

WORKING MATERIAL 4.2 · CHAPTER 4 — THE CERTIFIER'S LENS

Choosing a Certification Body

Source: Francesco Dore, *The Helm and the Lens*, Volume 1b — ISO 14001:2026, subchapter 4.2

GUIDING QUESTION

Three bodies quote for the same certification and one is half the price of the others. What, exactly, is the difference you are being offered?

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
"ISO 14001 requires you to use an accredited certification body."	ISO 14001 does not require certification at all. It names four routes to demonstrating conformity, of which certification is one. Requirements for accreditation come from buyers, schemes and the accreditation system, never from the standard itself.	
"All certificates are equivalent."	Mutual recognition is what the international arrangement exists to deliver, and it works within its scope. A body accredited for one scheme is not accredited for another, and a certificate issued outside a body's accredited scope carries no accreditation.	
"The number of audit days is a matter of negotiation."	Audit time is determined inside a mandatory framework, starting from the effective number of personnel and the complexity of the environmental aspects, with reductions capped and every adjustment justified and recorded.	
"We told them our headcount, so the figure is right."	For seasonal operations, and hotels are named among them, the effective number of personnel is based on the people typically present at peak season, not on an annual average or an off-season payroll figure.	
"You cannot see how a certifier arrived at its price."	The determination of audit time and the justification for it are to be provided to the client as part of the contract, and made available to the accreditation body.	
"Hotels are low complexity, so a short audit is correct."	The sector table places hotels and restaurants in the low band as a typical starting point. The framework requires the body to consider the specific activities of the organisation rather than apply the sector default mechanically.	
"A cheaper quotation means a more efficient body."	Where quotations differ in days rather than in daily rate, they are different calculations rather than different prices — and the calculation can be requested and compared before anything is signed.	

2 · Common mistakes — a self-check

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

- ☐ **Treating certification as a normal procurement, in which the buyer judges the product** — The buyer here does not judge it; the buyer's customers do.
- ☐ **Sending the off-season headcount** — It is the single most consequential number in the whole transaction, it is usually supplied without thought, and for a seasonal property the framework requires the peak-season figure.
- ☐ **Confirming that a body is accredited without checking what it is accredited for** — Scope is the whole of the information; the mark alone carries very little.
- ☐ **Comparing totals rather than calculations** — Two quotations that differ by days are answering different questions, and the difference is available on request.
- ☐ **Buying the brand and accepting whoever it sends** — The competence that will be applied to the property is the auditor's, and the auditor is negotiable in a way the brand is not.
- ☐ **Reading a short audit as efficiency** — Where the days fall below what the framework produces, the shortfall is not an economy: it is a smaller sample of a property that will nonetheless be described as certified.
- ☐ **Choosing without asking what leaving costs** — The question is never easier later, and the answer determines how free the property really is at the end of the cycle.

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?
Which certifications does the buyer accept, and what does it require of the issuing body — in writing?	Client correspondence; procurement policy	
Is each candidate body accredited for this scheme and scope, as shown on the accreditation body's register?	Accreditation body's public register	
What effective number of personnel was supplied to the bodies, and does it reflect peak season, including temporary, agency and in-scope contract staff?	Quotation request; peak-season staffing data	
Has each body supplied its audit-time determination and justification, and how do the calculations differ?	Quotations; contract	
Which of the property's own aspects did the body consider before applying the sector default?	Quotation; correspondence	
What does the body require on transfer, and what happens to the certificate in the interval?	Contract terms; correspondence	

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. Start from what the buyer requires, and treat accreditation for the right scheme as a filter, not a score.		

Action	Owner	Due date
2. Ask for the audit-time calculation with the contract, and compare calculations rather than totals.		
3. Supply the peak-season effective number of personnel, not the off-season payroll.		
4. Ask who the auditor will be: the competence that turns up is a named individual's, not a logo's.		

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.