Objectives, Criteria and Scope, One Audit at a Time

GUIDING QUESTION *Before your next internal audit, ask the person who assigned it what they need to know. If the answer is the name of a department, nobody has yet decided what the audit is for.*

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 your property.

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

What the market says	What actually holds	In our property
An annual schedule of departments is an audit programme.	No. A schedule can be part of a programme, but the programme also includes frequency, methods, responsibilities, planning requirements and reporting.	
Audit objectives are stated once, for the programme.	No. ISO 9001:2026 requires objectives to be defined for each audit.	
The audit scope is the department being audited.	No. Scope is the boundaries and extent of the audit; it can cross departments, locations, shifts and processes.	
Every clause of the standard must be audited every year.	No annual clause-by-clause cycle is prescribed. The programme must cover the QMS processes over a justified frequency determined by the organisation.	
A brand standards manual is a sufficient basis for internal audit.	No. Brand standards can be criteria where applicable, but they do not replace ISO 9001 and the organisation's other QMS requirements.	
More findings indicate a more thorough audit.	No. Finding count is not a measure of audit quality or depth.	
Observations outside the declared scope should not be reported.	Significant information outside the planned scope should not simply be suppressed; it should be communicated appropriately and its status made clear.	

2. Objective evidence: what an auditor would examine

Line	What to examine	Found? (Yes / Partly / No)	Notes and location
Document	Audit plans for the last four internal audits, examined for a stated objective distinct from the department name and from the criteria.		
Record	The findings from those audits, counted and ranked. A report of forty-odd findings of uniform size is the signature of an inventory rather than an audit.		
Read	The audit programme itself. If it is a grid of departments against quarters with no column for what each audit is to establish, the objective has never been part of the design.		
Told	Ask a general manager what the last internal audit of their property told them. A specific answer names something they did not know; a general answer names a department.		
Seen	The auditor at work. An auditor with an objective moves through the building differently from one working down a list, and the difference is visible within twenty minutes.		
Absence	There will be no audit anywhere in the programme whose scope crosses two departments, and no record of an audit having been declined or rescheduled because its objective could not be served in the time available.		

3. Common mistakes: self-check

Mistake	Why it matters	Present here? (Yes / Partly / No)
Treating the schedule as the assignment.	A cell in a grid says where and when; it does not say what the audit is for, and an auditor who accepts it as an instruction has been given a location.	
Auditing a department.	A department is a place and a set of people; what can be audited is a process, against a criterion, for a purpose.	
Defaulting to conformity.	It is the question a well-run hotel has already answered, and asking it repeatedly produces inventories.	
Mistaking a standards manual for audit criteria.	It is a specification and a training document, it covers the visible steady state, and much of what is worth finding is outside it.	
Counting findings as a measure of rigour.	Forty-four items of uniform size cannot be ranked, and an unrankable report produces no action.	
Drawing the scope before the objective.	Capability and effectiveness questions cross departments by their nature, and a scope fixed in advance will exclude the answer.	
Refusing to report what falls outside the scope.	The objective directs where the auditor looks and cannot restrict what she notices.	
Never declining an audit.	An objective that cannot be served in the time allocated should be said out loud before the audit, and in most hotels it never is.	

4. Action plan

Position from the book / gap found	Action in our property	Owner	Deadline
The auditor asks before preparing.			
The objective is chosen deliberately from among conformity, effectiveness and capability.			
The scope is drawn from the objective and is frequently not a department.			
Fewer findings, larger.			
What is seen outside the scope is still reported.			

In brief

For each audit the property defines the objectives, the criteria and the scope, and the order matters: the objective states what the property needs to know, the criteria state what conformity will be judged against, and the scope is drawn backwards from the first two. A grid of departments and quarters supplies none of the three.

Source: The Helm and the Lens, Volume 2b: The Lens, subchapter 3.2. This sheet does not reproduce the text of any standard; work with your own copy of ISO 9001:2026 from an authorised source.