International Standard

ISO 9000

Quality management — Fundamentals and vocabulary

Management de la qualité — Principes essentiels et vocabulaire

Fifth edition
2026-05

Reference number
ISO 9000:2026(en)

COPYRIGHT PROTECTED DOCUMENT

ISO copyright office
CP 401 • Ch. de Blandonnet 8
CH-1214 Vernier, Geneva
Phone: +41 22 749 01 11
Email: copyright@iso.org
Website: www.iso.org

Published in Switzerland

Contents

Page

Foreword

ISO (the International Organization for Standardization) is a worldwide federation of national standards bodies (ISO member bodies). The work of preparing International Standards is normally carried out through ISO technical committees. Each member body interested in a subject for which a technical committee has been established has the right to be represented on that committee. International organizations, governmental and non-governmental, in liaison with ISO, also take part in the work. ISO collaborates closely with the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) on all matters of electrotechnical standardization.

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 document 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).

ISO draws attention to the possibility that the implementation of this document may involve the use of (a) patent(s). ISO takes no position concerning the evidence, validity or applicability of any claimed patent rights in respect thereof. As of the date of publication of this document, ISO had not received notice of (a) patent(s) which may be required to implement this document. However, implementers are cautioned that this may not represent the latest information, which may be obtained from the patent database available at www.iso.org/patents. ISO shall not be held responsible for identifying any or all such patent rights.

Any trade name used in this document is information given for the convenience of users and does not constitute an endorsement.

For an explanation of the voluntary nature of standards, the meaning of ISO specific terms and expressions related to conformity assessment, as well as information about ISO's adherence to the World Trade Organization (WTO) principles in the Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT), see www.iso.org/iso/foreword.html.

This document was prepared by Technical Committee ISO/TC 176, *Quality management and quality assurance*, Subcommittee SC 1, *Concepts and terminology*, in collaboration with the European Committee for Standardization (CEN) Technical Committee, in accordance with the Agreement on technical cooperation between ISO and CEN (Vienna Agreement).

This fifth edition cancels and replaces the fourth edition (ISO 9000:2015), which has been technically revised.

The main changes are as follows:

— the title has been changed from "Quality management systems — Fundamentals and vocabulary" to "Quality management — Fundamentals and vocabulary" to better represent the enhanced content;

— the document has been restructured by moving the fundamental concepts and quality management principles from Clause 2 to Clause 4 to align with the structure in the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 2; Clause 2 is now Normative references;

— additions have been made to the fundamentals, dividing them into two congruent groups, "Fundamental quality management concepts" and "Additional concepts relevant to quality management", to address emerging trends in quality;

— terms have been added and definitions modified to reflect changes to ISO/TC 176 documents;

— the diagrams in Annex A have been restructured to illustrate the relationship between terms.

Any feedback or questions on this document should be directed to the user's national standards body. A complete listing of these bodies can be found at www.iso.org/members.html.

Introduction

This document provides the fundamentals of quality management. It provides the foundation and the vocabulary for quality management documents and quality management standards. This document is intended to help the user understand the fundamental principles, concepts and vocabulary of quality management, in order to be able to effectively and efficiently implement a quality management system (QMS) and realize value from quality management documents and QMS standards. This document proposes a well-planned QMS, based on a framework that integrates established principles and concepts relevant to quality management, in order to help organizations realize their objectives. It aims to increase an organization's awareness of its duties and commitment in fulfilling the needs and expectations of its customers and other interested parties, and in achieving satisfaction with its products and services.

To gain the most value for their organization's QMS, the user should first seek to understand the quality management principles and their rationale. The quality management principles form the basis of quality management documents. This document contains seven quality management principles in 4.2. For each quality management principle, there is a "Statement" describing the principle, a "Rationale" explaining why the organization would address the principle, "Key benefits" attributed to the principle, and "Possible actions" an organization can take in applying the principle.

The user should then understand the fundamental concepts in 4.3 and additional concepts relevant to quality management in 4.4 to seek insight into how they are used to develop QMS standards. Fundamental concepts are those which are integral to the understanding of quality management in general. Additional concepts are those relevant to the effective application of quality management within an organization.

