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**Quality management systems —  
Particular requirements for the  
application of ISO 9001:2015 for  
electoral organizations at all levels of  
government**

*Systèmes de management de la qualité — Exigences particulières  
pour l'application de l'ISO 9001:2015 aux organismes électoraux à  
tous les niveaux du gouvernement*



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## Foreword

ISO (the International Organization for Standardization) is a worldwide federation of national standards bodies (ISO member bodies). The work of preparing International Standards is normally carried out through ISO technical committees. Each member body interested in a subject for which a technical committee has been established has the right to be represented on that committee. International organizations, governmental and non-governmental, in liaison with ISO, also take part in the work. ISO collaborates closely with the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) on all matters of electrotechnical standardization.

The procedures used to develop this document and those intended for its further maintenance are described in the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 1. In particular, the different approval criteria needed for the different types of ISO documents should be noted. This document was drafted in accordance with the editorial rules of the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 2 (see [www.iso.org/directives](http://www.iso.org/directives)).

Attention is drawn to the possibility that some of the elements of this document may be the subject of patent rights. ISO shall not be held responsible for identifying any or all such patent rights. Details of any patent rights identified during the development of the document will be in the Introduction and/or on the ISO list of patent declarations received (see [www.iso.org/patents](http://www.iso.org/patents)).

Any trade name used in this document is information given for the convenience of users and does not constitute an endorsement.

For an explanation of the voluntary nature of standards, the meaning of ISO specific terms and expressions related to conformity assessment, as well as information about ISO's adherence to the World Trade Organization (WTO) principles in the Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) see [www.iso.org/iso/foreword.html](http://www.iso.org/iso/foreword.html).

This document was prepared by Technical Committee ISO/TC 176, *Quality management and quality assurance*.

This first edition cancels and replaces ISO/TS 17582:2014, which has been technically revised. The main changes compared with the previous edition are as follows:

- a new structure has been created based on the ten clauses of ISO 9001:2015.
- the specific electoral content has been placed under the clauses of the new structure.

Any feedback or questions on this document should be directed to the user's national standards body. A complete listing of these bodies can be found at [www.iso.org/members.html](http://www.iso.org/members.html).

## Introduction

### 0.1 General

Conduct of periodic, free and fair elections by secret ballot is the fundamental distinctive characteristic of a democratic political system. As such, the sustainability of the democratic political system is reliant on effectively defined, implemented and controlled electoral services. The ultimate goal is to elect those who will hold public office and to decide ballot proposals that affect the populace.

Vote casting is an expression of the fundamental political right to participate in public affairs guaranteed by human rights instruments such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights<sup>[2]</sup>. This process is based on the principle of one-person one-vote, without restrictions based on race, gender, religion and social status. The registration and identification of eligible voters and the registration of political organizations and candidates are essential to the electoral process.

Every electoral system has its own set of regulations, which vary between countries according to their individual culture and traditions, and even within states where federal systems exist. The electoral process is composed of a series of interrelated processes, conducted by the electoral bodies, political organizations and the citizenship. These essential elements include determining who is eligible to vote, registration of political organizations and candidates, electoral logistics, casting, counting and accurate recording of votes, declaration of results, electoral education, oversight of campaign financing and resolution of electoral disputes.

Electoral bodies are institutions that have responsibility for the administration of the electoral process, including the preparation, organization, management, monitoring and promotion of the election, the casting of the votes and counting of the ballots, the resolution of electoral disputes or the official declaration of the election results.

The full and transparent implementation of each process constitutes the basis for the electoral body to achieve legitimacy.

In this document, the text reproduced from ISO 9001:2015 is placed in boxes, in order to distinguish it from the sector-specific guidance given for each clause.

#### **ISO 9001:2015, *Quality management systems — Requirements***

##### **Introduction**

##### **0.1 General**

The adoption of a quality management system is a strategic decision for an organization that can help to improve its overall performance and provide a sound basis for sustainable development initiatives.

The potential benefits to an organization of implementing a quality management system based on this International Standard are:

- a) the ability to consistently provide products and services that meet customer and applicable statutory and regulatory requirements;
- b) facilitating opportunities to enhance customer satisfaction;
- c) addressing risks and opportunities associated with its context and objectives;
- d) the ability to demonstrate conformity to specified quality management system requirements.

This International Standard can be used by internal and external parties.

It is not the intent of this International Standard to imply the need for:

- uniformity in the structure of different quality management systems;
- alignment of documentation to the clause structure of this International Standard;
- the use of the specific terminology of this International Standard within the organization.

