Surveillance: The Audit of the Interval

GUIDING QUESTION *Plot every audit your property has ever had (internal, external, and every management review), first on a twelve-month grid and then on a seven-day one. Which part of your own year, and which part of your own week, has nobody from outside the operation ever actually seen?*

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
"The surveillance date is set by the anniversary of the certificate and cannot be moved."	No. Only the first surveillance after initial certification is tied to a date by the rules: it falls no later than twelve months from the certification decision (ISO/IEC 17021-1:2015). After that, surveillance takes place at least once each calendar year outside recertification years. Neither the anniversary nor the day of the week is a requirement; the body plans the dates and a written request to change them is a normal part of planning.	
"A surveillance visit is a short version of the certification audit; the auditor picks what to look at."	No. Surveillance is shorter than a full audit, but ISO/IEC 17021-1:2015 fixes its minimum content: internal audits and management review, actions on previous nonconformities, complaints, effectiveness in achieving objectives and intended results, progress of continual improvement, continuing operational control, review of changes, and use of marks and references to certification. The auditor adds to that list; he does not pick from it.	
"If the audit falls on quiet days the auditor can simply ask people what the busy days are like."	Partly. Interviews are a legitimate source of evidence, but what people say about the busy days is a lead to be corroborated, not observation of the operation. Global ACI TECH-3-004 (formerly IAF MD 5) requires shift work to be considered when the audit is planned, and the certification body determines how the shifts and periods that matter are covered. Where the peak was not seen, an honest plan and report should be able to say so.	
"The visit can be squeezed into one long day if we are short of time."	No. Audit time under Global ACI TECH-3-004 (formerly IAF MD 5) is set in audit days from effective personnel and complexity, for quality schemes as for environmental ones, and the days cannot be reduced by programming longer working hours on each day. Two days compressed into one long day is a shorter audit, not the same audit.	
"The audit calendar is the certification body's business, not ours."	Partly. The certification body plans the programme and answers for the cycle rules, but the audit plan is normally communicated to the client and the dates agreed in advance, and the client can	

What the market says	What actually holds	In our property
	state its own constraints and preferences, in writing, at any time. A body cannot know which days matter to a hotel unless the hotel tells it.	
"Our internal audits have to sit before the external visit."	No. Neither ISO 9001 nor ISO/IEC 17021-1:2015 requires internal audits or the management review to sit immediately before a surveillance visit. Surveillance requires that they have taken place and examines them; their timing is the organisation's own determination, made on stated grounds.	

2. Objective evidence: what an auditor would examine

Line	What to examine	Found? (Yes / Partly / No)	Notes and location
Document	The audit programme and the certification schedule, showing planned dates and the stated grounds on which frequency and timing were determined.		
Record	The actual dates of every internal audit, management review and external audit of the cycle, plotted by month and by day of week; the plot is the evidence, not the list.		
Read	The duty roster and labour report for two audited days set against two peak days: headcount, proportion of casual or agency staff, departments operating.		
Seen	The service delivery process on the highest-volume day of the week, observed while it happens rather than described afterwards: the banquet turnover, the afternoon check-in peak.		
Told	What department heads say happens on the busiest day, recorded as what it is: a statement to be corroborated, not evidence of the operation.		
Re-performed	One function sheet from a weekend event followed through to the invoice and the post-event feedback, to see whether the documented process is the process on that day.		
Absence	No competence or awareness records for the weekend casual workforce, and no audit (internal or external) ever conducted on a Friday, Saturday or Sunday.		

3. Common mistakes: self-check

Mistake	Why it matters	Present here? (Yes / Partly / No)
Treating the anniversary as a physical constraint, and building an audit season around it.	When internal audits, review and external visit are packed into one band, the property has manufactured a single annual window through which it examines itself, and everything outside it is invisible to all three instruments at once.	
Assuming that because the data covers the whole year, the audit does.	This was the Heeren Court's most sophisticated error and the hardest to see: the numbers reviewed at every surveillance included every Saturday of the year, the audit had never included one, and the reporting form concealed the difference.	
Letting the body schedule on auditor availability alone without ever stating a preference.	A planner allocating a hundred client visits optimises for travel and workload, which is their job; nobody in that process knows your Tuesday is not your Saturday unless you tell them.	
Losing the small recurring item because the visit is routine.	The use of the certification mark and the wording of certification claims are fixed content of every surveillance, and in a hotel they drift constantly: onto a new wedding brochure, an updated tour operator listing, a signature block. The cheapest finding in the world to prevent, and one of the	

Mistake	Why it matters	Present here? (Yes / Partly / No)
	most often repeated.	

4. Action plan

Position from the book / gap found	Action in our property	Owner	Deadline

In brief

Surveillance is the audit of the interval. Because its subject is a period rather than a system, its content is deliberately repetitive: the same questions each year are what make a sequence of visits readable as a history. The defect at the Heeren Court was not the repeated content but the repeated coordinates: the same month, and more damagingly the same two days of the week, nine times over.

Source: The Helm and the Lens, Volume 2b: The Lens, subchapter 4.7. This sheet does not reproduce the text of any standard; work with your own copy of ISO 9001:2026 from an authorised source.