WORKING MATERIAL 4.9 · CHAPTER 4 — THE CERTIFIER'S LENS · SETTING: MOOREA, FRENCH POLYNESIA

Surveillance: Annual, Remote, Unannounced

Source: Francesco Dore, The Helm and the Lens, Volume 7b — GSTC Hotel Standard v4.0, subchapter 4.9 (book page 301)

GUIDING QUESTION

A certificate is granted on the evidence of one audit and kept on the evidence of the audits that follow. Surveillance may take place on site, remotely or in a mix of the two, and the certification body may also arrive unannounced. What can a screen show an auditor, what can it never show, and what does a hotel owe the certification body between visits?

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
After certification, the next audit is at renewal	No	Surveillance is annual, the first within twelve months of the certification decision	
Remote surveillance is a right the hotel can choose	No	The mode is chosen by the certification body on the basis of its risk assessment and documented	
Every surveillance audit covers the whole standard	No	Surveillance may focus on key processes or sensitive issues; all requirements are covered over the cycle	
Remote audits are lighter and less formal	Only partially true	They follow the GSTC Remote Audit Guidelines and IAF MD 4:2023; what they cover depends on the plan	
Unannounced visits are not part of GSTC certification	No	The Manual allows random unannounced monitoring visits	
A high-risk hotel can be surveyed remotely to save cost	No	High-risk clients receive annual on-site audits	

2 · Common mistakes — a self-check

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

☐ Treating the certificate as valid until renewal without regard to annual surveillance.

☐ Asking for remote surveillance where the main risks lie outdoors or off-site.

☐ Preparing documents for surveillance without listing what has changed in the operation.

☐ Building or extending facilities without the risk assessment indicator A11.2 asks for.

☐ Introducing new excursions or providers without evaluating them against D11.1.

☐ Tolerating guest feeding or close contact with wildlife in areas the hotel manages.

☐ Reading an unannounced visit as hostility rather than as part of the certification system.

☐ Assuming each surveillance covers everything, rather than sampling across the cycle.

3 · A Checklist for the Year Between Audits

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

Question	Why it matters	Our answer
What has changed since the last audit, and have we told the certification body?	Operational changes may be considered in choosing the mode of surveillance	
Are our main environmental risks visible on a screen?	Remote audits verify what the camera is shown, not what it is not	
Would an unannounced visit find the operation as our documents describe it?	The Manual allows random unannounced monitoring visits	
Have new providers and activities been evaluated against the Standard?	D11.1 and supplier evaluation apply to what is added during the cycle, not only at certification	
Which requirements will this surveillance sample, and which remain for later in the cycle?	All requirements must be covered within the three-year cycle	
Have complaints received since the last audit been recorded and answered?	A complaint the hotel ignores may reach the certification body directly, as it did in Moorea	

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 the hotel ready for an ordinary-day visit: are feeding of wildlife and close contact prohibited in practice (D11.3)?	Observation of pontoon, terraces and grounds	☐
Are excursion providers evaluated before their trips are sold (D11.1)?	Provider evaluation record	☐
Were sustainability-related risks assessed for expansions or new facilities (A11.2)?	Risk assessment with photographs and permits	☐
Does the strategy for ecologically sensitive areas cover new activity areas (D9.2)?	Updated strategy document	☐
Is a change note sent to the body before each surveillance?	Change notes: facilities, activities, providers, complaints (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.*