WORKING MATERIAL 4.10 · CHAPTER 4 — THE CERTIFIER'S LENS · SETTING: PENANG, MALAYSIA

# One Certificate, Many Hotels: Multi-Site Certification

*Source: Francesco Dore, The Helm and the Lens, Volume 7b — GSTC Hotel Standard v4.0, subchapter 4.10 (book page 313)*

**GUIDING QUESTION**

*A group of hotels can hold a single certificate, provided they run one sustainability management system from a central office that can act at every site. The certification body audits a sample, but the certificate stands or falls for all of them together. What must a group have in place before it applies, and what does it risk when one site fails?*

**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 |
|---|---|---|---|
| In a multi-site certification only the flagship is audited | No | A sample of sites is audited under IAF MD 1, and all sites are covered within the three-year cycle | |
| The group chooses which sites are sampled | No | The certification body plans and selects the sample | |
| Any hotel the group sells can be included | No | Each site needs a legal or contractual link giving the central office authority to implement corrective actions | |
| The internal audit can wait until after certification | No | All sites and the central office must be in the internal audit programme and assessed before applying | |
| A problem at one site affects only that site | No | The whole certificate is suspended or withdrawn if the central office or any site fails | |
| Group-level reporting is enough | Only partially true | The Standard allows corporate or portfolio reports, but property performance must be clearly distinguished | |

## 2 · Common mistakes — a self-check

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

☐ Applying for multi-site certification on the strength of one well-prepared flagship.

☐ Assuming the group can choose which sites the certification body will sample.

☐ Including properties linked to the group only by sales or marketing agreements.

☐ Postponing internal audits of smaller sites until after certification.

☐ Reporting only group totals when the Standard requires property performance to be distinguishable.
☐ Letting each site manage its own findings without a central corrective action process.
☐ Failing to notify the certification body when sites are added, sold or closed.
☐ Displaying the group certificate beside properties that are not listed on it.

## 3 · A Checklist for a Group Considering Multi-Site Certification

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

| Question | Why it matters | Our answer |
|---|---|---|
| Has every site and the central office been internally audited before we apply? | The Manual requires all sites and the centre to be assessed before application | |
| Can the central office implement corrective actions at every site under a contract? | A site the centre cannot correct is not eligible | |
| Are our sites similar enough for a sample to represent them? | Multi-site certification is not used where sampling would not give confidence | |
| Do we report energy, water, waste and emissions by site? | The Standard requires property performance to be clearly distinguished | |
| Do we accept that one failing site affects the whole certificate? | Suspension or withdrawal applies to the whole certificate | |
| Does our marketing present only the listed sites as certified? | Claims must not imply certification of sites outside the certificate | |

## 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? |
|---|---|---|
| Are all sites and the central office internally audited before application? | Internal audit reports for every site and the centre (Manual 14.6: binding on the body) | ☐ |
| Does the central office have authority to implement corrective actions at every site? | Contracts or management agreements for each site | ☐ |
| Is property-level performance distinguished in any group or portfolio report (A4.3; D1, D6 guidelines)? | Group report with property sections | ☐ |
| Does every site report energy, water, waste and emissions in the same format? | Monthly site data sheets | ☐ |
| Is there one central findings register, with the centre checking unsampled sites for the same weakness? | Central findings register | ☐ |

> *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.*