Grading, and Following an Action to Its Result

GUIDING QUESTION *Take a corrective action your property closed in thirty days on a process that only runs in summer. What evidence of effectiveness could possibly have existed on the day it was closed?*

Property: _____ Completed by: _____ Date: _____

How to use this sheet: work through the four parts with the people who own the process. The left-hand text comes from the book; the empty columns are for what is true in our property.

1. Verification Pact: what the market says, what actually holds, and your property

What the market says	What actually holds	In our property
Nonconformities must be graded major or minor.	No. ISO 9001 does not require major/minor grading for internal audits.	
An observation is a recognised category.	No. 'Observation' can be an organisation-defined category, but ISO 9001 does not prescribe it.	
Minor nonconformities do not require cause analysis.	Incorrect. The need for cause evaluation depends on clause 10.2 and the nature of the nonconformity, not on a universal minor exemption.	
Corrective actions must be closed within thirty days.	No. ISO 9001 says without undue delay; it does not impose a universal thirty-day limit.	
Absence of recurrence demonstrates effectiveness.	Not by itself. Effectiveness should be evaluated against whether the corrective action addressed the cause and prevented recurrence or otherwise achieved the intended result.	
Implementation of the action constitutes closure.	No. Implementation is one stage; effectiveness must be evaluated where corrective action is taken.	
The auditor decides when a finding is closed.	Closure authority is defined by the organisation's audit/corrective-action process; the auditor may verify effectiveness but does not automatically own management's closure decision.	

2. Objective evidence: what an auditor would examine

Line	What to examine	Found? (Yes / Partly / No)	Notes and location
Document	The corrective action log, examined for whether it distinguishes implementation from verification and whether any criterion of effectiveness was recorded when each action was agreed.		
Record	The evidence relied on to verify effectiveness. Where it consists of a signature and a statement that there has been no recurrence, nothing has been verified.		
Read	Closed actions concerning seasonal or peak processes, against the dates they were closed. This comparison takes ten minutes and characterises the whole programme.		
Told	Ask what would have to happen for a given action to be considered effective. An answer that names an observable condition indicates a criterion; an answer that names a date indicates a deadline.		
Seen	The process running under the conditions that produced the original failure, with the action in place. This is the verification, and it is an event rather than a document.		

Line	What to examine	Found? (Yes / Partly / No)	Notes and location
Absence	There will be no action anywhere in the log recorded as implemented but not yet verified, and no link between actions addressing the same condition. Both absences are ordinary and both produce excellent closure rates.		

3. Common mistakes: self-check

Mistake	Why it matters	Present here? (Yes / Partly / No)
Grading by outcome.	In a property with excellent recovery almost nothing that happens is severe, and a scale that tracks outcomes measures the property's luck.	
Collapsing implemented and verified into closed.	One column guarantees that the second state is never recorded, because there is nowhere to record it.	
Verifying against a date.	A seasonal action closed in January has established that a summer process did not fail in January.	
Accepting absence of recurrence.	Where the conditions did not occur, absence of recurrence is not weak evidence; it is not evidence.	
Writing the criterion of effectiveness at the review.	Fixed in advance it is a test; written afterwards it is a justification, and the file shows which it was.	
Leaving repeats unlinked.	The same condition arriving five times becomes five closed actions and an excellent closure rate.	
Accepting a reminder as a corrective action.	It cannot be given a criterion anybody is willing to write down, which is the fastest test available.	
Reporting the new closure figures without warning anybody.	Longer times and a list that no longer empties are the property recording that it does not yet know, and will otherwise be read as decline.	

4. Action plan

Position from the book / gap found	Action in our property	Owner	Deadline
The grade describes the control, not the outcome.			
Implemented and verified are separate states.			
Verification is scheduled to the condition.			
The criterion of effectiveness is fixed when the action is decided.			
Repeat conditions are linked.			

In brief

Grading is permitted rather than required, its criteria belong to whoever conducts the audit, and the obligation on causes attaches to the nonconformity and not to the grade. In a hotel the grade must describe the control that failed rather than the outcome that followed, because a property with excellent recovery will otherwise grade everything minor and will have built a scale that measures how often it has been lucky.

Source: The Helm and the Lens, Volume 2b: The Lens, subchapter 3.14. This sheet does not reproduce the text of any standard; work with your own copy of ISO 9001:2026 from an authorised source.