WORKING MATERIAL 4.7 · CHAPTER 4 — THE CERTIFIER'S LENS · SETTING: CHAMONIX, FRANCE

The Certification Decision and the Person Who Was Not There

Source: Francesco Dore, The Helm and the Lens, Volume 7b — GSTC Hotel Standard v4.0, subchapter 4.7 (book page 277)

GUIDING QUESTION

The auditor walks the property, meets the staff and leaves with a recommendation. The decision belongs to someone else, who has never seen the hotel and will judge it only through the file. What must that file contain for the decision to follow the evidence, and what happens when it does not?

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 auditor certifies the hotel at the closing meeting	No	The auditor recommends; at least one person who did not take part in the evaluation reviews and decides	
If the auditor says it is fine, the certificate follows	No	The decision-maker must confirm that the information is sufficient before deciding	
A request for more information means the hotel has failed	No	It means the file does not yet support a decision; the hotel can supply what is missing	
The decision-maker can be anyone in the certification body	No	Decision-makers are under formal contract and collectively competent under clause 11 of the Manual	
The certificate can be issued whenever convenient	Only partially true	The Manual sets six months from the last audit day; beyond it the certification body considers an extra audit	
Open minor nonconformities prevent a decision	No	Planned corrections for minors must be reviewed and accepted; serious findings must be corrected and verified	

2 · Common mistakes — a self-check

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

☐ Treating the auditor's recommendation at the closing meeting as the certification decision.

☐ Announcing certification in marketing materials before the certificate is issued.

☐ Showing documents on site without making them identifiable by title, date and indicator.

☐ Reading a request for further information as a failure or as distrust.
☐ Leaving requests from the certification body unanswered for weeks.
☐ Pressing the auditor for a generous report instead of preparing a complete one.
☐ Assuming that "seen" in the auditor's notes is evidence the decision-maker can use.
☐ Relying on contractors' or head office's documents that the hotel cannot produce on request.

3 · A Checklist for Preparing a File That Can Be Decided

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

Question	Why it matters	Our answer
Do we have an index of evidence by indicator, with title, date and location?	The decision-maker decides on information, not on the auditor's impression	
Can we send copies of key documents within a day if asked?	Fast answers keep the decision within the six-month limit	
Do our staff know that the auditor recommends and someone else decides?	Expectations set at the opening meeting prevent disappointment at the closing one	
Are records in a language the certification body's decision-makers can read?	Clause 11 requires collective language ability for the reports and records used	
Are documents held by contractors or head office available to the hotel?	Evidence the hotel cannot produce cannot reach the file	
Have we waited for the certificate before announcing certification?	The decision, not the recommendation, permits the claim	

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 an evidence index listing, for every indicator, the record, its date, owner and location?	Evidence index sent with the audit plan	☐
Can documents that answer indicators such as D5.1, D5.2 and D9.1 be sent within a day?	Shared folder of permits, agreements and inspection reports	☐
Were requests for information from the decision-maker answered quickly and labelled by indicator?	Correspondence file with dates	☐
Do staff understand that the closing-meeting recommendation is not the decision?	Opening-meeting notes (Manual 8.16: binding on the body)	☐
Are marketing materials changed only after the certificate is issued?	Approval dates of materials against the certificate date	☐

> *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.*