
Standard-Setting System Report

GEO Certified®

Club and Course Management

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Golf's Ecolabel



Development
& Renovation



Course & Club
Management



Standard

1. Scope

Any golf facility worldwide that has been fully operational for more than one year is eligible to participate in the OnCourse® programme, and apply at any point for the GEO Certified® ecolabel. Once certified the golf facility continues to measure, report and show its continual improvement in responsible golf operations, to become recertified after three years.

2. Sustainability Outcomes

GEO works to ensure the resource efficient and responsible stewardship of hundreds of thousands of acres of land that are managed as golf courses.

Through work to protect and enhance the ecological and hydrological value of that land; to reduce water and energy consumption; to influence purchasing decisions; to promote pollution prevention and to maximize positive community integration, GEO seeks to:

- Minimize climate change;
- Conserve biodiversity;
- Transform supply chains;
- Protect and enhance environmental quality;
- Generate valued and diverse socio-economic benefits for local people.

The sustainability issues addressed by the OnCourse® programme include:

Environmental	Economic	Social
Nature: Biodiversity Landscapes and ecosystems	Supply Chain	Community integration
Water: Conservation Recycling Watersheds	Waste management	Fair & ethical workplace environment
Energy: Resource efficiency Designing out high-energy usage Carbon Renewables	Efficient business practices	Local heritage and culture
Pollution control / environmental quality Soil, air, water	Jobs and tourism	

3. Justification

Golf is an estimated €60 billion and growing global industry. With over 35,000 existing clubs and courses, hundreds more in planning, design and construction, and hundreds of professional tournaments, golf has become a major player in sport, leisure and recreation, media, tourism, products and merchandise. Golf's re-establishment as an Olympic Sport (Rio 2016) is furthering popularity, visibility and stimulating new growth.

For many decades the environmental and social impact of golf has been questioned. Despite the sector providing protection of green-space, conservation of biodiversity and local community benefits, golf has been criticized for levels and type of some development and for the potential damage caused to landscapes and ecology, alongside its



consumption of water, fertilizers, pesticides and energy, when operational management does not address these sustainability issues.

These are the challenges and opportunities that GEO was established to consider and address, entirely dedicated to supporting the industry towards a future where negative impacts are avoided, or at least significantly reduced, and where any unavoidable impacts are more than adequately mitigated so that golf brings scientifically and objectively proven net gains to people and the planet.

With a strong platform of non commercial, industry backed policy, guidance, programmes, CEO Certified® criteria and ecolabel, and with a growing network of accredited third party verifiers, GEO has built a credible and consistent platform around which many international and national initiatives, tools and consultancies can play.

4. Performance Level

GEO Certified® is a baseline standard where golf facilities show adherence to "must" criteria and where possible to "should" criteria against which they are audited by a third party verifier. Continual improvement is central to the programme, and facilities are audited every three years against the re-certification criteria.

5. Adaptations

The GEO Certified® criteria and programme is an international standard, with local guidance and enforcement through the network of nearly 70 GEO auditors, who use their extensive knowledge and often in conjunction with the local Golf Federation and/or golf agronomy associations, to ensure local applicability.

Standard-Setting and Revision Process

6. Stakeholder categorization and geography

GEO is a stakeholder led organization working with and for the golf industry worldwide. We work with a wide range of stakeholder groups, both for consultation, input and as part of our advisory and expert committees.

- Global Golf governing bodies
- Golf industry associations across five continents, such as country federations and those for club management, agronomy, golf course architecture and golf tournaments
- Academic bodies in Europe, America, South America and China
- Government agencies and NGOs (especially those with interest in the main themes of the standard – such as water, biodiversity, CO2, social impact, etc.).
- Industry manufacturers and suppliers

7. Summary of the revision process

Our Standard Setting Procedures, freely available [online](#), aim to create a standard setting and revision process which is transparent, accessible and inputted into by a balance of stakeholder groups. For new standards at least two rounds of public consultation are conducted, where GEO reaches out to all stakeholder groups online, by direct mail, through workshops and discussions at events and through our network of partners and auditors present in countries across the world. The aim is to produce scientifically based, rigorous standards that are consistent internationally and locally applicable. We also pilot test new standards where possible (for example for New Developments and Tournaments).

