

GS1 Global Product Classification Frequently Asked Questions

June 2006

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1. The Schema

1.1 What is the basis for the industry standards?

Experts within the industry develop the standards. Wherever possible, existing commodity expertise is used. The problem is determining what is local expertise in a global environment. There are existing solutions today all over the world and all are different. Thus, the recommendations of industry experts have to be agreed by an industry work group before they are implemented. It is this group that has developed the rules on which the standards operate.

1.2 What is the GS1 global system of standards?

The GS1 System is an integrated system of global standards that provides for accurate identification and communication of information regarding products, assets, services and locations. It is the most implemented supply chain standards system in the world.

The GS1 System is the foundation of a wide range of efficiency-building supply chain applications and solutions. Based on GS1's ID Keys, a common recurring set of Identification keys, the GS1 System is composed of four key product areas:

- Global data and application standards for bar codes that use the globally recognised GS1 Identification Keys to automatically identify things such as trade items, locations, logistic units, and assets.
- Global standards for electronic business messaging that allow rapid, efficient and accurate automatic electronic transmission of agreed business data between trading partners. Based on two components: GS1 EANCOM and GS1 XML.
- The Global Data Synchronisation Network™ (GDSN™) is an automated, standards-based, global environment that enables secure and continuous data synchronisation, allowing all partners to have consistent item data in their systems at the same time.
- **Global Product Classification (GPC) is the chosen GS1 standard mandatory classification system for the GDSN.**
- A new global standards system that combines RFID (radio frequency identification) technology, existing communications network infrastructure and the Electronic Product Code (a number for uniquely identifying an item) to enable immediate and automatic identification and tracking of an item through the whole supply chain globally, resulting in improved efficiency and visibility of the supply chain.

GS1 also offers solutions integrating a number of GS1 products. Traceability is a robust solution for tracking and tracing items through the food supply chain. Patient Safety ensures prevention of medical errors and counterfeiting through the healthcare supply chain.

1.3 What is the GS1 Global Product Classification System?

Classification with GPC is the act of saying: “This product belongs to this Brick, this Brick has hierarchy components (Segment, Family and Class), and this Brick can be further described with a Brick Attribute set and the associated Brick Attribute Values”.

GPC is a rule-set based structure, not individual product identification (GTIN) or description (GDD product properties). The GPC Schema is a four-tier - flexible - classification system for grouping products into a schema. The four tiers are Segment, Family, Class, and Brick. A Brick entity identifies a category group that contains products that provide granularity and global recognition and can be characterised by the same set of up to seven generic attributes (Brick Attributes).

The word schema is used because it goes one step further from a scheme. A scheme is just a diagram showing systematic arrangement of parts. A schema also contains rules. Since GPC is rules based, it is a schema. UNSPSC is a scheme.

An example for an Apple (identified with a GTIN and described with GDD product properties) would be:

- Segment: Food, Beverage and Tobacco
- Family: Fruits / Vegetables / Nuts / Seeds
- Class: Fruit – Unprepared / Unprocessed
- Brick: Fruit-Unprepared / Unprocessed (Shelf stable)
 - Brick Attribute1: Formation
 - Brick Attribute1 Value: Whole
 - Brick Attribute2: If Organic
 - Brick Attribute2 Value: Yes
 - Brick Attribute3: If Pitted / Stoned
 - Brick Attribute3 Value: No
 - Brick Attribute4: Type of Fruit
 - Brick Attribute4 Value: Apple

Concepts of Reuse

6800000	Audio Visual/Photography	- Segment
6801000	Audio Visual Equipment	- Family
68010100	Televisions	- Class
10001402	Televisions – Hand-held	- Brick
20001148	Screen Size	- Attribute Type
30007878	4 INCH	- Attribute Value

6800000	Audio Visual/Photography	- Segment
6801000	Audio Visual Equipment	- Family
68010300	Portable Audio/Video	- Class
10001420	Portable DVD Players	- Brick
20001148	Screen Size	- Attribute Type
30007912	7 INCH	- Attribute Value

