WORKING MATERIAL 4.4 · CHAPTER 4 — THE CERTIFIER'S LENS · SETTING: SINTRA, PORTUGAL

The Initial Audit on Site

Source: Francesco Dore, The Helm and the Lens, Volume 7b — GSTC Hotel Standard v4.0, subchapter 4.4 (book page 239)

GUIDING QUESTION

Most owners imagine a certification audit as an examination: a visitor asks questions, the hotel gives the right answers, a mark is awarded. An accredited audit is closer to a structured search for evidence, planned in advance and sampled by the auditor. What actually happens, hour by hour, on the day a certifier walks through the door, and what should be ready before it does?

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
The hotel chooses which staff the auditor interviews	No	Clause 8.11.4 and Annex C1.5 require sampling by the certification body	
A well-organised binder can replace the site visit	No	Clause 8.14.3 requires the initial audit to take place on site	
Outsourced services are the supplier's responsibility, not the hotel's	No	Annex C1.4 brings outsourced businesses into planning; B9.1 and B9.3 cover contracted staff	
The audit plan is a formality	No	Clause 8.11.2 requires the client's approval; it is the hotel's advance view of the audit	
Auditors may skip steps if the hotel is well prepared	No	Clause 8.11.3 treats ISO 19011 recommendations as obligations	
The audit checks whether the hotel meets the intent of each criterion	Only partially true	The evaluation tool covers every criterion, but compliance is read at the level of the indicators	

2 · Common mistakes — a self-check

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

☐ Approving the audit plan without reading it.

☐ Preparing a presentation in place of evidence.

☐ Choosing and rehearsing the staff to be interviewed.

☐ Leaving outsourced and contracted activities outside the system.

☐ Keeping only summaries, so that sampled data cannot be traced to source.

☐ Expecting the initial audit to be conducted partly or wholly at a distance.

☐ Failing to arrange access to locked areas and off-duty staff.

☐ Treating the daily summary as a verdict rather than as a list of evidence still to provide.

3 · A Checklist for the Week Before an Initial Audit

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

Question	Why it matters	Our answer
Have we read the approved audit plan line by line and listed every area and record it names?	Clause 8.11.2 gives the hotel the plan; it describes the audit	
Is our staff list complete, including agency, contracted and temporary staff?	Sampling under clause 8.11.4 draws on everyone who works for the hotel	
Do we have contracts and evaluations for every outsourced activity in scope?	Annex C1.4 brings outsourced businesses into the audit	
Can we produce original records, not only summaries, for every indicator?	Auditors trace data from source to report	
Are private rooms available for confidential interviews?	Interviews must allow staff to speak freely	
Is the evidence behind every public claim ready to show?	Indicator A5.2 requires claims supported by verifiable data	

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?
Was the audit plan read line by line and turned into a preparation list?	Annotated audit plan	☐
Are outsourced providers inside the evidence, with sustainability requirements in agreements (A13.12, B9.1, B9.3)?	Contracts; provider statements; named contacts	☐
Can original records be produced within minutes for any indicator sampled (e.g. A2.1, A7.4, D1.1, D1.5, D7.1)?	Folder organised by indicator with original records	☐
Is a complete staff list available, including agency and contracted staff, with private rooms for interviews?	Staff list; room booking for the audit	☐
Have staff been trained on the policy and their roles, without scripted answers (A7)?	Training records; absence of answer cards	☐

> *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.*