WORKING MATERIAL 4.1 · CHAPTER 4 — THE CERTIFIER'S LENS · SETTING: KNYSNA, SOUTH AFRICA

Who Certifies the Certifier: Accreditation Explained

Source: Francesco Dore, The Helm and the Lens, Volume 7b — GSTC Hotel Standard v4.0, subchapter 4.1 (book page 201)

GUIDING QUESTION

A certificate is only as strong as the body that issued it, and that body is only as strong as whoever checked it. When a hotel signs a certification contract, what exactly is it buying, and how can an owner tell an accredited certification body from a company that has simply learned to use the right words?

WHO THE RULES BIND

The GSTC Accreditation Manual (AM-I v4.1) cited on this sheet binds certification bodies, not hotels. Where a row refers to it, it describes what the certifier must do and what the hotel can check; it is not a requirement of the GSTC Hotel Standard.

1 · Verification Pact: market claims against the standard

Copied from the book. The last column is for your property: what holds here, and how you know it.

What is claimed	Binding?	What actually holds	In our property
A certificate "aligned to the GSTC Criteria" is GSTC certification	No	GSTC certification requires a GSTC-Accredited body auditing against the GSTC criteria or a GSTC-Recognized standard	
The GSTC certifies hotels directly	No	The GSTC accredits certification bodies and recognises standards; certificates are issued by accredited bodies	
Accreditation is a formality that adds nothing for small hotels	No	Accreditation is the only independent check that the body is competent, impartial and covers all GSTC criteria	
Any accredited body can certify any tourism business	No	Accreditation is granted by scope; hotel/accommodation is a scope the body must hold and describe publicly	
Accreditation is always granted by the GSTC itself	Only partially true	The GSTC administers it, but in agreed countries, including the EU, a GSTC-Endorsed National Accreditation Body accredits the body	
Once accredited, a body stays accredited indefinitely	No	Accreditation ends at the latest five years after the initial decision and must be renewed	

2 · Common mistakes — a self-check

Tick each mistake you recognise in your own property, and note where it shows.

☐ Treating "GSTC-aligned", "inspired by" or "based on" as equivalent to GSTC certification.

☐ Believing that the GSTC certifies hotels, rather than accrediting the bodies that do.

☐ Choosing a certifier on price and speed before checking its accreditation and scope.

- ☐ Assuming every accredited body is accredited for hotels, or for every country.
- ☐ Advertising a certificate whose issuer cannot be traced, in breach of the hotel's own obligations under A5.
- ☐ Not asking which reference standard, and which issue of it, the audit will use.
- ☐ Forgetting that in some countries the accreditor is a national body endorsed by the GSTC.
- ☐ Keeping no record of why the certifier was chosen, so that the claim has no evidence behind it.

3 · A Checklist for Checking a Certifier Before Signing

The book's checklist, with a column for your own answer.

Question	Why it matters	Our answer
Is the body on the GSTC's published list of accredited certification bodies?	Only accredited bodies can issue GSTC certification	
Is hotel/accommodation among its accredited scopes, and does its geography include our country?	Accreditation is granted by scope and may be limited geographically	
Which reference standard will we be audited against, and in which issue?	Clause 5.1.2 distinguishes the GSTC criteria from a GSTC-Recognized standard	
Will our certificate carry the GSTC-Certified logo with a unique code and appear in a public database?	Clause 8.17 makes certification traceable by third parties	
Where are the body's complaints and appeals procedures published?	Clause 8.6 requires them to be public, and the hotel may need them	
Who examined this body: the GSTC or a GSTC-Endorsed National Accreditation Body?	Clause 3.1 assigns accreditation to one or the other, never to nobody	

4 · What would show this is working

Questions drawn from the subchapter's reading of the standard and its practical application. Indicator references point to the GSTC Hotel Standard v4.0; where the evidence lives is this book's practice, not a requirement of the standard.

Question	Where the evidence lives	Seen?
Is the certification body on the GSTC's published list of accredited bodies?	Downloaded list, dated, filed with the decision record	☐
Is the body accredited for the hotel/accommodation scope and the hotel's geography, and by whom?	Body's published scope description (Manual 5.2, 3.1: binding on the body)	☐
Which reference standard will the hotel be audited against: GSTC criteria or a GSTC-Recognized standard?	Contract and written answers from the body (Manual 5.1.2)	☐
Has any claim the hotel cannot verify been removed from its materials (A5.2)?	Website, reception and client communications, checked	☐
Is there a short written record of why this body was chosen?	Decision file in the management system (This book's practice)	☐

> *What this sheet is not: the GSTC Hotel Standard does not prescribe this form. It is a working aid drawn from the book; the standard's criteria, indicators and guidelines govern the real case. Independent material; not affiliated with or endorsed by the GSTC. The standard's own text at www.gstc.org prevails.*