The vocabulary in Clause 3 serves as a unified language for quality management documents, ensuring the terms are clearly and accurately defined as used within the quality management documents developed by ISO/TC 176. This document contains the terms and definitions that apply to all quality management documents and QMS standards developed by ISO/TC 176, at the time of publication. This document does not contain sector-specific terms and definitions for sector-specific QMS standards. The terms and definitions are arranged in conceptual order, with an alphabetical index of the terminological entries provided at the end of this document. Annex A includes a set of concept diagrams on which the thematic grouping of the terms and definitions in Clause 3 is based.

NOTE Guidance on some additional frequently used words in the QMS standards developed by ISO/TC 176, and which have an identified dictionary meaning, is provided in Reference [19].

Quality management — Fundamentals and vocabulary

1 Scope

This document establishes the fundamental concepts and principles of quality management which are universally applicable to the following:

— organizations seeking sustained success through the implementation of a quality management system (QMS);

— customers seeking confidence in an organization's ability to consistently provide products and services conforming to their requirements;

— organizations seeking confidence in their supply chain that product and service requirements will be met;

— organizations and interested parties seeking to improve communication through a common understanding of the vocabulary used in quality management;

— organizations performing conformity assessments against the requirements of ISO 9001;

— providers of training, assessment or advice in quality management;

— developers of related standards.

This document defines terms that apply to all quality management documents and QMS standards developed by ISO/TC 176.

This document is applicable to all organizations, regardless of size, complexity or business model.

2 Normative references

There are no normative references in this document.

3 Terms and definitions

ISO and IEC maintain terminology databases for use in standardization at the following addresses:

— ISO Online browsing platform: available at https://www.iso.org/obp

— IEC Electropedia: available at https://www.electropedia.org/

3.1 Terms related to organization

3.1.1
organization
person or group of people that has its own functions with responsibilities, authorities and relationships to achieve its *objectives* (3.7.11)

Note 1 to entry: The concept of organization includes, but is not limited to, sole-trader, company, corporation, firm, enterprise, authority, partnership, charity or institution, or part or combination thereof, whether incorporated or not, public or private.

Note 2 to entry: If the organization is part of a larger entity, the term "organization" refers only to the part of the larger entity that is within the scope of the *quality management system* (3.4.9).

3.1.2
context of the organization
combination of internal and external issues that can have an effect on an *organization's* (3.1.1) approach to specifying and achieving its *objectives* (3.7.11)

Note 1 to entry: The organization's objectives can be related to its *products* (3.7.9) and *services* (3.7.10), investments and behaviour towards its *interested parties* (3.1.4).

Note 2 to entry: The concept of "context of the organization" is equally applicable to not-for-profit or public service organizations as it is to those seeking profits.

Note 3 to entry: Understanding the *infrastructure* (3.4.3) can help to define the context of the organization.

3.1.3
top management
person or group of people who directs and controls an *organization* (3.1.1) at the highest level

Note 1 to entry: Top management has the power to delegate authority and provide resources within the organization.

Note 2 to entry: If the scope of the *management system* (3.4.2) covers only part of an organization, then top management refers to those who direct and control that part of the organization.

3.1.4
interested party
stakeholder
person or *organization* (3.1.1) that can affect, be affected by, or perceive itself to be affected by a decision or *activity* (3.2.12)

EXAMPLE *Customers* (3.9.1), owners, people in an organization, *providers* (3.1.9), bankers, regulatory authorities, unions, partners or society that can include competitors or opposing pressure groups.

3.1.5
involvement
taking part in an *activity* (3.2.12), event or situation

3.1.6
engagement
involvement (3.1.5) in, and contribution to, *activities* (3.2.12) to achieve shared *objectives* (3.7.11)

3.1.7
innovation
new or changed *object* (3.5.3) realizing or redistributing value

Note 1 to entry: *Activities* (3.2.12) resulting in innovation are generally managed.

Note 2 to entry: Innovation is generally significant in its effect.

3.1.8
association
organization (3.1.1) consisting of member organizations or persons

3.1.9
provider
supplier
organization (3.1.1) that provides a *product* (3.7.9) or a *service* (3.7.10)

EXAMPLE Producer, distributor, retailer or vendor of a product or a service.

Note 1 to entry: A provider can be internal or external to the organization.

