

ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO ISO 9001

Discover the key facts you need to know
about the world's most popular quality
management system standard





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WHAT IS ISO 9001?

ISO9001 is the internationally-recognised standard that specifies requirements for a quality management system (QMS).

In the most simple terms, a quality management system is a clearly defined set of business processes. Together with the relevant documentation, it defines your commitment to creating products and services that meet customer and regulatory requirements, consistently. A good QMS should include detailed information about processes and responsibilities within an organisation.

An effective QMS ensures that your business delivers to a consistently high standard, together with a plan to continually measure and improve every aspect of the business operations, within the appropriate regulatory framework.



[Click here to view our FREE ISO9001 online training course](#)



THE 7 PRINCIPLES OF ISO 9001

There are 7 principles that relate to ISO 9001 and these define the norms and rules for the day-to-day operation of your business. We explain each of these principles below.

1

Principle 1: customer focus

As you might expect, customer focus is the first principle, right where it should be. It covers both customer needs and customer service. This principle stresses that a business should understand its customers, what they need and when. While trying to meet, but preferably, exceed customers' expectations.

As the business' ability to spot new customer opportunities and satisfy them improves – customer loyalty increases, revenue rises and waste is then reduced. More effective processes result in improved customer satisfaction overall.

2

Principle 2: leadership

Without clear and strong leadership, a business flounders. Principle 2, is concerned with the direction of the organisation. The business should have clear goals and objectives, and ensure its employees are actively involved in achieving those targets.

The benefits are higher levels of employee engagement and increased motivation to satisfy customer needs. Research shows, if employees are kept 'in the loop' and understand the business vision, they'll be more productive. This principle seeks to rectify employees complaints about 'lack of communication'.

3

Principle 3: people involvement

The process approach is all about efficiency and effectiveness. Well-managed processes reduce costs, improve consistency, eliminate waste and promote continuous improvement.

By becoming a more efficient organisation, you will build confidence in your stakeholders by optimising performance. Manage processes by making responsibilities clear and ensuring your resources are used in the best way.

4

Principle 4: process approach

The process approach is all about efficiency and effectiveness. It's also about consistency and understanding that good processes also speeds up activities.

Great processes reduce costs, improve consistency, eliminate waste and promotes continuous improvement.

5

Principle 5: continual improvement

This principle is very straightforward: continual improvement should be an active business objective.

The benefits of this are clear: increased ability to embrace new opportunities, organisational flexibility and improved performance. Especially in difficult economic times, the businesses that thrive are those that can adapt to new market situations.

6

Principle 6: factual approach to decision making

A logical approach, based on data and analysis, is good business sense. Unfortunately, in a fast-paced workplace, decisions can often be made rashly, without proper thought. Implementing the Quality Management Principles we've discussed will allow decisions to be made with clarity.

Informed decisions lead to improved understanding of the marketplace as data is collated and analysed, and the ability to defend past decisions.

7

Principle 7: mutually beneficial supplier relations

This principle deals with supply chains. It promotes the relationship between the company and its suppliers; recognising it is interdependent. A strong relationship enhances productivity and encourages seamless working practices.

The result is optimisation of costs and resources, improving and building long-term relationships and the 'flexibility of joint responses to changing markets or customer needs and expectations'.



WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF ISO 9001?

Using a QMS such as ISO9001 can make your company very attractive to your potential customers. It confirms that the promises made by your sales and marketing function can be more than adequately fulfilled by your operational capacity.

It would be fair to say that most organisations' motivation for gaining ISO 9001 is to win new business. But once organisations start, they quickly find huge benefits in terms of improved internal processes, more consistent delivery and less re-work. Successful implementation can result in a dramatic reduction in costly errors and the resulting consequences for clients.

We find a lot of organisations apply for ISO 9001 certification because it is a stipulation for public contracts. It's government policy to define standards in central and local government tenders to make sure that the supplier is fit for purpose. As you'd expect, it's particularly important that government bodies are able to show they are spending taxpayer's money wisely.

"The value that our clients hold of ISO is really quite huge - in all of our tenders there is now a requirement for ISO certification and some quite specifically ask for ISO 9001. Although we previously had quality systems in place, there were processes that were often 'lost' and we maybe weren't as organised as we could be. ISO 9001, in particular, has allowed us to really develop our existing processes and as a result we are much more organised and ready for our planned growth."

*Lawrence Hargreaves
Nicoll Curtin*

ISO 9001 is often a requirement in the private sector too, particularly when applying to become part of a large supply chain, where the main contractor has ISO 9001 in place. It's clear that many organisations, who originally sought ISO 9001 to qualify for work, are pleasantly surprised to find just how much of a positive influence it had on their whole organisation.