1.4 Why do we need a globally standard product classification schema?

Experience has shown that when creating a classification schema in a multi cultural environment the following known problem areas are present:

- Unclear and inconsistent structuring
- Use of cultural terms and spellings
- A non standard naming convention
- Unclear and limited definitions
- Non-unique placement of products

A globally standard product classification schema such as the GPC Schema provides a commonly understood set of product category descriptors (product grouping, form, etc.). This can enable trading partners to communicate more efficiently and accurately throughout their supply chain activities, retail buying programs, etc. Importantly however, global data synchronisation is dependent on trading partners using the same globally standard product classification schema to enable product search, view, and subscription and publication activities.

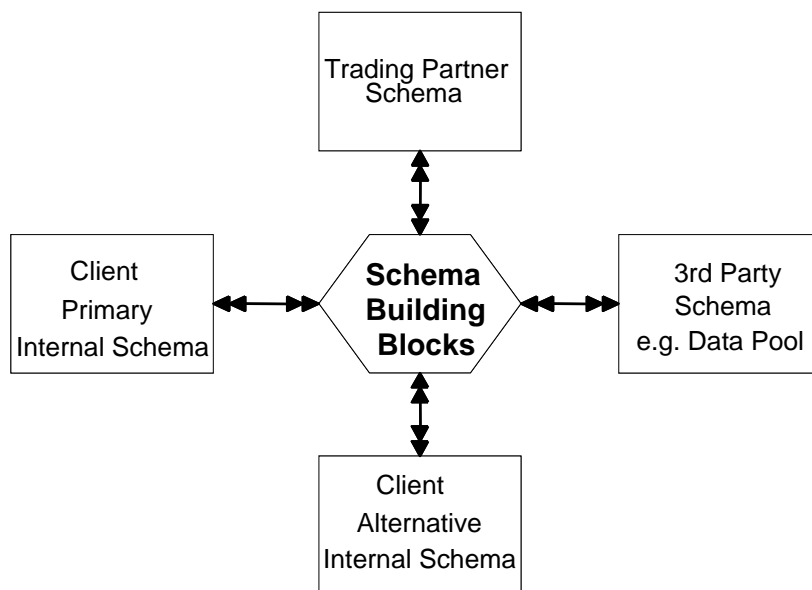
1.5 Why wasn't an existing schema selected instead of creating an entirely new schema?

Initially, the Global Product Classification Launch Team pursued an approach of acquiring an existing schema. A key criterion for the selection of a global classification was to allow ownership of the elements of the schema to be placed with an independent industry body. The intent was to avoid potential disputes over ownership rights, to ensure that Service Provider selection was based on cost & service factors (only) and that the on-going evolution of the schema would be driven exclusively by user requirements.

After careful consideration, the Global Product Classification Launch Team determined that the proprietary nature of the existing schemas was unlikely to change in the foreseeable future. The Global Product Classification Launch Team concluded that it would be in the best interest of the industry to create a new schema that would be owned and managed by GS1.

1.6 Will this replace existing proprietary solutions? Why are we moving away from proprietary solutions if they are working?

GPC is designed to potentially co-exist and map to alternative classification solutions. The individual data pools and users will determine which classification systems they wish to support in addition to the global standards. GPC is used as a common language to which participating parties map their legacy schemas, and through this process can easily understand how each local classification compares.



1.7 Is usage of the Schema compulsory?

GPC Brick is mandatory; use of a consistent, globally accepted product classification is a key enabler of data synchronization. We strongly suggest that:

- All major catalogues use the industry product classification standard structure.
- Products within various data pools not using the schema will need to cross-reference their data to this standard.

Development of full industry standards will be an ongoing process for some years yet as we cannot predict how much detail will ultimately be defined.

1.8 What are the Business Rules of GPC?

A comprehensive set of business rules was established for creating the schema.