Note 2 to entry: In a contractual situation, a provider is sometimes called "contractor".

3.1.10
external provider
external supplier
provider (3.1.9) that is not part of the *organization* (3.1.1)

EXAMPLE Producer, distributor, retailer or vendor of a *product* (3.7.9) or a *service* (3.7.10).

3.1.11
DRP-provider
dispute resolution process provider
person or *organization* (3.1.1) that supplies and operates an external *dispute* (3.9.4) resolution *process* (3.3.1)

Note 1 to entry: Generally, a DRP-provider is a legal entity, separate from the organization or person as an individual and the *complainant* (3.9.6). In this way, the attributes of independence and fairness are emphasized. In some situations, a separate unit is established within the organization to handle unresolved *complaints* (3.9.3).

Note 2 to entry: The DRP-provider contracts with the parties to provide dispute resolution, and is accountable for *performance* (3.7.3). The DRP-provider supplies *dispute resolvers* (3.9.5). The DRP-provider also utilizes support, executive and other managerial staff to supply financial resources, clerical support, scheduling assistance, training, meeting rooms, supervision and similar functions.

Note 3 to entry: DRP-providers can take many forms including not-for-profit, for-profit and public entities. An *association* (3.1.8) can also be a DRP-provider.

3.1.12
continual improvement
recurring *activity* (3.2.12) to enhance *performance* (3.7.3)

3.1.13
quality management system consultant
person who assists the *organization* (3.1.1) on *quality management system realization* (3.3.6), giving advice or *information* (3.8.4)

Note 1 to entry: The consultant can also assist in realizing parts of a *quality management system* (3.4.9).

Note 2 to entry: ISO 10019 provides guidance on how to distinguish a competent quality management system consultant from one who is not competent.

3.2 Terms related to management

3.2.1
management
coordinated *activities* (3.2.12) to direct and control an *organization* (3.1.1)

Note 1 to entry: Management can include establishing *policies* (3.4.5) and *objectives* (3.7.11), and *processes* (3.3.1) to achieve these objectives.

Note 2 to entry: The word “management” sometimes refers to people, i.e. a person or group of people with authority and responsibility for the conduct and control of an organization. When “management” is used in this sense, it should always be used with some form of qualifier to avoid confusion with the concept of “management” as a set of activities defined above. For example, “management shall…” is deprecated whereas “*top management* (3.1.3) shall…” is acceptable. Otherwise different words should be adopted to convey the concept when related to people (e.g. managerial or managers).

3.2.2
quality management
management (3.2.1) with regard to *quality* (3.5.2)

Note 1 to entry: Quality management can include establishing *quality policies* (3.4.6) and *quality objectives* (3.7.12), and *processes* (3.3.1) to achieve these quality objectives through *quality planning* (3.2.6), *quality assurance* (3.2.7), *quality control* (3.2.8) and *quality improvement* (3.2.9).

3.2.3
improvement
activity (3.2.12) to enhance *performance* (3.7.3)

Note 1 to entry: The activity can be recurring or singular.

3.2.4
good practice
method that has been proven to work well and produce good *results* (3.7.1), and is therefore recommended to be adopted as a model

Note 1 to entry: A method described as a good practice has usually been tested over time and validated through repeated trials before being accepted as worthy of broad adoption.

Note 2 to entry: In some circumstances "good practice" is referred to as "best practice".

3.2.5
benchmarking
comparative evaluation or analysis of similar practices with the aim of improving *performance* (3.7.3)

Note 1 to entry: Benchmarking can be applied to *policies* (3.4.5), *strategies* (3.4.12) and *objectives* (3.7.11), *processes* (3.3.1) and their operation, *products* (3.7.9), *services* (3.7.10) and the *organization's* (3.1.1) structures.

3.2.6
quality planning
part of *quality management* (3.2.2) focused on setting *quality objectives* (3.7.12) and specifying *processes* (3.3.1) necessary for providing *products* (3.7.9) and *services* (3.7.10), and related resources to achieve the quality objectives

Note 1 to entry: Establishing *quality plans* (3.8.10) can be part of quality planning.

