

WORKING MATERIAL 4.4 · CHAPTER 4 — THE CERTIFIER'S LENS

Stage 1: The Audit Whose Subject Is Time

Source: Francesco Dore, *The Helm and the Lens*, Volume 1b — ISO 14001:2026, subchapter 4.4

GUIDING QUESTION

Your system is complete, documented and well designed. What could a certification auditor find on the first day that no amount of further work this month would fix?

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 sets out the two-stage certification process."	It does not mention stages at all. The two-stage structure comes from the standard governing certification bodies. What ISO 14001 supplies is the list of things Stage 1 goes looking for.	
"Stage 1 is a document review and can be done from a desk."	Its purposes include evaluating the site and the property's readiness for Stage 2, and setting the focus and arrangements for it. A review confined to documents cannot do the part that decides the timetable.	
"If Stage 1 goes badly, you have failed."	Stage 1 produces areas of concern and a readiness decision, not the nonconformities that decide a certificate. Nothing is failed; something is postponed, which is a different and cheaper outcome.	
"The management review can be held the week before Stage 2."	The review has named inputs, including the extent to which objectives have been achieved and trends in performance, compliance and audit results. A meeting convened before those exist produces a minute, not a review.	
"One internal audit shows the programme is working."	The requirement is audits at planned intervals plus a programme covering frequency, methods, responsibilities, planning requirements and reporting, with documented information on the programme, its implementation and its results.	
"The compliance obligations register is the list of environmental laws."	Compliance obligations include legal requirements the organisation has to comply with and other requirements it has to or chooses to comply with — permit and licence conditions, contractual obligations, agreements with community groups, adopted standards.	
"Having the register means compliance has been evaluated."	Evaluating compliance is a separate requirement with its own frequency, its own action when compliance is not met, and its own documented evidence of results.	

2 · Common mistakes — a self-check

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

- ☐ **Planning a certification project as a quantity of work** — Two of the requirements are quantities of elapsed time, and no amount of effort substitutes for them.
- ☐ **Building the obligations register outward from the law and never inward from the property's own paperwork** — The obligations that are missed are almost always in permits, licences, leases and contracts.
- ☐ **Holding a management review in order to have held one** — It produces a minute, and a minute is evidence of a meeting, which is not what the requirement asks for.
- ☐ **Running the first internal audits to produce clean results** — They are the raw material of the review, and clean raw material makes an empty review.
- ☐ **Treating Stage 1 as a formality** — Gives away the only chance to hear what Stage 2 would have found.
- ☐ **Treating Stage 1 as an exam** — The time is spent trying to appear ready rather than establishing whether the property is.
- ☐ **Reading a clean Stage 1 as a forecast for Stage 2** — The first asks whether things exist and have run; the second asks whether they work.

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?
Is the scope determined and available as documented information?	Scope statement	
Were compliance obligations drawn from the property's own permits, licences, consents, leases and contracts, and are they held as documented information?	Obligations register; permits; contracts	
Has compliance been evaluated at a determined frequency, with evidence of results, as a separate act from listing the obligations?	Compliance evaluation records	
Are aspects, impacts and the criteria for significance documented?	Aspects register	
Has the internal audit programme run with real coverage, with evidence of implementation and results?	Audit programme; audit reports	
Has a management review been held with inputs that actually existed?	Management review minutes	

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. Build the certification timetable backwards from the internal audit programme and the management review, which need elapsed time.		

Action	Owner	Due date
2. Let the system run long enough for the audit programme to cover it and for the review to have real inputs before Stage 2.		
3. At Stage 1, confirm the scope against the building as it is and whether the audit time still stands.		
4. Ask the Stage 1 auditor what Stage 2 would raise and where it will focus.		

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.