- Applying clear and consistent structuring.
- Using non-culturally biased terms and spellings.
- Applying a standardised naming convention.
- Ensuring that each Family, Class and Brick has the necessary coverage and scope, with the ability to add appropriate new values as identified.
- Avoiding ambiguity through clear and concise definitions.
- Providing a generic and standardised schema by ensuring that all products are uniquely placed.

1.9 What are the Principles of GPC?

- Modularity and Flexibility of the classification in order to enable the development of further categories by addition of new Bricks, Brick Attributes and Brick Attribute Values.
- The logical grouping of Bricks. The logic behind the schema should be transparent.
- All categorized information must be universally applicable, i.e. the terminology used in the schema should not be culturally or nationally biased.
- A Brick must contain products that can be characterised by the same set of Brick Attributes. Brick Attributes must meet the GPC Brick Attribute rules.
- The number of Bricks should be manageable.
- The schema is initially published in Oxford English with an explanatory glossary, which helps to clarify specific terms. Both the schema and the glossary will later be translated to other languages, including US English.

1.10 What are the GPC Hierarchy Rules?

- Resulting Bricks must be grouped coherently and logically.
- Categorized information must be recognised globally.
- Hierarchy groupings must be relevant and suitable for all search functionalities.
- Classification must be flexible.

1.11 What are the Brick Rules?

The list of rules below is a comprehensive list that has been used for Bricks across Segments. These rules are not appropriate for all Segments. They should be used where they are relevant and are applied in all relevant segments.

- Broad Area of Differentiation
- Broad Area of Application
- Products Serve a Common Purpose and Use
- Processed to Similar Methods

- Products are Used and Applied in a Similar Manner
- Products are of a Similar Form and Material
- Split between Powered vs. Manual Products
- Replacement parts will be classified in one Brick per Class
- Storage and Preservation
- Variety Packs
- Other
- Application and Function

1.12 What are the Brick Attribute Rules?

The following set of rules has been devised to ensure the consistency of Bricks and their comprehensive coverage and to achieve a generic approach to assigning Brick Attributes and to ensure that attributes within GPC do not overlap with Global Data Dictionary Trade Item attributes.

- Globally applicable – Would this attribute be globally applicable? .
- Relevant to users and industry – Is the attribute of relevance to users? What benefit is it providing? .
- Unique, objective and mutually exclusive – Includes both attributes and the values belonging to the attribute concerned. .
- Non-legislation specific – Does this attribute relate to any legal requirement? .
- High-level descriptor - Would a user require or expect to search, subscribe or publish information through this view? After selecting a Brick can the user get down to a reasonable level of granularity to find or communicate information relating to a product.
- Single, comprehensive and exhaustive code list – Can a code list be devised that meets these needs? .
- Proactive use of a glossary – Are there any terms/words used within the attribute package that may cause confusion?
- Brick Attributes are dependent on the Brick and do not stand-alone.

1.13 What are the Brick Attribute Values?

- Normalised value pick list. Only one Brick Attribute Value could be populated per each Brick.
- Brick Attributes must contain a default value in cases of limited information or non-applicability – unclassified and unidentified.
- Brick Attributes must possess a single comprehensive and exhaustive code list.
- Brick Attribute Values must be managed and maintained by the Service Provider and where necessary the GPC Task Group (GPCTG)
- Duplicate Brick Attribute Values are not permissible; all values should be uniquely defined.
- There should be no abbreviations within values.
- Brick Attribute Values should be in alphabetical order and created on the basis of key words.
- Contentious terms or words used as a value or within a value must be added to the glossary, along with a concise definition.

1.14 What is the GPC Code System?

The brick code is a mandatory data field for GDSN between GS1 compliant data pools and the Global Registry.