3.2.7
quality assurance
part of *quality management* (3.2.2) focused on providing confidence that *quality requirements* (3.5.6) will be fulfilled

3.2.8
quality control
part of *quality management* (3.2.2) focused on fulfilling *quality requirements* (3.5.6)

3.2.9
quality improvement
part of *quality management* (3.2.2) focused on increasing the ability to fulfil *quality requirements* (3.5.6)

Note 1 to entry: The quality requirements can be related to any aspect such as *effectiveness* (3.7.17), *efficiency* (3.7.16) or *traceability* (3.5.11).

3.2.10
project management
planning, organizing, *monitoring* (3.11.3), controlling and reporting of all aspects of a *project* (3.2.11), and the motivation of all those involved in it to achieve the project objectives

3.2.11
project
unique *process* (3.3.1) undertaken to achieve an *objective* (3.7.11)

Note 1 to entry: A project generally consists of a set of coordinated and controlled *activities* (3.2.12) with start and finish dates, conforming to specific *requirements* (3.5.1), including the constraints of time, cost and resources.

Note 2 to entry: An individual project can form part of a larger project structure and generally has a defined start and finish date.

Note 3 to entry: In some projects, the objectives and scope are updated and the product or service *characteristics* (3.10.1) defined progressively as the project proceeds.

Note 4 to entry: The *output* (3.7.8) of a project can be one or several units of a *product* (3.7.9) or *service* (3.7.10).

Note 5 to entry: The project's organization is normally temporary and established for the lifetime of the project.

Note 6 to entry: The complexity of the interactions among project activities is not necessarily related to the project size.

3.2.12
activity
<projects> identified piece of work that is required to be undertaken to complete a *project* (3.2.11)

Note 1 to entry: The activity in a project can generally be recognized as the smallest identified entity.

3.2.13
project organization
<projects> temporary structure that includes *project* (3.2.11) roles, responsibilities, and levels of authority and boundaries that need to be defined and communicated to all *interested parties* (3.1.4) of a project

3.2.14
project management plan
document (3.8.7) specifying what is necessary to meet the *objective(s)* (3.7.11) of a *project* (3.2.11)

Note 1 to entry: A project management plan should include or refer to the project's *quality plan* (3.8.10).

Note 2 to entry: The project management plan also includes or references such other plans as those relating to organizational structures, resources, schedule, budget, risk management, environmental management, health and safety management and security management, as appropriate.

3.2.15
progress evaluation
<projects> assessment of progress made on achievement of *project* (3.2.11) *objectives* (3.7.11)

Note 1 to entry: This assessment should be carried out at appropriate points in the *project life cycle* (3.2.16) across project *processes* (3.3.1), based on criteria for project processes and *products* (3.7.9) or *services* (3.7.10).

Note 2 to entry: The *results* (3.7.1) of progress evaluations can lead to revision of the *project management plan* (3.2.14).

3.2.16
project life cycle
<projects> defined set of phases from the start to the end of a *project* (3.2.11)

3.2.17
project phase
<projects> division of a *project life cycle* (3.2.16) into manageable sets of *activities* (3.2.12), such as conception, development, realization and termination

3.3 Terms related to process

3.3.1
process
set of interrelated or interacting *activities* (3.2.12) that uses or transforms inputs to deliver a *result* (3.7.1)

Note 1 to entry: Whether the result of a process is called an *output* (3.7.8), a *product* (3.7.9) or a *service* (3.7.10) depends on the context of the reference.

Note 2 to entry: Inputs to a process are generally the outputs of other processes and outputs of a process are generally the inputs to other processes.

Note 3 to entry: Two or more interrelated and interacting processes in series can also be referred to as a "process".

Note 4 to entry: Processes in an *organization* (3.1.1) are generally planned and carried out under controlled conditions to add value and to ensure that intended results can be achieved.

Note 5 to entry: A process where the *conformity* (3.5.9) of the resulting output cannot be readily or economically validated is frequently referred to as a "special process".

3.3.2
procedure
specified way to carry out an *activity* (3.2.12) or a *process* (3.3.1)

Note 1 to entry: Procedures can be documented or not.

3.3.3
process owner
<quality culture> person (or team) responsible for defining and maintaining a *process* (3.3.1)

Note 1 to entry: At the organizational level, the process owner is the person (or team) responsible for the description of a standard process; at the project level, the process owner is the person (or team) responsible for the description of the defined process. A process can therefore have multiple owners at different levels of responsibility.

