WORKSHEET 4.15

What the Certificate Proves, and What It Does Not

Subchapter 4.15 · case in the book: Johannesburg

GUIDING QUESTION

Take your own certificate off the wall and read it as a stranger would, for five minutes. Write down the four things it actually tells that stranger: who assessed you, under whose accreditation, over exactly which activities and buildings, and on what date. Then ask what a client requiring it from you was hoping to learn, and notice the distance between the two lists. Everything in this volume lives in that distance.

This worksheet turns the tools of the subchapter into a form you can fill in. The texts come from the book; the empty columns are for your own property. Adapt it before use: an unadapted checklist is exactly what the book warns against.

Practical application: what to do in your property

Step (from the book)	Done?	What we found / owner
Read your own scope statement as a client would, and decide what you want it to cover.		
Prepare the one page that goes with your certificate, and send it before it is asked for.		
When you require certificates, ask for scope, date and the issuing body’s accreditation scope.		
Check accreditation on the public register yourself; it takes two minutes.		
Ask for twelve months of reporting by month and department, and read its shape.		
Use the complaint route if a certificate is being misrepresented to you.		
Stop presenting certification as evidence that a workplace is safe.		
Learn to say both true sentences about your certificate in the same breath.		

These steps are the book’s method, not requirements of ISO 45001. Evidence can take whatever form suits the property; a separate document is needed only where an applicable requirement, or the property’s own system, makes it necessary.

Verification Pact: what is believed, tested against the standard

What is commonly believed	What actually holds	Our position
«The certificate shows the hotel is safe.»	It shows a conforming system was assessed on stated dates within a stated boundary. Safety is an outcome, and no system standard certifies outcomes.	
«A certificate means the property complies with its legal obligations.»	It means the process for determining and evaluating those obligations was examined. Compliance itself is not certified.	
«A valid certificate is a valid certificate.»	Check the accreditation covers this scheme, and the scope covers the part of the property you care about.	

What is commonly believed	What actually holds	Our position
«It is current, so the system is running now.»	It reports what was found on particular days. What happens between them is what the property chooses.	
«If the evidence matters more than the document, the document is pointless.»	The document supplies what you cannot: an independent, impartial, competence-defined assessment with a public status and a route of complaint.	
«Our certificate speaks for itself to clients.»	It states four things. Everything else a client wants to know has to be shown by you.	

Common mistakes: a self-check

Mistake (from the book)	Present here?	Action / owner
Reading a certificate as a yes rather than as four separate statements.		
Never reading the scope statement: your own, or a supplier's.		
Assuming an accreditation mark covers the scheme the certificate is issued against.		
Treating a certificate as a statement about today rather than about assessment dates.		
Concluding that because it does not prove safety, it proves nothing.		
Replacing an independent assessment of a system with a private inspection of a morning.		

Operative synthesis

- **A certificate makes four claims: who assessed, under what accreditation, over which activities and buildings, and when.** Everything a reader is entitled to conclude sits inside those four, and almost everything readers do conclude sits outside them. Fourteen subchapters of misunderstanding (a duration declared from a payroll figure, a mark on a group brochure, a property that said nothing for six weeks, a marketing line about a certified safe hotel) are all versions of somebody working in the space between what the document says and what people hear.
- **The document is nonetheless worth having, and the reason is structural rather than declarative.** It is not the paper. It is the chain behind the paper: an assessor of defined competence, prevented by rule from designing what he judges, whose conclusion is reviewed by somebody who was not there, whose body is itself assessed by an accreditation body, and whose decision appears on a register anyone can check and challenge. That chain is what a client is buying when it requires a certificate, and no private inspection reproduces it.
- **For a property the practical position is simple and rarely adopted.** Know what your scope covers and decide whether that is what you want. Prepare the page that shows what your system has produced since the last visit. Make the claim the document supports rather than the one you wish it supported. Properties that do these three things find that the certificate becomes commercially useful in a way it was not before, and the reason is that they have started addressing the person reading it.
- **In Johannesburg nothing was falsified and nobody was careless.** A spa under concession sitting quietly outside a scope statement nobody had read in two years; an accreditation covering another standard; a valid certificate whose last visit was eleven months earlier, with nothing

known about the months since; and an uncertified hotel that produced better evidence than any of the three, because somebody there had been keeping records that meant something. One reader, four documents, and a framework one page longer the following year.

› This volume has been the lens: the audit, the auditor, the certifier, and what can and cannot be seen through an assessment. A lens does not create what it looks at and does not improve it. At best it resolves what is there, at the magnification the conditions allow, on the days it is pointed, and everything this book has described exists to make those days representative of the other three hundred and sixty. The system that matters is the one running at six in the morning on a corridor where nobody is watching. The certificate is how a stranger, reasonably, comes to believe that it is.

Action plan for our property

Action	Owner	Due	How we will know it worked

Source: Francesco Dore, The Helm and the Lens, Volume 3b «The Lens», subchapter 4.15. Edizioni Effedore, 2026. Clause references are paraphrased; this sheet does not reproduce the text of ISO 45001. It is not legal advice: health and safety law is that of the place where the property operates.