WORKING MATERIAL 4.3 · CHAPTER 4 — THE CERTIFIER'S LENS · SETTING: RAROTONGA, COOK ISLANDS

How a Certifier Sizes the Audit: Risk and Duration

Source: Francesco Dore, The Helm and the Lens, Volume 7b — GSTC Hotel Standard v4.0, subchapter 4.3 (book page 227)

GUIDING QUESTION

Owners tend to assume that audit time follows the number of rooms: a small property, a short visit. The Accreditation Manual says something different. What does a certification body look at when it decides how long, how often and in what form a hotel will be audited, and why can eight rooms take two days?

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
Audit time depends on the number of rooms	Only partially true	Size is one factor; clause 8.13 sizes the audit on impact likelihood, the Rule of Law Index and sensitive areas	
Any property under twenty rooms is extremely low risk	No	Annex C1.6 requires all five conditions, including no function activities and no sensitive location	
A very small hotel can have its initial audit done remotely	No	Clause 8.14.3 requires initial and recertification audits on site	
The certifier's risk assessment considers only what the hotel declares	No	Clause 8.13.5 allows media monitoring, online searches and other information known to the body	
Outsourced activities are outside the audit	No	Annex C1.4 requires planning to consider outsourced businesses, and D11.1 covers tour providers	
Once a hotel's risk is set, the audit never changes	No	Clause 8.10.6 requires the plan to be adjusted for effectiveness and previous audit results	

2 · Common mistakes — a self-check

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

☐ Assuming that audit time is set by the number of rooms alone.

☐ Believing that any property under twenty rooms qualifies as extremely low risk.

☐ Expecting an initial audit to be conducted entirely by video call.

☐ Leaving weddings, events or outsourced activities out of the application.

☐ Comparing audit quotes with neighbours instead of with the conditions in the Manual.

☐ Ignoring the protected status of the land and water around the property.

☐ Treating the certifier's risk assessment as an obstacle rather than a free external risk review.

☐ Forgetting that public reviews and media can enter the certifier's assessment.

3 · A Checklist for Anticipating the Certifier's Risk Assessment

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

Question	Why it matters	Our answer
Is our property in or near a UNESCO World Heritage site, an IUCN Category I to IV protected area or a Ramsar wetland?	Clause 8.13.4 makes sensitive areas a central risk factor	
Do we meet all five conditions of extremely low risk, or only the size condition?	Annex C1.6 requires every condition to hold	
Do we host weddings, meetings or other function activities?	Function activities alone exclude the extremely low risk category	
Which of our activities are run by outside businesses?	Annex C1.4 requires outsourced businesses to be considered in planning	
What would an online search reveal about our property?	Clause 8.13.5 allows the certifier to use public information	
Have we documented our own sustainability risks, as indicator A1.6 requires?	The hotel's risk identification should anticipate the certifier's	

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 protected areas and species around the hotel documented, with a strategy where impacts are possible (D9.1, D9.2)?	Protected-area record; written strategy	☐
Is there documented evidence of safe wastewater discharge (D5.2)?	Inspection or test report on file	☐
Are events, weddings and function spaces declared and governed by written procedures?	Application file; event procedure sent with bookings	☐
Are tour providers sold by the hotel evaluated (D11.1)?	Provider evaluation record	☐
Has the hotel checked itself against the five extremely-low-risk conditions honestly?	Self-check against Annex C1.6 (the risk assessment itself is the body's duty)	☐

> *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.*