



ISO 9001:2026 - THE NEW QUALITY MANAGEMENT STANDARD

ISO 9001:2026 Is Here: What Has Changed and How Businesses Should Prepare

Publication, transition deadlines, audit timing and a practical roadmap to becoming audit-ready

ISO 9001:2026 was published on 16 September 2026. Existing ISO 9001:2015 certificate holders have until 30 September 2029 to complete the transition.

For more than a decade, ISO 9001:2015 has been the global reference point for quality management systems. The new ISO 9001:2026 edition keeps the familiar foundation of the standard while updating it for today's operating environment - one shaped by faster technological change, increasingly connected supply chains, changing stakeholder expectations and a greater need for resilience, accountability and strategic decision-making.

The revision is therefore best viewed as an evolution rather than a complete redesign. Organisations with a mature ISO 9001:2015 quality management system do not need to start again. They do, however, need to understand the revised expectations, identify gaps, implement the changes and demonstrate that the new requirements are embedded before their transition audit.

When was ISO 9001:2026 released?

ISO 9001:2026, Quality management systems - Requirements, was officially published by the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) on 16 September 2026. It is the sixth edition of ISO 9001 and replaces ISO 9001:2015, including the 2024 climate-action amendment.

ISO describes the 2026 edition as a targeted update intended to improve clarity, usability and relevance while retaining the principles that have made ISO 9001 the world's most widely used quality management system standard.

What drove the revision?

The fundamentals of quality management have not changed: organisations still need to understand customer needs, control their processes, manage risks, improve performance and deliver consistent products and services. What has changed is the environment in which organisations operate.

- Digital technologies are changing how organisations design, deliver, monitor and improve products and services.
- Global supply chains are more interconnected and can expose organisations to disruption and dependencies beyond their direct control.
- Customers and other interested parties expect greater transparency, responsiveness and consistency.
- Organisations are expected to balance resilience and continuity with innovation and faster adaptation to changing markets.
- Leadership teams increasingly expect management systems to support strategic decisions and long-term business performance - not operate as stand-alone compliance systems.

ISO's revision process also considered user feedback, systematic reviews, interpretation requests, emerging trends and lessons learned from the use and auditing of ISO 9001:2015. The result is a standard intended to remain practical and relevant in a more complex operating environment.

What is new in ISO 9001:2026?

The structure remains familiar, but several areas have been clarified or strengthened. The most important changes for organisations to consider include the following:

- 1. Stronger emphasis on leadership and accountability** - Top management is expected to demonstrate that quality is integrated into how the organisation is led, rather than being delegated mainly to the quality function. Leadership commitment, accountability and strategic alignment therefore remain central to audit evidence.
- 2. Quality culture is brought into sharper focus** - The new edition places greater emphasis on creating and sustaining a culture that supports quality. Organisations should be able to show how desired quality behaviours are communicated, reinforced and demonstrated throughout the business.
- 3. Ethical behaviour is explicitly emphasised** - Ethical behaviour is now more visible within the quality management framework. This encourages organisations to consider how integrity, responsible decision-making and expected behaviours support consistent quality outcomes and stakeholder confidence.
- 4. Clearer treatment of risks and opportunities** - ISO 9001:2026 provides greater clarity around considering risks and opportunities. Organisations should not only prevent undesirable outcomes but should also identify and act on opportunities that can improve performance or create beneficial results.
- 5. Better strategic alignment** - The revised edition reinforces the relationship between organisational context, leadership, the quality policy, objectives and strategic direction. The QMS should support the business rather than operate separately from it.
- 6. A new and expanded Annex A** - The revised standard introduces a new Annex A to provide additional explanation of key concepts and the intent of requirements. This is intended to improve understanding and encourage more consistent application of the standard.
- 7. Alignment with the latest ISO Harmonized Structure** - ISO 9001:2026 adopts the latest harmonized structure used across ISO management-system standards. This supports organisations that integrate quality with systems such as ISO 14001, ISO 45001 or ISO/IEC 27001.

8. Climate-change considerations remain part of the system - The climate-change considerations introduced to ISO 9001:2015 through Amendment 1:2024 are carried into the new edition. Organisations should continue considering whether climate change is relevant to their context and whether interested parties have related requirements.

What has not changed?

The revision does not remove the core disciplines of a strong QMS. Customer focus, the process approach, evidence-based decision-making, competence, documented information, control of externally provided processes, internal auditing, management review, corrective action and continual improvement remain fundamental. Organisations should therefore build on their existing system rather than replace it unnecessarily.

When should organisations implement ISO 9001:2026?

Implementation should start now. Although the transition period runs until 30 September 2029, an effective transition requires more than updating a few procedures shortly before the certification audit. Organisations need time to understand the changes, complete a gap assessment, update processes, train employees, implement the revised requirements and generate objective evidence that the system is working.

A practical approach is to integrate the transition into the normal QMS cycle and aim to complete implementation well before the certification body's planned transition audit.

