



PROCEDURE FOR AUDIT PROCESS

1. PURPOSE

To describe procedure for Hygiene Rating audit planning, and audit techniques for appropriate operations of Hygiene Rating Audit Systems.

2. SCOPE

This process covers audit techniques, planning and sampling used in the operations of GCQ Certifications India LLP.

3. RESPONSIBILITY

Technical Manager/ Assistant Manager Compliance is responsible for defining Hygiene Rating Audit planning and techniques.

4. Procedure for Audit Planning

- i. On receiving the application from the FBO's the Technical Manager or Assistant Manager Compliance shall review the application form and the organization requirements. Enquiries can come through emails, phone calls, website etc.
- ii. After receiving the application, the review is done and agreement is signed with the client. Also the approval is taken for fee structure of Hygiene rating audit. A suitable Auditor is selected for Hygiene Rating Audit according to the scope and expertise who will be contacted by the Administration Head to check the availability.
- iii. The finalized contract or proposal document will be formally shared with the client. This document will include detailed pricing information along with all applicable terms and conditions. The proposal serves as the basis for mutual agreement and outlines the scope of services, deliverables, timelines, and any other relevant clauses necessary for compliance and transparency.
- iv. The client will be informed regarding the proposed audit date and the audit schedule by the Administration head.
- v. Upon confirmation of the audit date, the administrator will coordinate and finalize all necessary travel arrangements for the audit team. Additionally, a tentative audit plan outlining the key activities, timelines, and areas of focus will be shared with the client in advance to ensure preparedness and alignment.
- vi. In case any observer is required to witness the audit, the approval is taken from the client and his travel arrangements are borne by the Audit Agency.
- vii. Auditor is provided with the client detail so he can forward the Audit plan to the customer.

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Prepared By: Betsy Thankachan	Reviewed By: Rajesh Nampoothiri	Approved By: Vijayankutty Narayanan	1

- viii. The auditor is required to follow FSSAI regulations (Food Safety and Standards (Licensing and Registration of Food Business) Amendment Regulations, 2018; Section 6: Part V of Schedule 4.) during the auditing and the Hygiene rating checklist must be available with him.
- ix. The equipment requirements are identified on the basis of the organizational process.
- x. Operation Manager will ensure the availability of the equipment along with proper calibration.

5. Audit Techniques

- a. Opening Meeting: Auditor shall give a brief introduction about himself and explain about the Hygiene rating scheme. The audit is planned accordingly.
 - Evidence shall be collected on sample basis and documents are reviewed.
 - The auditor shall inform the client about the equipment he would be using during the audit. Also the auditor shall inform the client about Major and Minor Non-conformity.
 - He shall inform the client that in case it is found during the course of the audit that there is a food safety threat or any statutory requirements are not met, the auditor has an authority to immediately terminate the audit with due information to the Technical Manager.
- b. Auditor will visit food preparation, serving, storage, transport area, etc. for compliance and will ask to show required documents. Auditor will collect all possible objective evidence in form of photographs, Interview/interaction, query, audit notes etc. and will upload the same on FSSAI portal to generate certificate.
- c. All audit instruments such as thermometer, stopwatch, magnifier, and torch used during Hygiene Rating Audits shall be uniquely identified and labelled with an instrument code and updated within the list of equipment document (ref: GCQ-FRM-HRA-03). The details of each instrument, including calibration status, shall be maintained in the Calibration Plan document (ref GCQ-FRM-HRA-10). Auditors shall ensure that all monitoring instruments are verified for readiness and appropriately utilized during each audit, as applicable
- d. All auditors will make Audit Note on the prescribed format of 'Audit Note Sheet' and all objective evidence will be saved in soft copy and same will be preserved in office of GCQ Certifications India LLP till life of certificate. In case of requirement, it can be shared with FSSAI.

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- e. At the completion of each Hygiene Rating Audit, the auditor shall obtain acknowledgment from the Food Business Operator (FBO) or authorized representative by securing their signature and date on the audit notes (GCQ-FRM-HRA-12). In cases where nonconformities are identified, the auditor shall record them in the Nonconformity (NC) Form (GCQ-FRM-HRA-15) and ensure that the form is signed by the client immediately after the audit.
- f. The auditor is required to complete all the relevant formats, capture all applicable legal and other requirements (Statutory and regulatory requirements) and collect substantial evidence to confirm the scope of Audit. In case of nonconformity, same will be communicated to client and same shall be uploaded on FSSAI portal after the audit. Overall rating of the Food Establishment will be based on objective evidence only.
- g. All the collected photographic evidences and observations must be uploaded on FSSAI portal once the audit is over.
- h. The Non conformities should be classified Major or minor based on the available evidences.
- A. **Major Non-Conformity:** When there is serious failure in food safety management system of the catering establishment, which may result in adverse health consequence possibly even fatal, the auditor shall report such finding to FSSAI within 24 hours. FSSAI after ascertaining the seriousness of the situation shall take regulatory action against the concerned food business operator.
- B. **Minor Non-Conformity:** When there is short coming in the food safety management system or regulatory contravention of catering establishment, which may not cause any adverse health consequence, the 30 days for its rectification and follow up, so that the non- conformance could be rectified.

