
**Sequential sampling plans for
inspection by variables for percent
nonconforming (known standard
deviation)**

*Plans d'échantillonnage progressif pour le contrôle par mesures des
pourcentages de non-conformes (écart-type connu)*

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Foreword

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The procedures used to develop this document and those intended for its further maintenance are described in the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 1. In particular the different approval criteria needed for the different types of ISO documents should be noted. This document was drafted in accordance with the editorial rules of the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 2 (see www.iso.org/directives).

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This document was prepared by Technical Committee ISO/TC 69, *Applications of statistical methods*, Subcommittee SC 5, *Acceptance sampling*.

This first edition of ISO 39511 cancels and replaces ISO 8423:2008, of which it constitutes a minor revision to change the reference number from 8423 to 39511.

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Introduction

In contemporary production processes, quality is often expected to reach such high levels that the number of nonconforming items is reported in parts per million. Under such circumstances, popular acceptance sampling plans by attributes, such as those presented in ISO 2859-1, require prohibitively large sample sizes. When it is possible to apply acceptance sampling plans by variables, such as those presented in ISO 3951-1, the sample sizes are much smaller. However, especially in the case of acceptance of a product of extremely high quality, those sample sizes are still too large. Therefore, there is a need to apply standardized statistical procedures that require the smallest possible sample sizes; sequential sampling plans are the only statistical procedures that satisfy that need. It has been mathematically proved that among all possible sampling plans having similar statistical properties the sequential sampling plan has the smallest average sample size.

The principal advantage of sequential sampling plans is the reduction in the average sample size. The *average sample size* is the average of all the sample sizes that may occur under a sampling plan for a given lot or process quality level. The use of sequential sampling plans leads to a smaller average sample size than single sampling plans having the equivalent operating characteristic.

Other factors that should be taken into account are as follows.

a) Complexity

The rules of a sequential sampling plan are more easily misunderstood by inspectors than the simple rules for a single sampling plan.

b) Variability in the amount of inspection

As the actual number of items inspected for a particular lot is not known in advance, the use of sequential sampling plans brings about various organizational difficulties. For example, scheduling of inspection operations may be difficult.

c) Difficulty of drawing sample items

If drawing sample items is rather difficult, the reduction in the average sample size by sequential sampling plans may be cancelled out by the increased sampling cost.

d) Duration of test

If the test of a single item is of long duration and a number of items can be tested simultaneously, sequential sampling plans are much more time-consuming than the corresponding single sampling plan.

e) Variability of quality within the lot

If the lot consists of two or more sublots from different sources and if there is likely to be any substantial difference between the qualities of the sublots, drawing of a representative sample under a sequential sampling plan is far more difficult than under the corresponding single sampling plan.

The balance between the advantage of a smaller average sample size of the sequential sampling plan and the above disadvantages leads to the conclusion that sequential sampling plans are suitable only when inspection of individual items is costly in comparison with inspection overheads.

The choice between single and sequential sampling plans should be made before the inspection of a lot is started. During inspection of a lot, it is not permitted to switch from one type to another, because the operating characteristic of the plan may be drastically changed if the actual inspection results influence the choice of acceptability criteria.

Although a sequential sampling plan is on average much more economical than the corresponding single sampling plan, it may occur, during inspection of a particular lot, that acceptance or non-acceptance comes at a very late stage because the cumulative leeway (the statistic used for the determination of lot acceptability) remains between the acceptance value and the rejection value for a long time. With the

graphical method, this corresponds to the random progress of the step-wise linear curve remaining in the indecision zone.

In order to alleviate this disadvantage, the curtailment values are set before the inspection of a lot (or a process) is started, and inspection terminates if the cumulative sample size reaches the curtailment value, n_t , without determination of lot acceptability. The acceptance and non-acceptance of the lot (or the process) is then determined using the curtailment acceptance and rejection values.

For sequential sampling plans in common use, curtailment usually represents a deviation from their intended usage, leading to a distortion of their operating characteristics. In this International Standard, however, the operating characteristics of the sequential sampling plans have been determined with curtailment taken into account, so curtailment is an integral component of the provided plan.

Sequential sampling plans for inspection by variables are also provided in ISO 3951-5. However, the design principle of those plans is fundamentally different from that of this International Standard. The sampling plans in ISO 3951-5 are designed to supplement the ISO 3951-1 acceptance sampling system for inspection by variables, which is a counterpart of the popular ISO 2859-1 acceptance sampling system for inspection by attributes. Thus, they should be used for the inspection of a continuing series of lots, that is, a series long enough to permit the switching rules of the ISO 3951 system to take effect. The application of the switching rules is the only means of providing enhanced protection to the consumer (by means of tightened sampling inspection criteria or discontinuation of sampling inspection) when the sequential sampling plans from ISO 3951-5 are used. However, in certain circumstances, there is a strong need to have both producer's and consumer's risks under strict control. Such circumstances occur, for example, when sampling is performed for regulatory reasons, for the demonstration of quality of production processes or for hypothesis testing. In such cases, individual sampling plans selected from the ISO 3951-5 sampling scheme may be inappropriate. The sampling plans from this International Standard have been designed in order to meet these specific requirements.

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