

WORKING MATERIAL 4.1 · CHAPTER 4 — THE CERTIFIER'S LENS

What a Certification Body Actually Verifies

Source: Francesco Dore, *The Helm and the Lens*, Volume 1b — ISO 14001:2026, subchapter 4.1

GUIDING QUESTION

Your certificate hangs behind the reception desk. Without looking at it, can you say which parts of this property it covers, and which it does not?

1 · Verification Pact

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

What is claimed	What actually holds	In our property
"The certificate proves the hotel is environmentally responsible."	It attests that a management system meeting the requirements exists and is effective within a stated scope. The standard sets no environmental performance criteria and says that adopting its requirements does not in itself guarantee optimal environmental outcomes.	
"We are ISO 14001 certified."	True only of what the scope covers. Where leased venues, concessions or off-site operations sit outside it, the unqualified claim is broader than the certificate supports.	
"Certification means the whole property was inspected."	Verification is by sampling, and it happens within a boundary the organisation itself declared. What the certificate covers was decided by the organisation, not by the auditor.	
"You can leave a difficult operation out of the scope."	The guidance states that scoping should not be used to exclude activities, products, services or facilities that have or can have significant environmental aspects, nor to evade compliance obligations.	
"Certification is how you claim conformity."	The standard names four routes, of which certification is one: self-declaration, confirmation by interested parties, confirmation of the self-declaration by an external party, and certification by an external organisation.	
"We conform to the standard apart from the clauses that do not apply to hotels."	Claims of conformity are not acceptable unless all requirements are incorporated into the system and met without exclusion.	
"The scope is an administrative detail on the certificate."	It is the only sentence on the certificate specific to the property, it governs what may be claimed, and the standard requires it to be a factual and representative statement available to interested parties.	

2 · Common mistakes — a self-check

Tick each mistake you recognise in your own property. The consequence is the book's.

- ☐ **Treating the scope as the certification body's wording** — The organisation determines the boundaries and applicability; the certification body verifies what it finds against that determination. A property that says the auditors wrote our scope has described a process that did not happen.
- ☐ **Assuming that anything the auditors have walked past is in scope** — Auditors walk past a great deal. Presence on a site visit is not coverage, and coverage is not established by proximity.
- ☐ **Reading absence of findings as confirmation of breadth** — Four clean surveillance audits at Casa Larraín confirmed only that the system worked inside its boundary. An audit cannot find a problem in a place it was never asked to look at, and this is the same asymmetry that governs sampling in an internal programme.
- ☐ **Letting the claim drift because it is made by a function that never sees the certificate** — Sales writes the tender response, marketing writes the website, and neither has any reason to read a scope statement unless somebody puts one in front of them.
- ☐ **Narrowing the scope to keep an awkward operation out** — It is the one move the guidance explicitly forecloses, and it is also self-defeating, because the awkward operation is usually the one with the significant aspects, which is to say the one a buyer will ask about.
- ☐ **Believing the certificate says something about environmental results** — It does not, the standard says it does not, and a property that oversells it on that basis is building its credibility on a claim the standard itself will contradict.

3 · What an auditor would ask to see

Questions drawn from the subchapter's reading of the standard and its practical application. They are questions to test your own evidence, not additional requirements.

Question	Where the evidence lives	Seen?
Where is the scope documented, and how is it made available to interested parties?	Scope statement; website; tender library	
Which operations attached to the property — leased venues, concessions, off-site laundry, staff accommodation — were considered, and what was decided for each, with what reason?	Scope decision record; leases; contracts	
Does every certification claim in sales and marketing material match the scope sentence?	Tender library; website; questionnaires	
How were new leases, concessions or outsourcing decisions handled as planned changes before they opened?	Change records; contract approvals	
Can the heads of department say whether their operation is inside the scope?	Management meeting record; interviews	

4 · From the Operative Synthesis to action

Concrete actions taken from the subchapter's Operative Synthesis. Fill in the owner and the date in your property.

Action	Owner	Due date
1. Read the scope sentence aloud once a year at a management meeting.		
2. Check every claim the property makes against what the scope sentence actually covers.		
3. Route every new lease, venue, concession or contract past the person who owns the scope before it opens.		
4. Treat each such addition as a change to the management system, planned rather than discovered.		

What this sheet is not: ISO 14001 does not prescribe this form. It is a working aid drawn from the book; the standard and, in Chapter 4, the certification body's own rules and contract govern the real case.