TEMPLATE · TRANSITION FROM GSTC INDUSTRY STANDARD V3.0 TO GSTC HOTEL STANDARD V4.0

The Transition Checklist: From v3.0 to v4.0

Source: Francesco Dore, The Helm and the Lens, Volume 7a — GSTC Hotel Standard v4.0, subchapters 1.15 (book page 185) and 2.15 (book page 381); Appendix A (book page 399)

THE DATE THAT GOVERNS EVERY CERTIFIED PROPERTY

Certifications issued under v3.0 are no longer valid after 30 December 2028 (GSTC transition guidance, 26 January 2026). The date applies whatever the expiry printed on a certificate. It concerns the certification, not the hotel's legal obligations.

1 · Key facts

Fact	What it means for a certified property
Hotel Standard v4.0 dated 30 December 2025	The fourth revision of the GSTC Industry Standard, separated into a Hotel Standard and a Tour Operator Standard.
40 criteria, 205 performance indicators	Section A: 14 criteria, 74 indicators · B: 9, 44 · C: 4, 12 · D: 13, 75.
Audits based on indicators rather than criteria	Transition guidance of 26 January 2026. A renumbered binder shows where evidence belongs; only the indicators show what it is missing.
30 December 2028	After this date, certifications under v3.0 are no longer valid.
The GSTC does not certify hotels	It recognises standards and accredits certification bodies; a GSTC-Accredited body audits. The form and timing of the transition audit are agreed with that body.

2 · A re-reading, not a relabelling

Layer	What changed between v3 and v4.0	What a renumbering catches
Number	Changed for most criteria; sections A and B reorganised	All of it
Criterion statement	Largely carried over in substance; three criteria new, several merged, moved or split	Most of it, if the statements are compared
Performance indicator	Rewritten throughout; 205 in version 4.0, now the level at which audits are based	Almost none of it
Evidence	Organised by the old indicators and the old numbering	None of it

3 · What is new, has moved or was removed — seven kinds of change

Kind of change	Examples	What the hotel must do	Done
Carried over, renumbered	Former A3 to A4, A4 to A7, A6 to A5, A9 to A6	Re-index the evidence and read every indicator; a new number often hides new indicators	☐
Moved between sections	Former D1.1 and D1.2 into A13; former A7.4 to B5	Reassign responsibility, since a new section often belongs to a different person	☐
Merged	Former B3 and B4 to B3; former B8 and B9 to B4; former D1.1 and D1.2 to A13	Combine the evidence and check that nothing in either predecessor has been lost	☐
Divided or spread	Former A7 and A7.1, split into each relevant criterion; A7.2 to A11, A7.3 to A12	Follow each part of the old requirement to its new home	☐
Removed	Former D3.3 Visits to natural sites, with no matching criterion	Check whether the practice still falls under an indicator, such as D11.1 on tours and visits to natural areas	☐
New	A3, A14, B6	Build from the beginning: policy, person, training and records	☐
Expanded indicators	A4, A13, D3, D6	Start new data series early enough to show a full year of performance	☐

4 · Correspondence, criterion by criterion

Pairings follow the GSTC's own Change Mapping from v3.0 to v4.0; the notes on what changed in substance are this book's reading. Not a substitute for reading the indicators. The last two columns are for the property.

Section A — Demonstrate Effective Sustainable Management

Industry Standard v3 (2016)	Hotel Standard v4.0 (2025)	What changed in substance	Evidence re-read by indicator	Responsible
A1 Sustainability management system	A1 Sustainability management system	Policy, plan, targets, risks, resources and annual review become eight indicators; risks limited to sustainability-related risks	☐	
A2 Legal compliance	A2 Legal compliance	Register of local and national laws; child protection, trafficking, modern slavery and animal welfare named; internal procedures enforced	☐	
None in the GSTC mapping	A3 Guest and staff welfare	New criterion: a designated person for occupational and guest health and safety; hazard, emergency and crisis training	☐	
A3 Reporting and communication	A4 Reporting and communication	An annual report on policy, goals, actions and performance, publicly accessible; data at set intervals; stakeholder feedback	☐	
A6 Accurate promotion	A5 Accurate promotion	Facilities and services represented accurately; every sustainability claim supported by verifiable data or documentation	☐	
A9 Information and interpretation	A6 Information sharing and guidance	Staff trained on the destination; documented behavioural guidelines; digital formats preferred; relevant languages and accessible formats	☐	
A4 Staff engagement	A7 Staff engagement	Defined roles; orientation and structured training; records; materials in languages staff understand; engagement reviewed	☐	
A5 Customer experience	A8 Guest experience	Corrective actions documented and guests notified of them; guests engaged in sustainability practices	☐	
A10 Destination engagement	A9 Collaboration with stakeholders	Documented engagement with DMOs, NGOs, tourism boards, community leaders or associations, aligned with destination priorities	☐	
A8 Land, water and property rights	A10 Land, water and property rights	Consultation on new projects; FPIC principles where regulations are absent; external grievance mechanism; confirmation in the annual report	☐	