Key transition dates

Date	What it means
16 September 2026	ISO 9001:2026 officially published.
31 March 2027	Accreditation bodies are expected to be ready to assess certification bodies against ISO 9001:2026 no later than this date.
30 June 2027	Accredited certification bodies are required to submit their transition declaration and supporting information.
30 September 2027	Accreditation-body transition decisions for certification bodies are to be completed.
31 March 2028	From this date, new and initial accredited ISO 9001 certifications may only be issued to ISO 9001:2026.
30 September 2029	Final deadline for organisations certified to ISO 9001:2015 to complete the transition to ISO 9001:2026.

When will audits against ISO 9001:2026 begin?

There is no single global date on which every certification body will start ISO 9001:2026 audits. Accredited audits against the new edition can begin as certification bodies complete their own transition and receive

the necessary accreditation decision. Availability will therefore vary by certification body and accreditation body during the transition period.

For organisations already certified to ISO 9001:2015, the transition can be completed during a scheduled surveillance audit, during recertification, or through a separate transition audit. Organisations should confirm the timing directly with their certification body and agree a transition plan early.

Important: From 31 March 2028, new and initial accredited certifications may only be issued to ISO 9001:2026. Existing ISO 9001:2015 certificate holders must complete their transition by 30 September 2029.

A practical transition roadmap

- 1. Obtain and understand the new standard:** Ensure the people responsible for the QMS understand the revised requirements and the intent behind them.
- 2. Conduct a formal gap assessment:** Compare the existing ISO 9001:2015 system against ISO 9001:2026 and identify gaps, clarifications and areas where evidence needs to be strengthened.
- 3. Build a transition action plan:** Assign owners, deadlines and priorities. Separate documentation updates from changes that require behaviour, competence or process implementation.
- 4. Review leadership, culture and ethical behaviour:** Determine how leadership promotes quality, how expected behaviours are communicated and how the organisation can demonstrate an effective quality culture in practice.
- 5. Review risks and opportunities:** Confirm that both risks and beneficial opportunities are identified, assessed and acted upon in a way that supports QMS performance and business objectives.
- 6. Revisit context and strategic alignment:** Review internal and external issues, interested parties, climate relevance where applicable, the quality policy and quality objectives to ensure alignment with strategic direction.
- 7. Update processes and documented information:** Revise procedures, forms, process maps, registers and other documented information only where needed. Avoid unnecessary rewriting where the existing system already satisfies the requirement.
- 8. Train and communicate:** Make sure employees understand relevant changes and can explain how their role affects quality, customer satisfaction and QMS performance.
- 9. Generate evidence:** Operate the updated system long enough to create records that demonstrate effective implementation.
- 10. Conduct an internal audit and management review:** Audit against ISO 9001:2026, identify nonconformities or weaknesses, complete corrective action and review transition readiness at management level before the external audit.

How Savvy Compliance Solution can help

Savvy Compliance Solution can support organisations through the complete ISO 9001:2026 transition - from understanding the new requirements to building an implemented system that is ready for an external certification audit. The goal is not simply to update documents, but to help the organisation demonstrate that the revised QMS is understood, implemented and effective.

ISO 9001:2026 transition gap assessment: We assess your existing QMS against the new edition and provide a clear, prioritised gap report.

Transition planning and implementation support: We help convert gaps into a practical action plan with responsibilities, target dates and implementation guidance.

QMS development and document review: We help organisations build or improve policies, procedures, process maps, objectives, risk and opportunity controls, records and other documented information.

Leadership and quality-culture support: We help leadership teams translate the new emphasis on culture, accountability and ethical behaviour into practical expectations and evidence.

Training and awareness: We can train management, process owners, internal auditors and employees on the revised requirements and their responsibilities within the QMS.

Internal audits: We can assess implementation against ISO 9001:2026 and identify nonconformities or weak evidence before the certification-body audit.

Mock certification and audit-readiness assessments: A pre-assessment gives teams an opportunity to practise presenting evidence and correct gaps before the external auditor arrives.

Corrective-action and root-cause support: Where gaps or audit findings are identified, we help organisations establish root causes, implement sustainable corrective action and verify effectiveness.

START YOUR ISO 9001:2026 TRANSITION EARLY

Savvy Compliance Solution can help you understand the changes, assess the gaps, implement the revised requirements and prepare your team for a confident transition audit.

PREVENT • PROTECT • PERFORM

The bottom line

ISO 9001:2026 is not a reason to rebuild a working quality management system from scratch. It is an opportunity to strengthen the connection between quality, leadership, culture, risk, opportunity and business strategy. Organisations that start early can use the transition period to make purposeful improvements rather than rushing to update documents close to the deadline.

The final transition deadline is 30 September 2029, but readiness should be achieved well before then. The strongest approach is to understand the changes now, complete a structured gap assessment, implement the revised expectations, verify effectiveness through internal auditing and management review, and coordinate the external transition audit with the organisation's accredited certification body.

References

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