WORKING MATERIAL 4.2 · CHAPTER 4 — THE CERTIFIER'S LENS · SETTING: HALLSTATT, AUSTRIA

Choosing a Certification Body, and the Two-Year Rule

Source: Francesco Dore, The Helm and the Lens, Volume 7b — GSTC Hotel Standard v4.0, subchapter 4.2 (book page 215)

GUIDING QUESTION

Once an owner knows which certification bodies are accredited, the choice among them still has to be made, and it is rarely made on paper alone. Who should never sit on the other side of the audit table, and what does an accredited body promise in public before a hotel signs anything?

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 consultant who prepared the hotel makes the best auditor, because she knows it	No	Clause 8.5.1 bars consultancy personnel from auditing or deciding on the client for at least two years	
Using a consultant makes a hotel ineligible for certification	No	The Manual restricts the consultant's later role, not the hotel's right to seek help; A7 still requires staff involvement	
The hotel chooses its auditor by name	Only partially true	The body assigns qualified auditors under clause 8.11.1; the hotel approves the audit plan under clause 8.11.2	
Complaints and appeals procedures are internal to the certification body	No	Clause 8.6 requires them to be publicly available in the languages the body uses	
Once the initial audit is over, links between auditor and hotel no longer matter	No	Clause 8.5.2 requires a review if audit or decision personnel join the client within two years	
Any accredited body can certify a hotel anywhere	No	Accreditation covers defined scopes and geographies that the body must describe publicly	

2 · Common mistakes — a self-check

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

☐ Choosing the certification body recommended by the consultant who prepared the hotel, without independent comparison.

☐ Failing to tell the body who advised the hotel in the previous two years.

☐ Approving the audit plan without reading the names and roles in it.

☐ Believing that an auditor who knows the hotel will produce a better or easier audit.

☐ Allowing a consultant to write the entire system without the staff involvement criterion A7 requires.

☐ Ignoring the language of the audit team when staff speak several languages.

☐ Not knowing where the body's complaints and appeals procedures are published.

☐ Hiring a former member of the audit team without informing the certification body.

3 · A Checklist for Choosing a Certification Body

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

Question	Why it matters	Our answer
Is the body accredited for hotel/accommodation, in our country, and by whom?	Clauses 3.1 and 5.2 define who accredits and what scope the body holds	
Have we declared in writing everyone who advised us on sustainability in the last two years?	Clause 8.5.1 can only be applied if the body knows who the advisers were	
Have we checked every name in the audit plan before approving it?	Clause 8.11.2 gives the hotel the plan to approve; that is the moment to check	
Are the complaints and appeals procedures available in a language we read?	Clause 8.6 requires them to be public in the languages the body uses	
Can the audit team interview our staff in the languages they speak?	Evidence from interviews is only as good as the understanding between the parties	
Do we have a rule for reporting any later hire of audit or decision personnel?	Clause 8.5.2 requires the body to review such cases within two years	

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 there a written declaration of everyone who advised the hotel on sustainability in the last two years?	Declaration sent to the body, with dates and nature of work	☐
Was every name in the audit plan checked against that declaration before approval?	Audit plan, annotated and approved (Manual 8.5.1, 8.11.2: rules for the body)	☐

Question	Where the evidence lives	Seen?
Are the body's complaints and appeals procedures filed, in a language the hotel reads?	Contract file (Manual 8.6: binding on the body)	☐
Were staff engaged in developing and implementing the policy and plans, not handed a consultant's system (A7.1)?	Records of staff participation in drafting and implementation	☐
Is there a rule to report to the body any hire of a person from its audit or decision team?	Management system procedure (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.*