Industry Standard v3 (2016)	Hotel Standard v4.0 (2025)	What changed in substance	Evidence re-read by indicator	Responsible
A7 Buildings and infrastructure; A7.1 Compliance	No single successor	Split by the GSTC into each relevant criterion: permits and compliance for new projects now sit with A11 and A12	☐	
A7.2 Impact and integrity	A11 Site selection, planning and development	Permits for new projects; sustainability risk assessment integral to planning; landscape, heritage and ecological connectivity protected	☐	
A7.3 Sustainable practices and materials	A12 Buildings, construction and infrastructure	Preference for qualified local labour added; local or certified materials; run-off control; native plants; construction waste hierarchy	☐	
D1.1 Environmentally preferable purchasing; D1.2 Efficient purchasing	A13 Procurement	Combines all procurement-relevant criteria; local purchasing now has its indicators here; fourteen indicators: category targets, local purchase targets, single-use elimination, supplier evaluation and agreements	☐	
None in the GSTC mapping	A14 Food and beverages	New criterion: plant-based options, preference for local or certified plant-based ingredients, food waste practices	☐	

Section B — Social and Economic Benefits to the Local Community

Industry Standard v3 (2016)	Hotel Standard v4.0 (2025)	What changed in substance	Evidence re-read by indicator	Responsible
B1 Community support	B1 Community support	Ongoing support recorded and monitored; employability and skills programmes for local residents where feasible	☐	
B2 Local employment	B2 Local employment	Written policy; transparent recruitment for permanent and temporary staff; local share monitored including management	☐	
B3 Local purchasing; B4 Local entrepreneurs	B3 Local entrepreneur support	Merged; the local purchasing indicators now sit in A13; a maintained list of supported products and services, promoted to guests	☐	
B8 Community services; B9 Local livelihoods	B4 Community services and livelihoods	Merged; rights-of-way, transport routes and access to homes named; grievance system; issues documented and outcomes shared	☐	
A7.4 Access for all	B5 Access for all	Moved to section B; physical and neurodivergent needs; improvement plans; details before booking; people with disabilities involved	☐	

Industry Standard v3 (2016)	Hotel Standard v4.0 (2025)	What changed in substance	Evidence re-read by indicator	Responsible
None in the GSTC mapping; partial antecedents in B5 and C1	B6 Code of conduct	New criterion: written code with zero tolerance, respectful communication, safeguards for minors and vulnerable groups, training records	☐	
B5 Exploitation and harassment	B7 Exploitation, harassment and human trafficking	Confidential disclosure; child labour prevention; monitoring; staff training; records of no child or illegal labour; supplier requirements	☐	
B6 Equal opportunity	B8 Employment inclusion and equality	Explicit non-merit grounds; policy reviewed; groups at risk documented; bias training; equality monitored across all positions	☐	
B7 Decent work	B9 Decent work	Living wage kept in the criterion; contracted staff included; legal minimum for all; annual wage review; grievances without retaliation	☐	

Section C — Benefits to Cultural Heritage

Industry Standard v3 (2016)	Hotel Standard v4.0 (2025)	What changed in substance	Evidence re-read by indicator	Responsible
C1 Cultural interactions	C1 Cultural interactions	From guidance on visits to sites, to guest materials, role-based staff training and a channel for communities and Indigenous peoples	☐	
C2 Protecting cultural heritage	C2 Protecting cultural heritage	Substance kept: contributions in money, in kind or through collaboration; residents' access to heritage sites not impeded	☐	
C3 Presenting culture and heritage	C3 Presenting culture and heritage	Local art and crafts in guest-facing spaces; permissions for cultural presentations; consultation on sensitive or Indigenous heritage	☐	
C4 Artefacts	C4 Artifacts	Compliance with local and international law; an internal inventory of origin, use, display and legal ownership or custody	☐	

Section D — Environmental Benefits

Industry Standard v3 (2016)	Hotel Standard v4.0 (2025)	What changed in substance	Evidence re-read by indicator	Responsible
D1.3 Energy conservation	D1 Energy conservation	Energy by type per guest night or occupied room; renewable share reported; annual targets; equipment maintenance; outdoor heating	☐	

