WORKING MATERIAL 1.1 · CHAPTER 1 — THE VISION OF OWNERSHIP (SECTION A) · SETTING: MONTEVERDE, COSTA RICA

Why a Hotel Standard, and Why Now

Source: Francesco Dore, The Helm and the Lens, Volume 7a — GSTC Hotel Standard v4.0, subchapter 1.1 (book page 13)

GUIDING QUESTION

A wall of sustainability awards tells a guest that someone, somewhere, once looked at a hotel and approved of it. A published standard asks a narrower and harder question: against which requirement, measured by which indicator, verified by whom? What changes for an owner when the second question is the one the market starts asking?

1 · Verification Pact: market claims against the standard

Copied from the book. The last column is for your property: what holds here, and how you know it.

What is claimed	Binding?	What actually holds	In our property
A hotel can be "GSTC certified" by applying to the GSTC	No	The GSTC accredits certification bodies and recognises standards; certification is issued by an accredited body	
Awards and platform badges are equivalent to certification	No	They may reflect real practice, but they are not judgements against a published standard by an accredited body	
Meeting the intent of a criterion is enough	No	Version 4.0 assesses performance at the level of the indicators published beside each criterion	
The standard covers health and safety	Only partially true	A3 asks for measures on guest and staff welfare, but the preamble limits the risks addressed to sustainability; safety approvals remain with competent authorities	
A small property must meet the standard exactly like a large one	No	A1 requires a system proportional to size and scope, and the guidelines give options for micro, small and medium-sized properties	
A certificate issued under the previous version remains valid indefinitely	No	Certifications under Industry Standard v3.0 are no longer valid after 30 December 2028, the end of the transition period	

2 · Common mistakes — a self-check

Tick each mistake you recognise in your own property, and note where it shows.

☐ Treating awards, badges and commendations as equivalent to certification against a published standard.

☐ Believing the GSTC certifies hotels directly, rather than accrediting the bodies that do.

☐ Reading the criteria and ignoring the indicators, which are where compliance is now assessed.

☐ Assuming a small property must build the system of a chain, instead of one proportional to its size.

☐ Treating the standard as a substitute for health, safety and fire approvals from competent authorities.

☐ Keeping sustainability data in invoices and memory rather than in monthly records.

☐ Buying a quick online label in place of building evidence.

☐ Waiting for a client's questionnaire before mapping practice against the criteria.

3 · A Checklist for an Owner's First Reading of the Standard

The book's checklist, with a column for your own answer.

Question	Why it matters	Our answer
Which of the frames on our wall were granted against a published standard by an accredited body?	Separates evidence of conformity from evidence of goodwill	
For each of the forty criteria, is our practice evidenced, practised but unevidenced, or absent?	Turns a vague sense of being sustainable into a gap map	
Who, by name, oversees our sustainability management plan?	A1 and A7 require a system with clear responsibility, even in a small property	
Which indicators do we already record monthly, and which exist only in invoices?	Version 4.0 is assessed at the level of the indicators	
Do our major clients or lenders already ask for GSTC-related evidence?	The commercial deadline often arrives before the regulatory one	
If we hold a certificate under Industry Standard v3.0, when will we transition before 30 December 2028?	Certificates under v3.0 lose validity at the end of the transition period	

4 · What would show this is working

Questions drawn from the subchapter's reading of the standard and its practical application. Indicator references point to the GSTC Hotel Standard v4.0; where the evidence lives is this book's practice, not a requirement of the standard.

Question	Where the evidence lives	Seen?
Have we read every criterion and every performance indicator, not only the criterion statements?	Gap map against the forty criteria, dated	☐
Is each indicator marked practised and evidenced, practised but not evidenced, or not practised?	Gap map status columns	☐
Is one person formally designated to oversee the sustainability management plan (A1.3, A7.2)?	Designation letter or job description	☐
Are energy, water, waste and purchasing figures recorded monthly from a stated start date (A4.5)?	Monthly indicator log and the invoices behind it	☐
When we describe our status to buyers, do we say whether we are certified, and by an accredited body?	Correspondence with tour operators and agents	☐

> *What this sheet is not: the GSTC Hotel Standard does not prescribe this form. It is a working aid drawn from the book; the standard's criteria, indicators and guidelines govern the real case. Independent material; not affiliated with or endorsed by the GSTC. The standard's own text at www.gstc.org prevails.*