3.3.4
process approach
<financial and economic benefits> systematic approach to *management* (3.2.1) in which an *organization* (3.1.1) identifies, monitors and manages its internal *processes* (3.3.1) and their interactions

3.3.5
workflow
<documentation> series of *activities* (3.2.12) necessary to complete a task

Note 1 to entry: A workflow that is partially carried out without manual interference can be referred to as a "semi-automated workflow". A workflow that is completely carried out without manual interference can be referred to as an "automated workflow".

Note 2 to entry: Workflows can be documented.

3.3.6
quality management system realization
process (3.3.1) of establishing, documenting, implementing, maintaining and continually improving a *quality management system* (3.4.9)

3.3.7
change matrix
<organizational change management> two-dimensional array showing the relationship between *product* (3.7.9) or *service* (3.7.10) realization stages and organizational change stages

Note 1 to entry: The product or service realization stages are presented on the x-axis and organizational change stages on the y-axis.

3.3.8
aggregation model
<organizational change management> combined view of the current state of organizational change

Note 1 to entry: The combined view presents the positions of *interested parties* (3.1.4) on the *change matrix* (3.3.7).

3.3.9
intervention
<organizational change management> *process* (3.3.1) through which the behaviour of an *organization* (3.1.1) is changed

3.3.10
people development
<training> encouragement of employees to acquire new or advanced *competence* (3.10.6) by creating learning and training opportunities with circumstances to deploy the outcomes that have been acquired

3.3.11
design and development
set of *processes* (3.3.1) that transform *requirements* (3.5.1) for an *object* (3.5.3) into more detailed requirements for that object

Note 1 to entry: The requirements forming input to design and development are often the *result* (3.7.1) of research and can be expressed in a broader, more general sense than the requirements forming the *output* (3.7.8) of design and development. The requirements are generally defined in terms of *characteristics* (3.10.1). In a *project* (3.2.11), there can be several design and development stages.

Note 2 to entry: The words "design" and "development" and the term "design and development" are sometimes used synonymously and sometimes used to define different stages of the overall design and development.

Note 3 to entry: A qualifier can be applied to indicate the nature of what is being designed and developed (e.g. *product* (3.7.9) design and development, *service* (3.7.10) design and development, process design and development).

3.3.12
outsource, verb
make an arrangement where an external *organization* (3.1.1) performs part of an organization's function or *process* (3.3.1)

Note 1 to entry: An external organization is outside the scope of the *management system* (3.4.2), although the outsourced function or process is within the scope.

3.3.13
contract
binding agreement

3.4 Terms related to system

3.4.1
system
set of interrelated or interacting elements

3.4.2
management system
set of interrelated or interacting elements of an *organization* (3.1.1) to establish *policies* (3.4.5) and *objectives* (3.7.11), as well as *processes* (3.3.1) to achieve those objectives

Note 1 to entry: A management system can address a single discipline or several disciplines.

Note 2 to entry: The management system elements include the organization's structure, roles and responsibilities, planning and operation.

Note 3 to entry: The management system elements can include the organization's policies, practices, rules and beliefs.

Note 4 to entry: An organization manages its interrelated elements in an orderly manner to achieve its objectives.

Note 5 to entry: The scope of a management system can include the whole of the organization, specific and identified functions of the organization, specific and identified sections of the organization, or one or more functions across a group of organizations.

3.4.3
infrastructure
<organization> *system* (3.4.1) of facilities, equipment and *services* (3.7.10) needed for the operation of an *organization* (3.1.1)

3.4.4
work environment
set of conditions under which work is performed

Note 1 to entry: Conditions can include physical, social, psychological and environmental factors (such as temperature, lighting, recognition schemes, occupational stress, ergonomics and atmospheric composition).

3.4.5
policy
<organization> intentions and direction of an *organization* (3.1.1) as formally expressed by its *top management* (3.1.3)

3.4.6
quality policy
policy (3.4.5) related to *quality* (3.5.2)

Note 1 to entry: The quality policy:

— is generally consistent with the overall policy of the *organization* (3.1.1);

— can be aligned with the organization's *vision* (3.4.10) and *mission* (3.4.11);

— provides a framework for the setting of *quality objectives* (3.7.12).

