



GUIDE 69

Harmonized Stage Code system (Edition 2) — Principles and guidelines for use

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Foreword

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0 Introduction

0.1 The standardization process has a number of definite steps or stages which can be used both to describe the process and to indicate where in the process any one item has reached. In general terms the methods used to develop and publish standards via the formal standardization process operated by international, regional and national standards bodies are very similar no matter which body is overseeing the process. Thus, at a high level, it is possible to have a common view of the standardization process and with it a common set of stages. There are differences between the processes of individual bodies, however, and this has led to the development of different stage systems for each body.

0.2 The development of so many systems has led to some confusion amongst users and it was decided to develop a Harmonized Stage Code system which could be used and understood by all bodies. The first version of this was developed in 1993. This has now been revised and simplified.

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Harmonized Stage Code system (Edition 2) — Principles and guidelines for use

1 Scope

This Guide establishes a Harmonized Stage Code (HSC) system intended to be used in databases for tracking standards development projects. It sets out the principles and guidelines for the use of the harmonized stage codes, and is intended to facilitate exchange of information concerning standards projects between international, regional and national standards bodies.

2 General principles of the system

2.1 The purpose of the HSC system is not to re-invent the stage system and make each body follow it exactly. Its purpose is to provide a common framework for the transfer of core data, thus allowing each body to map its own processes and system onto the core matrix. Each standards body can develop its own stage system for its own use.

2.2 It is recognized that different customers have different requirements from a stage code system. Standards organizations need a detailed system to enable workflow to be properly monitored, analysed and controlled. The general public needs only an overview which is simple to understand. The HSC system enables these requirements to be satisfied by providing a matrix overview of the whole process, whilst allowing the details to be included within it.

2.3 A neutral procedural framework of codes has been established for application to the different procedures currently in use by international, regional and national standards organizations.

2.4 This framework can be used for either mapping an existing stage code system onto the framework or for developing a new stage code system around it.

2.5 The HSC matrix takes an unusual approach in that it mixes both stages/milestones with decisions, in that some events have mutually exclusive sub-events, whilst some do not. This is necessary because of the nature of the standards process, which mixes periods of activity (and therefore completed activities) with decisions which could or must be made either during or after those periods of activity. Whilst this approach reduces the need to hold information about these decisions in separate database fields, it is recommended that certain information (e.g. project status) is held in other fields.

2.6 Only the given codes within the framework are valid for data transfer. Other codes may be included for internal purposes only (see clause 5), but they shall not be transferred to other bodies as part of a database extract. This is governed by the rules indicated within the ISONET Manual.

2.7 Only certain stages are possible. Those that are not possible are indicated.

2.8 The system allows tracking of the development of a given project in the same way in databases being used at international, regional and national levels. The adoption of a project from one level to another (e.g. international to national, or regional to national) is therefore able to be incorporated in the overall sequence of codified events.

2.9 The framework proposed can accommodate new procedures that may be developed in the future. The overall standards-making process is similar in each organization, thus any changes to existing processes are likely to be

common ones. Even allowing for a complete rethink in the standards process, the matrix is so constructed that it can easily be adapted to new requirements.

2.10 Only the Harmonized Stage Code group is allowed to authorize the use of any new phase or sub-phase number or any new main event number. Individual organizations have the flexibility to use sub-event numbers.

3 Design of the stage code matrix

3.1 A series of "phases" representing procedural sequences common to different organizations has been established. These represent the main stages of standards development.

3.2 A series of "events" has been established within each phase, using a consistent logical system of concepts. The terms "phase" and "event" are hence used to designate the respective axes of the resulting matrix.

3.3 Principal phases and events are each coded by a two-digit number from 00 to 90, in increments of 10 to allow for interpolation (using the second digit) of "sub-phases" and "sub-events" that might occur in the procedures of one body or another. Such interpolation has already been made in a number of cases in the proposed matrix. The only events available for "free" use are the events not ending in the digit "0" that have not already been designated. It is recognized that there is a need for a rapid change mechanism when new common codes are needed.

3.4 Individual cells within the generic matrix are coded by a four-digit number made up of its phase and event coordinates. For visual presentation (although not necessarily for the purposes of database operations), the pair of coordinates are separated by a point (e.g. 10.20 for phase 10, event 20).

3.5 All unused phase codes are reserved for future use, to allow for interpolation of additional phases that might be identified.

3.6 The event codes 10, 30, 40, 50 and 80 are reserved for future use, to allow for interpolation of additional event types that might be identified. Of these, the event codes 30, 40 and 50 occur within the main action events of *xx.20* to *xx.60*. A number of internal actions/stages may be required between *xx.20* and *xx.60*. Therefore, users may designate events 30, 40, 50 as internal stages providing it is recognized that they would have to amend their internal systems if these codes are required in the future for the main matrix. Such a requirement may occur if the actions that occur become more uniform between standards organizations.

