

WORKING MATERIAL 4.6 · CHAPTER 4 — THE CERTIFIER'S LENS

What Certification Auditors Look For: Where a Stranger Starts

Source: Francesco Dore, *The Helm and the Lens*, Volume 1b — ISO 14001:2026, subchapter 4.6

GUIDING QUESTION

An auditor who has never seen your property has three days to sample it. Nothing obliges him to look where the trouble is — so how does he keep finding it?

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 auditor decides where to look."	He starts from the organisation's own aspects register, significance criteria, obligations and objectives. The property has already told him where its risks are; the standard requires it to have written that down.	
"ISO 14001 tells the certifier what to look for."	It does not describe any audit method. It supplies the requirements; how an external audit is planned and sampled comes from the standard governing certification bodies.	
"A ratio that improves proves performance improved."	The edition requires indicators for monitoring progress towards measurable objectives, and criteria plus appropriate indicators for evaluating performance. An indicator must represent the status of what it claims to represent; a per-room ratio can improve while abstraction rises.	
"What is inside our boundary but run by someone else is not ours."	Externally provided processes, products or services relevant to the intended outcomes must be controlled or influenced, and the type and extent of that control has to be defined within the system.	
"The aspects register was correct when it was written."	Determining aspects requires taking into account change, including new developments and new or modified activities; and changes affecting the system must be planned and managed. A register that describes a property that no longer exists is not current.	
"Auditors look for what is wrong."	They test whether the organisation's own map matches its own ground. Most findings are mismatches between what the property has written about itself and what it does.	
"Three days is not enough to find anything real."	Three days spent on the two aspects the property itself ranked highest is a great deal of time. The scarcity forces selection by risk, which is precisely what an inherited departmental programme avoids.	

2 · Common mistakes — a self-check

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

- ☐ **Preparing the departments that will be visited rather than the aspects that will be examined** — The auditor selects from the register, not from the organisation chart.
- ☐ **Treating the aspects register as a document produced for certification** — It is the map the auditor navigates by, and the property wrote it.
- ☐ **Reporting ratios without absolutes** — It is the single most common way a hotel misleads itself about its environmental performance, and it is done in complete good faith.
- ☐ **Assuming the boundary is the fence** — Anything inside the fence operated by somebody else is still relevant to the intended outcomes of the system.
- ☐ **Letting the aspects register age** — It describes the property that existed when it was written, and hotels change faster than registers.
- ☐ **Replacing a whole indicator set at once** — Destroys the trend information in the process.
- ☐ **Concluding that the certification auditor is better than the internal team** — He is differently constrained, and the constraint is reproducible.

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?
Does the aspects register describe the property as it is now, including new or modified activities?	Aspects register; list of changes	
When was the aspect ranked highest last examined, and by whom?	Audit programme; audit reports	
Which indicator monitors each objective, and can it show what the objective is for — the absolute figure as well as the ratio?	Objectives; indicator data	
How is control or influence over concessions and third parties inside the boundary defined in the system?	Leases; concession agreements	
Do operating criteria exist for the processes linked to significant aspects?	Procedures; equipment settings	

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 the next internal audit from the property's own ranking of its aspects, not from the departments.		
2. Verify against physical things that cannot be tidied, and walk the seams where responsibility changes hands.		
3. Trace one commitment down and one object up.		

Action	Owner	Due date
4. Give extra weight to everything that has changed since the last audit.		

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.