The quality management system requirements specified in this International Standard are complementary to requirements for products and services.

This International Standard employs the process approach, which incorporates the Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA) cycle and risk-based thinking.

The process approach enables an organization to plan its processes and their interactions.

The PDCA cycle enables an organization to ensure that its processes are adequately resourced and managed, and that opportunities for improvement are determined and acted on.

Risk-based thinking enables an organization to determine the factors that could cause its processes and its quality management system to deviate from the planned results, to put in place preventive controls to minimize negative effects and to make maximum use of opportunities as they arise (see Clause A.4).

Consistently meeting requirements and addressing future needs and expectations poses a challenge for organizations in an increasingly dynamic and complex environment. To achieve this objective, the organization might find it necessary to adopt various forms of improvement in addition to correction and continual improvement, such as breakthrough change, innovation and re-organization.

In this International Standard, the following verbal forms are used:

- “shall” indicates a requirement;
- “should” indicates a recommendation;
- “may” indicates a permission;
- “can” indicates a possibility or a capability.

Information marked as “NOTE” is for guidance in understanding or clarifying the associated requirement.

The design and implementation of an electoral body’s quality management system is influenced by its obligations under the applicable legal framework as determined by international law, national constitutions and national law.

The electoral quality management system requirements specified in this document are complementary to requirements for the electoral service provided by the applicable legal framework and the electoral body.

## 0.2 Quality management principles

### ISO 9001:2015, *Quality management systems — Requirements*

#### 0.2 Quality management principles

This International Standard is based on the quality management principles described in ISO 9000. The descriptions include a statement of each principle, a rationale of why the principle is important for the organization, some examples of benefits associated with the principle and examples of typical actions to improve the organization's performance when applying the principle.

The quality management principles are:

- customer focus;
- leadership;
- engagement of people;
- process approach;
- improvement;
- evidence-based decision making;
- relationship management.

There is no sector-specific guidance.



0.3 Process approach

0.3.1 General

ISO 9001:2015, *Quality management systems — Requirements*

0.3 Process approach

0.3.1 General

This International Standard promotes the adoption of a process approach when developing, implementing and improving the effectiveness of a quality management system, to enhance customer satisfaction by meeting customer requirements. Specific requirements considered essential to the adoption of a process approach are included in 4.4.

Understanding and managing interrelated processes as a system contributes to the organization's effectiveness and efficiency in achieving its intended results. This approach enables the organization to control the interrelationships and interdependencies among the processes of the system, so that the overall performance of the organization can be enhanced.

The process approach involves the systematic definition and management of processes, and their interactions, so as to achieve the intended results in accordance with the quality policy and strategic direction of the organization. Management of the processes and the system as a whole can be achieved using the PDCA cycle (see 0.3.2) with an overall focus on risk-based thinking (see 0.3.3) aimed at taking advantage of opportunities and preventing undesirable results.

The application of the process approach in a quality management system enables:

- a) understanding and consistency in meeting requirements;
- b) the consideration of processes in terms of added value;
- c) the achievement of effective process performance;
- d) improvement of processes based on evaluation of data and information.

Figure 1 gives a schematic representation of any process and shows the interaction of its elements. The monitoring and measuring check points, which are necessary for control, are specific to each process and will vary depending on the related risks.