3.7 Within each standards development process, there are a number of special stages which can be called "milestones". These mark a key point within the process. Within the HSC matrix system there are a number of common milestones which should be recognizable by all standards bodies. Others may exist within the processes of individual bodies. These common milestones are stages 00.00, 10.00, 20.00, 40.20, 40.60, 50.20, 50.60, 55.60, 60.60, 65.60, 90.20. These are marked by "M" in the matrix. From the review phase onward, other common milestones are stages 90.60, 91.60, 92.60, 99.60. These are marked by "m" in the matrix. Although these milestones are important stages, like all other stages they are optional and need not be recorded if they are not suited to an organization's way of working.

4 Basic guidelines for using the system

4.1 The common codes proposed have generic meanings so that comparable procedures are identifiable explicitly by identical stage codes by each organization within its own context. Thus each organization may rename a code in accordance with its own terminology, providing that the generic meaning and local meaning are synonyms.

4.2 Different phases and events are important to different bodies, and each is free to adopt only those that are applicable to its own purposes.

4.3 Each stage code represents an action. That action maybe the beginning or end of an activity or a decision based on some aspect of that activity. Certain stages may be considered as milestones in the lifetime of a project.

4.4 Other information concerning, for example, document source or document type, should be recorded in separate database fields and should not be reflected in stage codes.

4.5 There is no sub-code to indicate that a project is dormant at any particular stage. It is recommended to use another database field to address this issue.

4.6 The HSC system allows for the cyclical nature of the standards process and for the repeating of either the current phase or an earlier phase. Events that may be repeated in the life of a project are recordable by repetition of the same stage codes. For example, if it is just a procedure that is being repeated (for example, because of a procedural error) and a decision event is required, then event *xx.93* should be used. Alternatively, for example, if a document is incorrect and needs to be redrafted and a decision event is required, then event *xx.92* should be used. It is recommended that tracking of versions or iterations in either the same or different phases or events should be handled by separate numeric fields in the database.

4.7 The backstaging and freezing of projects are issues for the local operation of the HSC. Projects may be backstaged to any other point in the system by using (usually) event *xx.92* or *xx.93*. Freezing a project at any point is possible by either just using the code the project has reached or, alternatively, using event *xx.91*. Other codes may be used locally, but care shall be taken over which code is transferred. Projects that have been suspended should also have this information recorded in a separate database field.

4.8 The HSC system is not concerned with recording either target or actual dates for achieving stages. Under ISONET guidelines, other data fields should be used to record target and/or actual dates associated with specific stages. The individual standards body should decide for which stages it wishes to hold this information and should also maintain this information within its own database system.

4.9 The phase labelled "00: Definition of new project" should not be used to put back projects into abeyance once work at a subsequent stage has already been started, unless it is intended to reprocess the project totally.

4.10 A distinction is made between the event-types action (codes 20 to 60/70) and decision (code 90) because these could in practice be significantly separated in time.

4.11 The stage *xx.60* is the end of a main action and no other stage should represent a completion of a main action. However, there are a few phases where a small subsequent action is required, such as the dispatching of results. This is catered for by using event *xx.70*. Once a project has reached event *xx.60/xx.70*, the next event can be either one of events 91 to 99 or the next appropriate phase. Only one of the *xx.90* events is possible at any one time.

4.12 The phase labelled "60: Publication stage" is intended to designate the publishing of the standard by the developing body. Phase "65: Implementation stage" is intended to accommodate the implementation by one body of a standard that has been developed within another body. Usually, but not always, this will be the national implementation of a regional or international standard.

4.13 The use of event *xx.90* is different from the others in that there is a choice of Decisions which can be made, hence the different layout for this event. If event *xx.92* or *xx.94* is used, then in general it should be followed by using event *xx.99*. Note that, as for all other events, the use the *xx.90* events is optional.

4.14 The general headings for the *xx.90* events are the following:

- xx.91* Decision to postpone project
- xx.92* Decision to redefine project
- xx.93* Decision to redraft
- xx.94* Decision to omit one or more phases
- xx.95* (not allocated)
- xx.96* (not allocated)
- xx.97* Decision to merge or split project
- xx.98* Decision to abandon project
- xx.99* Decision to register for next applicable phase

The headings for specific events may differ slightly from these, depending on the phase.

4.15 The use of event "xx.94: Decision to omit one or more phases" can be used to indicate that a particular track for that project has been decided. The actual track should be indicated in a different database field.