Industry Standard v3 (2016)	Hotel Standard v4.0 (2025)	What changed in substance	Evidence re-read by indicator	Responsible
D1.4 Water conservation	D2 Water conservation	Water risk from credible sources; use by source and per guest night; annual targets; linen reuse with participation monitored	☐	
D2.1 Greenhouse gas emissions	D3 Greenhouse gas emissions	Public commitment; annual Scope 1 and 2 targets and reporting; Scope 3 where feasible; offsets after reduction; coolant phase-out	☐	
D2.2 Transport	D4 Transportation	Cleaner operational transport; staff commuting options; EV charging where parking is provided; bicycle facilities; guest information	☐	
D2.3 Wastewater	D5 Wastewater	Documented evidence of safe discharge; water reuse such as greywater where feasible; technical staff training	☐	
D2.4 Solid waste	D6 Solid waste	Written policy; plan following the Waste Hierarchy; waste by type per guest night; annual targets; single-use items monitored	☐	
D2.5 Harmful substances	D7 Harmful substances	Inventory with Safety Data Sheets; usage monitored; substitution targets including landscaping; training; guest information	☐	
D2.6 Minimize pollution	D8 Minimize pollution	Sources identified by location; monitoring and review; noise from events; light pollution near sensitive areas; smoking areas	☐	
D3.1 Biodiversity conservation	D9 Biodiversity conservation	Protected areas and species documented; a strategy where sensitive areas may be affected; contributions recorded	☐	
D3.2 Invasive species	D10 Invasive species	Documented list of invasive plants and animals; removal with authorities; prevention in landscaping; plant inventory	☐	
D3.3 Visits to natural sites	No matching criterion	Recorded as removed in the GSTC mapping; tours and visits to natural areas offered by the hotel are now addressed by indicator D11.1	☐	
D3.4 Wildlife interactions	D11 Interactions with animals	Terminology update; tours and visits to natural areas addressed in D11.1; tour providers checked; safety protocols; close contact with wild animals prohibited in the directly managed environment	☐	
D3.5 Animal welfare	D12 Animal welfare	Conditional on keeping animals: licences, qualified personnel, welfare records, no coercive practices; Five Domains named	☐	
D3.6 Wildlife harvesting and trade	D13 Wildlife harvesting and trade	List of nationally protected species; guidance on wildlife products; acquisition or breeding only where strictly regulated	☐	

Three details are easy to miss: the 2016 safeguard against inappropriate interaction with children now has its clearest successor in B6; the rule that threatened species are not used or sold now sits in A13, with due diligence on wild-sourced products; and food has its own criterion, A14, while food waste remains also within D6.

5 · Transition steps

The order of the steps comes from the transition plan in Appendix A of the book; the dates are the property's own, except the last. Step 5 cannot move later without damaging steps 8 and 10, because the review and the audit both need a year of data. This sequence is this book's practice; only the final date comes from the GSTC's guidance.

Done	Step	What it involves	Our target date	Owner	Notes
☐	1. Confirm the route	Ask the GSTC-Accredited certification body how and when the transition audit will take place			
☐	2. Read every indicator	All 205 indicators read against the binder and marked evidenced, partial or absent			
☐	3. Decide as owners	Designated person for A3; code of conduct for B6; public emissions commitment for D3; resources in the next budget			
☐	4. Build the new criteria	A3, A14 and B6 written, approved, communicated and trained, with records			
☐	5. Start the data series	Energy by type, water by source and waste by type per guest night; Scope 1 and 2; linen reuse participation			
☐	6. Publish the first report	Annual report in the v4.0 structure, publicly accessible, with the previous year as baseline where data allow			
☐	7. Train before the season	Code of conduct, hazards and emergency response for permanent and seasonal staff alike			
☐	8. Hold the annual review	Targets reviewed and the plan updated on its findings, under A1.5 and A1.8, with decisions minuted			
☐	9. Assess internally	A reading of the evidence, indicator by indicator, by someone outside the department that produced it			
☐	10. Transition audit	Audit under version 4.0 by the accredited body, leaving months to close any findings			
☐	11. End of transition	Certifications under v3.0 no longer valid	30 December 2028		

6 · Before the transition audit — a self-check

☐ Have we read the indicators beneath each criterion, not only compared criterion statements?

☐ Have we stopped treating the relabelled binder as a completed transition?

☐ Do we know that a v3.0 certificate is not valid after 30 December 2028, whatever its printed expiry date?

☐ Are we treating correspondence tables, including this book's, as maps rather than as evidence of conformity?

☐ Are the three new criteria — A3, A14 and B6 — being built early, with policies, people and training records?

☐ Have the annual data series started early enough to show a year of tracking against a target?

☐ Has every requirement that moved to another section been given a new person responsible where needed?

☐ Are we finding the gaps ourselves rather than waiting for the certification body to identify them?

> *This checklist is archived once the transition period closes. Independent material; not affiliated with or endorsed by the GSTC. The standard's own text at www.gstc.org prevails.*