Note 2 to entry: The *quality management* (3.2.2) principles presented in this document can form a basis for the establishment of a quality policy.

3.4.7
culture
<quality culture> integrated shared values, beliefs, history, ethics, attitudes and observed behaviours

3.4.8
quality culture
culture (3.4.7) supporting the achievement of a *quality policy* (3.4.6) and *objectives* (3.7.12), and the delivery of *products* (3.7.9) and *services* (3.7.10) that meet the needs and expectations of *customers* (3.9.1) and other *interested parties* (3.1.4)

3.4.9
quality management system
QMS
part of the overall *management system* (3.4.2) of an *organization* (3.1.1) related to *quality* (3.5.2)

3.4.10
vision
aspiration of what an *organization* (3.1.1) would like to become as expressed by *top management* (3.1.3)

3.4.11
mission
organization's (3.1.1) purpose for existing as expressed by *top management* (3.1.3)

3.4.12
strategy
plan to achieve a long-term or overall *objective* (3.7.11)

3.4.13
economic benefit
<financial and economic benefits> benefit attained through the effective implementation of *management system* (3.4.2) *processes* (3.3.1) and resources to generate value and improve the health and overall worth of an *organization* (3.1.1) and its relevant *interested parties* (3.1.4)

3.4.14
financial benefit
<financial and economic benefits> organizational *improvement* (3.2.3) expressed in monetary form

Note 1 to entry: Financial benefits should be realized by implementing cost-effective *management system* (3.4.2) *processes* (3.3.1).

3.5 Terms related to requirement

3.5.1
requirement
need or expectation that is stated, generally implied or obligatory

Note 1 to entry: "Generally implied" means that it is custom or common practice for the *organization* (3.1.1) and *interested parties* (3.1.4) that the need or expectation under consideration is implied.

Note 2 to entry: A specified requirement is one that is stated, e.g. in *documented information* (3.8.14).

Note 3 to entry: A qualifier can be used to denote a specific type of requirement, e.g. *product* (3.7.9) requirement, *service* (3.7.10) requirement, *quality management* (3.2.2) requirement, *customer* (3.9.1) requirement, *quality requirement* (3.5.6).

Note 4 to entry: Requirements can be generated by different interested parties or by the organization itself.

Note 5 to entry: It can be necessary for achieving high *customer satisfaction* (3.9.13) to fulfil an expectation of a customer even if it is neither stated nor generally implied or obligatory.

3.5.2
quality
degree to which a set of inherent *characteristics* (3.10.1) of an *object* (3.5.3) fulfils *requirements* (3.5.1)

Note 1 to entry: The term "quality" can be used with adjectives such as poor, good or excellent.

Note 2 to entry: "Inherent", as opposed to "assigned", means existing in the object.

3.5.3
object
anything perceivable or conceivable

EXAMPLE *Product* (3.7.9), *service* (3.7.10), *process* (3.3.1), person, *organization* (3.1.1), *system* (3.4.1), resource.

Note 1 to entry: Objects can be material (e.g. an "engine", a "sheet of paper", a "diamond"), immaterial (e.g. "conversion ratio", "project plan") or imagined (e.g. "unicorn", "scientific hypothesis").

[SOURCE: ISO 1087:2019, 3.1.1, modified — Example added. Articles added in Note 1 to entry.]

3.5.4
grade
category or rank given to different *requirements* (3.5.1) for an *object* (3.5.3) having the same functional use

EXAMPLE Class of airline ticket, category of hotel in a hotel brochure.

Note 1 to entry: When establishing a *quality requirement* (3.5.6), the grade is generally specified.

3.5.5
statutory requirement
obligatory *requirement* (3.5.1) specified by a legislative body

3.5.6
quality requirement
requirement (3.5.1) related to *quality* (3.5.2)

3.5.7
metrological requirement
set of *requirements* (3.5.1) for *measurement processes* (3.11.8) that include criteria and practices necessary to ensure that *measurements* (3.11.4) are reliable and comply with applicable requirements and regulations

Note 1 to entry: This may include, among other things, the accuracy and precision of the measurement process, metrological *traceability* (3.5.11), calibration frequency, personnel training levels, necessary maintenance operations.