

# Getting ready for ISO 9001

A practical starting point for UK businesses preparing for ISO 9001. Use this guide to organise your first conversations and turn a broad ambition into a manageable plan.

This is a preparation guide, not a clause-by-clause audit or a substitute for the standard. A completed checklist is not evidence that you qualify for certification.

## 1. Agree why you are doing it

Write down what you want to achieve: more consistent work, fewer repeat problems, a customer requirement or access to a tender. If a customer has asked for certification, get their exact wording and deadline before buying support.

**Practical step:** Bring to your first meeting: the customer requirement and your three main reasons for starting.

## 2. Describe the business you want to cover

List the products or services, locations and activities you want the management system to cover. Include outsourced work that affects what your customer receives. A short description helps you discuss the proposed scope with a consultant and certification body.

**Practical step:** Your starting note: what you supply, where you work and which teams are involved.

## 3. Give someone time to lead the work

Choose a project lead and a senior person who can agree priorities and resources. Ask the people who do the work to help explain it. Put regular time in the diary so preparation does not become a last-minute paperwork exercise.

**Practical step:** Agree now: the lead, decision-maker, available time and a date for your first progress review.

## 4. Follow one real job from enquiry to completion

Choose a recent order or piece of work. Walk through how you agreed the requirements, planned it, selected any suppliers, delivered it and checked the result. Note who makes decisions and where information is kept.

**Practical step:** Look for: unclear handovers, repeated checks, missing information and delays.

## 5. Gather what you already use

Start with useful existing material: quotations, order records, work instructions, supplier information, training records, inspection results and customer feedback. Make a simple list of where each item is stored and who keeps it current.

**Practical step:** Avoid rewriting everything first. Identify what works, what is missing and what people actually use.

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# From preparation to assessment

## 6. Identify the gaps and set priorities

Compare your arrangements with the applicable ISO 9001 requirements, using the standard and competent support where needed. Consider what could prevent you meeting customer requirements. Turn the gaps into a short action list with an owner and target date.

**Practical step:** Choose a few useful measures, such as delivery reliability or repeat complaints, and decide how you will review them.

## 7. Put the system into everyday use

Explain the agreed ways of working to the people involved. Keep evidence from real work and check that colleagues can find the information they need. When something goes wrong, record what happened, investigate the cause and check whether the action taken helped.

**Practical step:** Use records from actual jobs; do not create a paper trail just for an assessment.

## 8. Check the system and review the findings

Plan internal audits and a management review. Use them to examine how the system is working, identify problems and agree improvements. Arrange suitable competence and objectivity for the audits, and follow up the actions they produce.

**Practical step:** Keep a clear record of findings, decisions, responsibilities and follow-up.

## 9. Choose the right support and certification route

Ask a consultant what they will deliver and what your team must do. Discuss certification separately with a certification body. Check any accreditation requirements in your customer contracts and verify the body's relevant accredited scope.

**Practical step:** Request a written breakdown of implementation help, assessment, ongoing audits, travel and any other charges.

## 10. Agree the assessment plan when you are ready

Discuss your progress and evidence with your chosen certification body before fixing dates. Ask which edition and any transition arrangements apply to your project. Allow time to address findings and continue maintaining the system after certification.

**Practical step:** There is no single timetable that suits every business. Base the plan on your scope, resources and starting position.

ISO develops standards; external certification bodies assess organisations and issue certificates. Check that your chosen route meets your customer's requirements. This guide does not guarantee certification.

# Your preparation checklist

Tick what you have addressed. Use the gaps to plan the next conversation.

Business: \_\_\_\_\_

Project lead: \_\_\_\_\_ Review date: \_\_\_\_\_

- ☐ We know why we want ISO 9001 and what customers require.
- ☐ We have described the activities and sites to be covered.
- ☐ A project lead and senior decision-maker are identified.
- ☐ People have time allocated to the work.
- ☐ We have followed our main work processes and identified owners.
- ☐ We know where useful documents and records are held.
- ☐ We have an action list for gaps, with owners and dates.
- ☐ We have chosen useful measures and a way to review them.
- ☐ Staff understand the arrangements relevant to their work.
- ☐ Internal audits and management review are planned.
- ☐ We have discussed the appropriate edition and assessment route.
- ☐ We understand the quoted costs and ongoing commitments.

## Our next three actions

| Action | Owner | Target date |
|--------|-------|-------------|
|        |       |             |
|        |       |             |
|        |       |             |

## Need help getting started?

[Find a consultant](#) · [Contact GetISO](#) · [Explore issosmart](#)

Official background: [ISO 9001 overview](#) · [ISO: quality management systems](#) · [ISO: certification](#) · [UKAS guidance](#)