

# Understanding the Differences: Jewellery Hallmarking vs. Bullion Hallmarking in India

## Hallmarking Federation of India (HFI)

As the Indian gold market continues to evolve, clarity around the rules and processes for hallmarking—whether for jewellery or bullion—is more critical than ever. The Hallmarking Federation of India (HFI) recently released Circular No. 42 (dated 23.07.25), addressing the fundamental question: Why is there a difference between jewellery hallmarking and bullion hallmarking? This article summarizes HFI's clarifications for industry players and consumers alike.

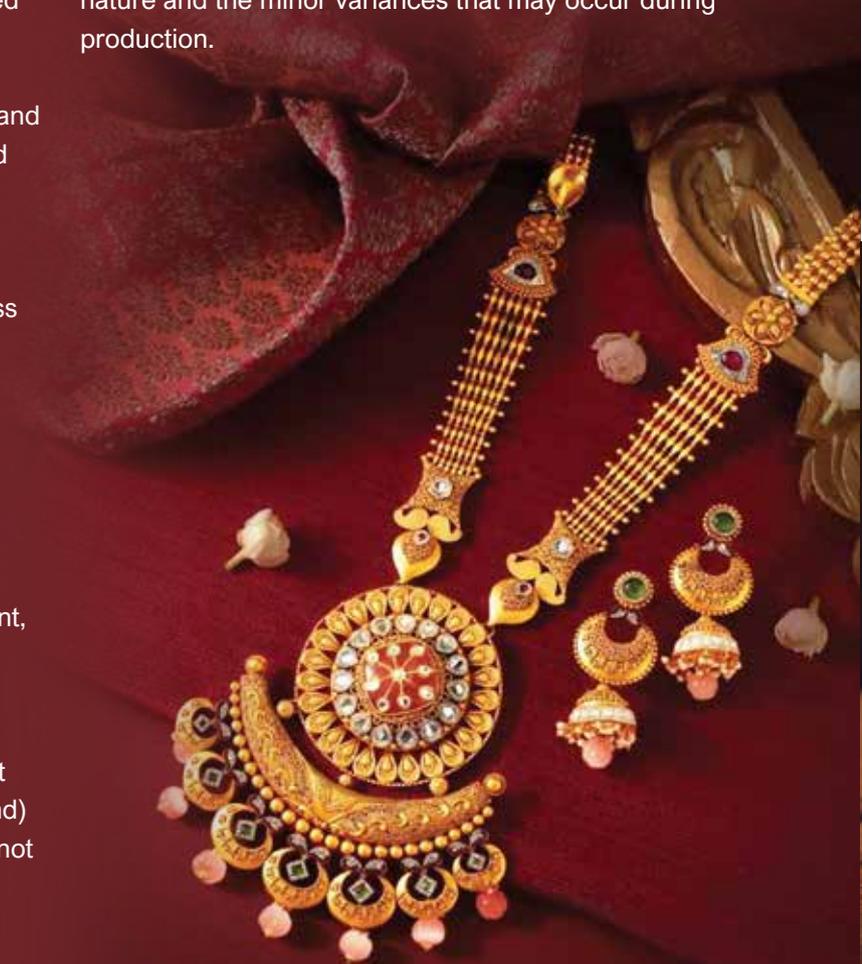
### Jewellery Hallmarking: Consumer-Centric Certification

Jewellery hallmarking is primarily a third-party certification scheme implemented by the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS). Here are the key features:

- 1. Certification Process:** Only BIS-registered jewellers can submit items for hallmarking via the BIS portal, ensuring controlled and regulated access.
- 2. Rigorous Sampling:** BIS-authorized Assaying and Hallmarking Centres (AHCs) employ prescribed sampling methods for fire assay, maintaining consistency in testing.
- 3. Tolerance in Purity:** Minor tolerance in fineness is permitted—up to 0.005 parts—recognizing inherent technical variations during the assay process.
- 4. Transparency & Traceability:** Each certified jewellery item is assigned a unique Hallmark Unique Identification (HUID), generated and made visible only through specialized equipment, reducing counterfeiting.
- 5. Market Sampling and Enforcement:** When BIS officials sample items in the market, a slight tolerance in fineness (up to 2 parts per thousand) is accepted, ensuring that minor deviations do not penalize jewellers unfairly.

- 6. Weight Tolerance:** Minor weight variations, up to 2 grams in market surveys, are tolerated, providing flexibility for small weight deviations in finished jewellery products.

The jewellery hallmarking regime is thus designed for consumer protection and everyday practicality. The underlying philosophy recognizes jewellery's artisanal nature and the minor variances that may occur during production.



**Bullion Hallmarking:****Strict Standards for Investment-Grade Products**

Bullion, mainly in the form of bars and coins, is treated entirely differently under BIS guidelines:

1. **Product Certification Approach:** Bullion hallmarking is a product certification, akin to the ISI mark for industrial goods, where each batch certified is directly stamped by the manufacturer or refinery.
2. **Licensed Refiners Only:** Only BIS-licensed gold refineries can hallmark bullion; they are responsible for the integrity of the entire batch.
3. **Batch-Level Testing:** Every batch of bullion is tested—there is no random sampling as in jewellery. Each bar is fully traceable to its originating refinery.
4. **Highest Purity Benchmarks:** Testing is even more stringent, allowing only a 0.002 parts fineness tolerance. Importantly, there is no negative tolerance. Retesting in another BIS lab mandates that bullion must meet at least the specified purity (e.g., 995/999), ensuring only positive tolerance effects.
5. **No Weight Reduction Permitted:** Unlike jewellery, where small negative weight tolerances are acceptable, bullion bars must not fall below their marked weight—typically supplied slightly overweight (e.g., a 5g bar is at least 5.010g)—removing risk of negative weighing outcomes.
6. **Distinct Marking Methods:** Bullion bars are marked using methods such as embossed stamps

or punches, with detailed marking of five key parameters as per the good delivery standards.

7. **Investment Product Status:** Bullion is considered an asset class, used for investment or official exchange—subject to the tightest controls and typically not resubmitted for retesting.
8. **Refinery Accreditation:** Refinery labs must meet international quality standards (such as IS17025:2017, NABL, and ILAC), ensuring confidence for global trade.
9. **No Hallmarking Centers for Bullion:** Ordinary BIS-licensed jewellery hallmarking centers do not conduct such rigorous bullion testing—reflecting the higher standard for investment-grade products.

**Bottom Line: Why the Two Systems Differ**

The crux is that jewellery is an artisanal, consumer-product with expected natural variation, demanding flexibility and traceability. Bullion, as a global asset and investment standard, necessitates uncompromising accuracy, traceability, and batch-level certification.

For Indian jewellers and consumers, understanding these distinctions helps ensure compliance, inspire consumer trust, and support the integrity of Indian gold—whether purchased as a treasured ornament or an investment bar.

For further details, industry members can reach out to the Hallmarking Federation of India or consult with authorized BIS representatives.