Numbering and Structure

		Example	
Optional	{ Segment	72000000	Home Appliances
	{ Family	72010000	Major Domestic Appliances
	{ Class	72010300	Major Cooking Appliances
Mandatory	{ Brick	10001950	Ovens
	Attribute Type	20001529	Energy Type
	Attribute Value	30008570	Electric

- All numbers are 8 digits in length, non-negative integer
- Unique identification
- Constant, i.e. the description can change, but the number remains the same
- **Segment.** E.g. 10000000
- **Family** code preceded with the Segment code. E.g.: 10200000
- **Class** code: preceded with the Family code. E.g.: 10203000
- **Brick** Numbering
 - The code always starts with a '1'
- **Brick Attribute** Numbering
 - Repeatable field
 - The code always starts with a '2'
 - Reusable against another Brick, where applicable
- **Value** Numbering
 - Repeatable field
 - The code always starts with a '3'
 - Reusable against another Brick, where applicable
- **Temporary GPC Brick** Number
 - Devised by the GPCTG in conjunction with the GDSN Task Group
 - Stems from the mandatory use of GPC in the Global Registry and the need to register items that are not currently covered by the GPC
 - Brick Code: 99999999
 - Brick Name: Temporary Classification
 - Brick Definition: Temporary GPC Brick Code

1.15 What categories / segments are covered?

GS1 are seeking the widest possible category coverage. In 2006, the standard includes:

- Arts/Crafts/Needlework
- Audio/Visual/Photography
- Automotive Light Application*
- Baby Care
- Beauty/Personal Care/Hygiene
- Building Materials*
- Camping
- Clothing
- Communications
- Computing
- Electrical*
- Food/Beverage/Tobacco (FBT)
- Footwear
- Fuels*
- Healthcare
- Home Appliances
- Homecare
- Household Kitchen Merchandise
- Household/Office Furniture/Furnishings
- Lawn/Garden Supplies
- Live Animals*
- Lubricants*
- Music
- Personal Accessories
- Pet Care/Food
- Plumbing*
- Safety Protection – DIY
- Safety/Security/Surveillance*
- Sports Equipment
- Stationery, Occasional Supplies
- Textual/Printed/Reference Materials
- Tool Storage Workshop Aids
- Tools Equipment - Hand
- Tools Equipment - Power
- Toys and Games

* Available as of September 30, 2006-

1.16 Will the Schema be supplied in my own language, and by when?

Initially the Schema will be launched in UK English. However, it has been identified that language is a critical consideration in the usage of the schema and are currently identifying the business process and potential avenues to implement this. This includes enabling MOs (acting as 'Sales Agent' of the Schema on behalf of GS1) to perform local translations as required in their market.

1.17 Why should I contribute?

Your non-participation in the standards process means you have no future voice in the development of global standards, and therefore no influence on their future direction.

1.18 How do I participate in the GPC development process e.g. apparel?

You can contribute electronically, by downloading the GPC FEEDBACK FORM from the GPC CHANGE REQUEST FEEDBACK folder in the eroom:

http://eroom.uc-council.org/eRoom/facility/AlignDataBusinessModelingGroupBMG/0_342b9

Enter your comments/suggestions/proposals, remembering to denote the relevant product hierarchy and mailing the form to

<mailto:mclassification.feedback@acnielsen.co.uk>

If you wish to make a brief, general comment (i.e. no more than 300 words), you can leave a comment on the eroom page by using the 'add a comment' function

1.19 How will we deal with products that may appear in different verticals e.g. batteries?

One of the advantages of the flexible brick solution is that there is no implied mandatory hierarchy. Our suggested hierarchy will never solve this problem completely. Any search tools provided by data pools and the tools downloaded with the schema should solve any issues with finding the correct brick.

2. Governance

2.1 How is the GPC Organised?

- GS1 user community is the owner of GPC.
- It is managed under GS1 GDSN Inc. and receives process support from GSMP.
- The GPC Leadership Committee governs it.
- ACNielsen is the current service provider for GPC. This means that they host and publish the agreed industry classification Schema to view and download. ACNielsen has also participated in a working group to establish rules that govern the inclusion or exclusion of new items versus the schema as they appear on the market. In conjunction with an industry work group from some leading manufacturers and retailers, they have developed a set of rules governing the classification schema. They will be responsible for operating those rules on a day-to-day basis. New items appearing on the market that require a change to the Schema, according to the rules, will be added by ACNielsen

2.2 What is the role of the GPC Leadership Team?

The GPC BRG is lead by the GPC Leadership Committee (previous leaders for Task Group). The GPC Leadership Committee is comprised of 14 Members: Retailers, Suppliers, and Other (data pool, solution provider, MO, etc.), who are nominated by members of the BRG and elected via an official vote. Leadership Members can be re-elected after serving a 1-year term. There is a term limit of 3 consecutive years.