4.16 The phase labelled "90: Review stage" incorporates the concepts "91: Confirmation stage", "92: Revision stage", "95: Withdrawal procedure" and "99: Withdrawal stage". Whether 91, 92 or 95/99 are used depends on the decision reached within phase 90. Phases 95/99 can be used by those bodies for whom withdrawal itself is a distinct and finite process that is tracked in the system.

4.17 A number of database systems hold records (as opposed to projects) that for one reason or another are deemed to have been cancelled or no longer valid, but which remain on the system. The usual approach is to use a separate database field to record this information. However, some users may wish to use the HSC for this, in which case these records should be given a special code of 99.98. Such a code follows the principle of event xx.98 and yet is beyond the valid range for all acceptable documents. This code does not apply to projects which have been officially postponed or abandoned or otherwise stopped: these projects shall have one of the other valid event xx.90 codes.

5 Development of internal codes based on the matrix

5.1 The HSC system has been designed primarily for data transfer, but it could be used for internal purposes.

5.2 Whilst it is recognized that there is a risk of divergence if individual bodies all add codes for their internal use and use the same codes for different things, it is believed that the effect of this will be slight. The matrix ensures that the main codes remain the same throughout and only internal codes may have different meanings. This is the position at present where the same code number from two organizations may mean different stages.

5.3 All organizations that use the matrix to include internal codes must realize that the HSC system may be altered in future, which may necessitate changes to these internal codes.

5.4 Individual bodies may add extra digits for interpolation of internal procedures not relevant to external parties. It is recommended that this be done by one of two methods.

- a) by extending the notation to the right in some variant of *XX.XX.YY* where *YY* is a local code only; or
- b) by the use of new events between *xx.21* and *xx.59* inclusive. This could mean using events 30, 40 and 50 which are at present unused, but which occur within the start and finish of the main actions of each phase.

In each case it should be noted that these are only local codes and should not be transferred. If these reserved codes are later used for specific events, then users will be required to amend their internal system accordingly.

5.5 The use of sub-stages or organization-specific stages between events *xx.20* and *xx.60* can help solve the issue of how to incorporate the activities of specialist bodies such as working groups. Whilst it is up to the individual bodies to determine any local codes that may be necessary, it is recommended that the activities of a working group are not included as specific stages.

5.6 The use of new events (e.g. 80s) for activities (e.g. editing) is to be discouraged. As stated elsewhere, these are reserved codes. Whilst organizations could use these unused events for internal codes if they wished, they must be aware that if these reserved codes are later used for specific events then they will be required to amend their internal system accordingly.

5.7 With multi-fora projects (i.e. those projects are progressing through more than one standards forum, such as at international, regional and national level), it is possible that the project may be at different stages or, more likely, sub-stages, at any one time. It must be recognized that these shall be recorded either as different projects or as different streams of the same project. Either way, they are effectively different entities and shall be treated as such with different data sets, including stage codes for each. It is not possible to track a multi-fora project with only one stage code (or certain other attributes) being recorded for all the fora.

5.8 The use of sub-phases for specific fora (e.g. using *x1.xx* for international, *x2.xx* for regional and *x3.xx* for national) is not necessary. The use of specific prefixes to allow for these is also not necessary. The ISONET Manual indicates that a unique organization label should be used for sending files relating to different fora. This would enable organizations to devise their own method of indicating the forum or body concerned.

5.9 The HSC system has not been designed to support parallel processes which may occur at one or more points within the system, but which are sub-processes of a main phase. There are a number of these parallel process (e.g. translating of text, obtaining drawings, preparing tables, etc.). All of these are in effect part of the work of a phase and occur between *xx.20* and *xx.60*. Sub-events between these points may be defined locally, but in general it is recommended that, if required, information on these attributes be contained in separate fields.

5.10 Users of the HSC system may find it difficult either to map their internal codes to the HSC or to translate the HSC to another system. This is normal. When mapping internal codes to HSC, it must be remembered that the majority of codes used by organizations are for internal use only. The public and other organizations do not need to know them. Once this is accepted, it becomes easy to fit in the main codes to the matrix and to develop codes within the main actions *xx.20* to *xx.60* for internal only stages. Likewise, it is not normally possible to translate back from the core matrix to an individual system. This does not invalidate either system. Remember the purpose of the HSC is for ease of data transfer of core data, not every detail.

6 Updating of the Harmonized Stage Codes

6.1 The Harmonized Stage Code System is updated according to needs. Any user may submit proposals for modifications and/or additions to the HSC. Such proposals should be sent to ISO Central Secretariat at the following address:

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6.2 All proposals received will be forwarded for consideration to the Harmonized Stage Code Maintenance Agency.