

PRACTICAL GUIDELINE | ISO 9001 TRANSITION

ISO 9001:2026 Transition Guideline

2015 vs. 2026: What's Changing and What Your QMS Needs to Do About It

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Quality | Environment | Sustainability

Overview

ISO 9001 is undergoing its first major revision since 2015. Publication is confirmed for 16 September 2026, with certified organizations expected to have an approximately three-year window to transition existing certificates. The revision is evolutionary: the core clause structure, process approach, and PDCA cycle remain intact, and a well-run ISO 9001:2015 system is the right foundation to build on. This guideline maps what has changed, clause by clause, and what action it requires from your QMS.

Clause-by-Clause Comparison

Area	ISO 9001:2015	ISO 9001:2026 — What's New	Action Required
Overall Structure	Built on the Annex SL high-level structure	Aligns with the updated Harmonized Structure across ISO management standards	Update templates and cross-references if you run an integrated management system
Context of the Organization (4.1)	General internal/external issues, reviewed periodically	Must explicitly consider climate change as a relevant external issue where applicable	Update context analysis and SWOT/PESTLE documentation to capture climate-related risk
Leadership (5.1)	Leadership commitment to the QMS and customer focus	Explicit requirement to promote and demonstrate quality culture and ethical behavior	Evidence culture through training records, communication, and recognition mechanisms
Risks & Opportunities (6.1)	Risks and opportunities addressed together in one planning step	Risks and opportunities are treated as separate, more actionable planning items	Restructure the risk register into two distinct tracks with dedicated treatment plans
Organizational Knowledge (7.1.6)	Baseline requirement to determine and maintain necessary knowledge	Strengthened emphasis on knowledge retention, sharing, and application	Formalize a knowledge-capture and succession process for critical roles
Change Management	Planning of changes addressed briefly	Structured review and communication required when planning change	Introduce a documented change-control procedure with communication steps
Interpretive Guidance	No informative annex explaining clause intent	Substantially expanded Annex A clarifying structure, terminology, and clauses	Realign the quality manual and internal audit checklist wording with Annex A
Terminology (Clause 3)	ISO 9000 as the sole reference for terms and definitions	A limited set of QMS-specific terms added directly to Clause 3	Review and align internal definitions with any newly introduced terminology

Transition Roadmap

- 1 Track the confirmed publication date (16 September 2026) and the IAF's official transition rules once released
- 2 Commission a 2015-vs-2026 gap assessment against your current QMS using the comparison above
- 3 Update Clause 4.1 context analysis to explicitly capture climate-related risks and opportunities
- 4 Evidence leadership's promotion of quality culture and ethical behavior through training and communication records
- 5 Split the risk and opportunity register into two tracks with distinct treatment plans
- 6 Realign the quality manual, policy wording, and internal audit checklist with updated terminology and Annex A guidance
- 7 Brief internal auditors and management review participants on the revised clause structure
- 8 Schedule the certificate transition audit with your certification body within the confirmed transition window

Need Help Planning Your Transition?

VerdeVista Consulting supports Saudi organizations through structured gap assessments, documentation realignment, and staff briefings to move confidently from ISO 9001:2015 to ISO 9001:2026. Get in touch to scope your transition plan.

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