Key roles of the leadership team include:

- GPC Program Management
- GPC BRG governance and business management
- Voting Authority for all Change Requests routed to the team
- Coordinate between GPC and other BRGs
- Prioritising agenda items for the BRG
- Consult on the general GPC issues
- Communicating to the BRG and to the external community
- Supervising GPC Service Provider (ACNielsen)
- Coordinate GPC Sub Group activities

2.3 What do GPC BRG and Sub-groups do?

The scope of the GPC BRG and its associated GPC Sub groups is the development and maintenance of GPC. BRG will review and reach consensus on proposed actions. A Change Request (CR) initiates each additional Industry Sector Classification requirement or maintenance of existed schemas.

2.4 Why did GS1 embark on this with ACNielsen?

GS1 recommended ACNielsen as the service provider for the product classification pilot project in 2002. The purpose of the pilot was to test an industry model for voluntary, standardised product classification. The pilot was a step towards meeting the full needs of individual members and achieving global standards for the industry. At the two Implementation Meetings (Chicago and Paris, September 2002) overall feedback was very positive and most participants expressed their interest to be the users of the GPC when it was launched.

2.5 Is this an ACNielsen schema?

No, this is the GS1 Schema. GS1 have stated as a basic principle that they would resist any commercial company owning the Schema, to avoid any conflict of interest between the sole owner and the industry.

2.6 Does ACNielsen provide governance and evaluate changes to the Schema?

GS1 manages the contractual relationship with ACNielsen. This includes contract negotiation, service level agreements, governance, and revenue stream. Submitted Change Requests to the Schema are evaluated through the GSMP.

2.7 Will the Schema be made available to all users in an open manner?

Yes, all users can follow the steps to register on this website. Then subject to the commercial licensing agreement users are able to access and download the Schema.

II. WHY / WHEN?

3. Mapping, migration

3.1 What are the business reasons why I should migrate to GPC?

- GPC is the chosen GS1 standard mandatory classification system for the GDSN.
- Only products classified according to GPC will be registered in the GS1 Global Registry.
- Global positioning: Sellers and buyers need to group products the same way globally to ensure effective data synchronisation in the GDSN, to enable product search, view and validation as well as publication and subscription match.
- Sellers and buyers need to be able to cross-reference its product to GPC, hence it is crucial to build this functionality into their back in systems for ultimate benefits of collaborative commerce.
- Global comparison
- Independent of internal reporting classifications (Today Retailers and Manufacturer classify products differently internally.)
- Allows understanding of Global SKU mix down to attribute
- Language barriers could be eliminated
- Multitude of brands globally
- Normalization of class attributes
- Can be used to apply attributes for class specifics
- Faster implementation into GDSN
- Quarterly updates at aggregate level
- Ability for potential usage of POS data
- Exchanging attribute values in GDSN

3.2 Why for the Suppliers?

- All externally facing communication that references product data could use GPC
 - Product specifications
 - Price Lists
 - Shipment and Share Reports
 - Inventory Positions
 - Product Image Management
 - Category Management
 - Point of Sale (POS) Data
 - Shelf Data (plan-o-grams)
 - Joint Business Plans
 - Order Acquisition & Shipment Status
 - Consumer Response

- Data Management – Product Information Management
 - Single source, high quality master data and services
 - Enter Data Once
 - Common Data Standards
 - Single Point of Accountability
 - Atomic Level Data Aggregation

