

# Halderstone



Training module

# Third-Party Auditing

Navigate accreditation, the certification ecosystem, the audit lifecycle, impartiality boundaries & certification decision interfaces



**Do you struggle to understand the unique governance and constraints of audits conducted by certification bodies?**

## Overview

Audits conducted by certification bodies differ fundamentally from internal audits, operating within a stringent accreditation-driven system that mandates independence and strict separation of audit activity from certification decisions.

This module provides a practical orientation to this complex ecosystem. Participants will learn how accreditation bodies and certification bodies interact, understand the full certification cycle from Stage 1 and Stage 2 through surveillance and recertification, recognise how impartiality is maintained, and clarify how lead auditors interface with review, decision, surveillance, and complaints mechanisms, enabling effective engagement without relying on proprietary procedures.



## Target audience

- Aspiring auditors who want to audit management systems following best practices
- Practising management system auditors who want to strengthen their audit knowledge, judgement, and effectiveness

# Is this module for you?

## It is a good fit for you if you...

- work with or within audits conducted by certification bodies and want to understand how they are governed.
- struggle to distinguish internal audits from Stage 1, Stage 2, surveillance, and recertification audits.
- need clarity on independence, impartiality, and decision separation.
- interact with certification bodies and want to avoid role confusion.
- are transitioning into third-party auditing and need context, not CB-specific procedures.

## It may be less suitable for you if you...

- already have a solid understanding of the accreditation–certification ecosystem.
- are not involved in audits conducted by certification bodies or CB interactions.
- need audit execution, interviewing, or reporting skills.
- are looking for a specific certification body's proprietary procedures.

# Learning outcomes



## Key outcomes

- Explain how accreditation shapes certification body governance and third-party audit constraints
- Describe the typical certification pathway and where audit activity interfaces with review and certification decisions
- Distinguish the intent of Stage 1, Stage 2, surveillance, and recertification at a practical level

## Additional capabilities

- Recognise common impartiality and non-consultancy risks and define appropriate boundary-respecting responses
- Distinguish the intent of Stage 1, Stage 2, surveillance, and recertification at a practical level
- Brief internal stakeholders on what to expect from certification auditors and what requests are inappropriate
- Navigate common friction points using appropriate escalation and complaint pathways

# Agenda

## **What makes third-party audits different**

How audits conducted by certification bodies differ from internal audits in purpose and constraints, including independence, impartiality, and the non-consultancy boundary

## **Ecosystem and governance landscape**

How accreditation bodies, certification bodies, standards, schemes, and sector regulations interact, and how accreditation expectations shape governance, oversight, and consistency in certification activities

## **Roles, accountability, and decision separation**

How roles are separated across audit, review, and certification decision functions, what auditors may and may not do in client interactions, and where the audit sits within the certification body's controlled process flow

## **Competence and impartiality management in certification bodies (CBs)**

How CBs manage auditor competence and impartiality at a system level, including qualification logic, assignment constraints, conflict handling, and behavioural expectations

## **Audit lifecycle and stage logic**

How Stage 1, Stage 2, surveillance, and recertification audits differ in intent, outputs, and limits, and what remains stable across the certification cycle

## **Scope, boundaries, and auditability in a certification context**

How scope statements, boundaries, exclusions, and multi-site structures are treated in audits conducted by certification bodies, and what "consistent coverage" means

## **Impartiality in practice**

How auditors recognise and manage common pressure points such as expectations of "helpfulness", commercial sensitivities, and conflicts, while maintaining professional distance and constructive engagement

## **Certification-oriented outputs**

How outputs from audits conducted by certification bodies support objective, decision-ready conclusions, with clear separation between evidence, findings, and improvement opportunities, without drifting into consultancy

## **Challenges, escalation paths, and complaint governance**

How disagreements, complaints, and appeals are positioned at a high level, and how auditors are expected to act when constraints limit access, evidence, or time

## **Case-based workshop**

Applying the learned concepts, methods, and approaches in a realistic case setting

# Included materials



## Learning materials

- Slide deck
- Participant workbook

## Templates & tools

- Accreditation–certification ecosystem map
- Certification pathway overview
- Impartiality and non-consultancy boundary checklist
- Competence & assignment constraints quick reference

## Confirmation

- Confirmation of participation

# Preparation guidance

## Assumed background

This module assumes participants already have practical familiarity with auditing and management systems, including:

- Core audit principles and evidence-based judgement concepts
- Experience participating in internal audits (as auditor or lead)
- Comfort reading management system requirements

## Preparatory modules

### Foundation (depending on background)

Useful if you are new to the underlying concepts

- Audit Principles

### Supporting (optional)

Helpful but not required to participate effectively

- Internal Auditing
- Audit Reporting & Follow-up

# Logistics



## Available languages

- English
- German

## Standard delivery options

- Virtual live teaching
- Blended learning (e-learning + live)

## Bespoke delivery options

- On-site delivery at your place
- Content adapted to your organization



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