1. Consistency

Companies that use a QMS have a very clearly defined process for manufacturing products or delivering services that allows them to cope with staff changes, breakdowns and even finding new outsource partners. Because documentation is a key factor in the QMS, the information is readily available to deal with changes. The company is no longer reliant on individual skill and knowledge.

2. Reduction in failures

A good QMS should have an inbuilt reviewing process. Should a problem occur in a process, or if a customer is not satisfied with a service, then the errors that have led to this failure can be identified and the causes examined. From the findings, the systems can be updated to prevent similar issues in the future.

3. Prequalification for new business

A QMS such as ISO 9001 demonstrates your competency to new businesses and markets. Many types of organisation, from those that work in the public sector through to international corporations, will take your QMS as a mark of trust. Make sure you get certification through the appropriate channels, such as a UKAS accredited provider to maximise this benefit.

4. Evidence-based change

Without clear results and statistics deciding what changes to make in a business is complete guesswork. A QMS will generate a real picture of operational weak points and frailties. It will provide the data that is required in order to reflect and inform meaningful change within the business.

5. Continual improvement

Going forward, a QMS will provide a business with a simple framework for implementing change within procedures, complete with a full documentation process that allows businesses to plot the evolution of different approaches. The continual refinement of the system allows organisations to pursue excellence at every level.

6. Customer satisfaction

Ultimately every business needs to serve the customer. It may be a maxim of business, but the customer is the most important entity in any relationship. By using a QMS you are making a statement about your reliability and ability to deliver on your contractual responsibilities to your customer.

HOW DO I OBTAIN CERTIFICATION FOR MY BUSINESS?

The process starts with what's known as a 'Stage 1 Audit'. This is where your Lead Assessor will review your business' QMS and prepare a report (often referred to as a 'gap analysis'). This identifies the actions required to meet the ISO9001 standard. This then becomes your helpful action plan, so don't worry if you think you don't feel prepared. Some organisations find they already have lots of required processes in place; they just need better documentation and communication of what processes are mandatory and who has responsibility for delivering them.

Once you've addressed the gaps highlighted in the Stage 1 report, your Auditor will come back to carry out the 'Stage 2 Audit'. This will reveal the effectiveness of your QMS and whether it meets all the requirements of the standard. If you are fully compliant, you will be recommended for certification by your Auditor. The Auditors' report will then be checked via an approvals process and if no anomalies are identified, certification is officially awarded.



HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE TO OBTAIN CERTIFICATION?

The amount of time it takes to become certificated very much depends on the size of your organisation and your readiness and ability to create or improve your QMS. Ideally, once the required standards have been defined by senior management you'll need a designated representative within your organisation who takes responsibility for ensuring the necessary work is delivered. You don't have to appoint a designated 'Quality Manager'; just someone who is the main coordinator for the project to become certified.

How do I choose a certification body?

When you achieve ISO 9001 certification through a Certification Body (CB), you have proven that an independent third party has verified that you meet all requirements of the standard. This is a powerful message to both new clients and current clients. However, be mindful that not all Certification Bodies are equal. Only Certification Bodies accredited by UKAS are allowed to issue Certificates with the coveted 'Crown and Tick' and, in fact, the Government itself states that it *"...encourages and recommends UK businesses, government, and local authorities that need third party conformity assessment services to use services from conformity assessment bodies accredited by a national accreditation body. UKAS is the body appointed by BIS to be the national accreditation body."*

Read the full statement at:
<http://bit.ly/UKASTheOnlyWay>

It's also important to compare costs carefully. Pay particular attention to ongoing fees. Some will charge 'annual management or

administration fees', others don't. An annual re-audit is mandatory but some CBs may insist on visiting (and charging) you more than once a year.

Can you help me to develop my QMS?



UKAS-accredited Certification Bodies, like British Assessment Bureau, carrying out certification to ISO management standards have to remain objective and impartial, this means they cannot write

documentation for you or provide consultancy in conjunction with certification. What they can do is provide ISO training, which can be a useful exercise before committing to the implementation of a standard.

Another advantage of choosing a UKAS-accredited body is the fact that they cannot consult and offer certification (which would effectively be 'assessing your own work'). Therefore, both you and your stakeholders know the assessment will be genuine and without ulterior motives.

How much does it cost to become ISO9001 certified?

When you choose to obtain a quote from the British Assessment Bureau these will be provided on a fixed fee basis, reducing your worry about additional costs.

