

Bulletin Sep-26

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN ISO 9001:2015 / 2026



ISO 9001:2026 — what the new edition means for your certification

The sixth edition of ISO 9001 has been published. This bulletin summarises what has changed, what has not, and the steps we recommend so your transition is straightforward. In short: this is an evolution of the standard you already meet, not a rebuild.

Published 16 Sep 2026 Sixth edition	Transition ends Sep 2029 Expected 3-year window	Your current certificate Stays valid Throughout the transition
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THE SHORT VERSION

ISO 9001:2026 keeps the framework you know. **The ten-clause structure, the process approach, the Plan-Do-Check-Act cycle and risk-based thinking all remain.** The revision adds a small number of new requirements, restructures one clause, and — for the first time in the standard's history — includes a guidance annex. Most of the extra length sits in that guidance, not in the requirements themselves. If you maintain a healthy ISO 9001:2015 system, the gap to 2026 is modest and manageable within the transition period. There is no need to overhaul your quality management system, and you should be cautious of any advice suggesting otherwise.

WHAT HAS CHANGED

Four areas of the requirements carry the substantive changes. None of them requires a wholesale rewrite.

Clauses 4.1 & 4.2 Context & interested parties	Climate change is now explicit (Already in force) You must determine and record whether climate change is a relevant issue for your organisation — even if your conclusion is that it is not. A note also recognises that interested parties may have climate-related expectations. This came into effect through the 2024 amendment, so it should already be in your context analysis; if it isn't, it is the most urgent item to address.
Clause 5.1.1 Leadership & commitment	Quality culture and ethical behaviour Top management is now explicitly required to promote and demonstrate a culture of quality and ethical behaviour. This need not be a new programme — a light evidence trail is enough: culture and ethics referenced in leadership communications and policy and discussed in management review beyond the usual metrics.
Clause 6.1 Actions for risks & opportunities	Risks and opportunities separated Clause 6.1 is restructured into subclauses so that how you treat risks is documented separately from how you identify and pursue opportunities. If your current system records both, in a single register, you will need to split them. This is largely a documentation change — your underlying approach to risk does not change.
Clause 7.3 Awareness	Awareness of culture and ethics Everyone doing work under your control should be aware of the quality culture and expected ethical behaviour, alongside the existing awareness requirements. For most organisations, a short addition to induction and training material satisfies this.

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OTHER REFINEMENTS

Expect minor clarifications elsewhere — strengthened change-management expectations (Clause 6.3, including communication planning and reviewing changes after they are made), tidied terminology around documented information, and a slightly expanded set of terms in Clause 3. These are clarifying rather than new burdens and are best picked up during your normal document-review cycle.

WHAT HAS NOT CHANGED

- The overall structure, the process approach and the PDCA cycle are unchanged.
- Clause 8 (Operation) sees only minor terminology adjustments.
- The standard remains deliberately technology-neutral — **there are no new mandatory requirements** for AI, cybersecurity, ESG reporting or supply-chain resilience, despite speculation to the contrary.
- Your existing documented information, procedures and records remain the right foundation to build on.

THE NEW ANNEX A

Guidance, not a new rulebook

For the first time, ISO 9001 includes an informative Annex A giving guidance across Clauses 4 to 10. It is guidance only: it creates no new requirements and cannot, on its own, be the basis of a non-conformity. It will, however, shape how audits are interpreted, so it is a useful read once you have the standard — particularly its explanation of quality culture and of the risk/opportunity thinking behind Clause 6.1.

TRANSITION TIMELINE

February 2024 — Climate-change amendment published (already applies)

August 2025 — Draft International Standard released

16 September 2026 — ISO 9001:2026 published — the transition period begins

From approx. mid-2027 — First 2026 certificates available, once certification bodies complete their own accreditation

September 2029 — Transition deadline — ISO 9001:2015 is withdrawn

A three-year transition is expected, in line with recent ISO revisions. Formal transition arrangements are confirmed by the International Accreditation Forum and accreditation bodies around publication; we will pass on any refinements as they are finalised.

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOUR CERTIFICATE

- Your ISO 9001:2015 certificate **remains valid** for the whole transition period.
- You do not need to do anything immediately, beyond confirming the climate-change requirement is already covered in your context analysis.
- There is a natural efficiency in aligning your transition with a scheduled surveillance or recertification audit, rather than arranging a separate visit.
- Certification-body capacity tightens as the 2029 deadline approaches, so planning early gives you the most flexibility over timing.

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WHAT WE RECOMMEND YOU DO NOW

Straight away

- Confirm climate change is assessed and documented in your Clause 4.1 context (and 4.2 interested parties).
- Add quality culture and ethics to your next management review agenda and minute the discussion.
- Do a light gap check against the four changes above.

During the transition

- Separate risks and opportunities in your registers to match the new Clause 6.1 structure.
- Add culture and ethics awareness to induction and training records (Clause 7.3).
- Include the new topics in your internal audit scope and begin your transition audit in good time.

HOW ISO-CERT ONLINE LTD WILL SUPPORT YOU

As your certification body, we are updating our own accreditation to the 2026 edition and will contact you in good time to plan your transition — normally combined with your next recertification audit, so it fits your existing schedule.

We would advise that you check the Messages Board in the **ISO-Cert Unite Portal** regularly, as this is where we will be issuing further updates, regarding this subject and other.

If you would like a gap review against the 2026 requirements before then, get in touch and we will arrange it.

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