



Transition and Application of the 2026 Revised ISO 9001 Quality Management Standard



ISO 9001-2026 coming up!

Introduction

ISO 9001 is the world's most widely recognized standard for quality management systems (QMS). Since its initial release in 1987, it has undergone several major revisions, evolving from a manufacturing-focused quality assurance framework into a core management tool emphasizing risk management, stakeholder expectations, and integration with organizational strategy. Following the publication of ISO 9001:1987 (1st edition), subsequent revisions were released which were ISO 9001:1994 (2nd edition), ISO 9001:2000 (3rd edition), ISO 9001:2008 (4th edition), and ISO 9001:2015 (5th edition). The revision cycle has averaged 6 to 8 years. **ISO 9001:2026 represents the next update following ISO 9001:2015, marking a gap of over a decade.**

The ISO standard revision process consists of 7 stages: (1) Preliminary Stage, (2) Proposal Stage (AWI), (3) Preparatory Stage (WD), (4) Committee Stage (CD), (5) Draft International Standard (DIS) Stage, (6) Final Draft International Standard (FDIS) Stage, and (7) Publication Stage. **The standard has now reached the FDIS stage, indicating that the official version of the revised ISO 9001 is expected to be published in the 2nd half of 2026. A transition period will follow, during which both the old and new versions will remain valid. After this period, only the latest version will be recognized as the effective standard.**

Key Differences in ISO 9001:2026

The Final Draft International Standard (FDIS) of ISO 9001:2026 has now been released. Based on past experience, the FDIS content typically carries over almost entirely into the final published version. A comparison between ISO 9001:2015 and ISO 9001:2026 (FDIS) shows that the new version does not fundamentally alter the existing structure. Instead, it builds upon the High-Level Structure (HLS) framework common to ISO management system standards, introducing flexible enhancements to meet evolving quality management needs. **Table 1** compares the main differences between ISO 9001:2015 and ISO 9001:2026 (FDIS) versions in terms of their various considerations.

From the perspective of system upgrades and modernization, **the revised ISO 9001 emphasizes the expansion and optimization of the quality management system**, including:

1. Extending the focus from “customer satisfaction” to the entire customer experience across the product lifecycle—anticipating needs, creating value, and incorporating emerging concerns such as climate-related risks and their impact on customers.
2. Strengthening top management leadership by integrating quality culture and climate risk response into strategic quality management priorities, thereby enhancing leadership involvement and accountability.
3. Incorporating sustainability (ESG), climate change, AI-driven digital tools, technological innovation, quality culture, and expanded stakeholder engagement—including supply chains, regulatory authorities, employers, employees, and shareholders—as essential quality elements within the QMS.



Table 1. Key Differences Between ISO 9001:2015 and ISO 9001:2026 (FDIS)

Differences	ISO 9001		Key Difference
	2015 (5th Edition)	2026 (FDIS, 6th Edition)	
Management Focus	Process compliance; meeting standard requirements	Value creation and sustainability	Avoid “compliance for compliance’s sake”; processes must link to business value
New Requirements	Not specified	1. Climate change inclusion; 2. Ethics and integrity management; 3. Ethics for emerging technologies; 4. Lifecycle and customer experience	These four are mandatory audit items; organizations must establish mechanisms as a priority
Risk Management	Combined risk and opportunity management approach	Separate management mechanisms for risks and opportunities, with independent preventive action systems	Requires both risk mitigation and proactive opportunity development
Documented Management	Emphasis on maintaining documented records (including electronic)	Allows electronic and cloud-based records with emphasis on traceability	Can be simplified; focus on retrievable, verifiable, and traceable records
Leadership	Implicit requirement for leadership involvement	Explicit requirement for active leadership and direct responsibility for quality culture and climate response	Top management must lead and integrate quality culture into strategy
Application of Digital Technologies	Not addressed	Encourages appropriate use of AI, internet, and IoT, including ethical review	Adopt digital tools pragmatically; focus on quality improvement, not trend-following
Supply Chain Management	Covers outsourced production processes only	Covers all externally provided products and services with risk-based control	Apply differentiated supplier management by risk level; address supply chain decarbonization related to climate change
Change of Management and Emergency Response	Limited to system-level changes	Expands to process-level changes and emergency preparedness (e.g., supply chain disruptions, climate impacts)	Broader scope and stronger resilience in risk response

- Enhancing the identification and management of risks and opportunities by clearly distinguishing between negative risks and positive opportunities, enabling more precise preventive measures. Where appropriate, organizations are encouraged to adopt a strategic approach and track continuous improvement KPIs separately for risks and opportunities.
- Integrating the management and associated risks of emerging technologies—such as AI, automation, and IoT—into the QMS where applicable.
- Emphasizing “resilience management” and a “prevention-oriented approach” to strengthen an organization’s ability to respond effectively to disruptions, such as supply chain interruptions and climate-related impacts.

For organizations already compliant with ISO 9001:2015, the newly introduced requirements in the revised ISO 9001 serve as the primary focus for system upgrades and are also essential audit items for transition compliance. These include:

1. Integration of Climate Change Considerations:

Addressing climate risks, carbon emissions and greenhouse gas policies, impacts on production and services, implications for the supply chain, and the implementation of climate-related assessments and reviews.

2. Incorporation of Ethics, Integrity, and Quality Culture:

Establishing appropriate ethical governance mechanisms, along with review and management processes to ensure both the organization and its suppliers comply with ethical standards. Promoting company-wide quality culture through structured programs and practices.

3. New Requirements on Emerging Technology Ethics:

Evaluating and managing risks associated with digital technologies such as AI, the internet, and IoT already applied within the QMS. Ensuring that the use of such technologies supports quality control, with proper review and risk management mechanisms in place.

4. Lifecycle and Customer Experience:

Lifecycle thinking is a shared element between ESG considerations and the revised ISO 9001, and is also a key factor in customer experience under climate change awareness.



In addition, organizations are expected to strengthen the identification and management of risks and opportunities by clearly distinguishing between negative risks and positive opportunities. This requires more explicit preventive measures and performance tracking within the existing QMS. Once risks related to unexpected events—such as supply chain disruptions or climate impacts—are identified, corresponding preventive actions and emergency response mechanisms should be established.

Considering the revised ISO 9001's emphasis on aligning processes with business value, organizations must define and demonstrate how performance objectives for each operational process contribute to value creation and sustainable development, which is also an essential component of the upgraded QMS.

Conclusion

The revised ISO 9001 quality management system places clear emphasis on embedding quality culture within organizational operations. By adopting a customer experience and value-driven approach, quality management now encompasses the entire lifecycle of products and services—from design and production to after-sales service. The value delivered at each stage of customer experience becomes central to meeting customer needs and achieving satisfaction. Accordingly, “customer experience” can be incorporated into quality policy objectives, performance metrics, and the expression of quality culture, reinforcing the goal of consistently meeting and exceeding customer expectations.

From the perspective of broader economic and societal trends—namely strategic integration, digital intelligence, and sustainable development—the revised ISO 9001 not only retains its customer-centric management philosophy but also incorporates the application and governance of emerging technologies such as AI and automation. In addition, ESG and corporate sustainability considerations are integrated into the QMS framework. As a result, the revised ISO 9001 evolves into a comprehensive management tool that aligns strategic trends and drives innovation and sustainable growth. ■



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