The cost of certification will depend on:

- your organisation's total size
- the sector you operate in
- the number of locations you operate from.

[Click here to get a quote online or call 0800 404 7007](#)

WHY YOU SHOULD CHOOSE BRITISH ASSESSMENT BUREAU (BAB)

We are UKAS-accredited

UKAS-accreditation is the gold-standard of ISO certification in the UK and it is the only ISO certification recommended by the UK Government. You can read their statement here: <http://bit.ly/ChooseUKAS>

Peace of mind

Unlike some certification bodies we do not tie you in to unnecessarily long contracts – once you have achieved certification with us you are free to stay with us or transfer your certification to another UKAS-accredited body without any charges or penalties.

Transparent Pricing

We do not have any hidden fees or expenses and all UK-based audits are charged on a fixed-fee basis with all expenses included. Where overseas audits are required these costs are agreed in advance, so there are no nasty surprises.

Our Market-Leading Client Area and Online Resources

We pride ourselves on our ability to leverage technology and to support our clients with a range of useful guides, resources, online tools and templates designed specifically to build and maintain Quality Management Systems. Our clients get access to these as part of their ongoing relationship with us.

Ongoing Support

In addition to the online resources we also offer a telephone helpdesk service during office hours (8.30am – 5pm Monday to Friday).

Excellent Customer Service

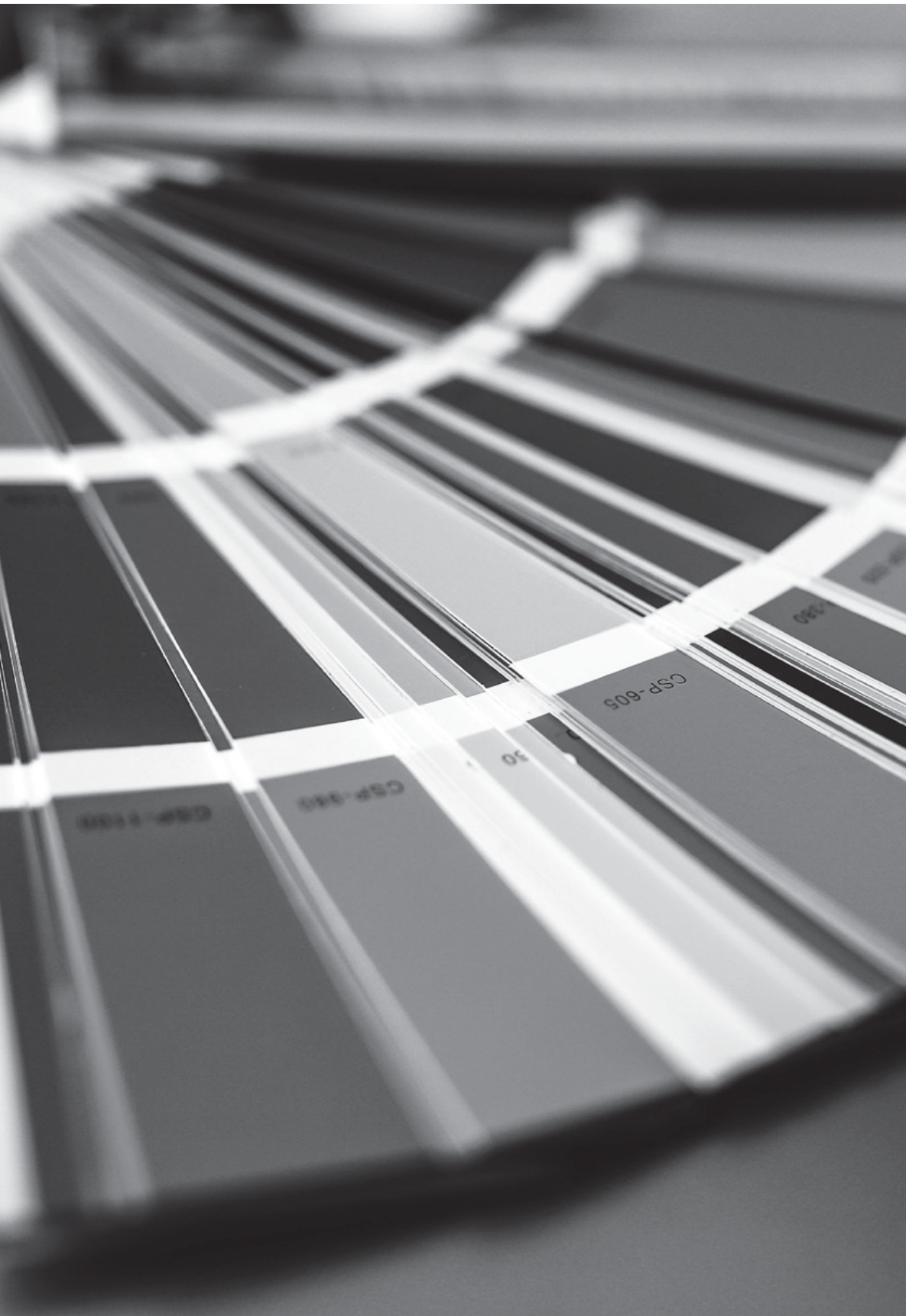
Offering a great experience is at the core of everything we do at BAB and therefore we are constantly seeking ways to improve so we can delight our clients. That's why we subscribe to the independent review service, Feefo, where we are almost always receiving 5-star reviews. Take a look at our great reviews here: <http://bit.ly/BAB5Stars>