In case the food establishment fails to provide corrective action within the agreed timeline, the Assistant Manager Compliance/ Operation Manager shall inform FSSAI regarding the same.

- i. While conducting the audit, the auditor has to do:
 - **Documentation Review** – Lab reports, technical data, Management system, personnel details, training details
 - **Site Tour** – Identify the level of understanding of the employees regarding policies and procedure.
- j. In case of any Non-conformity, the same is documented in a clear manner to ensure that it is understood at all levels. The Non-conformance must be recorded and the gap must be highlighted appropriately so the FBO's and FSSAI can understand it well as per the regulatory requirements.
- k. The audit must be conducted in a safe manner to ensure the safety of him as well as the other employees. Auditor is allowed to terminate or discontinue the audit in case they find any act of breach or any food safety threat in the organization.

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- l. Objective evidence are to be collected during the course of the audit where Photographs can be taken and can be directly uploaded on the FSSAI Portal. Every observation has to be recorded that are collected through interviews or document examination.
- m. The audit notes maintained by the auditor must have all the observations along with objective evidence and also non-conformities must be clearly specified. The Non conformity and audit finding must be uploaded on the FSSAI portal so it can be viewed by Food Establishments as wells as FSSAI. The non-conformities must be documented clearly
- n. Auditors must conduct the audit online. But in case of unavailability of an online option for Audit, physical Audits maybe carried out using the assessment checklist available on FSSAI Portal. The same results may be uploaded later by filling the assessment checklist on Serve Safe Portal. To submit scores inspecting officer may login through FSSAI Website and upload scores along with a copy of Audit checklist.
- o. The auditors must create their login ID on FSSAI Portal on the dashboard of HRAA.
- p. Any evidence received from an external source can be verified by directly contacting them for the purpose of authenticity.

Such as for Lab reports Auditor can directly contact the laboratory. FSSAI website can be used for verification of FoSTaC Trainings.
- q. It is important for the auditor to upload the documents on the app in timely manner to avoid loss of data. In case of network issue photographs must be secured properly to avoid any loss.
- r. Once the documents are uploaded on FSSAI Portal, the situation is assessed
- s. Technical review of audit is done by Technical Manager on regular basis.
- t. A closing meeting is done at the end of the audit where the Auditor shall explain about:
 - Non-conformities identified along with the Corrective Action
 - Procedure to download Hygiene rating certificate and display.
- u. In case the Food Safety Establishment gets the rating of less than 3-star, a re-verification audit is scheduled.

6. Audit Records

After the completion of the audit, the records and evidences collected are compiled and handed over to Administration head as well in order to compile the hard copy of the same which will further demonstrate the effectiveness of the system. GCQ Certifications India LLP shall retain the Audit records for a period of 2 year.

7. Audit reports and Audit Certificates

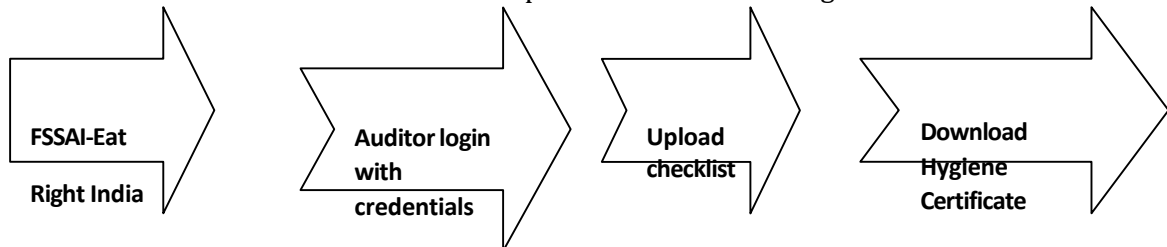
- On completing the verification process, findings are uploaded on FSSAI Hygiene Rating Portal.

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- Food Establishments or Customers can then download the Verified Hygiene Rating Certificate By following the steps below:

The certificate issued from the HRA portal contains following information:



- ✓ Identification of the Issuing Body FSSAI
- ✓ Unique Identification and date of Issue
- ✓ Date of Audit
- ✓ Identification of the area inspected
- ✓ Hygiene Rating
- ✓ Signature of Authorized personnel

Complaints and Appeals

Complaints

The GCQ shall have a documented process to receive, evaluate and make decisions on complaints.

The documented process for handling complaints shall be available to any interested party upon request.

Upon receipt of a complaint, the GCQ shall confirm whether the complaint relates to audit activities for which it is responsible and, if so, shall deal with it. The GCQ shall be responsible for all decisions at all levels of handling complaints.

Appeals

Appeals against the decision of auditor to be first forwarded to the GCQ, if unresolved, then escalate to QCI and if not satisfied then the applicant may appeal to FSSAI. The timeline for the resolution of the appeals will be as under:

1. HRAA- 15 days after appeal is made
- 2.QCI- 15 Days after appeal is made
3. FSSAI- 15 days after appeal is made

Investigation and decision on appeals shall not result in any discriminatory actions.

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