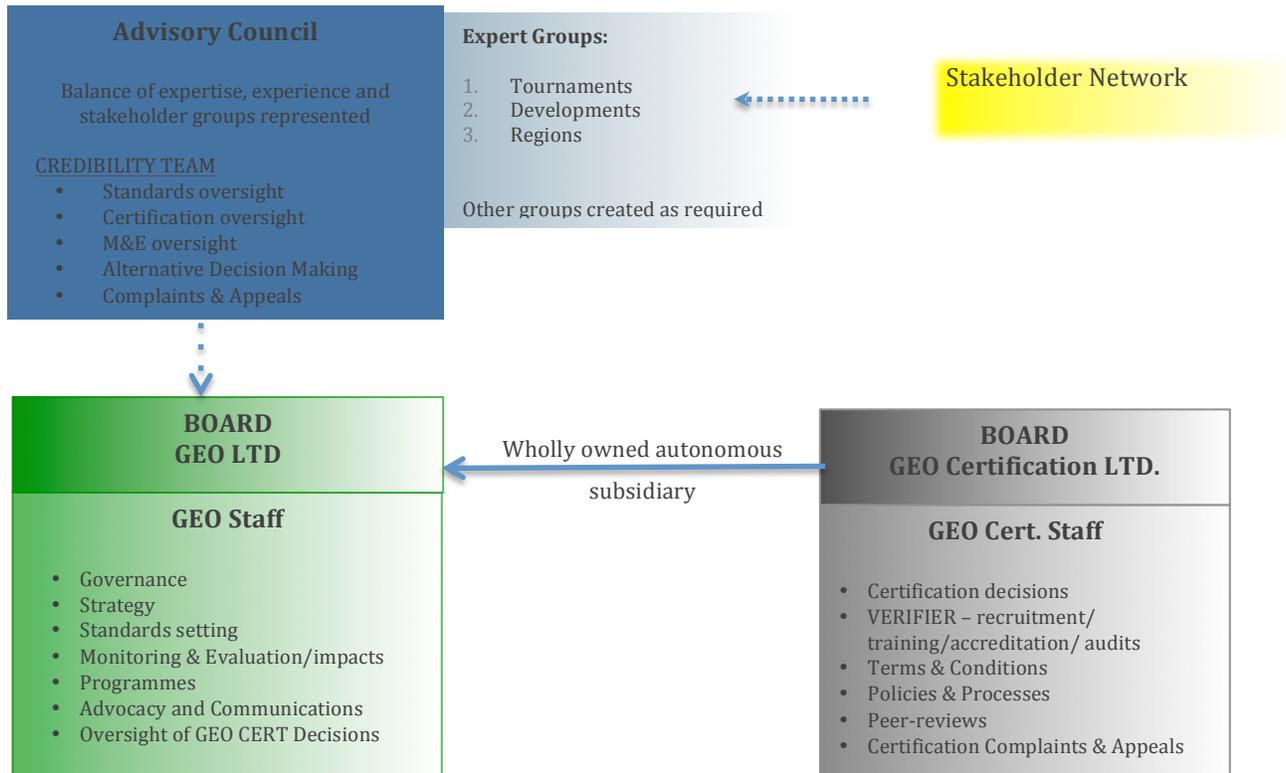
8. Review and Revision Process

The policy on standard revision is every 5 years for each standard, although within the procedures there is the possibility of starting an 'extraordinary' standard setting process if this is deemed as needed by changes in scientific/technical knowledge, standards users, our stakeholders or GEO.



9. Governance

GEO aims to bring together and support stakeholders in the Golf Industry. Our Governance structure is shown below:



In 2015 GEO Certification Ltd was formed to create a stronger separation between standard setting and programmatic activities, and auditing, assurance and certification activities. This will help to ensure greater independence and impartiality in the audit and certification processes. The two organisations are supported by the Advisory Council – a multi-stakeholder group of experts in a balance of relevant fields, and wider support through the informal stakeholder network.

10. Decision-making process

All decisions are by consensus, defined as the absence of sustained opposition. If the Board, Group or Committee cannot reach consensus, then the issue passes to vote, where a super-majority is the threshold ([see here](#)). Alternative decision-making for Standard Setting ([here](#)) and Complaints by golf clubs on certifications [here](#).