Competence for a Department You Have Never Worked In

GUIDING QUESTION *You watched a process run for two hours and saw nothing wrong. Would the people who run it have said the same, and if not, what were they watching that you were not?*

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 internal auditor must hold a lead auditor qualification.	No. ISO 9001 does not require a lead-auditor qualification for internal auditors.	
Audit method training is sufficient competence to audit.	No. Audit-method competence must be combined with competence relevant to the assignment, discipline, sector and context.	
An auditor must have worked in the department audited.	No. Direct work experience in the department can help but is not universally required.	
Auditor competence is demonstrated by a certificate.	No. Certificates are evidence of training or qualification, not proof of competence for every assignment.	
A technical expert may be added to the audit team.	Yes. A technical expert can support an audit team where specialized knowledge is needed, while the auditor remains responsible for audit activities and conclusions.	
Auditor competence must be re-evaluated annually.	No universal annual re-evaluation interval is prescribed. Competence must be maintained and evaluated as appropriate.	
Competence is a property of the auditor rather than of the assignment.	Competence is both person- and assignment-specific; the same auditor can be competent for one audit and not another.	

2. Objective evidence: what an auditor would examine

Line	What to examine	Found? (Yes / Partly / No)	Notes and location
Document	Whatever the property holds recording the competence required for each audit and the basis on which the assigned auditor meets it, distinguished from a general audit qualification.		
Record	Audit plans showing what the auditor expected to test and where that expectation came from. Most plans record a checklist and no expectations at all.		
Read	The hours at which internal audits have been conducted over two years. A programme conducted entirely within office hours has audited few of its operational processes under the conditions that produce failures.		
Told	Ask a supervisor what they watch during their most difficult hour. Then ask whether an auditor has ever asked them. The second answer is almost always no.		
Seen	The auditor in the department during the process, and specifically whether they are watching the work or the paperwork. The difference is visible in ten minutes.		

Line	What to examine	Found? (Yes / Partly / No)	Notes and location
Absence	There will be no record of any process the property has concluded its internal auditors cannot competently audit. Every programme covers everything, which means no competence judgement has ever been made.		

3. Common mistakes: self-check

Mistake	Why it matters	Present here? (Yes / Partly / No)
Treating audit method training as competence.	Method tells an auditor how to gather evidence and not what is worth gathering evidence about.	
Observing without expectation.	Four accurate hours can pass over the whole of the interesting part, and the auditor may be certain they saw everything.	
Asking about procedure instead of about unease.	The manual describes the steady state; what people watch describes where it breaks.	
Asking only inside the department.	Two people from the same team are comfortable about the same things, and the auditor will look exactly where the department already looks.	
Confusing where to look with what to conclude.	Borrowing attention is legitimate; borrowing the verdict is auditing by asking.	
Auditing service processes in office hours.	A turnaround, an arrival wave and a night shift cannot be examined afterwards, and a programme that runs nine to five has audited them only at their easiest.	
Pretending every process is auditable in house.	Writing down the ones that are not is a competence judgement; covering everything is the absence of one.	
Pairing the auditor with the department to solve it.	It restores the independence problem, and the two constraints have to be solved separately.	

4. Action plan

Position from the book / gap found	Action in our property	Owner	Deadline
The auditor arrives with expectations, borrowed if necessary.			
The question is about unease, not about procedure.			
A second source sits downstream.			
Borrowing where to look is not borrowing what to conclude.			
Some processes are honestly beyond the auditor.			

In brief

Competence is a relation between an auditor and a specific audit, and in a hotel the knowledge a quality auditor lacks is mostly tacit (what a process looks like when it is about to go wrong), which cannot be read up and cannot be acquired without doing the work.

Source: The Helm and the Lens, Volume 2b: The Lens, subchapter 3.5. This sheet does not reproduce the text of any standard; work with your own copy of ISO 9001:2026 from an authorised source.