, including any key identified risks matters that relate to the project type or context) including any Expert Stakeholder opinions and recommendations.

iii. Defined Identified SDGs Impacts including any Expert Stakeholder opinions and recommendations sought.

iv. Confirmation of certification pathway and any Gold Standard Approved Methodologies and Product Requirements followed including a demonstration of Financial Additionality where required.

v. A draft Monitoring Plan.

Para 5.1.11

With a successful Preliminary Review, the Project will obtain 'Listed' status in the Gold Standard Registry. This means that:

(a) The Key Project Information, draft [Project Design Documentation](#) and supporting documentation are made publicly available, AND

(b) The Project Developer may promote the Project according to the [Claims Guidelines](#) as appropriate for Listed status Projects.

(c) The Project may proceed to Validation.

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With a successful Preliminary Review, the Project will obtain 'Listed' status in the Gold Standard Registry. This means that:

(a) The Key Project Information, draft [Project Design Documentation](#), where applicable and supporting documentation are made publicly available, AND

(b) The Project Developer may promote the Project according to the [Claims Guidelines](#) as appropriate for Listed status Projects.

(c) The Project may proceed to Validation.

Table 2 – Revisions to Rule update [THE SDG IMPACT TOOL](#)

Current requirements	Revised requirements
Para 2.1.3 The SDG Impact Tool application is mandatory for all new projects submitted for Preliminary Review after 14.03.2022 and projects (including new PoAs and their VPAs) submitted for design certification review and renewal after 14.03.2022	Not applicable. <i>You may use the SDG impact Tool to identify the relevant monitoring indicator, SDGs and corresponding SDG targets and design a monitoring plan for identified indicators. It is not required to submit the SDG tool for the project for preliminary review, however, it must be completed and submitted to VVB for validation.</i>
Para 2.1.5 The completed SDG Tool shall be submitted along with other project documentation (such as Project Design Document (PDD), Monitoring Report (MR), Emission Reductions (ER) spreadsheets, as applicable) during requests for: a. Preliminary Review b. Validation and Verification to GS-VVB c. Design and Performance review/certification to Gold Standard	Para 2.1.5 The completed SDG Tool shall be submitted along with other project documentation (such as Project Design Document (PDD), Monitoring Report (MR), Emission Reductions (ER) spreadsheets, as applicable) during requests for: a. Preliminary Review a. Validation and Verification to GS-VVB b. Design and Performance review/certification to Gold Standard

2.1.2 | Regular or Retroactive - both project types shall submit the required documents for preliminary review (time of first submission) within one year of the project start date. Project submitted at a date later than one year from the project start date will not be eligible for Gold Standard certification. LUF project shall refer to [LUF activity requirements](#) for applicable timeline.

2.1.3 | In Case of regular VPAs, corresponding to a design certified real case VPAs – refer to para 8.2.2 of [Programme of Activity requirements](#).

2.2 | Preliminary review procedure

2.2.1 | As per the certification timeline, the project/PoA/VPAs enter the preliminary review after submitting the project documents³ and paying the applicable fee.

2.2.2 | **Pathway 1:** The Completeness Check Pathway timeline is summarised below;

- a. Step 1 - The Gold Standard (or a certification body) shall, within 14 days of submission of the documents **and** the payment of the fee, conduct a completeness check.

³ For the list of required documentation for both the pathways, please refer to the para 1.1.2 of [Preliminary Review Request Form](#).

- i. If the project/PoA/VPAs successfully passes the completeness check, the project skips directly to Step 4 and Steps 2 & 3 are not applicable.
 - ii. During the completeness check, if Gold Standard identifies that information is missing and/or further information is needed to make a decision, the Gold Standard shall request further information from the Project Developer.
- b. Step 2 - The Project Developer shall submit the requested information within 14 days of receipt of the request.
- c. Step 3 - The Gold Standard shall notify the Project Developer (within 7 days of submission -
 - i. If the submission is considered complete, the project is listed (Step 4).
 - ii. If the submission is found incomplete or further information is required, the project developer is notified accordingly. The project developer may submit further information anytime and Gold Standard will review according to available capacity.
- d. Step 4 – After the completeness check, the project is either:
 - i. listed on the [Gold Standard Impact Registry](#) or
 - ii. not listed on the [Gold Standard Impact Registry](#). Where it is decided to not list the project, the project developer is provided with the rationale for rejection of the request.

2.2.3 | **Pathway 2:** For the detailed preliminary review a 4-week desk review is conducted by Gold Standard or a certification body. The 4-week review timeline shall apply to early users of a new Project Type, Methodology, or Product, or a project applying Land Use and Forests Activity Requirements. Such projects shall undergo a detailed preliminary review as required by the [GS4GG Principle and Requirements \(pathway 2 – detailed preliminary review\)](#).

2.2.4 | For any project type, Gold Standard at its discretion, may select the project for the Detailed Preliminary Review Pathway (Pathway 2), at any stage of preliminary review. In such cases, the 4-week timeline applies.

DOCUMENT HISTORY

Release date	Summary of changes
11/10/2023	- Clarified timeline for submission of project documents for preliminary review (para 2.1.2 & 2.1.3)
16/08/2021	- Rule update issued to introduce changes to preliminary review process