New Golf Development Criteria
Background Notes Ver 1.3

Golf’s Opportunity
Since its very first design, golf has offered an intrinsic benefit of connecting people to nature. When golf is designed to exist within the beauty and constraints of the natural environment or rehabilitates a degraded site it is contributing to ecosystems and provides a safe haven for wildlife. But, golf has advanced beyond its deep-rooted link to community and nature evolving into a multi-billion dollar, global industry. Through this evolution golf has not always been fully recognised for its social, environmental and economic value.

Background
Through the New Golf Development Criteria (hereafter known as the Voluntary Sustainability Standard or VSS) we are seeking to find a common ground on what the industry believes is expected of a sustainable golf development.

After two years of road testing on a global scale with a small group of real world golf projects, their commentary and feedback has been incorporated to evolve the VSS to set feasible targets whilst elevating expectations. Issues around engagement with local communities, difficulties with supply chains and site selection & surveying were items actively discussed amongst others.

The VSS deliberately includes very few quantifiable criterions. This is in light of the fact that the VSS has an international scope and as such it is deemed appropriate to keep the individual criterion performance based rather than a prescriptive format. The feedback pro-forma in the consultation pack provides the opportunity to give your full comment of all aspects of the VSS including the overall structure and the form of the individual criterion as desired.

The VSS is designed to inform new developments up until the point of opening day. At this point the project should refer to the document “GEO Certified® - Evaluation Criteria” for future operations and management of the facility.

There is a support program for both development and management of golf properties called OnCourse® that assists a golf facility to apply the VSS criteria to real world
situations. 3rd party auditors can oversee that process in order to gain certification for the facility. Read more…

Context
Setting an international voluntary standard for sustainable golf development represents a significant step for golf as an industry to take. It signals a consideration for the impacts and a protection of the integrity of the industry. The final public consultation process will run over the next 6 weeks and will be overseen by the Working Group. During this time views will be sought from all areas of the globe and across many industry sectors. The process will be comprehensive, transparent and orchestrated in accordance with the ISEAL best codes of practice and standard setting procedures.

If the consultation process is successful golf will be the only sport to have a sustainable design and construction process recognised by the ISEAL Alliance.

We would hope that from this consultation process the views and comments will bring forward issues that may requires supplementary documentation such as technical advice notes, regional criteria development and thresholds research.
Briefing Points

1. Anyone can use this Standard – it is a voluntary framework document

2. Certification is an optional process people can enter into and this Voluntary Sustainability Standard will be used to inform that certification process in accordance with ISEAL Alliance codes of practice
Support and Collaboration

Supported by and working collaboratively with a cross section of golf industry and external stakeholders, GEO brings golf and sustainability experience and expertise to drive sustainability in and through golf. GEO’s not-for profit support services support the industry’s leadership, credibility and promotion spanning: communications advisory; program and mentoring support for clubs, developments, and tournaments; standard setting; third party certification. On behalf of the industry, GEO has enabled golf’s sustainability system to become the only sports member of the global ISEAL community (isealalliance.org).

Please visit golfenvironment.org to learn more about GEO’s specialist support and coordination role within golf.