Training For You and Your Team

Whether it's one of our free online refresher courses, or one of our many cost-effective e-learning courses, we have a range of online solutions to address ISO standards and auditing knowledge gaps. We also offer more in-depth classroom-based face-to-face training courses for both individuals and teams. Ask your adviser for more information or click the link to see the full range: <http://bit.ly/BAB-Training>

Premium Branding

Achieving ISO certification is something to be proud of and it should be celebrated – that is why we provide premium certificates and BAB-branded ISO logos for you to use within your business, both online and offline.



ISO CERTIFICATION

We offer a range of ISO certification services, the most popular of which are shown below. Many of our clients start with ISO9001 and then add on ISO14001 or ISO27001 and eventually ISO45001, however some of our larger clients add multiple certifications at once. Whatever your needs, we help clients of all shapes, sizes and industries – from sole traders operating from home to multi-national organisations with thousands of staff. If you're unsure of your options one of our friendly advisers would be happy to help you explore them.

ISO9001 – Quality Management

ISO 9001 Quality Management will help your business to:

- Improve efficiency and profit margins
- Win and retain business
- Stand out from your competitors.

ISO14001 – Environmental Management

Lead the way in environmental efficiency savings with our rigorous environmental management system standard.

ISO 14001 Environmental Management will help your business to:

- Become environmentally friendly
- Manage compliance obligations
- Win and retain business
- Reduce waste and improve your public image.

ISO27001 – Information Security Management

Set yourself apart from your competitors with our rigorous information security standard.

ISO 27001 Information Security Management will help your business to:

- Implement a robust approach to information security
- Keep your clients' data safe
- Win and retain business.

ISO45001 – Health & Safety Management

Stand out from the competition with the future of occupational health and safety management.

ISO 45001 Health and Safety Management will help your business to:

- Implement a system for managing health and safety
- Reduce risk of accidents, claims, costs and business interruptions
- Win and retain business.

TRAINING & E-LEARNING

Having helped thousands of clients to achieve ISO certification we have identified the importance of having properly trained staff working on a business' management systems. We have therefore developed a range of convenient e-learning courses and intensive, in-depth face-to-face training courses. We have included some of our more popular courses below, but you can find the full range on our website: <http://bit.ly/BABCourses>.

E-Learning Courses

ISO 9001 – Knowledge and Awareness

This engaging course has been designed to boost ISO 9001 knowledge and awareness and is appropriate for any employee who requires an overview. The course will take 10-20 minutes.

ISO 9001 – Guide to Achieving Certification

This in-depth course has been specifically designed to guide users to achieve ISO 9001. The course will take 50-60 minutes.

GDPR Knowledge and Awareness

This course helps ensure that organisations and their staff comply with the new legislation and avoid risks of prosecution and fines. The course takes 60-90 minutes.

Fire Risk Essentials

This essentials course has been designed to boost your fire risk awareness and is appropriate for any employee who requires an overview of the risks associated with Fire Hazards. The course will take 20-30 minutes.

Training

ISO Internal Auditor Training

An effective ISO management system requires ongoing review and updating. This is the role of the Internal Auditor. They should be able to plan and carry out successful internal audits and report their findings to Senior Management.

ISO 9001 Lead-Auditor Training

Our ISO 9001 Lead-Auditor course covers the process approach to quality management systems and auditing, the eight quality management principles, the requirements of ISO 9001 (and guidance in the accompanying document 9004), and how to plan, complete and report the audit of an entire quality management system.

Fast Track to ISO Certification

Are you looking to achieve ISO certification as quickly and simply as possible? Then this fast track training to the internationally recognised quality management standard is for you.



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