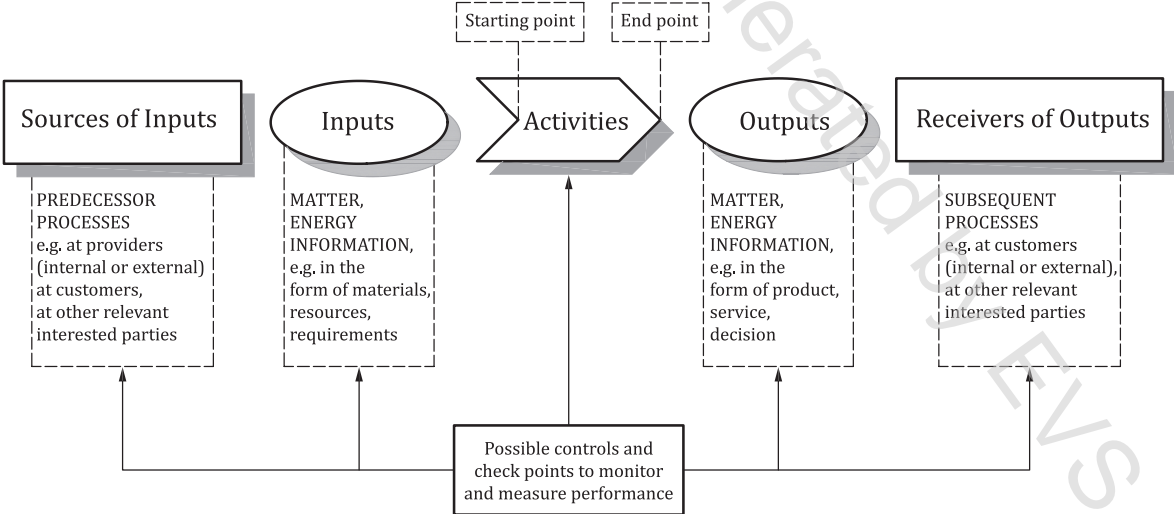


Figure 1 — Schematic representation of the elements of a single process

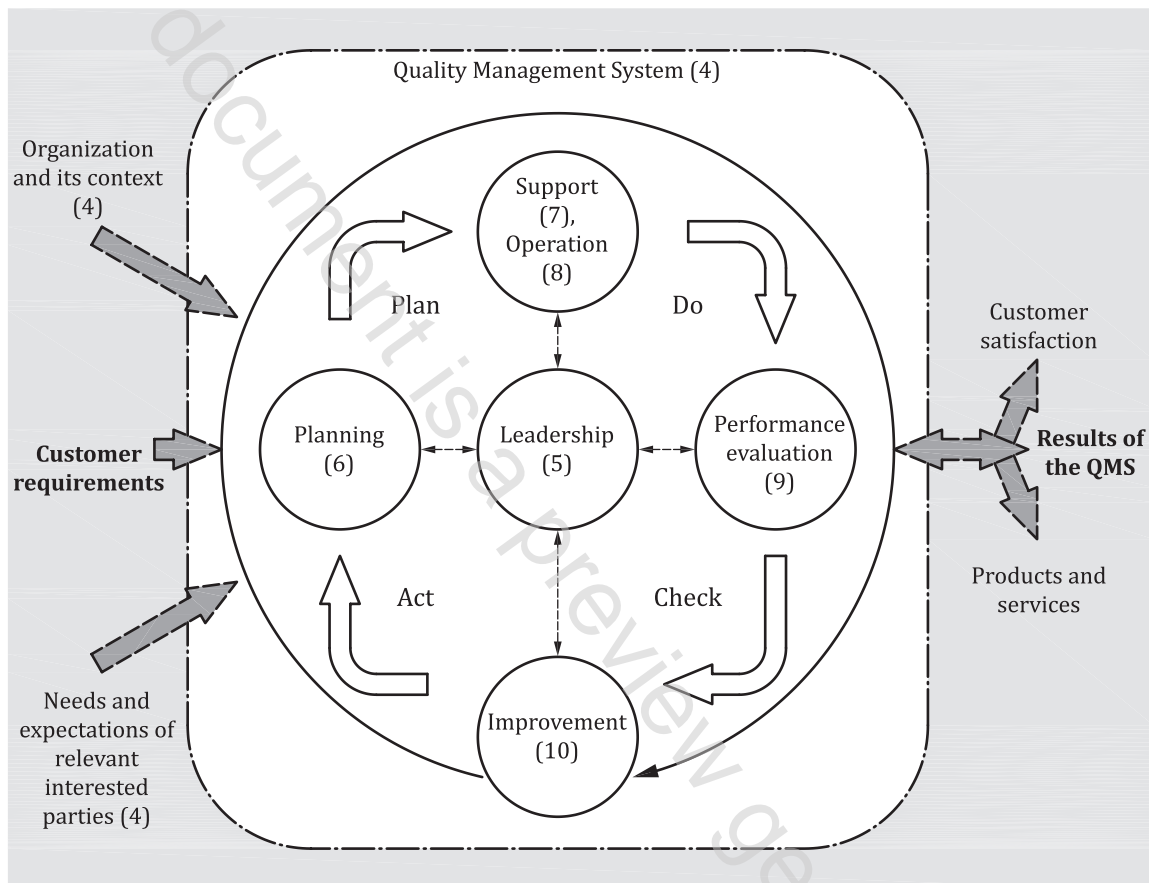
There is no sector-specific guidance.