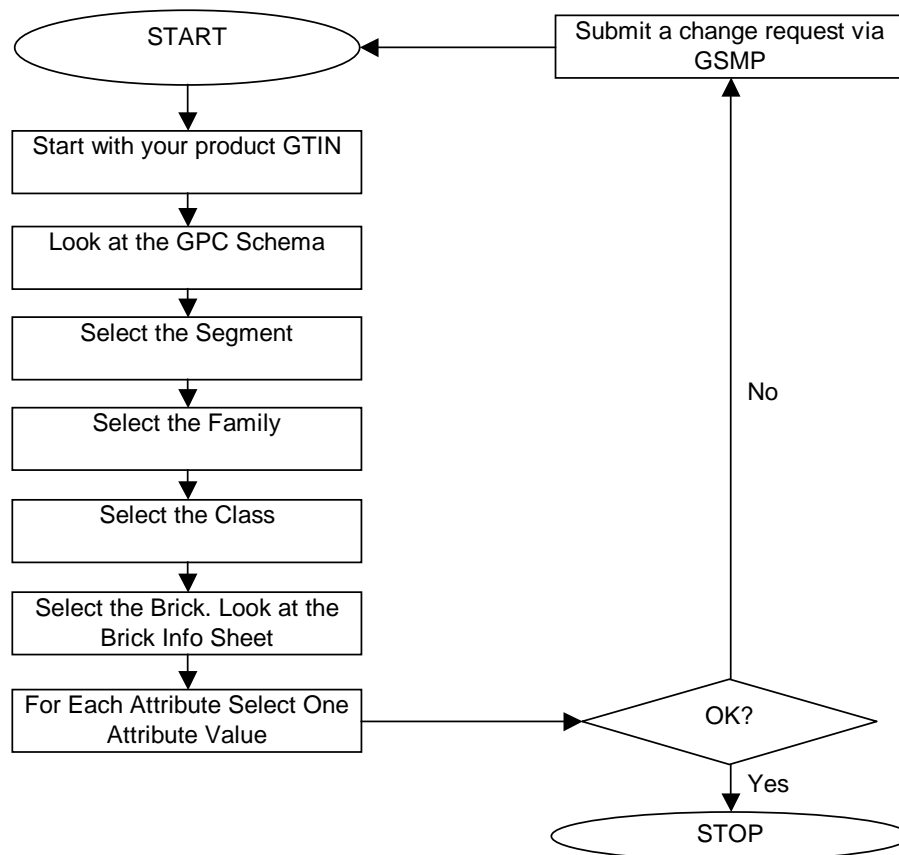
3.3 Why for the Retailers?

- GDSN Subscriptions
 - GPC Bricks could be used to allow buyers to subscribe by Brick to allow them to focus on the items they need to see
- GDSN New Item Workflow
 - GPC could be used to route GDSN messages to the right buyer
 - Buyers assigned to GLN Supplier, Target Market and GPC Brick
 - If new items come in via GDSN the validation workflow is triggered and the item is routed to the buyer
- Category Management
 - Establish category level item attributes
 - Planning is needed to expand product categories for data received from GDSN
 - A process of a detailed comparison/mapping from GPC to internal hierarchy is needed
 - Live vendors to be publishing using GPC is feasible
- Plan to complete mapping of GPC to internal hierarchy is feasible
- Reporting using GPC Brick and Brick Attributes as an industry standard that will cross all product silos.
- Product Information Management
 - Central classification role
 - Data cleansing facilitation
 - All items added before current standards need to be level set to include the right Brick codes
 - All items going forward should use the latest Brick code options
 - Controls publications and helps to direct new items to the appropriate internal items

3.4 When do I need to do this?

In GDSN GPC Brick code is mandatory, hence if you are a supplier, retailer, data pool or service provider involved with GDSN you should use GPC from the very beginning of the GDSN process.

4. Using the Schema



4.1 Will Retailers and Manufacturers be required to change their internal schemas to match the GS1 standard?

No. The purpose of the schema is to provide a “common” language, which can link different schemas. The only requirement would be to either cross-reference your internal schema to the GS1 standard, or at least to ensure that each individual product is coded to this standard. However, we encourage all users to consider integrating the schema into their internal operation. This is the best way to enable accurate and efficient data alignment between trading partners.

