WORKING MATERIAL · SUBCHAPTER 4.3

The Chain Behind the Certificate

GUIDING QUESTION *Who accredited the body that certified you, for which scheme, and in which public register does your certificate appear? Three facts, and most properties cannot supply any of them.*

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
A certificate is either accredited or it is not.	No. Accreditation has a defined scope; a body can be accredited for some certification activities and not others.	
A logo on the certificate indicates accreditation.	No. A mark can be useful evidence, but the current accreditation status and scope should be verified in the accreditation body's records.	
Accreditation covers everything a certification body does.	Incorrect. Accreditation covers the activities and schemes within the granted scope.	
Accreditation is granted once.	No. Accreditation is maintained through continuing assessment and can be suspended, reduced or withdrawn.	
The international body accredits certification bodies.	No. National or recognized accreditation bodies accredit certification bodies; the international cooperation provides the multilateral recognition framework.	
A property has no way to verify its own certification body.	Incorrect. Public directories of accreditation bodies and certification status provide verification routes.	
Accreditation guarantees the quality of an individual audit.	No. Accreditation provides confidence in competence and consistency of the certification system; it does not guarantee perfection in each audit.	

2. Objective evidence: what an auditor would examine

Line	What to examine	Found? (Yes / Partly / No)	Notes and location
Document	The certification agreement, which states the conditions of use of the marks, and the certificate itself with every mark on it identified.		
Record	The property's recent tender and questionnaire responses to compliance questions about certification, and the basis on which each was answered.		
Read	The accreditation body's public schedule for the certification body, which states the schemes the accreditation covers. It is public and takes minutes.		
Told	Ask whoever writes the tender responses to name the accreditation body. In most properties the question has never been asked and the answer is the certification body's name.		
Seen	The certificate as it appears in the public register a buyer would consult, found using the search term the property has recorded.		
Absence	There will be no record anywhere of what the marks on the certificate mean, and no note of the register entry. Both are public and neither has been written down.		

3. Common mistakes: self-check

Mistake	Why it matters	Present here? (Yes / Partly / No)
Reading a mark as an accreditation.	Certification marks, accreditation marks, scheme marks and subscription marks look alike on a document and mean different things.	
Treating accreditation as general.	It is granted for specific schemes, held separately and suspended separately, and knowing a body is accredited is not knowing for what.	
Inheriting compliance answers.	A yes copied from a previous submission is a claim nobody has verified, and an unsubstantiated yes is worse than a no.	
Never locating the register entry.	It is where the buyer looks, it is public, and most properties do not know it exists.	
Describing the international arrangement from an old template.	The bodies operating it were succeeded at the beginning of 2026 and a response naming the predecessors is an error a reviewer may have to act on.	
Assuming accreditation is a single past event.	It is assessed on a cycle and can be reduced, suspended or withdrawn, and the property's certificate rests on it.	
Displaying every mark available.	Marks carry conditions of use set out in the certification agreement, and misuse is a ground for suspension.	
Believing accreditation guarantees a good audit.	It concerns the competence and consistency of the certification body, which is a different proposition and a weaker one.	

4. Action plan

Position from the book / gap found	Action in our property	Owner	Deadline
The property can name its accreditation body and the scheme.			
Marks on a certificate are identified rather than assumed.			
The register entry is located once and recorded with its search term.			
Compliance answers come from the one-page sheet.			
The description of the international arrangement is current.			

In brief

A certificate sits at the head of a four-link chain (the property, the certification body, the accreditation body, and the international arrangement through which accreditations are mutually recognised), and the property is the only party that never sees the others. In a quality certification that invisibility has a price, because quality certificates are bought by procurement functions and procurement functions verify.

Source: The Helm and the Lens, Volume 2b: The Lens, subchapter 4.3. This sheet does not reproduce the text of any standard; work with your own copy of ISO 9001:2026 from an authorised source.