### 0.3.2 Plan-Do-Check-Act cycle

#### 0.3.2 Plan-Do-Check-Act cycle

The PDCA cycle can be applied to all processes and to the quality management system as a whole. Figure 2 illustrates how Clauses 4 to 10 can be grouped in relation to the PDCA cycle.

NOTE Numbers in brackets refer to the clauses in this International Standard.



**Figure 2 — Representation of the structure of this International Standard in the PDCA cycle**

PDCA cycle can be briefly described as follows:

- **Plan:** establish the objectives of the system and its processes, and the resources needed to deliver results in accordance with customers' requirements and the organization's policies, and identify and address risks and opportunities;
- **Do:** implement what was planned;
- **Check:** monitor and (where applicable) measure processes and the resulting products and services against policies, objectives, requirements and planned activities, and report the results;
- **Act:** take actions to improve performance, as necessary.

Elections can only occur when citizens exercise their right to vote. Voter registration is a condition for the establishment of the electoral process. Identification of eligibility and registration of eligible voters are essential to the electoral process.

By registering to contest elections, political organizations and candidates legally formalize their participation in the electoral process. This may entitle them to receive public funding for their campaign in accordance with the applicable legal framework as well as the establishment of clear and unambiguous criteria to determine who is eligible to vote.

Electoral bodies plan election day logistics well in advance of the electoral event. Key factors in logistics are the efficient distribution of electoral materials, establishment of voting stations and provision of voting equipment.

Vote casting and vote counting go hand in hand. Counting votes is a task of paramount importance, since the results of the process reflect the will of the electorate. When done in a transparent and accurate manner, it increases confidence in elections and acceptance of the final results.

It is essential that voters are aware of the different stages of the electoral process. Electoral education is a continual process that spans the entire electoral process. Processes are established to ensure that information relating to candidates, ballot proposals and voting locations is available to voters prior to the election.

The declaration of results is the legally binding conclusion of the process by which the electoral body proclaims the results of the election. Additionally, there should be fair and timely resolution and communication of electoral complaints and appeals.

The full and transparent implementation of each electoral process constitutes the basis for the electoral body to achieve legitimacy. Collectively, these processes constitute an electoral event and occur in three stages: before, during and after the election.

### 0.3.3 Risk-based thinking

#### ISO 9001:2015, *Quality management systems — Requirements*

#### 0.3.3 Risk-based thinking

Risk-based thinking (see Clause A.4) is essential for achieving an effective quality management system. The concept of risk-based thinking has been implicit in previous editions of this International Standard including, for example, carrying out preventive action to eliminate potential nonconformities, analysing any nonconformities that do occur, and taking action to prevent recurrence that is appropriate for the effects of the nonconformity.

To conform to the requirements of this International Standard, an organization needs to plan and implement actions to address risks and opportunities. Addressing both risks and opportunities establishes a basis for increasing the effectiveness of the quality management system, achieving improved results and preventing negative effects.

Opportunities can arise as a result of a situation favourable to achieving an intended result, for example, a set of circumstances that allow the organization to attract customers, develop new products and services, reduce waste or improve productivity. Actions to address opportunities can also include consideration of associated risks. Risk is the effect of uncertainty and any such uncertainty can have positive or negative effects. A positive deviation arising from a risk can provide an opportunity, but not all positive effects of risk result in opportunities.

There is no sector-specific guidance.

#### 0.4 Relationship with other management system standards

##### ISO 9001:2015, *Quality management systems — Requirements*

##### 0.4 Relationship with other management system standards

This International Standard applies the framework developed by ISO to improve alignment among its International Standards for management systems (see Clause A.1).

This International Standard enables an organization to use the process approach, coupled with the PDCA cycle and risk-based thinking, to align or integrate its quality management system with the requirements of other management system standards.

This International Standard relates to ISO 9000 and ISO 9004 as follows:

- ISO 9000 *Quality management systems — Fundamentals and vocabulary* provides essential background for the proper understanding and implementation of this International Standard;
- ISO 9004 *Managing for the sustained success of an organization — A quality management approach* provides guidance for organizations that choose to progress beyond the requirements of this International Standard.

Annex B provides details of other International Standards on quality management and quality management systems that have been developed by ISO/TC 176.

This International Standard does not include requirements specific to other management systems, such as those for environmental management, occupational health and safety management, or financial management.

Sector-specific quality management system standards based on the requirements of this International Standard have been developed for a number of sectors. Some of these standards specify additional quality management system requirements, while others are limited to providing guidance to the application of this International Standard within the particular sector.