4.2 I do not understand how the Schema maps, or can be mapped to my internal schema?

Usage Guidelines are available on the website. Third Parties will also be able to support you to complete this alignment and coding.

<http://www.gs1.org/productssolutions/gdsn/gpc/training/access.html>

This guide shows you the 9 simple steps you need to follow:

1. Go to the GS1 standards site
2. Find the published GPC schemas
3. Select Segment where your product could be found
4. Open or Download the files
5. Search the hierarchies and Brick definitions to find your Brick

6. Locate the GPC Brick definition
7. Review the GPC Brick definition to confirm your product falls in this category
8. Record the information that will be required for data synchronisation
9. Use / apply via your internal systems or selected data pool

4.3 What if the information from the Brick, Brick Attributes and Brick Attribute Values is not sufficient to cross reference with another classification system?

Our experience thus far with the GS1 Schema indicates that the structure and values can easily be aligned to a variety of schemas. However, we understand that in some cases this may be difficult. In these situations, the classification governance process provides a means for requesting changes to the schema. Alternatively, changes in other schemas, to better match the GS1 Classification, may also need to be considered. Again, we encourage all users to consider integrating the schema into their internal operations as the best way to enable accurate and efficient data alignment between trading partners and to achieve the associated benefits.

4.4 Do the Usage Guidelines for the GS1 Schema provide cross-reference tables to other classification schemas such as IRI, IFLS, GFK, etc.?

This service is not supplied with the GS1 Schema. However, third parties can provide this support.

4.5 How will the migration occur with 1SYNC, Agentrics, Le Paragon and others?

Each data pool will determine its own migration strategy and timetable.

IV. GPC Payments, Access and Use

5.1 No Additional Payments for the GPC standards

The costs of developing and maintaining the Schema are included in the fees for GDSN. The funds from this process are used to pay the Service Provider to operate the Schema.

5.2 Access to GPC

The British English version of GPC standard is available free of charge, without any usage restrictions. No additional contractual arrangement is necessary to use GPC. GS1 Member Organisations could translate the GPC standard into a local language and may charge for this value added service.

The GPC is published as a full and complete snapshot on a quarterly basis. Versioning is not used but every publication is date stamped with "as at." E.g.: "As at January 16, 2006.

The outputs are posted to the GS1 website for users to access and download;

- GSMP

http://www.ean-ucc.org/global_smp/GPC_Published_Standards.html

We provide the following outputs, one of each for each sector

- Information sheets in Word.
- Hierarchy sheets in Excel
- Visual map in Excel
- Delta reports in Excel
- Schema files in XML
- Delta reports in XML

We also provide the following outputs, one of each for as a combined publication (all sectors included)

- Hierarchy sheets in Excel
- Schema files in XML
- Delta reports in XML

Currently, the delta report changes using change codes which include:

- M = Modification. A description change only. The code is not changed.
- A = Addition. The introduction of a new code and description.
- D = Deletion. The deletion of a code and description.

5.3 GPC Browser

The GPC browser allows you to browse all components (Segment, Family, Class, Brick and Attribute) of the current GPC schemas. Many thanks to GS1 Japan for developing this tool.

To view Attribute information, double-click Brick definitions. Attribute information will open in a new window.

<http://gpcbrowser.gs1.org/>

5.4 Helpdesk

GPC categorises correspondence into the following 3 levels:

- First Level @ GS1 Member Organisation - support being consolidated
- Second Level @ GS1 Global Office
 - For the GS1 Member Organisations: helpdesk@gs1.org
 - For the User community: gpcuserhelp@gs1.org
- Third Level @ GPC Service Provider: classification.feedback@acnielsen.co.uk
 - Input from industry participants during the development of new Segments
 - Change Requests for published Segments submitted on the appropriate form
 - General queries about published Segments