New Versions of ISO 9001 and ISO 14001 Reach Final Stages

Now available at HKQAA!
ISO/FDIS 9001:2015
ISO/FDIS 14001:2015
Buy Now!

Dr Nigel H. Croft

Associate Technical Director, HKQAA

Chairman, ISO Technical Subcommittee on Quality Systems (ISO/TC 176/SC2)

The Final Draft International Standards (FDIS) of ISO 9001 and ISO 14001 were published in early July, and both will be subjected to a 60-day ballot by the member bodies of ISO. Both standards received a strong positive vote at the previous (DIS) stage, and only relatively small changes have been made to address the comments received. The FDIS ballot is a simple "Yes/No" vote, and no further changes to the technical content are permitted.

Assuming that the FDIS ballots are approved, then the new ISO 9001:2015 and ISO 14001:2015 standards are expected to be available in mid-September 2015. ISO and the IAF (International Accreditation Forum) have already agreed that there will be a three-year transition period during which organisations currently certified to the standards can make the necessary adaptations to their quality and environmental management systems. The formal Transition Plans are available for free download from the IAF website (www.iaf.nu).

The Revision Process

Work on the revision to the two standards began in earnest in 2012, although preliminary work had started before that, to look at the challenges that needed to be addressed in order for the standards to remain relevant for the next decade or more. This included work by a TC176/SC2 Task Group on "Future Concepts for Quality Management Systems" and a TC 207/SC 1 Study Group on "Future Challenges for Environmental Management Systems", both of which evaluated the potential implications of evolving stakeholder expectations and new technological developments since the last major revisions over ten years ago.

Both standards use the new harmonized High Level Structure that has been developed by ISO's Joint Technical Coordination Group, and published in Annex SL of the ISO Directives (available for free download from http://www.iso.org/sites/directives/directives.html). This will make life easier for organisations that choose to have a single ("integrated") management system to meet the requirements not only of ISO 9001 and ISO 14001, but also including standards such as ISO 27001 (Information Security), the future ISO 45001 for Health and Safety Management Systems (which is expected to replace OHSAS 18001), and the future Anti-Bribery management systems standard (ISO 37001) among others.

The overall "Annex SL" sequence is as follows:

1. **Scope**
2. **Normative references**
3. **Terms and definitions**
4. **Context of the organisation**
    - Understanding the organisation and its context
    - Understanding the needs and expectations of interested parties
    - Determining the scope
    - Management system
5. **Leadership**
    - Leadership and commitment
    - Policy
    - Organisational roles, responsibilities and authorities
6. **Planning**
    - Actions to address risks & opportunities
    - Objectives and planning to achieve them
7. **Support**
    - Resources
    - Competence
    - Awareness
    - Communication
    - Documented information
8. **Operation**
    - Operational planning and control
9. **Performance evaluation**
    - Monitoring, measurement, analysis & evaluation
    - Internal audit
    - Management review
10. **Improvement**
    - Non conformity and corrective action
    - Continual Improvement

The publication of the FDIS is a key milestone for the new standards, not only because it provides the opportunity for all interested parties to see the final text and to make the appropriate preparations, but it also allows for certification and accreditation bodies such as HKQAA and HKAS to finalize their auditor training, in preparation for carrying out transition audits to the new standards. The IAF has made it clear that provided there are no changes between the FDIS and the published versions of the standards (which is HIGHLY unlikely), then certificates to ISO 9001:2015 and ISO 14001:2015 can be issued based on audits carried out against the FDIS versions. This is, of course provided the auditors and the certification bodies have demonstrated their competence to carry out such audits.

As Chair of ISO/TC176/SC2, the ISO subcommittee responsible for ISO 9001 and ISO 9004 (among other standards), I am very excited about this revision, and I know from my colleagues in ISO/TC207/SC1 (the equivalent committee that is responsible for ISO 14001) feel the same.

Some of the key concepts that are being incorporated into the new standards are as follows:

- Both ISO 9001 and ISO 14001 recognise that no two management systems will be, or *should* be identical, because organisations operate in different business contexts. Both standards require organisations to think about the external and internal factors that can affect the way in which their systems need to be managed in order to be successful. The external factors may include, for example, issues arising from legal, technological, cultural, social and economic conditions at the international, national, regional or local levels. Also important are the internal factors, such as the values, culture, knowledge and performance of the organisation.

- Both standards include stronger requirements for management at all levels to show their leadership, and to ensure that the quality and environmental management systems are aligned with the strategic direction of the organisation and integrated into the way it does business.

- Both standards put a strong emphasis on managing processes in order to achieve the desired outcomes (which, in the case of ISO 9001, means providing customers with "consistent, conforming products", and for ISO 14001 means preventing pollution, meeting compliance obligations and improving environmental performance). This approach provides more flexibility for organisations to decide for themselves how much documentation is needed, of course they can demonstrate that the processes are effective.

- Interwoven into the new standards is a focus on "risk-based thinking", whereby an organisation needs to identify the risks (and opportunities!) associated with its activities, and take actions to mitigate the risks of generating non-conforming products or producing negative environmental impacts. It is not the intention of ISO 9001:2015 or ISO 14001:2015 to require organisations to adopt formal risk management methodologies, but rather to provoke a mentality of "risk-based thinking". Put simply, this means considering risk qualitatively (and, depending on the organisation's context, quantitatively) when defining the rigour and degree of formality needed when planning and controlling individual activities and processes.

It is to be hoped that all users will be able to benefit from the new versions of these two important standards, and will take advantage of the changes that are being introduced to ensure that their quality and environmental management systems continue to be relevant in the years to come.

* * *

For further details, please contact:
Hong Kong Quality Assurance Agency (HKQAA)
E-mail: hkqaa.mkt@hkqaa.org
Website: www.hkqaa.org
Tel: Hong Kong   -   (852) 2202 9111
        Shanghai   -   (86 21) 6876 9911
        Guangzhou   -   (86 20) 8383 3777
        Macau   -   (853) 6238 8759