A matrix showing the correlation between the clauses of this edition of this International Standard and the previous edition (ISO 9001:2008) can be found on the ISO/TC 176/SC 2 open access web site at: [www.iso.org/tc176/sc02/public](http://www.iso.org/tc176/sc02/public).

NOTE 1 Since the publication of ISO 9001:2015, and at the time of publication of this document, the revision of ISO 9004 has been completed and ISO 9004:2018 has been published.

NOTE 2 ISO 9001:2015, Annexes A and B, referenced above, are not included in this document.

There is no sector-specific guidance.

# Quality management systems — Particular requirements for the application of ISO 9001:2015 for electoral organizations at all levels of government

## 1 Scope

### ISO 9001:2015, *Quality management systems — Requirements*

#### 1 Scope

This International Standard specifies requirements for a quality management system when an organization:

- a) needs to demonstrate its ability to consistently provide products and services that meet customer and applicable statutory and regulatory requirements, and
- b) aims to enhance customer satisfaction through the effective application of the system, including processes for improvement of the system and the assurance of conformity to customer and applicable statutory and regulatory requirements.

All the requirements of this International Standard are generic and are intended to be applicable to any organization, regardless of its type or size, or the products and services it provides.

NOTE 1 In this International Standard, the terms “product” or “service” only apply to products and services intended for, or required by, a customer.

NOTE 2 Statutory and regulatory requirements can be expressed as legal requirements.

This document specifies requirements for a quality management system where an electoral organization:

- needs to demonstrate its ability to manage elections by secret ballot, to provide reliable, transparent, free and fair results that comply with electoral requirements;
- within the established legal framework, aims to enhance the trust and confidence of citizens, candidates, political organizations and other electoral interested parties through the effective implementation of the electoral quality management system, including processes for continual improvement.

NOTE 3 Electoral bodies can be constituted to reflect local legal requirements.

NOTE 4 In this document, the term “product” only applies to the electoral service provided by an electoral body.

This document is applicable to the election period, including pre-election and post-election activities or processes.

This document is applicable to all electoral bodies involved in any aspect of the electoral process, whether they are permanent organizations or temporary organizations established in support of a particular election period.

## 2 Normative references

### ISO 9001:2015, *Quality management systems — Requirements*

#### 2 Normative references

The following documents, in whole or in part, are normatively referenced in this document and are indispensable for its application. For dated references, only the edition cited applies. For undated references, the latest edition of the referenced document (including any amendments) applies.

ISO 9000:2015, *Quality management systems — Fundamentals and vocabulary*

There is no sector-specific guidance.

## 3 Terms and definitions

### ISO 9001:2015, *Quality management systems — Requirements*

#### 3 Terms and definitions

For the purposes of this document, the terms and definitions given in ISO 9000:2015 apply.

ISO and IEC maintain terminological databases for use in standardization at the following addresses:

- ISO Online browsing platform: available at <https://www.iso.org/obp>
- IEC Electropedia: available at <http://www.electropedia.org/>

NOTE Concept diagrams explaining the thematic groupings in this clause are given in [Annex A](#).

### 3.1 Terms related to electoral quality management system

#### 3.1.1

##### **electoral body**

public institution having legal and administrative responsibility for the preparation and conduct of *elections* ([3.2.7](#)) according to the legal framework of the country

Note 1 to entry: The responsibility involves all aspects of conducting an *election* ([3.2.7](#)) and includes related activities such as referenda, citizen initiatives or revocation of the mandate and balloting.

#### 3.1.2

##### **outsourced electoral process**

process that the *electoral body* ([3.1.1](#)) needs for its *electoral quality management system* ([3.1.6](#)) and that the electoral body chooses to have performed by an external party

#### 3.1.3

##### **ballot proposal**

legislation proposal or policy question submitted for vote by the *electorate* ([3.2.8](#))

Note 1 to entry: There are several types of ballot proposal. These differ based on who is motivating the ballot proposal, whether it is a citizen or the legislature, and the people who are to form the electorate for the ballot proposal.

Note 2 to entry: Proposals concerning the *election* ([3.2.7](#)) of *candidates* ([3.2.1](#)) for public office are generally not considered to be ballot proposals.

#### 3.1.4

##### **electoral service development plan**

specification of the requirements to be met by an *electoral body* ([3.1.1](#)) in the delivery of its *electoral service* ([3.1.5](#)) in documented form