The Chain That Makes a Certificate Mean Something

GUIDING QUESTION *Take your hotel's certificate, or the certificate a supplier has sent you, and ask four questions of it. Who issued it? Who says that body is competent to issue it, for this standard? Is that accreditation recognised beyond its own country? Can you find the certificate in a public register without asking the hotel or the supplier for help? If any answer is missing, you are holding a document, not an assurance.*

Property: _____ Completed by: _____ Date: _____

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

1. Verification Pact: what is commonly believed, what actually holds, and your property

What is commonly believed	What actually holds	In our property
«A certificate is a certificate.»	Its value depends on who issued it and who assessed the issuer. Outside the chain it offers no independent assurance a client can verify.	
«The seal says accredited, so it is.»	Only a recognised accreditation body can accredit. Private accreditation services are not part of the chain.	
«A package with consultancy and certification is efficient.»	The rules forbid a certifier from certifying what it, or a linked consultancy, helped design.	
«The audit length is the certifier's business.»	Audit time follows from people and complexity. A day on a screen cannot assess a hotel.	
«Clients only want to see the certificate.»	Clients increasingly check accreditation and registers themselves, in minutes.	

2. What the standard requires, and what demonstrates it

From Table 4.1.a. The third column of the book (what is method, not requirement) is left out here: write what your property actually holds as evidence.

What is required	What demonstrates it to a hotel	In our property
Certifier impartial, no consultancy	Separate contracts, companies and people for any consultancy and the certification	
Certifier accredited for the scheme	The information security scheme in the accreditation body's published scope for that certifier	
Accreditation body recognised	The accreditation body listed as a signatory of the international arrangement for management system certification	
Audit time calculated	A proposal showing the days and how they were derived from people and complexity	
Two-stage initial audit, on site	Stage 1 and stage 2 planned, with time at the hotel during operation	
Scope stated, validity verifiable	A certificate with scope, sites and version of the statement of controls, findable in a register	

3. The instrument: Table 4.1.b, The chain check

The instrument of this subchapter. Completed for the hotel's own certificate each year and for every supplier certificate the hotel relies on.

Link	Question to ask	Where to check	In Paris
Standard	Which standard and edition is certified?	The certificate	Correct number, no edition stated
Scope	Which activities, sites and statement of controls?	The certificate and its annex	None stated
Certification body	Is it accredited for information security?	Accreditation body's directory	Not found in any directory
Accreditation body	Is it a signatory of the international arrangement, recognised for management system certification?	The arrangement's list of signatories and their recognised scopes	Private service, not a member
Audit	Two stages, on site, time calculated from people and complexity?	The audit plan and report	One day by video call
Impartiality	Any link between the certifier and the consultant?	Contracts and company records	Sold together as one package
Register	Can the certificate be found and confirmed as valid?	Public database; certifier on request	Not found

The rows above are the book's; the empty rows are for lines your property needs to add.

4. Common mistakes: self-check

Common mistake	Present here? (Yes / Partly / No)	Where we see it
Buying certification in a package with the consultancy that builds the system.		
Taking the word accredited on a seal as proof of accreditation.		
Accepting a certificate from a body accredited for other standards but not this one.		
Accepting an initial audit held entirely remotely in a day.		
Holding a certificate with no stated scope or statement of controls.		
Continuing to claim certification after learning the certificate is outside the chain.		
Mistaking the size or fame of a certifier for its accreditation and competence.		

5. Action plan

Step from the book / gap found	Action in our property	Owner	Deadline
Read every certificate for its body, standard, edition, scope, sites and dates.			
Find the certifier in the accreditation body's directory, for information security.			
Confirm the accreditation body is a signatory of the international arrangement for management system certification.			

Step from the book / gap found	Action in our property	Owner	Deadline
Verify the certificate in a public register or with the certifier.			
Keep consultancy and certification in separate, unlinked hands.			
Expect a two-stage audit, on site, with days calculated from people and complexity.			
Withdraw any claim based on a certificate outside the chain, and tell clients.			
Apply the same check to every supplier certificate the hotel relies on.			

In brief

A certificate means something only as part of a chain: a standard, a certification body that follows the international rules for certifiers, an accreditation body that checks it does, an international arrangement through which accreditation bodies check one another, and a public register where the result can be confirmed. The hotel checks each link before it buys and before it relies, keeps consultancy and certification apart, expects a real audit at the hotel, and corrects at once any claim it cannot support.

Source: The Helm and the Lens, Volume 5b: The Lens, subchapter 4.1. This sheet does not reproduce the text of the standard; work with your own copy of ISO/IEC 27001:2022 from an authorised source.